

Zuzana Piussi and the Eccentric Subject: Positional Female Authorship in Slovak Advocacy Documentary

Katarína Mišíková

Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, Slovakia
misikovakatarina@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-7509-2068>
<https://ror.org/05hna7313>

Abstract. Slovak documentary filmmaker Zuzana Piussi is the most prominent representative of film journalism and advocacy documentary in Slovak nonfiction cinema. Despite an impressive body of work spanning two decades and addressing a wide range of socio-political topics, her films remain insufficiently studied domestically and are virtually absent from international documentary scholarship. This paper argues that what critics identify as formal and argumentative inconsistencies in Piussi's work in fact constitutes a deliberate system of transgressive strategies. Through textual analysis of selected political documentaries, drawing on documentary studies and feminist theory, the paper demonstrates how Piussi positions herself as an eccentric subject – in Teresa de Lauretis's sense – in order to render invisible or hidden power structures visible. She transgresses the norms of documentary discourse by blending modes, techniques, and voices. She abandons the position of a neutral observer by subordinating her dramaturgy to advocacy and directly intervening in the reality she documents. She crosses ethical boundaries of documentary – those of consent, transparency, and balanced representation – in order to strengthen her argument. And she deploys her own gender subversively as a provocative authorial strategy. Together, these strategies define Piussi's practice as a specific form of positional female gaze within the tradition of advocacy documentary.

Keywords: Slovak documentary cinema; advocacy documentary; female authorship; female gaze; eccentric subject.

Zuzana Piussi ir ekscentriškasis subjektas: pozicinė moters autorystė Slovakijos angažuotame dokumentiniame kine

Santrauka. Slovakų dokumentinio kino kūrėja Zuzana Piussi yra ryškiausia kino žurnalistikos ir angažuoto dokumentinio kino atstovė Slovakijos negrožinio kino tradicijoje. Nepaisant įspūdingo, daugiau nei du dešimtmečius apimančio kūrybinio palikimo ir plačios socialinių bei politinių temų aprėpties, jos filmai Slovakijoje tebėra nepakankamai tyrinėti, o tarptautiniuose dokumentinio kino tyrimuose beveik neminimi. Straipsnyje teigiama, kad tai, ką kritikai įvardija kaip formalius ir argumentacinius Piussi kūrybos nenuoseklumus, iš tiesų sudaro sąmoningai kuriamą transgresinių strategijų sistemą. Remiantis atrinktų politinių dokumentinių filmų tekstine analize, dokumentinio kino studijomis ir feministine teorija, parodoma, kaip Piussi save pozicionuoja kaip **ekscentriškąjį subjektą** Teresos de Lauretis prasme, siekdama padaryti matomas nematomas ar paslėptas galios struktūras.

Received: 2026-04-27. Accepted: 2026-08-20.

Copyright © 2026 Sara Pane. Published by Vilnius University Press. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution Licence](#), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Ji peržengia dokumentinio diskurso normas, jungdama skirtingus dokumentikos režimus, technikas ir balsus. Atsisakydama neutralaus stebėtojo pozicijos, ji pajungia dramaturgiją angažuotam tikslui ir tiesiogiai įsikiša į dokumentuojamą tikrovę. Siekdama sustiprinti savo argumentaciją, ji peržengia dokumentinio kino etines ribas, susijusias su informuotu sutikimu, skaidrumu ir subalansuotu reprezentavimu. Galiausiai ji pasitelkia savo lytinę tapatybę kaip provokuojančią autorinę strategiją, naudojamą subversyviai. Šios strategijos kartu apibrėžia Piussi kūrybinę praktiką kaip savitą **pozicinio moters žvilgsnio** formą angažuoto dokumentinio kino tradicijoje.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: Slovakijos dokumentinis kinas; angažuotas dokumentinis kinas; moters autorystė; moters žvilgsnis; ekscentriškasis subjektas.

Introduction

Film journalism is the Cinderella of nonfiction film. For the most part, it lacks the prestige of auteur documentaries or the adventurous spirit and immediacy of photo and video reporting. It is no wonder that, despite its prevalence, Jonas Mekas (Mekas, 1968) described newsreel as one of the most neglected forms of cinema. Yet, film journalism and newsreel play an irreplaceable role both in cinema and society: they stand at the intersection of journalism and artistic creation, and their role is not only to inform but also to explain. Their purpose is to disseminate topics related to socio-political events among the public, to comment on and interpret them, and thereby connect the world. Film journalism also serves as an archive of collective memory: from the earliest Lumière newsreels to later film weeklies, it preserves snapshots of the entire first century of cinema, from its inception to the digital era.

Against this backdrop, the work of the Slovak documentary filmmaker Zuzana Piussi, stands out as an unlikely outlier. Being one of the few Slovak female film directors in a male-dominated documentary profession and making films addressing socio-political issues instead of topics traditionally coded as 'female' (motherhood, family, intimate experience, etc.), she is a striking exception both to the norms of film journalism defined by male authorship and female documentary tradition. For more than two decades, Piussi has consistently addressed highly visible yet politically sensitive public issues – corruption, justice, nationalism, institutional power, and gender – while simultaneously exposing the mechanisms through which specific actors, conflicts, and forms of responsibility are rendered invisible. Despite the impressive body of work and the social impact her films often make, she is still somehow not taken seriously as an auteur. With a few exceptions¹, her work is not sufficiently analytically studied domestically and is virtually absent from international documentary studies despite being a significant case for both film journalism and advocacy documentary. I argue that the reason for this is that she continually and consistently contests the norms of filmmaking and social discourse. The very strategies she uses to make her films visible and present in public discourse are often the reason why her documentaries are perceived as controversial in message and inconsistent in form.

The aim of this paper is to dismantle the image of Zuzana Piussi as a *femme terrible* of Slovak documentary film by analysing the authorial and rhetorical strategies she employs

¹ See Ferenčuhová (2009), Branko (2009), and Palúch (2015).

in her portrayal of current socio-political events. Drawing on the methodological foundations of textual analysis, documentary studies and feminist theory, I will demonstrate how she subordinates the dramaturgy of her films to advocacy, how her approach raises questions of documentary ethics and how by resisting the existing norms of documentary and social discourse, she succeeds to position herself as a major auteur documentary filmmaker of today.

To do this, I will first draft a comprehensive overview of the tradition of film journalism within the context of Slovak documentary cinema and describe Piussi's position in it. After this, I will briefly describe the topics she concentrates on and explain why the choice of the subject matter and methods are often the cause of controversies surrounding her films. The core of the paper will, through case studies of selected films, analyse four major transgressive strategies that Piussi uses to render the invisible power structures visible, and to position herself in Slovak documentary filmmaking as what Teresa de Lauretis (2007) defined as the eccentric subject.

Tradition and trials of Slovak film journalism

In Slovak cinema, as well as in other countries of the so-called former socialist bloc, film journalism once had a strong tradition. Long before the spread of television, film weeklies provided an overview of news from various areas of life. Admittedly, given the media reality of state socialism, many of them served propaganda purposes, but often they were also a space for creative forms of reporting. They persisted even after television news took over their informational function. The transition to democracy and market economy brought about the collapse of a film journalism system that had been in place for four decades, a collapse later exacerbated by the collapse of state-subsidized cinema and the plundering of its technological infrastructure².

Three films mark the symbolic swan song of Slovak film journalism at the turn of the decade (*Stanislav Babinský – The Life is an Uncompromising Boomerang*³, *Flight Report OK 89–90*⁴, and *All Together... in Slovak*⁵), each an immediate response to the upheavals of the transition period. Since the privatization and collapse of the state-run *Koliba* film studio in the early 1990s, film journalism focusing on socio-political topics has been rare. Socio-political journalism thus concentrated on the public television broadcast Slovak Television, where, however, it frequently faced political pressure. A telling example is the fate of the program *Reporters (Reportéri)*, which was repeatedly subjected to censorship, and was cancelled on multiple occasions⁶.

² For more on the tradition of film journalism and newsreel in Slovak cinema, see Macek (1992) and Urc (2017). A detailed account of privatization and defraudation of the state-run film studio *Koliba*, see Macek (2010).

³ *Stanislav Babinský – život je nekompromisný bumerang* (d. Eubomír Štecko, 1990).

⁴ *Letová správa OK 89 – 90* (d. Il'ja Ruppeldt, 1990).

⁵ *Všetci spolu... po slovensky* (d. Eva Štefankovičová, 1991).

⁶ *Reporters*, which began airing in 2004, became a recurring target of political pressure. Their troubled history – including suspensions under the third and fourth Fico governments and the withdrawal of individual reports deemed politically sensitive – is symptomatic of the broader deficit of critical television journalism in Slovakia and its vulnerability to interference from those in power.

Zuzana Piussi is a rare example of present-day socio-political film journalism in Slovak cinema. She has been labelled as part of the so-called *Generation 90* (Peter Kerekes, Jaro Vojtek, Juraj Lehotský, Marek Kuboš, Marko Škop, Robert Kirchhoff, Marek Šulík, and others)⁷, a generation of documentary filmmakers who made their debut with feature-length films around the turn of the millennium. They brought playful staging techniques, thoughtful formal composition, and visual expression to Slovak documentary film. The shift toward subjective documentary filmmaking, a distrust of the omniscience of the expository mode – which had been discredited by socialist propaganda – a focus on festival and art-house audiences, as well as several years of feature-length film production under the conditions of independent filmmaking financed by grants and international co-productions, led to the fact that film journalism was not at the forefront of this strong generation of filmmakers' interests. The only woman in that generation, combining subjective documentary with journalistic methods, became the most prominent representative of contemporary socio-political documentary is, notably, Zuzana Piussi⁸.

A lone runner of the Generation 90

The productivity of this lone filmmaking runner is truly remarkable. Since her first film, *Wipe Out* (*Výmet*, 2003), which depicted a botched raid by a police SWAT team, breaks in her filmography have been rare. In some years, she premieres several films. This work rate is enabled by operating within the framework of independent low-budget filmmaking and by personally handling multiple roles (she not only writes the screenplays for her films and co-produces them, but often also serves as their cinematographer and editor). Piussi explores a wide range of topics. Police violence and police procedures are the subject of *Wipe Out* and *Scent Evidence* (*Pachová stopa*, 2024). Sexual diversity is the topic of *Angels Cry* (*Anjeli plačú*, 2005) and *Grandmother* (*Babička*, 2008). Political manipulation is at the core of *A Difficult Choice* (*Ťažká voľba*, 2016), *The Grasp of the State* (*Od Fica do Fica*, 2012), and *The State Capture* (*Ukradnutý štát*, 2019). *Fragile Identity* (*Krehká identita*, 2012) depicts the phenomenon of nationalism. *Koliba* (2009) deals with the case of the embezzlement of the Slovak film industry. *Men of the Revolution* (*Muži revolúcie*, 2012) reflects on the Velvet Revolution of 1989 in Czechoslovakia. The struggle for the rule of law is documented in *Disease of the Third Power* (*Nemoc tretej moci*, 2011), and *Ordeal* (*Očista*, 2021). The director moves from politics to ecology in *Voice of the Forest* (*Hlas lesa*, 2025). She is not solely interested in Slovak society; in recent years, thanks to her creative and personal partnership with Czech documentary filmmaker Vít Janeček, she has been equally active in the Czech Republic.

⁷ Branko (2004).

⁸ Martin Palúch (2015, p. 251) draws attention to the absence of film journalism in Slovak documentary after 1990, while citing the films of Mário Homolka and Robert Kirchhoff as exceptions alongside Piussi. Thanks to their pioneering work, journalistic approaches to socio-political themes have gradually returned to Slovak nonfiction cinema, as evidenced by Eduard Cicha's *Petr Breiner's Elementary Art School* (*Základná umelecká škola Petra Breinera*, 2018) and Dominik Jursa's *The Golden Land* (*Zlatá zem*, 2020). Unlike Piussi, however, neither filmmaker foregrounds such a strong personal authorial presence within the film itself.

Zuzana Piussi also employs a variety of techniques: from observation to participation, from archival materials to animated sequences, from personal commentary to performance. Some of her works blend elements of fiction and documentary film to varying degrees (*Grandmother*, *Hero of Our Time* [*Hrdina našich čias*, 2009], *Unbalanced* [*Zošalieť*, 2022]).

Despite this wide range, her work retains a strong and recognizable personal stamp: an effort to understand the reality we live in. Zuzana Piussi is, in fact, a tireless chronicler of Slovak society and its transformations since 1989.

The breadth of her thematic scope, her emphasis on topicality at the expense of cinematic form, her apparent disregard for the technical quality, and the diversity of her approaches prevent Piussi – unlike other filmmakers of the Generation 90 – from being recognized as a distinctive auteur. The unpolished nature of her work and her focus on domestic themes are also responsible for her lower visibility at film festivals⁹. Moreover, her intuitive approach to filmmaking and the lack of a more rigorous dramatic structure often lead to conceptual problems, which is a point frequently highlighted by critics and theorists. Martin Palúch, for example, criticizes her for lacking a broader perspective on the subject matter, and for uncritically presenting facts, and describes her film *The Grasp of the State* as a hastily produced propaganda piece (Palúch, 2015, p. 263). Mária Ferenčuhová, on the other hand, points to the issue of the representativeness of her protagonists, which often leads to a distorted perception of a particular social group or phenomenon (Ferenčuhová, 2009). My claim is that the formal and argumentative shortcomings of Piussi's films are closely tied to her status of a trailblazing filmmaker. In the words of Pavel Branko, in Piussi's case, "the breakthrough is always more important than the polish" (Branko, 2009, p. 179). She does not wait for a topic to fully develop. Instead, she seeks to capture it as it unfolds, from the perspective of an engaged contemporary observer. Even at the risk of inconsistency and superficiality, at the expense of conceptual coherence and rigorous analysis.

The positional female gaze of the eccentric subject

What might seem as a somewhat improvised and inconsistent approach to documentary reveals itself in Piussi's case as a deliberate creative technique. This is a technique characterized by a strong quality of female resistance. Piussi could hardly be described as a practitioner of the 'female gaze' in documentary film, as defined by Lisa French (French, 2021). She does not seek to articulate a female sensibility through her films¹⁰, and her thematic focus does not lie in topics traditionally associated with the feminist agenda, such as gender equality, the domestic and family sphere, motherhood, and the like. Nevertheless, all her films are strongly shaped by a female viewpoint, voice, and perspective – which are

⁹ Most of her festival awards come from the Czech Republic and Slovakia, such as the *Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival* or the *One World Festival*.

¹⁰ With the exception of the docudrama *Grandmother*, which deals with the sexual escapades of a mature woman with younger lovers.

positions that are marginalized and belittled. And Zuzana Piussi does not hesitate to use this position to her advantage, or rather to the advantage of the film she is making. The authorial strategy of her female gaze is not aesthetic or thematic, but positional instead; it stems from the experience of a marginalized or underestimated outsider.

From this position, Piussi deconstructs, disrupts, and exposes closed systems such as the police (*Wipe Out, Scent Evidence*), the judiciary (*Disease of the Third Power, Ordeal*), or politics (*Men of the Revolution, The Grasp of the State, Difficult Choice, The State Capture*). She also penetrates clan-like communities such as the filmmaking community (*Koliba*), nationalist groups (*Fragile Identity*), or foresters and ecologists (*Voice of the Forest*). She is interested in uncovering hidden power structures, institutional opacity, political manipulation, and moral hypocrisy.

She uses her films as tools to make the invisible visible. When Jacques Rancière (2004) described the relationship between politics and aesthetics as systems which delimitate of what is common to the community, the forms of its visibility and of its organisation, he viewed aesthetic acts as configurations of experience that create new modes of sense perception and induce novel forms of political subjectivity. This distribution of the sensible reveals who can participate in communal activities within a specific time and place and who based, on their occupation, is or is not able to take charge of what is common to the community.

Piussi disregards existing distribution of the sensible and creates a new regime of visibility. She deliberately disrupts both aesthetic norms of filmmaking and social norms of politics. Even though she employs techniques of investigative reporting, such as presenting evidence and argumentation, archival materials, narrative commentary, interviews and confrontation of multiple viewpoints, she mixes facts and interpretations and places herself at the centre of events as the observing subject. This is achieved not only through her physical presence or voice-over commentary, but also through the filmmaker's perspective, which does not seek to present the viewer with objective facts, but rather to convince them of the filmmaker's own viewpoint. In this sense, her films are what Patricia Aufderheide (2007) labels as advocacy documentaries. This specific subgenre of the documentary film aims not only to bring a particular issue to light and inform the audience but also to mobilize it. This explicit goal of social or political change, which distinguishes the advocacy documentary from the public affairs documentary, is strongly present in Zuzana Piussi's films and manifests itself in a consistent political dramaturgy.

Piussi's films do not adopt a neutral documentary position. The public image of herself which she constructs through her personal presence in her films has been since the very beginning of her career shaped by controversial – and often explosive – nature of the topics she chooses to address. Her authorial approach is the antidote to the documentary principle of sobriety, often counting on certain eccentricity of her own persona and her viewpoints. She foregrounds a gendered, situated authorial voice, resisting the masculine norm of objectivity in political documentary. This positioning can be understood through Teresa de Lauretis's concept of the eccentric subject – a subject who refutes the categories offered by the dominant discourse and dismantles the constructedness of those categories.

As a woman in male-dominated investigative terrain, and as a documentarian who refuses the conventions of sobriety and neutrality, she occupies a place she is not supposed to occupy and reconfigures who and what becomes visible.

In De Lauretis' words, as a filmmaker, Piussi is "giving up a place that is safe, that is 'home' – physically, emotionally, linguistically, epistemologically – for another place that is unknown and risky, that is not only emotionally but conceptually other; a place of discourse from which speaking and thinking are at best tentative, uncertain, unguaranteed" (De Lauretis, 2007, p. 175). She has to challenge and contest norms of documentary and social discourse through a set of transgressive interventions. These grant her the position of an eccentric subject, "a position of resistance and agency" (ibid.). Her approach to depicting socio-political themes provokes various controversies and scandals, triggers censorship, and even leads to criminal prosecutions. Piussi actively works with the explosive nature of her themes and the exoticism of some of her protagonists, building part of her films' impact on them. She counts on the fact that, thanks to this, her voice cannot be overheard. The recurring legal and critical friction her films provoke in order to facilitate political change is, as I will show, symptomatic of the same transgressive strategies rather than incidental to them.

Piussi's transgressive strategies are layered: they determine not only the formal structure and dramaturgy of her works, but also the ethical aspects of her documentaries and her own position as a filmmaker. In the following sections, I will identify four main transgressive authorial strategies of Zuzana Piussi through a set of case studies. I focus primarily on her political documentaries as the body of work where all four strategies are most fully developed, while referencing her other films wherever relevant. The examples used should not be exhaustive of her work but should comprehensively demonstrate how she positions herself as an eccentric documentary subject of her own films.

She transgresses norms of documentary discourse through refusing to conform to a specific form of documentary, deliberately mixing various modes and techniques. She also refuses the traditional role of a neutral observer and becomes directly engaged in events she documents in order to serve as an advocate for a certain cause. She does not shy away from transgressing ethical boundaries of the documentary when it comes to the choice and handling of her respondents, and subordinates her relationship with her protagonists to the advocacy nature of her films. She also subversively transgresses her stereotypical gender role of a female filmmaker, while using the mimicry of a fragile woman when uncovering invisible power structures dominated by men.

Transgressing the norms of documentary discourse

Certain filmmaking techniques may lead one to compare Zuzana Piussi with her documentary predecessors – as her camera presence and satirical editing recall Dziga Vertov, her use of commentary and respondent provocation echoes Michael Moore, and her female subjective voice invites comparison with Agnès Varda or Chantal Akerman. The truth, however, is that Piussi is in her own way a singular filmmaker, far removed from Vertov's

formal experimentation, Moore's cohesive dramaturgy, or Varda's playful sensibility and Akerman's contemplative observation. Even within Slovak documentary filmmaking, we would be hard-pressed to find figures to whom she is directly comparable.

Piussi's auteur persona and creative strategy are built on several pillars. She focuses on current socio-political issues and employs techniques from non-fiction genres related to journalism, such as presenting evidence and the argumentation of investigative reporting, persuading the audience, using archival materials, narrative commentary, interaction with respondents, and the confrontation of multiple viewpoints. In line with the rise of the subjective documentary¹¹, however, the filmmaker often places herself at the centre of events as the observing subject. This is achieved not only through her physical presence or voice-over commentary, but also through the filmmaker's perspective, which, through the film, does not seek to present the viewer with objective facts, but rather to convince them of the filmmaker's own viewpoint. Piussi frequently disregards basic journalistic principles – such as verifying facts from multiple sources, presenting a balanced range of opinions, clearly distinguishing facts from interpretation, and ensuring transparency in the methods used to gather information. In this unorthodox manner, she subordinates the formal elements of journalistic documentary to the creative interpretation that is typical of personal documentary.

Although her films bear a strong personal stamp, she views even topics from the personal or intimate sphere – such as sexual life – as social phenomena rather than personal ones. Despite her personal presence in her films, Piussi does not concern herself with her own subjectivity, nor even with the subjectivity of her protagonists. She is a world away from the poetic mode of the autobiographical trend in Slovak documentary filmmaking¹².

Her films are dominated by Bill Nichols' (Nichols, 2010) participatory and performative style: they are characterized by her interaction with the protagonists, whom she questions, and provokes into reacting, as well as by her interaction with the audience for whom she performs the role of an investigating filmmaker and comments on events. For example, films such as *Men of the Revolution*, *Koliba*, and *The State Capture* are built around the director's interviews with the interviewees, which she supplements with archival footage and/or animation, along with her own commentary. From this mosaic, she constructs her own interpretation of the 'cases' of the collapse of the ideals of November 1989, the looting of film studios, and the murder of an investigative journalist.

Piussi, however, often employs expository and observational techniques: she attempts to explain the context through commentary or to become an invisible observer of events. For example, in the film *The Grasp of the State*, she records the meetings and conflicts of the organizers of civic protests by using the fly-on-the-wall technique, but she always clarifies the connections between individual events in the commentary, which is accompanied by comically stylized animations capturing the political events in the background. This heterogeneity of approaches, as an artistic choice, stems from the fact

¹¹ For more on the subjective turn in documentary film, see Renov (2004). For more on the subjective turn in Slovak documentary cinema, see Palúch (2015, p. 247).

¹² For more on the autobiographical documentary film in Slovak cinema, see Mišíková (2024a and 2024b).

that Piussi always selects the documentary mode that allows her to represent the event in a convincing manner.

Because of this seamless blending of documentary modes not only from one film to another but also within a single work, it would be more appropriate to approach Zuzana Piussi's work through Carl Plantinga's concept of the voice of documentary film (Plantinga, 2010) rather than Bill Nichols's documentary modes. Piussi's rhetorical strategies are built on investigation, testimonies, evidence, collage-like montage, and explanatory authorial commentary, which make her films powerful tools for persuading the audience through their formal voice. However, the facts she presents often contradict one another, and their interpretation is not underpinned by logical argumentation but, instead, by the director's own presence in the film. Her inquiry does not stem primarily from documents, but rather from interactions with the protagonists. This is one reason why her films often have a mosaic-like structure. She constructs her 'case' from the testimonies of her subjects, creating an argumentative structure from them, which she then presents as her own version of the truth. This brings her perspective closer to the open voice of documentary film and encourages the audience to form their own interpretations of the events depicted.

Transgressing the role of a neutral observer

Piussi's search for the truth is often accompanied by escalation or a conflict. Unlike her early films, where she appears primarily as a voice behind the camera, in her later works, she becomes the investigating protagonist of the story – at once its narrator and an active participant in the events she documents.

The film *The State Capture*, which exposes the ties between Robert Fico's government, the Italian N'drangheta mafia in Slovakia, and the shady businessman Marián Kočner – who is currently serving a sentence for economic crimes and who also faces charges of plotting the murder of an investigative journalist and his fiancée in 2018 – features a scene from Kočner's trial. At the moment of the key witness testimony, the court continued the hearing in camera, and Kočner was then able to make use of the right to have a confidant remain in the courtroom. He offered this role to one of the journalists present, but no one responded to the offer, so director Piussi volunteered herself. Her willingness to step out of the position of invisible and neutral observer, transgressing the professional norms of journalism and documentary filmmaking, is consistent with her strategy: where others keep their distance, she steps into the gap to make visible what was meant to remain unseen. Although she had to remain silent about the facts of the testimony, the two days she spent listening to the key testimony helped her piece together a complete picture of the case and reinforced her conviction that the state had been captured by top government officials, intelligence agencies, and organized crime¹³.

In the film *The Voice of the Forest*, the director and a forester set out to assess the extent of the bark beetle infestation in central Slovakia. Together, they set out in the dark

¹³ For more see, the interview with the director mk (2019).

to inspect the felled trees, only to discover that many of them were healthy and had apparently been cut down for the purpose of profiting from illegal logging.

These instances of direct intervention into reality testify to the fact that Piussi views documentary film as a form of advocacy. Not merely as a Griersonian creative treatment of actuality and a tool for democratic enlightenment, but as rather as a tool for making an appeal as a gate-keeper shaping the public discourse. This tension between informing and persuading lies at the heart of Piussi's artistic stance. Through her films, she seeks to defend the interests of the aggrieved: the cultural film heritage in *Koliba*, the rule of Law in *Disease of the Third Power* and its sequel, *Ordeal*, democracy in the films *The Grasp of the State* and *The State Capture*, victims of miscarriages of justice in *Scent Evidence*, and devastated nature in *The Voice of the Forest*.

This advocacy also involves systemic criticism and political dramaturgy, to which Piussi subordinates the structure of her films. Good examples include the films *The Grasp of the State* and *The State Capture*, which directly accuse the Prime Minister Robert Fico and his close associates of corrupt ties to business circles and organized crime. Piussi engages her audience by arranging the respondents' testimonies and combining them with animated sequences that shed light on certain relationships and events. In the opening credits of the film *The Grasp of the State*, the director states that "this film was born out of despair". The despair over the state of the Slovak political reality between the two governments of Prime Minister Robert Fico – Piussi exposes the helplessness of his political and civic opponents and the dashed hopes for constructive change that the civic protests were supposed to bring. *The State Capture* continues this theme in light of the events surrounding the journalist's murder. The film is a mosaic of testimonies from dozens of interviewees – journalists, security analysts, former intelligence officers, and representatives of civic initiatives – supplemented by footage from the "For a Decent Slovakia" protests, materials from Kočner's trial, and a variety of archival and news sources. Piussi ties this heterogeneous material together with animated sequences and her own commentary, which aims to demonstrate the connections between politics, organized crime, and state institutions. The director's closing remark – that it was only during the trial with Kočner that she realized the 'state capture' was not a metaphor but a reality – is a prime example of her advocacy-driven narrative: the film does not end with an analysis, but with an affirmation of her own convictions.

Piussi's advocacy-driven approach prioritizes concrete knowledge over abstract concepts, and compelling detail over the big picture. She needs to experience and perceive a subject primarily through interaction with reality, and only secondly through the study of sources. Her approach is process-oriented, often influenced by the evolution of the subject itself. She is able to capture the polyphony and chaos of reality because she does not make films about factual events, but rather about how people perceive these events subjectively, and often in conflict with one another. The absence of traditional dramaturgy in her films stems precisely from her interactive approach to researching and developing a topic. As a result, the films often suffer from a lack of balance among individual themes (e.g., in *The Voice of the Forest* suddenly changes its focal point in the last third of the

running time from illegal logging to culling of bears) and the viewpoints presented, while also raising questions of documentary ethics regarding her work with interviewees and the collection of material.

Transgressing ethical boundaries

Zuzana Piussi's films pose a challenge to the ethical boundaries of documentary filmmaking - from her choice of the protagonists, through obtaining consent from those being filmed, to the transparency of her methods.

The problematic choice of protagonists occurs mainly in two of her films. Her first feature-length film, *Angels Cry*, which portrayed several gay men with the aim of capturing the problems faced by LGBTIQ+ people in Slovakia, was met with rejection by the queer community because it represented them through several protagonists with unconventional life stories (e.g., a reality TV contestant, a former prostitute, a promiscuous gay priest)¹⁴.

In another example, the film *The State Capture*, the choice of protagonists undermines the credibility of their statements. The film includes testimonies not only from political and security experts, but also from controversial figures in the intelligence community and the disinformation sphere without confronting them or cross-referencing them with more credible sources. The unsystematic or unrepresentative selection of protagonists is one of the ways Piussi subverts authority figures, including those who might help the audience navigate the chaos of multiple voices. The only real authority offering a coherent account of events through commentary is the director herself. Her voice, however, is not an omniscient, formal voice, but rather the open – albeit appealing – voice, which aligns the filmmaker's position with that of the audience as she strives, for them and alongside them, to understand and interpret the events.

In the film *Disease of the Third Power*, which exposes political interference in the courts and the persecution of judges who refused to submit to this system, Piussi broke a basic principle of the documentary when she used footage from a hidden camera which filmed without consent. The film culminates in a confrontation between the daughter and a colleague of a judge who, despite instructions from her superior, refused to rule in favour of the defendant, subsequently fell seriously ill and possibly died as an indirect result of workplace bullying. After much insistence, the colleague met in person with the filmmaker and the daughter of the late judge. The daughter wanted an explanation as to why her mother had not been helped to testify about the influence on the verdict. However, out of fear, her colleague refused to speak on camera, so Piussi recorded the conversation between the daughter and the colleague from a distance by using a hidden camera. She later faced criminal prosecution for violating testimonial confidentiality, with a two-year prison sentence threatened¹⁵. Here, Piussi refused the role of documentarian filming with

¹⁴ It drew sharp criticism, for example, from the Slovak lesbian artist Anna Daučíková, regarding both the choice of the protagonists and the way they were portrayed. See Daučíková (2005).

¹⁵ For more on the case, see TASR (2013).

consent. By filming without it, she literally re-distributed the sensible – making visible and audible what the judicial system tried to foreclose.

Piussi's subversion of power systems often employs humour, awkwardness, confrontation, and improvisation. All of her films contain a moment of the unexpected – a moment when the subjects either let their guard down or become convinced by their own self-stylization. For example, in the film *Wipe Out*, the police commander's self-confidence and loquaciousness come across as comical in the context of a botched police raid in which SWAT officers raided the wrong man's home. In the film *Men of the Revolution*, the director's questions provoke the former revolutionary leader Ján Budaj – who, in the early 1990s, faced accusations of collaborating with the secret police during the communist era – to walk off the set. In *Koliba*, the alcoholic delirium of the former director of the studios is captured, embodying the essence of the lost cultural memory of both the nation and the institution.

Piussi succeeds in catching her protagonists in the act not only by using hidden cameras, as in *Disease of the Third Power*, but also by highlighting the contrast between the protagonists' official personas and their more relaxed, off-guard selves. In the film *Difficult Choice*, Piussi follows the course of the 2014 presidential election and the presidential inauguration, as well as the behind-the-scenes events. The film captures the young, promising politician Jaroslav Procházka during the filming of a promotional interview. His repeated rehearsing of answers, the stiffness with which he instructs his wife before the cameras start rolling so that they appear as representatives of traditional values, and his obfuscation of information about the source of campaign funds reveal his inauthenticity. Piussi was unable to get a hold of the Prime Ministerial candidate Robert Fico, but she depicted him through a montage of party rallies held on International Women's Day, where he was repeatedly telling the same sexist jokes. Politics as a performative act is explicitly addressed in the finale, when Piussi's former colleagues from an independent theatre, acting as a group of citizens watching a presidential inauguration from outside Bratislava Castle, comment on the event as a theatre for the masses and occupy the position of those excluded from the performance of power.

The film *Fragile Identity* is largely built on the exoticization of its protagonists. In the film, Piussi charts various currents of Slovak nationalism and paints a picture of the construction of national identity based on a mix of myths, religion, and pop kitsch. She has her protagonists perform the most bizarre expressions of nationalism in order to capture their absurdity. A Jesuit priest and historian, the author of a controversial book that downplays the crimes of the fascist Slovak State during World War II, is portrayed in the film as a delusional old man. The chairman of Matica slovenská¹⁶ shows the director his naïve, history-inspired paintings and convinces her that, according to genetic tests, Slovaks have lived on their territory for 20 000 years. Another protagonist, who studied physics

¹⁶ This is an association founded in the 19th century to support Slovak culture but which, after 1989, transformed into a state-supported institution with a chauvinistic agenda.

but fell for a fanatical belief in God and the nation, develops elaborate theories about the historical influence of the Slavs on the region's history – even in Hungary. Another, in a state of ecstasy, engages in glossolalia typical of Christian charismatic movements. The leader of an extreme nationalist, fascist-leaning group is shown in the midst of his Disneyland-esque residence, reminiscent of a medieval fortress, during a petty confrontation with a younger party member, as well as at musical performances featuring folk motifs and lyrics imbued with nationalist ideology. By depicting nationalists who seek to justify their nation's existence through romantic notions of its mythical roots in antiquity and the early Middle Ages, and by linking these to official state rituals – such as the unveiling of the controversial statue of the Great Moravian prince Svatopluk, who is misleadingly presented as the “king of the ancient Slovaks” – Piussi exposes the politicization of national identity and the processes of political myth-making.

The investigative drive to uncover and understand events is not only the driving force behind Zuzana Piussi's films, but also the crux of her work, where she tests – and often crosses – the ethical boundaries of documentary filmmaking. For the director, filmmaking ethics means “not hurting someone I care about” (Smejkal, 2009, p. 20). Most of her films, however, deal with public issues, and, with a few exceptions, they are not shaped by the filmmaker's personal relationship with the protagonists. On the contrary, since she often portrays figures with whom she finds herself in ideological opposition, she does not feel bound by a responsibility not to harm the respondents through the film. That is why she systematically blurs their understanding of when they are being filmed and when they are not, allowing them to expose themselves through their own behaviour. She even caricatures politicians and public figures through animation.

As Michael Renov (2004, p. 130) notes, epistemic and ontological aspects have traditionally taken precedence over ethical aspects in documentary filmmaking. Considering ethics in the spirit of Emmanuel Lévinas as a confrontation with the Other and knowledge as a violent attempt at appropriation (ibid., p. 148), Renov examines the ways in which documentary filmmakers relate to their subjects. From an ethical perspective, Piussi's authorial stance is close to the Griersonian tradition, for which, the documentary film was “a pulpit from which to espouse values, the camera as a hammer through which to shape public opinion” (ibid., p. 147). Although, through their argumentative structure, Piussi's films – much like films of the formal voice – claim to represent truth and knowledge, the shift lies in the acknowledgment of her own authorial position through her personal involvement in the documentary as a subject of cognition, and the resulting openness to a diversity of interpretations.

Transgressing stereotypical gender roles

Piussi positions herself as an eccentric subject of her documentaries also by using her own persona as a tool. Her unmistakable voice is always heard in the commentary or interviews: it is strangely thin – and yet it has a harsh quality; it comes across as fragile,

yet also irritating¹⁷. On camera, she appears in extravagant outfits that often create a comical contrast with her investigative approach¹⁸. This peculiar discrepancy is further emphasised by the deliberately naïve manner in which the director asks seemingly simple questions or feigns surprise in order to break down the respondents' guard and elicit the most authentic reaction possible.

In her films, Piussi often occupies the unique position of a woman in a man's world. For a long time, she was the only female documentary filmmaker in a male profession¹⁹. She often finds herself among predominantly male subjects. In the film *Wipe Out*, she follows a police unit's operation on her own with a small camera; in *Scent Evidence*, she navigates the male environment of a police investigation; in *Men of the Revolution*, she portrays exclusively male leaders of the November 1989 Revolution; while, in the film *Koliba*, she communicates only with male witnesses to the privatization vicissitudes of film studios, or, in *The Voice of the Forest*, she contrasts the perspectives of predominantly male foresters on the one side and ecological activists on the other.

In the environment she captures, Piussi is drawn to the slightly subversive self-stylization of a small woman among big men. While her physical build is indeed slender, she often emphasises it both dramatically and visually to achieve an ironic effect. This is most striking in the film *Koliba*. In this film, which she herself describes as a documentary detective story, she attempts to reconstruct the story of the collapse of the state-run Koliba film studios in the 1990s. The film was made shortly before the establishment of the Slovak Audiovisual Fund in 2010, which – following two decades of a vacuum in systematic public support for cinema and a deep production crisis in the Slovak film – established the legislative framework for its operation and enabled the rebuilding of the film industry's infrastructure²⁰. Piussi's film is composed of testimonies from solely male filmmakers, producers, managers, politicians, and technical staff – all at least a generation older than her – who played various roles in this story. It captures the diversity of the story's versions as told by the individual participants. From these often-conflicting versions emerges a unified sense of a peculiar discomfort among the respondents. In relation to these men, Piussi – who at the time of filming was a relatively recent graduate in documentary filmmaking with prior experience as an actress in independent theatre – appears as a seemingly naïve director who wants to learn more from her older and more experienced counterparts.

Her witty approach to archival material and commentary, however, refutes this impression of naïvety and reveals a well-thought-out strategy. She tells the story of Ko-

¹⁷ The distinctive quality of Piussi's voice, which also defined her as an actress and singer in independent theatre and musical ensembles, is the result of damage to her vocal cords and a botched surgery. See Akácsová (2012).

¹⁸ Mária Ferenčuhová (2009, p. 168) describes her styling in the film *Koliba* as "Sherlockian".

¹⁹ While in the early years of Piussi's professional career, few women made their debut in documentary filmmaking, this has changed with the emergence of the youngest generation of documentary filmmakers over the past five years, with a group significantly dominated by women: Viera Čákanyová, Daniela Meressa Rusnoková, Lucia Kašová, Paula Ďurinová, Barbora Sliepková, Paula Reiselová, Mária Pinčíková and others.

²⁰ For more on the establishing of the *Slovak Audiovisual Fund*, see Šmatlák (2016).

liba's privatization as a tale that foundered on deeply entrenched corrupt practices, petty squabbles within the film community, and the shameless greed of the new political elites. And, in the end, they all come together over canapés at a reception, as evidenced by her footage from the gala premiere of a new Slovak film.

The post-apocalyptic state of Slovak cinema is emphasised through the use of archival materials, particularly a promotional film from the 1980s intended to attract foreign productions. In a humorous manner, the film showcases the technical capabilities and craftsmanship that Koliba once offered. Piussi then uses editing to juxtapose the promotional image of the film studios with their current, literally dilapidated state, or with the altered function of their components, which have been transformed into an editing suite for a reality TV show or a studio for filming TV commercials.

Piussi emphasises her subversive stance through a montage of archival footage in which the former director, Vladimír Ondruš, welcomes various political delegations to the studio complex in front of a statue of Paľo Bielik, a founding figure of Slovak film directing²¹. Bielik's stature is defined not only by his place in the history of Slovak cinema, but also by his imposing figure. The fact that Bielik portrayed the legendary 18th-century outlaw captain Jánošík in the 1935 film *Jánošík* (d. Martin Frič) and also directed the two-part film about the folk hero *Jánošík* in 1963, refers not only to the stereotypical ideal of masculinity but also to the theme of the plundering of the state film enterprise. In one scene of the film, the larger-than-life statue of Slovakia's first film director is directly mocked for its pathos by the well-known artist Viktor Frešo, who is also Bielik's grandson. In the film's finale, Piussi waits under that same statue for a lawyer representing the company that currently owns the land and buildings of the former studios, owns a television station, and plans to convert part of the land into luxury apartments²². Her petite figure deliberately comes across as almost schoolgirlish, thereby mocking the dignity and grandeur of her male counterparts as well as the great film pioneers of the past. She then allows the lawyer to guide her past a bulletin board commemorating the now-lost cultural heritage of Slovak cinema. *Koliba* addresses a deep trauma of the Slovak cinema and directly accuses male egos of its downfall. No wonder that, because of Piussi's ironic approach, the film was dropped mid-production by the public broadcaster who had originally commissioned the film, and, after its premiere, was criticized by part of the film community for superficiality and a distorted interpretation of the facts²³.

Piussi employs a similarly subversive strategy in another film that explores the political and economic transformation following the fall of socialism: *Men of the Revolution*. Here, too, through interviews with various participants in the events – whether from the former dissident movement, the so-called 'grey zone', or the new political elites – she reconstructs the story of the Velvet Revolution. In her interpretation, it is a satirical drama

²¹ The statue of Paľo Bielik, created by the academic sculptor Ladislav Snopek, was installed along the access road to the former studios in 1988, just one year before the fall of state socialism.

²² We find the same visual antithesis in a behind-the-scenes shot from the filming of *Koliba*, where Piussi 'looks up' with her camera at the enormous socialist realist style steel statue of the Slovak folk hero Jánošík, created by the sculptor Ján Kulich in the valley of Vrátna in northern Slovakia.

²³ See, for example, Grečner (2010).

of upheaval, the disappointment of the ideals of democracy and the unity of November 1989, and the continuity of power by the transformed communist forces²⁴. This view is explicitly expressed by a local chairman of the leading revolutionary force, the movement *Public against Violence* (VPN). Piussi portrays this discord as a clash between the revolution's leaders' accounts of events, which contrast with archival footage from newsreels and news reports that, on the contrary, articulate the ideals of freedom and unity. Like in the case of Koliba, she positions herself as an outsider: a filmmaker among politicians, a representative of the younger generation, but also a woman among men. This subversive aspect of her character becomes striking when the chairman's serious reflections are interrupted by his wife, who asks what she can offer the director to eat. Meanwhile, the respondent forgets what he was talking about. Piussi thus portrays men as those who like to talk about ideas, but often cannot translate them into reality, while women, in the meantime, in a totally eccentric position, keep the daily routine of life entirely outside the frameworks of power.

Conclusion: Subversion suits her well

“Every filmmaker probably shoots in a way that suits their nature”, (Smejkal, 2009, p. 20) says director Zuzana Piussi, who, despite the prominence of socio-political issues in her films, consistently emphasises her own personal perspective. Her films provoke and irritate, much like her harsh, cracked voice. And not just thematically. They are reports on the state of the country, a chronicle of more than three decades of struggles for democracy and the rule of law. Although they are snapshots created without much time passing and aim to capture the current events, they are at times almost prescient in their anticipation of future developments. From today's perspective, it can be said that the figures from the anti-Gorila protests captured in the film *The Grasp of the State* later emerged in high-level politics – and many commentators view their involvement in that arena as a continuation rather than a resolution of the contradictions that Piussi identifies in the film. Looking back, *Fragile Identity* can be seen as foreshadowing later political trends: the intertwining of nationalism, religious symbolism, and official cultural policy – which the film portrays as a marginal phenomenon – came to occupy the centre of the government's cultural agenda in the following decade²⁵. The conflict between economic interests and the protection of natural heritage, which *Voice of the Forest* explores, remains a topical issue in Slovak public discourse – as evidenced, for example, by the ongoing disputes over the zoning of national parks. These prophetic reports may be arguments in favour of the relevance of Piussi's documentary method – despite its formal shortcomings.

²⁴ James Krapfl (2013) analyses various narratives built around the historical events of Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia. Piussi's depiction would correspond to what he labels as rhetoric of satire.

²⁵ Martina Šimkovičová, the Minister of Culture in Robert Fico's fourth government, who took office in 2023, has been systematically promoting a nationalist cultural agenda. For more on her ideological background and the practical consequences of her policies, see the report by the Artistic Freedom Initiative (Pavesi – Laourou – Sethi, 2025).

I have identified four main creative subversive strategies that Zuzana Piussi employs in order to gain visibility for the subjects she documents: transgressing the norms of the documentary discourse, transgressing the role of a neutral observer, transgressing ethical boundaries, and transgressing the stereotypical gender role. Each of these transgressions serves a specific function in Piussi's re-distribution of the sensible as an act of active resistance against the dominant cinematic and social discourse.

Through the combination of modes and techniques and blending of formal and open voice, her films resist the formal norms of the film journalism discourse. The topicality of her subjects, the investigative structure, and the use of authorial commentary in her films are reminiscent of the techniques of the documentary formal voice. However, she employs these formal techniques to serve her own personal statement about the world. Her films are an expression of her own worldview. It is precisely this combination of a formal and an open voice that tends to be the source of the imbalance and formal inconsistency in her films, yet it is also the very DNA of her auteur stance and strategy, in which the director remains consistent. Her ambition, after all, is not to make films as aesthetically balanced artifacts, but, instead, as challenges to the audience, urging them to take an active stance toward their social reality and to advocate for a social change.

In order to make visible what was supposed to remain unseen, Piussi steps out of the role of a neutral observer and directly engages with reality, as is demonstrated by her decision to become a confidant in a judicial process. Piussi's blurring of the boundaries between journalistic and auteur documentary, between exposition, observation, participation, and performance, as well as between documentation and staging, constitutes a continuous strategy of transcending precisely defined boundaries. Her films seek to subvert closed and opaque systems of power through a specific form of resistance. Sometimes, subversion against official authority is explicitly evident right from the film's opening credits. For example, the film *Men of the Revolution* includes a note stating that the film was not supported by the Slovak Audiovisual Fund, along with a quote from the expert committee's evaluation, which states that "The portrayal of the fates of the protagonists of the Velvet Revolution is not yet fully developed; too little time has passed for their fates to have crystallized". In the closing credits of the film *Disease of the Third Power*, it is noted that the technician responsible for sound mastering did not wish to be credited, by explaining that he is not interested in 'politics', while the sound engineer did not wish to be credited because he is afraid.

Another transgressive technique of resistance is the deliberate crossing of ethical boundaries. Through hidden camera footage as in *Disease of the Third Power*, through catching protagonists in the act as in *Difficult Choice* and *Fragile Identity*, through an unbalanced selection of protagonists as in *Angels Cry* or *The State Capture*, or through editing, animation, and satirical humour, Piussi pursues her argument even at the expense of documentary principles of transparency and balance. When she violates these norms, the ethical transgression is always motivated by an epistemological commitment: to dismantle the outer façade of the social reality and make audible what it was designed to suppress. In Rancière's terms, she reassigns who has a voice and who does not.

The unifying element of all four strategies is her own persona – her voice, her physical presence, her gender. By staging herself as a subject eccentric to the structures of power, she exposes the masculine nature of those structures from within. Her petite figure among the imposing male respondents, her naïve questions in rooms where women are not expected to ask questions, her extravagant appearance in environments that demand sobriety – these are not stylistic choices but acts of redistribution: they reconfigure who is visible, who speaks, and on whose terms. The controversies and conflicts her films provoke are, to a greater or lesser extent, a deliberate part of this provocative strategy. It is precisely thanks to them that her films penetrate the public discourse, actively shape the public opinion, and often become a public forum themselves, from which, a chorus of conflicting positions and opinions resounds.

In all of the variations mentioned, however, Piussi's resistance takes the form of a positional female gaze: the resistance of a woman in a man's world who does not hesitate to use the naïve stylization of an eternally questioning, socially engaged filmmaker amidst the turmoil of political decline. This resistance is a way of creating a space for the shared emotion of her advocacy documentaries, which draw the audience into her active stance toward the world.

References

- Akácsová, E. (2012, February 5). Zuzana Piussi: Boh sa nám rehoce. *.týždeň*. <https://www.tyzden.sk/casopis/10586/zuzana-piussi-boh-sa-nam-rehoce/>
- Aufderheide, P. (2007). *Documentary film: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Branko, P. (2004). Slovenský dokumentárny film – Generácia 90. *Film.sk*, 2, 22–24.
- Branko, P. (2009). Babička rúhavá a podvratná. *Kino-Ikon*, 12(1), 172–180.
- Daučíková, A. (2005, December 17). Pozor, my nie sme Mart'ania! *SME*. <https://www.sme.sk/komentare/c/pozor-my-nie-sme-martania>
- De Lauretis, T. (2007). Eccentric subjects. In P. White (Ed.), *Figures of resistance: Essays in feminist theory* (pp. 151–182). University of Illinois Press.
- Ferenčuhová, M. (2009). Fenomén Piussi a problém synekdochy. *Kino-Ikon*, 13(1), 162–171.
- French, L. (2021). *Female gaze in documentary film: An international perspective*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Grečner, E. (2010). Film o zániku filmovej Koliby. *Kino-Ikon*, 14(1), 155–162.
- Krapfl, J. (2013). *Revolution with a human face: Politics, culture, and community in Czechoslovakia, 1989–1992*. Cornell University Press.
- Macek, V. (1992). *K dejinám slovenského dokumentárneho filmu*. Slovenský filmový ústav – Národné kinematografické centrum.
- Macek, V. (2010). 1 297 254 000 Sk. *Kino-Ikon*, 14(1), 125–154.
- Mekas, J. (1968, February 29). Movie journal. *Village Voice*, 40.
- Mišíková, K. (2024a). Representing the self: Cinematic autobiography and auto-fiction in post-1990 Slovak nonfiction cinema. *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis*, (115), 102–119. <https://doi.org/10.37522/aaav.115.2024.271>
- Mišíková, K. (2024b). Nostalgic dimensions of autobiographical canonization: Generational canon in Slovak collective (self)portraits: +90 and Wave vs. Shore. *Eastern European Screen Studies*, 16(1),

68–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2040350X.2024.2357393>

mk. (2019, September 19). Zuzana Piussi: Ako dôverníčka som v súdnej sieni počúvala obvinenia a svedectvá Petra Tótha. *O médiách*. <https://www.omeiach.com/filmy/16299-zuzana-piussi-ako-dovernicka-som-v-sudnej-sieni-pocuvala-obvinenia-a-svedectva-petra-totha-video>

Nichols, B. (2010). *Introduction to documentary*. Indiana University Press.

Palúch, M. (2015). *Autorský dokumentárny film na Slovensku po roku 1989*. Občianske združenie Vlna / Drewo a srd – Ústav divadelnej a filmovej vedy SAV.

Pavesi, I., Laourou, J., & Sethi, S. (2025). *Early warning: The politicization of arts and culture in Slovakia*. Artistic Freedom Initiative – Open Culture! <https://artisticfreedominitiative.org/research/slovakia/>

Plantinga, C. R. (2010). *Rhetoric and representation in nonfiction film*. Chapbook Press.

rai. (2012, December 21). Vyděděný film Zuzany Piussi měl premiéru. *ČT24*. <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/clanek/svet/vydedeny-film-reziserky-piussi-mel-premieru-291331>

Rancière, J. (2004). *The politics of aesthetics: The distribution of the sensible*. Continuum.

Renov, M. (2004). *The subject of documentary*. University of Minnesota Press.

Smejkal, P. (2009). Neverím v objektívnu pravdu. *Film.sk*, 10, 18–21.

Šmatlák, M. (2016). The Slovak Audiovisual Fund: A brief history of prolonged time. In J. Dudková & K. Mišíková (Eds.), *Transformation processes in post-socialist screen media* (pp. 11–20). Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, Film and Television Faculty – Institute of Theatre and Film Research, Slovak Academy of Sciences.

TASR. (2013, January 18). Polícia zastavila trestné stíhanie v prípade filmu Zuzany Piussi. *Pravda*. <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/256289-policia-zastavila-trestne-stihanie-v-pripade-filmu-zuzany-piussi/>

Urc, R. (2017). *Neviditeľné dejiny dokumentaristov*. Slovenský filmový ústav.