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POSTWAR SOCIETIES: TRAUMA AND RECONCILIATION

Editors

Snezhana Dimitrova, Janja Jerkov and Ana Luleva

On the cover:
Scene from the silent movie *Patyat na bezpatnite* (“*In the Blind Alley*”), 1928,
by Zhana and Vasil Gendov
Bulgarian National Film Archive

This social melodrama explores the anxieties of vulnerable urban groups in a rapidly shifting postwar environment. Critics of the period saw it as comparable to American and European films. Its narrative of entrapment, forced prostitution, and moral collapse within a shoemaker's family reflects broader societal tensions, with illness and death symbolizing the limited choices facing a community still marked by the traumas of the First World War. The final “awakening,” framed through dream logic to express trauma and emotional disorientation, reveals the narrative as a nightmare. After 1944, the film would be ideologically reframed by the new authorities as evidence of “bourgeois decadence,” appropriated as a convenient parable about the moral failures attributed to capitalism. Under socialist realism, this world would be reread in a distinctly different key, its meanings reshaped both in cinema and in the broader public understanding of the past, while the unresolved post-war trauma persisted beneath the newly imposed ideological narratives.

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