

Institution: Brunel University London		
Unit of Assessment: 27 English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: The Pagan King		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2015 - 2017		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Max Kinnings	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 09/2009 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

The Latvian English-language feature film *The Pagan King* has led to cultural, economic and educational impact both regionally within Latvia and internationally via the film's global distribution. The film is the second highest-grossing domestic film at Latvia's box office to date (EUR422,564 in revenue, equivalent to GBP380,814 (11-2020)) and shaped the unprecedented rise in market share for Latvian films from 7.84% in 2017 to 22.07% in 2018. It has contributed to the Latvian government's mission to define a policy that strengthens the sense of national identity among the population and enabled the country to form a cohesive memory that supports the Cabinet of Ministers' aim to promote an understanding of Latvian history within a national and European context. The film has been distributed to over 45 countries on 4 continents and is available on Amazon Prime, Apple TV, and Hulu.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

Having produced a number of feature films which focus on aspects of Latvia's historical past, producer, director and co-writer, Aigars Grauba, and his co-producers at Platforma Film, in association with the National Film Centre of Latvia, set out to bring the story of King Namejs in 13th century Semigallia to an international audience via an English language feature film. Despite its cultural and historical significance to Latvia and the Baltic region generally, no other feature film or television drama has attempted to tell the King Namejs story.

Having been commissioned by the Latvian production company, Platforma Film in association with the National Film Centre of Latvia for his expertise as a collaborative screenwriter, Dr Kinnings' research encompassed 4 distinct periods. The first period (May to August 2015) focused on both the historical and cultural research related to the legendary story of King Namejs and the "Ring of Kings" from 13th century Semigallia (ancient Latvia). While few specific historical details exist relating to the biography of King Namejs, it was crucial to the authenticity of the project that rigorous attention to detail be maintained in the telling of the legend as it exists in Latvian folklore. The legend of King Namejs has such a strong hold over the national imagination in Latvia that it is estimated that a third of all men in the country wear a silver copy of the ring which has come to embody the national sense of freedom in the face of multiple invasions that have befallen the country.

This first period was the most sustained period of research-in-practice with extensive story conferences and redrafting involving collaboration with co-writer and director, Aigars Grauba, as well as production executives. The first draft of the English language screenplay was completed during this period which ended up being the basis on which financing and production decisions were made.

The second period of Dr Kinnings' research-in-practice took place in 2016 and concentrated on the adaptation of an existing Latvian language story treatment into an English language feature film screenplay. This was done alongside the development of all subsequent drafts of the script, right up to the shooting script used for the film's production in 2016 and 2017. This adaptation involved extensive collaboration with director Aigars Grauba, responding to production and story issues. It was during this stage the bulk of the filming took place, namely between October and November 2016 at Cinevilla Studios in Latvia.

The third period of script development took place in July 2017 with the final period of filming at Cinevilla Studios as well as location filming in Riga. This period of practical research was a creative challenge in that these final scenes (known as 'pick-ups') were scheduled to complete the film both thematically and in terms of the overall storyline. This often involved writing and rewriting scenes and dialogue on-set and in the midst of shooting.

A final period of post-production script development was completed in December 2017 in Oxford and related to the audio dubbing and recording of the final edit of the film (when non-English speaking actors in the film were dubbed into English). All of this practical research underpinned the subsequent economic impact while the film was in production, in terms of the employment of cast and crew and the raising of financing which ultimately reached EUR3,000,000, equivalent to GBP2,703,600 (11-2020).

The film received its world premiere in Riga on 17th January 2018. Its significance is enhanced by its being the first and, so far, only portrayal of the King Namejs legend on screen and is therefore very much one of a kind.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

The Pagan King (2018) Directed by Aigars Grauba [Film]. Riga: Platforma Film. Screenplay written by: Aigars Grauba & Max Kinnings.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The film's underlying research has underpinned and led to impact in a number of ways.

Cultural impact

The Pagan King feeds directly into the Latvian government's mission to define a policy that strengthens the sense of national identity among the population. 'The Guidelines for National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy 2012-2018', published by the Latvian Minister of Culture in the Cabinet of Ministers (and cited in the '2018 Latvia Country Report: Sustainable Governance Indicators 2018' by the Bertelsmann Foundation), identifies the need to form a strong and cohesive nation and society of Latvia as one of its key issues as well as the need to promote a distinct cultural belonging at both a national and European level (E1; E2).

The Pagan King makes a considerable contribution to the reinforcement of Latvian national identity and pride. In the same year the film premiered, audience interest in national films tripled and attendance for newly released films increased from 194,083 viewers in the previous year to 556,832 (E3). Films produced for Latvia's 100th birthday in 2018 (which included 16 feature films in total) influenced a significant portion of these numbers (206,000 admissions) with *The Pagan King* (82,285 admission) as the second most viewed Latvian film and the third most viewed film overall (E4). The film's top position shaped Latvia's Centennial jubilee programme by expanding the country's awareness of their cultural legacy and contributed to an important demonstration of Latvia's cultural and social values. It even outshone Universal Picture's international box-office hits, *The Grinch* and *Fifty Shades Freed*, and 20th Century Studio's *Bohemian Rhapsody*, a previously unprecedented achievement (E3).

This commercial activity has directly increased global interest in the region and the Latvian film industry and has had a major cultural effect within the country itself via a demonstrable expansion of the Latvians' interest in the Ring of Namejs – an innate symbol of Latvian national identity – and their cultural heritage.

Economic impact

The Pagan King is the second highest-grossing domestic film at Latvia's box office to date (EUR422,564 in revenue, equivalent to GBP380,814 (11-2020)) and contributed significantly to Latvia's film programme for the country's centenary in 2018. The total revenue from ticket sales for local productions increased from EUR736,976, equivalent to GBP663,278 (11-2020) in 2017, to EUR2,503,019, equivalent to GBP2,253,217 (11-2020) (E3). *The Pagan King* played a key role in this economic success and directly shaped the unprecedented rise in market share for Latvian films from 7.84% in 2017 to 22.07% in 2018 (E3; E9). The admission numbers and market share were significantly higher than European (non-domestic) films which, with 344,483 admissions and 13.65% market share even experienced a decrease in 2018 compared to the previous year which had seen 483,725 admissions and 17.71% market share (E3).

The Pagan King fundamentally contributed to Latvia's ascendant film industry in 2018 and led to extensive economic success in both Latvia and beyond. Following the film's release in cinemas in the Baltic countries and across Northern Europe in 2018 and early 2019, distribution deals have been secured for Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Japan, Latin America, Luxemburg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Romania, Scandinavia, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, UK, Ukraine and USA (E5; E6; E7; E8). As a direct result of its success in Latvia, *The Pagan King* is the first Latvian film distributed on a significant global scale which has reached multiple audiences on 4 different continents. This impact is ongoing as further distribution deals are secured within further territories.

Educational impact

'The Guidelines for National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy 2012-2018' recognise there is a lack of adequate knowledge amongst Latvians about the country's history until the 20th century, for half of which the country was a member of the Soviet Union (E1). The Cabinet of Ministers addresses this as a key problem that narrows many Latvians' understanding of their national identity in a wider European context and prevents them from forming a cohesive nation based on their historical and cultural legacy. *The Pagan King* alleviates this problem in the same year Latvia celebrates the 100th anniversary of its founding as an independent nation: the historical action film presents the audience with a story about an ancient Latvia in the 13th

century that must find strength and wage a war in order to preserve its independence from the Roman crusaders. The presentation of the legend of King Namejs directly influences the historical memory of Latvia, as it expands the nation's understanding of their past before the 20th century and enables Latvians to position their legacy within a national and European context. As a result, Latvians are able to form a cohesive memory that directly supports the Cabinet of Ministers' aim to promote the identification and understanding of the local history of Latvia.

As of September 2020, the film is available on DVD and Blu-Ray as well as on streaming platforms Amazon Prime, Apple TV and Hulu. Additional distribution in further territories is anticipated and discussions with Platforma Film are ongoing regarding a possible sequel or television drama series.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- E1** Guidelines on National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy (2012–2018) published by the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/guidelines-on-national-identity-civil-society-and-integration-policy-20122018>
- E2** Latvian Country Report published by Bertelsmann: https://www.sgnetwork.org/docs/2018/country/SGI2018_Latvia.pdf
- E3** Facts and Figures 2019, Estonia Latvia Lithuania Baltic Films: <http://nkc.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FF-2019-web.pdf>
- E4** Success of the film within the Latvian film industry: <https://bit.ly/2ROgKKf>
- E5** Details of distribution deals completed through 2018/19: <https://bit.ly/2B7SIIB>
- E6** Details of UK distribution via Lighthouse Picture: <https://bit.ly/2SuQ6pw>
- E7** Details of French distribution: <https://bit.ly/2H5D4N0>
- E8** Asian Premiere at the Guwahati International Film Festival October 31, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2L8d2bO>
- E9** Latvian Films Take Unprecedented Market Share: <https://bit.ly/2L9SCPS>