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Women's Place in Film History: the Importance of Continuity

If one asks who are the women in the history of cinema, one usually draws a blank. Plenty of actresses, of course, but directors? One can normally name one or two female directors from one's national tradition but it is extremely difficult to name women who made films in other countries. This is true even for such prominently present traditions as American or French cinema: women-filmmakers are generally absent from the history of film.

Let's look at examples: Who are the female directors in Polish cinema, if any? The Poles would respond by naming figures such as Wanda Jakubowska, Barbara Sass or Dorota Kedzierzawska (as well as another three or four). The non-Poles are more likely to be able to name Wajda, Zanussi, Pawlikowski, Machulski, even Polanski – but will not normally know the names of the women. After all, this is how film histories are written – following the careers of a handful of male 'auteurs'. And it is these same men that usually have dedicated books and articles written about, as well as retrospectives at festivals.

Let's apply this same exercise to other well-known film traditions. Who are the female directors in Italian cinema, if any? The names that normally come to mind, if you are not Italian, are all male – Rossellini, De Sica, Visconti, Pasolini, Antonioni, the Taviani Brothers, Bertolucci, Fellini, Scola, Zeffirelli, Rossi... Others that may not come up immediately but have been considered

important enough to be awarded a lifetime achievement at the Venice International Film Festival – Alessandro Blasetti, Mario Monicelli, Paolo Vilaggio, Giuseppe De Santis, Dino Risi, Ermanno Olmi, Marco Bellocchio... One may have thought by now about Lina Wertmüller or Liliana Cavani. But if the honorary awards at Venice IFF were used as a guideline for achievement, one would not find these women in the line-up of awardees¹. Not a single female director has ever been honoured by the oldest film festival in the world, just actresses, and one female screenwriter². Essentially, the message is – women better stay with acting. So, no wonder that someone like Elvira Notari (1875-1946), a pioneering filmmaker who directed more than sixty films is only known by a handful of specialists. Fast forward to present day, and the situation has not changed much: Antonietta De Lillo (b. 1960), a prolific director who served on one of the Venice juries in 2019 and who has made fifteen films, does not even have a Wikipedia entry dedicated to her.

How about France? One would immediately respond with a list of ‘auteurs’: Godard, Truffaut, Tavernier, Rohmer, and the list can be much longer very easily... How about women? One would, perhaps, come up with Agnès Varda, a woman who has become the token-excuse for the general absence of women in film history, but probably one would find it difficult naming many more beyond that, even though France has major female directors such as Claire Denis³, Catherine Breillat, Anne Fontaine, Diane Kurys, and many more.

What I am aiming to point out here is that history is written in a way that leaves women overlooked and excluded. More and more accolades over time get bestowed on men. Women gradually fall through the cracks in the context of what James English has termed ‘economy of prestige’ (2005); they disappear from the record. It is a sad status quo.

In obscurity: the ‘auteur’

It is not that women have not been in cinema since its very inception: they were. It is not that there are no acknowledged female directors in countries which are best known for the work of some male counterpart. Russia had

¹ The announcement of Lina Wertmüller’s honorary Academy Award in 2020 came just days after I wrote the text above. The director was also the first foreign woman nominated for best director award at the Academy, in 1977 for *Seven Beauties* (1975).

² Suso Cecchi d’Amico (1914-2010), for her eightieth anniversary in 2004.

³ Denis is one of the three women whose names appear in BBC’s poll for the 100 Best Foreign Language Films from 2018. Available: <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20181029-the-100-greatest-foreign-language-films> [access: 10.11.2019].

Tarkovsky but also Larisa Shepitko. Greece had Angelopoulos but also Tonia Marketaki. Hong Kong has Wong Kar-wai but also Ann Hui.

It is just that women are remembered much less. As fewer accolades go to them during their lifetime, it is significantly more likely that a female name would not endure for very long in history. The overall result is that women's contributions have been obliterated and are being obliterated from history at an alarming rate. The main reason for this is, in my opinion, the way the work of women is being talked about: it is not praised and celebrated as much as it ought to be.

Why is this the case? The factors are many and complex. I will only focus on one, which I have been observing for a while: women do not seem to be recognised as cinematic 'auteurs' as much as men are, yet it is around 'auteurs' that cinema history is still generally written about and studied. It is around 'auteurs' that film critics often cover the cinemas of smaller countries.

Thus, a history of Hungarian cinema that comes to present day, for example, would normally include mentions of an 'auteur' like Márta Mészáros among a range of her male colleagues (e.g. Radványi, Makk, Jancso, Koltai, Szabó, Tarr, as well as younger ones such as Fliegauf or Mundruczó) but it is highly unlikely to include an auteurial profile of such great female directors like Judit Elek (b. 1937) or Livia Gyarmathy (b. 1932), even though they have both directed more than fifteen films each and have a clearly recognisable 'auteurial' style. Ildikó Enyedi (b. 1955) may be recognized as major feminist director who has won awards at Cannes and Berlinale, yet the Wikipedia entry about her does not even make a reference to her style – rather, it seems more important to mention her father, a Hungarian geographer. The great Ibolya Fekete (b. 1955) is even less likely to figure, as she has not managed to be as prolific, even though she has made films of great importance. It is not that these female filmmakers would not be 'included' in a history of their national cinema - indeed, their names would appear listed alongside others, and some singular films of theirs may be highlighted. It is only that they would not be bestowed with the status of 'auteur'.

A 'dynamic' "list of film auteurs" can be seen on Wikipedia: it is an automatically created feature, which uses an algorithm that pulls together, in alphabetical order, the personal entries on specific directors that have the word 'auteur' in them. Twenty one female names figure among the 340 names on it (6.5%); Agnieszka Holland is the only one from Eastern Europe⁴.

⁴ Wikipedia, List of Film Auteurs. Available: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_film_auteurs [access: 10.11. 2019].

Let me give one more example. I recently viewed a one-hour long French television documentary, *Aller-Retour (The Roundtrip)*, which provides intimate insights into the profession of the film critic. It follows a dialogue between famous French film critic Jean-Michel Frodon and French director Benoît Jacquot as they travel to a provincial town to attend the premiere of Jacquot's new film. Their conversation on the train touches, among other things, on the making of an 'auteur' by a critic, as Frodon shares how, on his travels to numerous international film festivals, he has had the privilege to meet and befriend important film directors, whose careers he then follows with great interest; once he has discovered such a new admirable figure, he commits to seeing all the films of the director and writes about their new work. Besides numerous articles, Frodon has written and published books on many of these friends: Taiwanese Edward Yang or Chinese Jia Zhang-ke, for example. Among the Iranians, a cinema of special interest for him, he has curated projects engaged with the work of Abbas Kiarostami and Amir Naderi. And he is close friends with Jafar Panahi. Being written about by a critic of Frodon's stature certainly helps these directors a great deal: with the festivals, with the distributors, and with the audience. It takes a committed critic, who believes in the talent of a director, to discover and assert the auteur. For some reason, however, it mainly happens to male directors.

If I were to ask Frodon what does he think of the work of an Iranian female auteur Rakhshān Banietemad⁵, for example, he will most likely respond she is great and that she deservedly has the status of adored auteur within Iran. The reality, however, is that outside Iran people like Kiarostami and Panahi are known and celebrated 'auteurs' whereas Banietemad is only known to specialists. Assuming that the work of this female director is as good as the work of her male counterparts, could there be that the friendship with an internationally critical friend makes for a critical difference? Could it be that the absence of a dedicated friend who highlights the work of women-directors as systematically and consistently as Frodon does for his (male) friends is the key to the creation of the 'auteur'? Someone must use the designation in order to be proclaimed an 'auteur'...

One certainly cannot demand that famous critics befriend great female directors and follow their work to give them the status of 'auteurs' in continuous coverage. Friendships are matters of affinity and either happen or not. What can be done? Favouring a female director over a male one cannot be forced on

⁵ Born in 1954, prolific Banietemad has directed more than ten feature films and over twenty documentaries. She is widely considered to be the 'first lady' of Iranian cinema.

critics. Do female critics, however, befriend female directors internationally the same way as Frodon describes in the franc dialogue in *Aller-retour*? Do female critics feel the same obligation to continuously follow and cover the careers of female friends? Or do they feel that if they do so they would lose objectivity? Why does it seem male critics do not worry about such matters⁶?

I am asking these questions of myself as well, having met and befriended in the past one year two female filmmakers who have shared their work with me and of whom I think very highly as 'auteurs' - Louisa Wei in Hong Kong and Huang Yu-Shan In Taiwan; yet I have so far not produced any writing on their work. True, I am not a critic but scholar - could it be that I shun expressing my admiration for their films because I feel obliged to stick to my 'expertise' territory of an East Europeanist? But how about the work of Anna Zamecka from Poland or Mila Turajlić from Serbia? Two women who I would not hesitate calling documentary auteurs, who I have befriended and who I have supported in my role of a jury member at festivals and with other connections. However, I have never written a line in praise of their work, which I admire. How many of us, women scholars and critics, are in such debt to the filmmakers, I wonder⁷?

How lesser acclaim affects women's careers?

On the whole, the work of women-directors is less noticed, less acknowledged and less celebrated. Women are less likely to be recognised as auteurs in cinema. Does this situation affect their careers adversely? Most certainly so, as Patricia White has shown through analysing numerous examples in her seminal book on women's cinema (2015) where she considers female-made films in the context of their global circulation and reception.

Recognising the direct linkage between social standing, public recognition and filmmaking career was first done by Hamid Naficy in *Accented Cinema* (2001), a revealing study where he showed how these factors as well as the way

⁶ I notice that a 2018 seminar at Yale University, symptomatically titled 'The Auteur with the Camera: The Image in Recent Art Cinema' featured *Aller-retour* and discussed the work of a number of cinematic auteurs, namely Tsai Ming-Liang, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Carlos Reygadas, Kiyoshi Kurosawa, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Ben Rivers, and a few more West European male directors. Not a single female-made film was discussed by the speakers. I also note that one of the screenings was of the work of Bi Gan, a Chinese director born in 1989 who was declared to be an 'auteur' already at the time of the appearance of his first film, *Kaili Blues*, in 2015.

⁷ I have not carried out a systematic study on the matters of the 'auteur' in regard to female directors, nor in regard to critical coverage. What I share here is based on informed observations. Hopefully there will be scholars in the next generation who would engage into meticulously providing the statistical evidence I am lacking in putting my hypothesis forward.

a film travels through the festival circuit and other distribution channels directly impact and inform a director's chances to gaining funding for their next projects and thus to sustaining a career. Many of Naficy's observations can be applied directly to the situation of women.

I could not help thinking of these negative repercussions when watching Pamela Green's remarkable documentary *Be Natural: The Untold Story of Alice Guy-Blaché* (2018), which brings the career of this amazing woman out of obscurity with a bang. A pioneer of cinema since its earliest days, the first woman ever to direct a film in 1896, a woman who has a 1000 directing credits to her name (from the days of early shorts), a career spanning two continents and including the creation and running of a film studio in pre-Hollywood Fort Lee, Guy-Blaché is still mainly known only to those who study cinema history professionally. The film is bringing her back from oblivion in a powerful manner, but among other things it shows something instructive: whilst she is shown spending twenty years of her life in an active filmmaking and studio-management career, we see her spending the next five decades mainly in efforts to gain recognition for the work she has done and to restore the credits for what she has done - because, in the meantime, it has been swiftly credited to various male collaborators and discredited by film historians. Along with the enthusiasm and pride that a female viewer can experience when watching this film, comes the shattering realisation of the obliteration that is taking place in our presence and that women still do not have means to combat. It is important to acknowledge that the lack of systematic and ongoing appreciation actively diminishes the potential achievements of women⁸.

Why continuity is important

Then, I argue for a supranational approach to the study of women's cinema. For as long as we continue investigating women's contributions in the context of national frameworks, the visibility of this work will not be sufficient to match the political needs of the moment as there will not be enough critical mass of evidence to restore women to their rightful position in the history of cinema. Women will always be fewer than men in the history of a national cinema; the history of national cinemas always evolves around several (and very often, even only one) figures, larger than life 'auteurs'. In all cases, these are men – and just a few women are being admitted to the national Pantheon. It would be good if, as a first step, the women are

⁸ I still have not had the chance to see Mark Cousins' 14-hr long *Women Make Film* (2019) which promises to bring similarly seismic insights into the role of women in film history.

restored to a position that would equal the recognition that men enjoy in a national film history context. If we go one level higher, however, to the birds-eye view of the regional, we will see much clearer the critical mass of female contribution to cinema. This is why I argue that we are better off to agree 'watching across borders' and exploring the contribution of women from across the East and South Eastern part of Europe. Politically, for the feminist cause, it is better to talk of European women's cinema. In terms or practice, I would also like to encourage festivals or other showcases of female-made films to not limit themselves to nationally-made films, but to cast the net wider, across nearby borders. A programme that showcases women's work from across the Balkans, for example, would have better critical mass and more clout than a programme that should feature films only by Romanian women directors.

Willingness to view and explore over time and space is essential, as it is essential to acknowledge and address female concerns across borders and above regions. In addition, as it has started coming to light as of recently, it is essential to unpack the overshadowing of important female filmmakers by their male partners. Easily observed across continents and countries yet so rarely recorded and discussed, the phenomenon was aptly dubbed 'Machismo-Leninismo' by Isabel Seguí (2018), who discussed the example of Bolivian proletarian auteur Jorge Sanjines, credited as founder and leader of the Ukamau Group, and showed an extensive and complicated phenomenon of obliteration (in this instance, of the contribution of Beatriz Palacios, the producer of all his films and a director in her own right). Seguí's analysis revealed how a host of factors lead to a situation where, over time, the open-minded male member of the team welcomes support and takes all accolades whereas the supportive female member of the team is all but forgotten, and how a progressive political figure is nonetheless part and parcel of the patriarchal construct⁹. Women's cinema histories, Seguí shows persuasively, have to be unearthed from below the rubble and restored to light. It would be essential, in the process of doing this, to give sufficient support and accolades to women-filmmakers where they receive awards transnationally, as well as speak up for women in the numerous instances where they are treated in

⁹ In spite Seguí's excellent critique and extensive research, I cannot help noticing that the Wikipedia entry on Sanjines does not make any mention of Palacios but instead lists references to many of his Latin American male comrades, such as Fernando Solanas, Octavio Getino, Glauber Rocha and so on. It is no wonder that for as long as this is the case, the history of cinema will be dominated by male figures. Wikipedia, however, is an open source collectively-created reference source, and I believe it is essential for film historians to engage with corrections to entries that display male bias. Sanjines Wikipedia entry, Available: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jorge_Sanjines [access: 10.11. 2019].

a manner that is unacceptable, in line with traditional ideas of solidarity and support¹⁰.

Continuity in East and Southeast Europe: small national cinemas

I favour continuity, in several aspects, in approaching women's cinema when it comes down to the region of our specific interest. First, I favour watching across borders, as it allows to see for the critical mass and vibrancy of this oeuvre which remains obscured when confined within narrow national frameworks¹¹. Thus, I favour a situation where we opt to be interested not only in the work of women from our own nation, but also in the work of those who work across East Central Europe, the Balkans, the countries of the former Soviet Union - and beyond. Indeed, there are differences -but we have choice to use difference as a principle for division and exclusion, or, what I prefer, to make it a principle for reaching out to and embracing female 'otherness'. Historically, culturally and politically, too, we may easily divide and exclude, but we may as easily choose to overcome prejudice and be inclusive. It would help us to know that women who lived under different circumstances and in different cultural milieus have acted in response to their contexts. And yet they have managed to overcome adversity and be creative.

Existing political divisions determine cultural exchanges and the dissemination of films, and in most cases circulation limitations work as barriers that prevent women's cinema from traveling as far as it ought to - it is up to us, then, to decide to defy such obstacles and watch the films of women from elsewhere, against all odds. Thus, I favour that we engage pro-actively with film festivals in general (as women's cinema mainly travels through this circuit), but particularly with women's film festivals, from Flying Broom in Ankara to The International Women's Film Festival in Cologne/Dortmund, that still remain insufficiently networked - we can help strengthen their ties simply by resolving to do so¹².

¹⁰ The freshest example of such unacceptable treatment I have in mind is of the great Argentinian director Lucrecia Martel, who presided over the international jury of the 76th Venice International Film Festival in September 2019 and who came under excessive pressure from right-wing politician, actor and producer Luca Barbareschi who demanded her public apology for comments she made about the inclusion of the film by controversial Roman Polanski in the competition. In the context of this controversy, Martel was, reportedly, called 'mediocre' by Italian critics.

¹¹ I have high appreciation for the work of Mette Hjort (2005) which explores Danish national cinema and introduces the useful concept of 'small national cinema' by simultaneously showing how the limitations can be overcome in a global context.

¹² For a list of women's film festivals - which could be enlarged and improved but is still something to work with for the time being - see Wikipedia. Available: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_women%27s_film_festivals [access: 10.11.2019].

The contributions to this volume of “Panoptikum” supply much better information about the specific histories and contributions of female filmmakers in the countries of Eastern Europe. Still, let me mention at least some names here, in view to show that there is critical mass that must be reckoned with – and as I believe that everybody who studies the history of cinema in Eastern Europe must be familiar with at least these female auteurs.

First of all, the Czech Věra Chytilová (1929-2014) and her seminal film *Daisies* (1966). Then, Hungarian Márta Mészáros (b. 1931) with films like *Adoption* (1980) and her 1980s *Diary Trilogy*. And Bulgarian Binka Zhelyazkova (1923-2011), particularly with her film *The Last Word* (1973) as well as Albanian Xhanfise Keko (1928-2007), the least known of the group. In Poland, of course, important figures such as pioneer Wanda Jakubowska (1907-1998) but also Barbara Sass (1936-2015) and Agnieszka Holland (b. 1948) who somehow sits between generations and whose *A Woman Alone* (1981) I consider a seminal piece of feminist filmmaking. Each one of the women named here is an accomplished ‘auteur’ in her own right when it comes down to the specifics of individual cinematic style and the number of films. But we also have other veteran women-filmmakers such as Serbian Soja Jovanović (1922-2002), Bulgarian/Russian Irina Aktasheva (1931-1918), Romanian Elisabeta Bostan (b. 1931), or Greek Tonia Marketaki (1942-1994), as well as many more from the middle generation, born in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. To this list I would also add other female ‘auteurs’ from the region, such as Bosnian Jasmila Žbanić (b. 1970), and Aida Begić (b. 1976), Macedonian Teona Strugar Mitevska (b. 1974), Polish Dorota Kedzierzawska (b. 1957), Magdalena Łazarkiewicz (b. 1954), Małgorzata Szumowska (b. 1973), Latvian Laila Pakalnina (b. 1962), Greek Olga Malea (1960), Penny Panayotopoulos (b. 1960), Athina Rachel Tsangari (b. 1966), and Constantina Vulgaris (b. 1979), Turkish Yeşim Ustaoglu (b. 1960) and Pelin Esmer (b. 1972), Bulgarian Zornitsa Sophia (b. 1972) and Nadejda Koseva (b. 1974). This list could be much longer.

One should not forget those women who made contributions to areas other than directing, like the versatile and inexhaustibly wonderful Ester Krumbachová (1923-1996), or female producers who work today, such as Romanian Ada Solomon (b. 1968), who is leading the female caucus of the European Film Academy, or Sarajevo-based scriptwriter Elma Tataragic (b.1976). There have been plenty of awards, too, even if somehow quickly forgotten. Perhaps we should repeat more often that Hungarian Ildiko Enyedi has earned awards at Cannes with her *My Twentieth Century* (1989) and at the Berlinale with *Of Body and Soul* (2017), and that Adina Pintilie (b. 1980) won Berlinale’s Golden Bear with *Touch Me Not* (2018). Other women from the region won at Berlinale (Jasmila Žbanić, Yeşim

Ustaoğlu) and at Locarno (Ralitza Petrova, Aida Begić, Ivana Mladenovic), and so on. And films by Slovenian Hanna Slak and Greek Marianna Ekonomou, among others, are entered in the competition for Best Foreign Language Oscar.

I believe we ought to drop borders and the restrictions of regional and historical affinities in order to see the amazing wealth of female talent and supports its continuity.

The least we can and must do now

As things stand currently, there are two minimum requirements for women who are engaged with the study and teaching of film. In my view, one must make a conscious effort to meet them.

The first one is to start systematically combatting the exclusion of women by engaging in assertive inclusive/corrective practices.

The second one is to acknowledge the shortcomings in existing knowledge and educate oneself on the matter of women's cinema.

What assertive/inclusive practices do I have in mind, to begin with?

For example, reading lists: when putting together reading lists for teaching modules on whatever topic, check and make sure that at least one of the main recommended texts is authored by a woman. Check and make sure that the readings assigned for each session include at least one text authored by a woman¹³.

Then, screenings: If you have a list of ten-twelve films your students are required to see during the semester, on whatever module, make sure that at least two of these are directed by women - as there are enough good films made by (now often forgotten) women that could now be brought in for use as part of the effort to correct the record. Again, more and more colleagues internationally engage in such conscious effort to diversify the curriculum.

Include women pro-actively in the teaching content. For a module on Film Cultures I am teaching, for example, I introduced a weekly case study that features the contribution of a selected woman to the area discussed during the seminar. I talk about Mme Kawakita in cultural diplomacy and film, about Beki Probst in film markets, about Pauline Kael in film criticism, and so on. And I invite one or two women (archivists, curators, festival directors) to give guest interviews by Skype¹⁴.

¹³ At the University of St Andrews we discussed and pro-actively adopted this practice.

¹⁴ I have described the approach in more detail in my 2019 piece for *The Community of Practice*. <https://www.cetl.hku.hk/teaching-learning-cop/hic-rhodus-hic-salta-the-time-for-change-is-now/> [access: 10.11.2019].

Such little adjustments give quick results: our students graduate, leave, and then take these practices to the new contexts where they end up. One example, which is dear to me, involves a 24 year-old man from China who completed a Masters degree with us in 2018 and now works at a dynamic large 24-hrs bookshop in Guangzhou in China, a city of 14 million population. He had previously organised a film club, but when I he shared the programme with me, I commented that out of the 100 films he had heroically sourced and shown, only one had been made by a woman. After graduation he is back and runs the club again: he is now not only including significantly more work by women, but recently alerted me about a series of events dedicated to local women film-pioneers from Guangdong Province (a.k.a. Canton) which is about to turn into an original research project, restoring the legacy and visibility of female contributions. This whole change in attitude and engagement with discovering the work of forgotten women-filmmakers resulted from the simple introduction of case studies of women's work, from the move toward becoming assertively inclusive.

And how about educating ourselves?

I bet most of the readers of this text think of themselves as highly educated. And they probably are: on male-dominated film history and practice. At the same time, they are most likely fairly ignorant on the topic of women's cinema - just as I was and still am. It was the realisation of the huge gaps in my own knowledge on matters of women in film history that made me to start working on the sizeable project of pro-actively working to catch up. I started consciously viewing at least one film by a woman-director every week about two years ago - so by now I know the work of about twenty female filmmakers significantly better than before (some discoveries included the work of Chinese Zhang Nuanxin, Lebanese Jocelyne Saab, Scottish Margaret Tait, New Zealand Merata Mita, and Canadian Alanis Obomsawin, among others). The resolve to view one female-made film per week results, a year later, in a basic education that cannot be found in textbooks or educational packaging - not yet, one would educate oneself in view to be able to write the new textbooks and offer the new courses that will include the work of women.

I believe it would be of paramount importance for us, women (as well as men, if they like), to acknowledge that we do not know enough about cinema made by women. But how can we change the situation if we do not make the effort to get to know what has fallen off the record whilst a host of male 'auteurs' have stayed there? And I am not talking about knowing Agnès Varda's,

Chantal Akerman's, Margarete Von Trotta and Lina Wertmüller's work here. One must go a long way beyond these singular cases.

Let me offer an experiment: Here I list the names of ten female cinematic 'auteurs' from the smaller cinematic traditions of East and South Eastern Europe that I am focused on in this piece: Binka Zhelyazkova, Judit Elek, Helke Misselwitz, Laila Pakalnina, Maja Weiss, Jasmila Žbanić, Renata Litvinova, Teona Strugar Mitevska, Athina Rachel Tsangari, Zuzana Piussi, Adina Pintilie... How many of these names you did not know? How many of these you know about but have not really seen anything of? How many of these directors you feel you should get to know better? How many of these women could greatly benefit if scholars embraced their work?

More names can easily be added. The important matter, however, is that each one of the women listed here have made the quantity and the quality of films that would earn any male director the qualification of 'auteur', yet they remain underrecognized. Their work is difficult to find? Perhaps, as distribution is directly linked to the degree of interest in the work, and if we express interest, easier access is likely to follow. There is no writing or other material on these women? Maybe yes, but the situation is changing, including with the appearance of this issue of "Panoptikum". It is up to us to ensure the writing appears... How about educating oneself enough as to consider teaching a course on the topic of Women Filmmaking in Eastern Europe? I wonder how many such courses are on offer? Perhaps we could benefit from some sharing on the matter. Clearly, there would be more than enough material. Or, perhaps, a module dedicated to the work of a single female director? Several immediately come to mind that would fit the bill. A friend in London has been teaching repeatedly a film studies course that zooms in on the work of one singular director. The case in point is Ang Lee - a prolific and versatile film auteur. My friend says that engaging with such set up where he screens one film by the director every week and then discusses it with students allows him to give close scrutiny on matters of style, changing aesthetics, as well as industry considerations.

Would it be possible, I have wondered, to offer a similar course that would focus on the work of a single female director? There are at least several female directors that would qualify; the exploration of their careers and oeuvre would also allow to scrutinise funding conditions, critical reception, as well as the mechanics of oblivion and disappearance. In short, I believe in the significance of small and seemingly insignificant steps in changing behavior: contributing proactively to online sources like Wikipedia, the IMDb, as well as creating channels

on YouTube that feature competently organised material on women's cinema, as well as using social media. Many of us already do it!¹⁵

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¹⁵ Just in the last month I have had exposure to some excellent examples of such activist engagement, with the fantastic Facebook group that is dedicated to research on Kira Muratova <https://www.facebook.com/groups/KiraMuratovaSymposium/>, and with a Masterclass of Ibolya Fekete which is available on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1oJ86rq1qg> [access: 10.11.2019].

Abstract

The author calls for continuity and continuation of the study of women's cinema. Attention is drawn to the blurring of memory and even erasing women from the history of national film industries. They are not recognised as authors, while the history of cinema has been subject to the concept of the auteur film-maker. The filmmakers are made through the commitment and work of film critics and then cinema historians. The expert does not hide the fact that those relationships are strengthened by bonds of friendship, without the fear of being accused of having a lack of objectivity, and are often associated with the support of the author on the international festival circuit. The author calls for 'watching across borders', i.e. a supranational approach to the study of women's cinema. Crossing the borders of national cinemas, in which the authors have not been recognised, allows a broader perspective to see the critical mass of the authors of world cinema. Politically, for the feminist cause, it is better to talk about European women's cinema. Iordanova selects from the history of Central and Eastern European cinema, the names of authors who did not receive due attention. Moreover, she proposes specific inclusive and corrective feminist practices: the inclusion of filmmakers in the didactics, repertoires of film collections and festival selections; a commitment to self-study by watching at least one woman's film a week.

Key word: women's cinema; film festival circuit; global cinema; author's policy