

# Introduction

We are providing readers with a paper version of the feminine issue of “Panoptikum” with a lens aimed at Central and Eastern Europe, as well as electronic access to it. Our goal is to include contributions of women’s cinema from this region in the European tradition of women’s cinema. Paradoxically, although artistically and quantitatively it has constituted a solid counter proposition to western women’s cinema and constituted a regional variation of eastern women’s cinema, its significance has not yet been adequately reflected in research. This volume is a response to Ewa Mazierska’s call from a decade ago to write a new history of Central and Eastern European cinemas in a dialogue with authors specialising in the history of individual, small national cinemas, enriched by feminist studies (Mazierska, 2010). We are also following the path set by Dina Iordanova in the volume *Cinema of the Other Europe* (2003) that mapped women’s cinema and production conditions in the region including Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria. However, we share Mazierska’s opinion, that “the other” is by no means axiologically neutral, because it positions the cinema of countries such as Poland and Hungary as Western Europe’s ‘other’, much more than ‘East European’ and ‘East Central’, which attempts to situate these cinemas in the European mainstream” (Mazierska, 2010, p. 7).

The concept of the volume clarified covering the issues of women’s cinema in this part of Europe, which was part of the socialist Eastern Bloc, and after 1989, gradually adapted the feminist research methodology being used to rewrite the history of the region from a gender perspective<sup>1</sup>. The starting point is national film industries, but the ultimate goal is a transnational perspective in feminist studies in the former Eastern Bloc region. Answers to questions regarding the specificity of the position, condition and achievements of women working in the nationalised film industries of the Eastern Bloc are sought, where the emancipation of women in professions considered to be male preserves, related to technology or the tradition of the art dominated by men, was one of the postulates of social and cultural policy. Previous research approaches shed light on the East, bypassing the central border between East and West, which ran between Poland and Germany, and to be precise, in East Germany, “the closeness of some countries comprising the old Soviet bloc with the West, especially Germany and, at the same time, their distance from the East, especially Russia” (Mazierska 2010, p.7). In “Panoptikum” we focus on this border, juxtaposing texts on the position

<sup>1</sup> The idea of this monographic volume was born at the *Production Culture: Societal and Economic Aspects of Film Production* conference organised by Monika Talarczyk and Artur Majer and held on June 10-11, 2019, at the National Film School in Łódź. The subject matter was developed during the Polish-German feminist workshop organised by Małgorzata Radkiewicz and Maciej Pepliński and held in Leipzig at the Leibniz-Institut für Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Europa-GWZO on November 14-16, 2019.

of female filmmakers in the film industries of the People's Republic of Poland and East Germany (GDR).

The volume opens with Dina Iordanova's powerful speech entitled *Women's Place in History: The Importance of Continuity*, which she delivered at a conference in Łódź. The expert calls for "watching across borders," i.e. a supranational approach to study women's cinema: "Politically, for the feminist cause, it is better to talk of European women's cinema". As she claims, leaving the borders of national cinemas, in which female authors have not been recognised, allows a broader perspective to see the critical mass of female filmmakers in world cinema. Iordanova extracts from the history of Central and Eastern European cinema the names of authors who did not receive due attention – some of them have become the heroines of articles in this volume. What's more, she proposes specific inclusive feminist practices: the consistent inclusion of female filmmakers in the education process, film archive repertoires and festival selections; a commitment to self-study by watching at least one film made by a woman per week.

Cross-cutting texts are devoted to Polish and East German cinema in the socialist era. Monika Talarczyk in the article *The Other Sex of Polish Cinema* presents the results of quantitative research – the participation of women in creative film professions in the production of feature films in the People's Republic of Poland, including the key positions of the director, assistant director, screenwriter, cinematographer, music composer, art director/set designer, costume designer, editor and production manager. The inspiration for her assessment of this kind of data was Beata Hock's text devoted to the participation of women in the production of feature films in Hungary (Hock, 2010, 2012). She noticed that women's participation in filmmaking tended to limit discussion to the contributions of female directors, while industry practices and other behind-the-scene positions received scant attention (Hock, 2012, p. 85). Indeed, the question of women needs to be deepened and explained including "the specific logic of the state-socialist system of cultural production as a system that had its own justifications, advantages and disadvantages" (Iordanova, 2003, p. 16).

In this way, we received comparative studies of two film industries from the region. We hereby encourage you to undertake this type of research into the film industries of other neighbouring countries such as East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia etc.

Cornelia Klauß, the editor, along with Ralph Schenck, in the first monograph of directors in the East German film industry *Sie – Regisseurinnen der DEFA und ihre Filme* (Klauß, 2019), and the author of *New Horizons and Disruptions. East-German Female Directors of the DEFA-Studios and from the Underground*, wrote

the conclusions from her work on the book, which presents 63 directors of various types and genres of film: feature, documentary, animated and experimental films. A special place in it is occupied by Iris Gusner with her famous debut film *Die Taube auf dem Dach* banned from distribution. Margaret O'Brien devoted a separate analytical text to it entitled *Constructing Masculinities in Iris Gusner's Die Taube auf dem Dach* (1973, 1990, 2010).

The largest body of texts includes articles devoted to female filmmakers of various professions in Polish and Czechoslovakian film: an editor, a cinematographer, an author of films for children and a film critic as well as East European experiences of cooperation. The professional perspective results from the combination of film-oriented research with the assumptions of production culture research (Caldwell, 2008), i.e. research into the specifics of the work and the artistic effects of this work. This requires the development of unique research tools for analysing the work and style of such creative film professions as cinematographer, editor, set designer and costume designer, author of films for the young viewer, and, perhaps surprisingly, even the film critic.

Paulina Kwiatkowska recalls the figure of Zofia Dwornik, one of the most appreciated and nowadays rather forgotten female film editors of post-war communist Poland. In the Polish post-war cinema, the profession of film editor was strongly feminised. In the case of Dwornik, her decision to choose this particular profession was, however, based on additional objective considerations. Kwiatkowska takes a closer look not so much at the achievements of Dwornik in the 1960s and 70s, but at the complex circumstances that influenced her earlier career. Katarzyna Taras presents the cinematographer and director, Jolanta Dylewska. Although Dylewska only began working independently as a cinematographer after the changes of 1989, her position in the history of Polish and European cinema can be determined in the light of her female pioneering in this profession. The researcher focuses on films that are the result of Dylewska's collaborations with transnational directors, Agnieszka Holland (*In the Darkness, Spoor*) and Sergey Dvortsevov (*Tulpan, Ayka*). Paulina Walo focuses on the sub-genre of historical film for children and adolescents realised in the Polish People's Republic by female directors. She argues that the trivialised genre helped female directors speak in their own voices and give them opportunities to present the past from their own perspectives. Grażyna Świętochowska focused on Ester Krumbachová's intermedial work, treating her not only as a designer, but the producer of certain ideas successfully introduced into film. There are at least a few basic themes that organise the specificity of Ester's artistic discourse: the whole galaxy of food and the specificity of the interior, an important background



for the platform of culinary images. Małgorzata Radkiewicz addresses the issue of feminist film criticism in Poland in the 1980s, represented in the book by Maria Kornatowska *Eros i film* (*Eros and Film*, 1986), who decided to include a gender lens in Polish writings on sexuality in cinema.

We hope that this issue of “Panoptikum” will also fill the gap in film studies literature on women’s cinema in Central and Eastern Europe.