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IS IT WORTH WRITING THE HISTORY OF CINEMA IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE?¹

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Keywords: Central-Eastern Europe, cinematography of Central-Eastern Europe, history of film, European film, national cinema, postcommunism

Słowa kluczowe: Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia, kinematografie Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, historia filmu, film europejski, kino narodowe, postkomunizm

Abstract: Dobrochna Dabert, IS IT WORTH WRITING THE HISTORY OF CINEMA IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE? "PORÓWNANIA" 7, 2010, Vol. VII, pp. 129-139, ISSN 1733-165X. The author searches for arguments that would confirm the sense of writing the history of a particular region such as Central and Eastern Europe. There have not been any attempts so far. There are usually syntheses of the world cinematography that include the Central and Eastern European cinematographic art only to a limited degree. On the other hand, monographies on national cinematographies do not take into account the external contexts. There are three ways to look at the different cinematographies of the region: respecting national differences, viewing Central and Eastern European cinema as a constituent of the European cinema, and as a local phenomenon with its own internal characteristics.

Abstrakt: Dobrochna Dabert, CZY WARTO PISAĆ DZIEJE KINA EUROPY ŚRODKOWO-WSCHODNIEJ? „PORÓWNANIA” 7, 2010, Vol. VII, ss. 129-139, ISSN 1733-165X. Autorka poszukuje w tym artykule argumentów, uzasadniających sensowność pisania dziejów kinematografii ograniczonych do regionu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Do tej pory nie podjęto się takiej próby. Najczęściej powstają syntezy kina światowego, które jedynie w ograniczonym stopniu uwzględniają sztukę filmową Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, z kolei monografie poświęcone kinematografiom narodowym rezygnują z uwzględniania kontekstów zewnętrznych. Na dzieje zróżnicowanych kinematografii regionu można spojrzeć na trzy sposoby: respektując narodowe odrębności, postrzegając kino Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej jako składową kina europejskiego, wreszcie jako zjawisko lokalne z własną, wewnętrzną swoistością.

The nations of Central and Eastern Europe, on the one hand, show integrative tendencies spurred by the idea of European Union. On the other hand, they manifest an emancipatory need after newly regained independence. In a sense, in between these stands there is a need for identification with a smaller Europe – the Central and Eastern one. The recently revived

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regional research that is inspired, i.a. by post-modern historiographical conceptions, offer new cognitive possibilities connected with such an attitude. Without getting into all the twists and turns of the political and historical thought on Central and Eastern Europe, we will try to think whether regional research on the history of film is sanctioned in this territory and what the benefits of such an approach are.

If we take a look at syntheses of history and film that are aimed at analysing the cinema of Central and Eastern Europe, we will notice two most commonly found tendencies in the relation to the cinematographies in the countries of this region. *Historia sztuki filmowej* Jerzy Toeplitz (a couple of editions), *Historia filmu dla każdego* Jerzy Płażewski (a couple of editions), *Film History. An Introduction* Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, New York 1994, *The History of Cinema for Beginners* by Jarek Kupść (London 1998³), and *Kino nieme. Historia kina*, vol. I, edited by Tadeusz Lubelski, Iwona Sowińska and Rafał Syska, Kraków 2009, *Kino klasyczne. Historia kina*, vol. II, edited by Tadeusz Lubelski, Iwona Sowińska, Rafał Syska, Kraków 2011, constitute attempts at presenting a more or less detailed synthesis of the history of the film arts in which the fundamental phenomena that are most characteristic and valuable for the entire output of this discipline are emphasised. The cinematographic achievements of the nations of Central and Eastern Europe according to the principles of such syntheses remain outside the main trend of thought. In syntheses that are aimed at capturing the main achievements and developmental trends of the cinema on all continents, there will naturally and inevitably appear propensities that emphasise the commonly found elements in order to present the internal logic of the development of film in the world that is expressed by the regularities found in cinematographies that are culturally or geographically distant. Special emphasis is put on the description of leading aesthetic tendencies and pointing out parallel developmental trends. Such an attitude does not fully eliminate the idiosyncrasies of the local phenomena; however, the discrepancies that result from cultural or historical differences that do not have a place in thus understood project of the world cinema become marginalised or their status is branded by some kind of exoticism. The essence of narration in a synthesis of world history of film is constituted mainly by phenomena that take place in Western Europe or North America.

³ Czech translation: J. Kupść, *Malé dějiny filmu. Ilustrovaný průvodce světovou kinematografií od počátků po současnost*. Praha 1999.

The syntheses of world cinema are counterbalanced by the works on the history of film that focus on national cinematographies⁴. If syntheses that aim at capturing the entire output of the art and cinematographic industry are based on tendencies towards a superficial manner of most of the forms and film phenomena that have appeared in the world, then in syntheses of the national cinema the direction is reversed. A separatist attitude serves to limit the thought to a local area and describe all its idiosyncrasies that get lost in the supranational syntheses. It can, however, trigger interpretation complications that result even from the historical conditioning. Not always have the borders of a country – past and present – delimited the area that is defined as national production. This is the case of, e.g. Polish cinema which only after 1918 was actually produced within one independent country, as previously it produced films in the three zones of the partitions. In order to emphasise the lack of a national cinematography the Polish film historiography uses such expressions: “the Polish cinema within the Polish lands⁵, or “the Polish film in the Polish culture”⁶, which allow us to distinguish one’s own achievements among the production of the former countries that took part in the partitioning without fear of claiming rights to other peoples’ output.

The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary face a similar problem – so do the countries formerly included in the Habsburg Empire. In today’s historical monographies of these countries, e.g. the monography devoted to Slovak cinematography, there appears a different attitude that bears the risk of claims to cultural achievements of others that could be understood as a reclaiming of past losses⁷. The authors of the aforementioned monography explain their own research decisions in a way that can be deemed controversial.

The year 1896 is recognised as the beginning of Slovak cinematography. It was then that the first public film viewings took place on the 19th of December in Košice and 25th of December in Bratislava. The cinematographic activity in the times of the Austro-Hungarian Empire is a part of our national culture no matter if the nationality of the authors of those enterprises was Slovak or Hungarian. Similarly the Old Slavic and Latin monuments that appeared on the soil of today’s Slovakia pertain to our spiritual heritage.

⁴ Obviously there are many more syntheses of this kind; thus it is not possible to present all of them. Only exemplary monographies can be pointed out. For the purpose of this article these will be works from the Central and Eastern European area: Red. J. Toeplitz/R. Marszałek, *Historia filmu polskiego*. Vol. 1-6; T. Lubelski, *Historia filmu polskiego. Twórcy, filmy, konteksty*. Chorzów 2009; M. Haltof, *Kino polskie*. Transl. by M. Przyłipiak. Gdańsk 2002, L. Briukhovets'ka, *Prykhovani filmy. Ukrains'ke kino 1990-x*. Kyiv 2003; I. Karbalo, *101 Godina filma u Hrvatskoj 1896-1997*. Zagreb 1998; P. Volk, *Dvadeseti vek srpskog filma*. Beograd 2001; D. J. Golding, *Jugoslovensko filmsko iskustvo 1945-2001. – Oslobodeni film*. Zagreb 2004; V. Macek, J. Paštěková, *Dejiny slovanskej kinematografie*. Bratislava 1997; Red. L. Ptáček, *Panorama českého filmu*. Praha 2000.

⁵ Cf. T. Lubelski, *Historia filmu polskiego. Twórcy, filmy, konteksty*, op. cit.

⁶ Cf. M. Hendrykowska, *Śladami tamtych cieni. Film w kulturze polskiej przełomu stuleci 1895-1914*. Poznań 1993.

⁷ The authors of the monography state straightforwardly: „Až do zániku monarchie v roku 1918 boli hlavným bremenom slovenskej kinematografie maďarské asimilačné tlaky”. (The main reason for the Slovak cinematography until the fall of the Empire in 1918 was the Hungarian assimilation obligation”). V. Macek, J. Paštěková, *Dejiny slovanskej kinematografie*. Bratislava 1997, p. 25.

Also the silent cinematograph, internationalistic in its nature, is part of the Slovak culture that functioned in the area of former Hungary⁸.

In a similar vein Hungarian monographies present still unresolved conflicts of the neighbours; however, they completely eliminate the Slovak achievements⁹. Traces of problems and conflicts of a national nature can also be found in syntheses of the history of cinematography in the countries of former Yugoslavia. In monographies by Peter Volk or Ivo Karbalo¹⁰ national cinematographies become discarded (artificially it seems) from the output of the “Yugoslavian cinema”. The notion of “Soviet cinema” is also in need of redefinition. It is an artificial creation on political grounds and brings a number of misunderstandings, controversies and clashes between today’s neighbouring countries, who only yesterday functioned within one body.

A part of these controversies refers to, i.a., copyrights from the post-revolutionary reality of the cinematographies appearing within the Soviet Union, post-war Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia, and will probably remain unresolved because the centralising policy frequently debilitated or totally eliminated the autonomy of national film production or at least distorted its image. One of the outcomes of the difficult past is a “battle for the legacy” that is visible, e.g. in the spectacular debates on the Ukrainianhood of Kira Muratova, attempts at ‘recovering’ Larisa Shepitko’s film *The Ascent* from 1976 by the Belarussian cinematography. There are also laborious attempts at eliminating the use of the inadequate though popularised name of the Czech Film School for the benefit of the Czechoslovakian Film School.

In the historical memory, nations that regained their independence claim a right to their own history, past (in this context a film history and past), and national tradition. The problems of the cinematographies of Central and Eastern European countries only mentioned here, stem from past relations, but become a premise to pose the question of whether in the light of such significant debates, it is worth enriching the thought on national cinema by the regional context which will not ignore the specificity of the Eastern and Central history.

⁸ „Za počiatok dejín slovenskej kinematografie pokladáme rok 1896. Vtedy sa u nás uskutočnili prvé verejne filmom predstavenia – 19. decembra v Košiciach a 25. decembra v Bratislave. Kinematografické aktivity v období Rakúsko-Uhorskej Monarchie sú súčasťou našej národnej kultúry bez ohľadu na to, či ich pôvodcovia boli Slováci alebo Maďari. Rovnako ako k našmu duchovnému dedičstvu, legitímne Patria staroslovenske a latinské pamiatky, ktoré znikli na územi dnešného Slovanska, svojou podstatou internacionálny nemý kinematograf je súčasťou slovenskej kultúry v priestore vtedajšieho Uhorska”. V. Macek, J. Paštěková, *Dejiny slovenskej kinematografie*. Bratislava 1997, p. 1.

⁹ B. Gyöngyi, V. Gyürey, P. Honffy, *A magyar játékfilm története a kezdetektől 1990-ig*. Budapest Műszaki Könyvkiadó 2004.

¹⁰ Cf. footnote 2.

The history of the cinematographies of this region can be viewed in three ways: respecting national autonomies, perceiving Central and Eastern European cinema as a component of the European cinema, and finally as a local phenomenon with its own internal characteristics.

1. “*Intimní osvetlení*” – or maintaining national autonomies

If, while writing the history of the Central and Eastern European cinema, we respect the autonomy of each separate cinematography, then the regional history will become a sum of the national histories. Each would be treated as a unique phenomenon in which their own artistic and cultural traditions and the indispensable context of history that includes custom and mental specificity would become points of reference. Owing to such a research perspective, national identity would be confirmed, as national histories constitute a possibility for “a deeper insight” into a limited part of the history of cinema. This great insight would allow us to interpret all conditionings that result from a national specificity that is understood in a wider sense. Tadeusz Lubelski, a historian of the cinema, stresses that more or less for two decades there has been an increase in the

... interest in the issues of the national cinema in film research. It is manifested both by the attitude of the historians of particular cinematographies to characterise the cultural specificity of each of them, but also – what is of equal importance – by the appearance of many works on national cinemas and the methodology of research¹¹.

It thus seems natural that there should be a greater need for books on national cinematographies. (...) A couple of decades ago, in the first stage of expansion and research in film studies, traditional views that multiplied historical and film facts dominated. However, for some years there have appeared books that pose additional questions and place the history of the particular cinematographies in the context of national history or the widely understood history of culture. Films are at present frequently used as the key to the search for national identity – to use the preferred notion¹².

According to Lubelski, “national cinema” is a notion that is presently understood in the following categories:

- territory: as a “domestic film industry”, when the national character of the production is defined by the producer’s citizenship;
- product of “the national cinematographic institutions’ activity”;
- in the functional understanding of national cinema which constitutes an image “of oneself as a person that belongs to a particular society and culture”;

¹¹ T. Lubelski, *Wstęp*, in: Red. T. Lubelski, M. Stroiński, *Kino polskie jako kino narodowe*. Kraków 2009, p. 6.

¹² T. Lubelski, *Historia kina polskiego. Twórcy, filmy, konteksty*, op. cit., p. 13.

– in the relational view there are many thematic and stylistic differences that allow us to distinguish the values of domestic cinematography among others¹³.

It should not be forgotten that “nationcentrism”¹⁴ is also dangerous, as one can ignore or pay insufficient attention to the external influences, especially the ones from neighbours. It can lead to thoughtless acceptance of all creative solutions or, contrarily, to the negation of all domestic achievements. National cinema faces more and more often the issue of co-production when international cooperation is not limited to producing or financing the venture but also includes an international creative team who, together with the director, is responsible for the form and artistic message of the work.

It is the issue of co-production that for some becomes a counterargument to the idea of national cinema.

2. “Europe, Europe” or the dimension of a single identity

In a polemic attitude that is represented, among others, by a Cracow-based film researcher, Barbara Kita, there appears a rejection of the idea of a national limitation in analysing cultural phenomena for the benefit of incorporating the entire perspective that includes the whole Old Continent. The researcher notices that the notion of European cinema hitherto functioning was built in a “slightly stereotypical, from today’s perspective, point of view of distinguishing oneself from the American system of merchandise production”¹⁵. Nevertheless, according to her, today’s notion of the European cinema should stem from the situation in which “there is such an obvious crisis of the national cinema (migration, mixing of components, co-production) that it is difficult to maintain the claim about its existence and activity”¹⁶. Kita writes that the argument for the need to verify today’s understanding of this notion should be the initiation of new internal processes of national ‘Europeanisation’¹⁷, that are characterised by structural changes in the countries with simultaneous activation of migration processes on the local and national levels and a comprehensive phenomenon of culture hybridisation”¹⁸. The complex cultural situations and Europe’s multiculturalism encourages her to search for supranational indications of the “European cultural realm” within whose framework there function the cinematographies of this region. Kita tries to find

¹³ Cf. op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁴ This notion appears in political works, i.a. in the text by M. J. Dudziak: *Tożsamość a wielokulturowość: Od dezintegracji do integracji wspólnoty*. ”Sprawy Narodowościowe” 2006, no. 28.

¹⁵ B. Kita, *Czy Europa marzy o (wspólnej) tożsamości?* in: Red. B. Kita, *Przestrzenie tożsamości we współczesnym kinie europejskim*. Kraków 2006, p. 10.

¹⁶ B. Kita, *Czy Europa marzy o (wspólnej) tożsamości?* op. cit., p. 19.

¹⁷ B. Kita, *Czy Europa marzy o (wspólnej) tożsamości?* op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁸ Cf. B. Kita, op. cit., p. 10.

common topics that Europe deals with and, as European experience builds a new identity, the thus perceived idea of "European cinema". According to the author, these would be: globalisation, the Islamisation of Europe, the issue of multi-ethnicity in Europe and its national minorities that are reflected in the contemporary European cinema. As can be noticed, in such an array of topics, the presence of Polish cinematography would be highly debatable.... Tadeusz Lubelski's less radical proposal¹⁹ to perceive "Europehood" as the coexistence of national cinematographies and their own input into the European diversity seems more accurate, as it does not belittle the character and uniqueness of "local" artistic solutions. Thus, the authors of the history of European cinema would then analyse all the cinematographies of the continent equally.

If Central and Eastern European cinema is treated as a rightful part of the European cinema, omitting all geographical and historical issues, then there will take place an update of all artistic, technological, aesthetic and ideological criteria that are considered as being common for the entire European area and define the film identity of Europe. Similar approaches are represented by Mirosław Przyłipiak and Jerzy Szyłak²⁰ who point to the community of aesthetic and ideological experiences that distinguish and unite the outputs of the artists in Europe:

We think it is obvious that there exist particular values that are characteristic of the European cinema and allow us to speak about it as of a distinct ideological, cultural and artistic formation. The proof can be seen not on the basis of some superior characteristics of the European culture but from the history of the European cinema itself²¹.

A case in point is the newest Romanian cinema that cultivates the tradition of auteur theory in which the director is also frequently the screenwriter and the producer, and guarantees a personal approach to the work. The Europehood of Romanian cinematography is also visible in developing the issue of national self-esteem, the attempt to confront one's own history and contemporary social problems. Locality is a point of reference for thoughts that are of interest also outside the closed area of one's own experience. Films from the years 2005-2007 focused mainly on thoughts on the experience of the society during the reign of Ceaușescu reflecting that atmosphere devoid of nostalgic tendencies, whereas the newest films take place in contemporary Romania and refer to issues that transgress the national trauma of communism and meet the existentialist experience of contemporary Europeans halfway.

¹⁹ Cf. T. Lubelski, *Paradoksy kina europejskiego*. "Kino" 2003, no. 1.

²⁰ Cf. M. Przyłipiak, J. Szyłak, *Kino najnowsze*. Kraków 1999.

²¹ M. Przyłipiak, J. Szyłak, op. cit., p. 125.

The case of the Romanian cinema shows how the entire tradition and contemporary status of the cinematographies of our continent become the point of reference. Obviously, one's own local specificity stops playing the most important role. Thus, this version of thought could be called a “globalising perspective” which stems from the presumption that due to “the erosion of boundaries”²² we live in a “single world”²³ in which the social and cultural world constitutes a common good and the cultural differences fade away. American cinema with its technological advancement and own conception of the cinema becomes an important point of reference and, whether we want it or not, a paragon. Writing the history of the cinematography in Central and Eastern Europe as European cinema should consist in “averting the eye” from the tradition stemming from the closest neighbourhood and reaching “above” to the paradigm of the European film culture.

3. “Another way” or glocalisation as a Central and Eastern European project

It can be assumed that the closest habitat for our national cinema is Central and Eastern Europe, its history, and cultural experience, including the history of the particular neighbouring cinematographies. Studies of the history of the film culture of our region that pertain to this type of research, would respect the environment in which they function, bearing in mind the national identity of each of these cinematographies and their cultural specificity. They would also make it possible to track cultural exchange and tensions between the national and transnational realm of our own cinematography. Extra-regional references and tracking convergence and divergence between the paths European and world cinema have taken and would remain concrete points of reference. This emphasis on a close link between the local and the global, defined in literature using the sociological notion of “glocalisation”²⁴ seems to be a beneficial strategy.

In the area of Central and Eastern Europe identity discourses have become more active in recent years. After the fall of the bipolar pattern of Europe, questions on the shape of independence and autonomy, and their place in the new Europe get new meanings. The elimination of the iron curtain that separated half of Europe from the rest of the world triggered the need to redefine their own images of the past, the national character and identity. Old convictions and system of order rooted in the post war decades are subject to revision.

²² Cf. J. Rosenau, *Distant Proximities: Dynamics Beyond Globalization*. Princeton University Press 2003.

²³ Cf. A. Giddens, *Europa w epoce globalnej*. Warszawa 2009.

²⁴ Cf. Z. Bauman, *Globalizacja*. Warszawa 2000.

Perceiving one's own cinema in the supranational perspective but simultaneously taking into consideration the regional context allows us to see one's own cinematography from a new perspective. Bearing in mind the neighbourhood context while investigating the issue of one's own cinematography gives an opportunity to see details of the domestic issue in a new and different way.

If we look at the Central and Eastern European cinematographies from a regional perspective, there will appear an array of new questions and attempts at answering them that will take into consideration this context, thus allowing to see previously omitted relations, conditionings and regularities. It seems that the comparative approach is highly desired when writing the histories of the cinematographies after the fall of communism.

As pointed out by Jacek Baluch in the relation between Poland and Slovakia:

Communism wreaked havoc in the mutual awareness of our nations. Although it should be honestly acknowledged that we have negative stereotypes about Slovaks, not to mention the Czechs thanks to the pre-war rightist Sanacja. the fault of communism was their continuation in spite of the officially proclaimed closeness and cooperation. We could not relinquish these stereotypes throughout the whole second half of the 20th century. Despite official agreements, cooperation between circles of writers, published translations of works and the appearance of departments of Slavic studies, we still were, in fact, isolated and we did not know much about each other²⁵.

The comparative approach will allow us to combine the strategy of a general view of cinematography from the national perspective with the perspective based on a given context, which in this case will not boil down to comparative activities with leading Western European and American achievements, but will allow us to answer the question about the worth of the closer and more distant neighbours for the national cinematographies of the post-communist countries.

Antoni Kroh accurately states the benefits of the comparative approach:

A Pole that is interested in Slovak culture and who tries to get to know it and understand it is forced to leave his Polish shell at least for a while in order to get a feeling of this non-Polish reality, non-Polish history and non-Polish conditions of development. This exercise seems for many reasons to be very useful because we usually use our own measure when thinking about the neighbours, which is a frequent source of significant misunderstandings²⁶.

Generally speaking the particular cinematographies function within the cultural paradigms that determine the dominant pattern of culture as the tradition of a community, and its attitude towards its heritage and its past.

²⁵ J. Baluch, *Polak myśli o słowackich dylematach*, in: *Kim są Słowacy? Historia, kultura, tożsamość*, Red. J. Purchla, M. Vášáryová. Międzynarodowe. Centrum Kultury, Kraków 2005, p. 121-122.

²⁶ A. Kroh, *Kultura Słowacji – podsumowanie*, in: *Kim są Słowacy?*, op. cit., p. 203-204.

Tracking the changes that take place within the national paradigms, which are also reflected in the art of film, will be a useful tool that puts order into the comparative discourse of Central and Eastern European cinema. The paradigms shift as the attitude of the members of the given community change due to external conditioning. Symbols, significant figures, and previously established ways of analysing past events undergo re-evaluation. The past together with the entire load of values and anti-values is constructed anew. As a consequence, the manner in which it is valued can be changed. The notion of “collective memory” and also that of “social dismemory” determine the equally changeable historical canon. The attempt at recreating the cultural paradigms for each of the countries of the region can become an effective drive for the dialogue that enable posing common problems for such seemingly distant cinematographies as the Polish, and Bulgarian ones or the Czech and the Romanian ones, etc. that on the face of it do not have much in common.

Being close neighbours who experienced 50 years of a communist totalitarian regime is a starting point and a reason for carrying out comparative research. Hence, we can distinguish an array of problems which in the vertical (national) perspective could be confronted with the horizontal network of connections, relations, similarities and different solutions within the neighbouring cinematographies.

Rafał Majerek, expert on Slovak studies, emphasises that while thinking about the role and form of image creation about a different nation:

Literature and culture – both of which shape the national system of symbols, stereotypes and autostereotypes indirectly, showing the most important realms of values that hold true in the given society and frequently thematising breakthroughs in the life of a nation – are contributory to the creation of its image in another cultural environment, help overcoming the distance, and allow getting rid of indifference and looking beyond one’s own problems²⁷.

The perspective in which the cinematographies of Central and Eastern Europe would be analysed in the context of their own region is placed between the isolating national perspective and a wider European perspective. It is worth taking into consideration an intermediary position in order not to lose the benefits from both extremes. There exists a historical specificity of development of the countries in the central and eastern part of the European continent confirmed by historical research, which resulted in an identity proposal that is different from the one offered by East and West. Then, comparative procedures would enable us to extract those elements that are not perceptible or are simply not taken into consideration in the application of either national or European perspective.

²⁷ R. Majerek, *Literatura słowacka w Polsce. Zagadnienie recepcji i badań literackich*, in: *Kim są Słowacy?*, op. cit., p. 151.

It is difficult to avoid the feeling that the experience of the forced post-war situation strengthened the political and the cultural independence of this region. In the search for arguments for the approach that includes the local context, the following dates should be taken into consideration: 1956, 1968, 1989. They are important not only because of the political events in the countries of the East, but they are also reflected in events in the artistic, aesthetic and ideological realms. Distinguished artistic phenomena that arose within the particular cinematographies of the region found their counterparts. An example of this would be the post-war film output of Central and Eastern Europe that developed under the influence and due to the inspiration from the Soviet avant-garde from the 1920s and 1930s. Whereas the artistic imagination of the creators of Polish film influenced not only the closest neighbours, e.g. the trend for historical cinema in the 60s and 70s in the Hungarian cinematography or the works of Andrej Tarkovski, it also reverberated in such culturally distinct cinematographies as the Bulgarian one or national schools of Soviet cinematographies (Ukrainian, Georgian). The Czechoslovak new wave inspired the Polish cinema of the early 1970s, whereas the cinema of moral anxiety of the 1970s and 1980s became a standard of the social cinema in the cinematographies of the entire eastern bloc. If we notice certain stylistic and aesthetic similarities in the film productions in our region, they result to some extent from the similar education of most film makers in Central and Eastern Europe that was obtained in the following three centres: Moscow WGIK, Prague FAMU and National Film School in Łódź, but also a shared fascination with the western artistic achievements (e.g., avant-garde from the beginning of the century: surrealism, expressionism) and the Italian neo-realism, the French new wave, the British cinema of the angry young men, etc.

The argument for the artistic character and uniqueness and, first and foremost the values of the achievement of the cinema in Central and Eastern Europe is the whole list of outstanding phenomena which, though born in this region, have become a part of the European film culture heritage. Let's mention: the Polish film school, Soviet individualism of the second half of the 1950s, national schools of cinematographies within the USSR from the 1960s, Czechoslovak New Wave, Polish new wave cinema from the beginning of the 1960s (films by Jerzy Skolimowski, Roman Polański), cinema of moral anxiety, Polish and Czech cinema of animated movies, etc.

The openings of the countries after 1989 forced the cinematographies of the region to face similar challenges connected not only with institutional reorganisation but also the need for self-definition (discussion on national identity, provinciality as a characteristic of the region's nations), a new view of one's own history (revaluation and reinterpretation of the

past, uncovering blank spots), a description of the diversified manifestations of contemporaneity: including the consequences of economic transformations, problems of the regions that are economically challenged, “after effects” of the social changes: unemployment, violence, organised crime, problems of the elderly, Other, Different, Strangers, but also the condition of the intelligentsia, possibilities for young people in the new reality, women that demand greater rights of self-determination, etc. These problems are translated into feature film versions found across the cinematographies of Free Europe, which owing to creative individualities, its own artistic and film traditions and historical experience, assume different forms of expression. The essence of the community of the region is developed on the basis of the tension between the Other and the Own whereas paradoxically the uniting aspect is the principle of approaches and withdrawals that create a “glocal”²⁸ community which demands a separate status within research. If we answer the following question positively: **Is** it worth writing one history of the cinematographies of Central and Eastern Europe? Then we can pose another question that will pertain to more detailed methodological issues: **How** do we write the history of the cinema in our region? The methodology of comparative research referred to in the text seems to be cognitively the best and most fruitful. This issue, however, is in want of a deeper and more multifaceted analysis and reaches beyond the scope of this article.

Transl. Jolanta Sypiańska

²⁸ “The notion of “glocalism” refers to such a model of society which benefits from the possibilities offered by the globalization processes (meaning fast means of communication) though does not lose its local (regional) makeup. According to this view, a glocal society is the most desired form of social organization, as it guarantees benefiting from modernity while also preserving local (regional, ethnic, national) traditional paragon and values”. Cf. L. Gawor, *Antyglobalizm, alterglobalizm i filozofia zrównoważonego rozwoju jako globalizacyjne alternatywy*. “Problemy Ekorozwoju” 2006, Vol. 1, no. 1, p. 44.