

Introduction

This volume gathers together proceedings of the international conference „History of Central-European Cinema. Intercultural Perspective” held from November 5th to 7th, at the University of Łódź, Poland. The conference provided a forum for experts from different methodological fields linked with the interest in transnational dimensions of cinema history.

Until recently the notion of Central-European cinema has been dominated by the national perspective, or the one concentrated on the relations with the Western cinema industries. The new impulse emerged recently as a response to the changes taking place in the modes of film production and new strategies of film distribution. Equally important are the new methodological approaches, especially the historiographic ones – which compel us to reconsider many cinematic phenomena surveyed in the past. Significant role here plays the so-called “return to the archives” and “new cinema history”, challenging the great canonical narratives, which for many years has been reproduced by the film-history scholarship.

The most of the nine delivered papers presented empirical case studies. Authors tackled various topics showing that intercultural aspects of Central European cinema is a fascinating challenge to the contemporary cinema studies. Andrzej Dębski in his article demonstrates transnational background of early cinema business in Poland while Urszula Biel provides a profound analysis of distribution and reception of Polish films in Germany in 1920s and 1930. Together with Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska piece on audience practices in postwar Berlin and Tomasz Rachwałd analyses of Polish postwar press, these articles proved how methodologically fruitful archival research and non-filmic sources can be.

In turn, Tomasz Kłys provides historically situated analysis of the German movie about Polish national uprising “Ritt in Die Freiheit” (1936) showing how central European national cinema reflected political and cultural changes in Europe. The problem of national identity has been also examined by Magdalena Wąsowicz who highlighted political dimensions of Hungarian rock-opera genre. While if it comes to the issue of Central-European states and audiences attitude towards foreign film industries has been addressed directly by Piotr Zwierzchowski who focused on Polish film critics discussions on Hungarian movies and by Ewa Ciszewska who traced Polish-Czechoslovak film co-production strategies. Her conceptualization serves as a productive background for Mikołaj Góralik piece on Polish and Czechoslovak science fiction movies.

Thus the goal of this book was to introduce reflection on historical phenomena that require perspectives transgressing national paradigm in studying film history (it is co-productions, cinemas of communist block and films produced under a significant “cold war” pressure and – last but not least – issues related to transnational distribution and reception). And although the attempt to reconstruct transnational history topography seems to be obviously impossible to realize in one volume, we believe, this publication provide and inspiration for broader discussions and research projects.

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