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Female Revolution behind the Camera

Kobieca rewolucja
za kamerą

Abstract: The paper addresses the issue of discrimination against women in the world of cinema. The author examines the successive stages of the struggle pursued by women of cinema for equality and fair treatment in an industry dominated and ruled by men. The discussion covers the most important campaigns and movements challenging gender discrimination, such as #MeToo in the U.S. or the European #nobodysdoll, as well as watershed events from the author's point of view, including the Oscar for Kathryn Bigelow – the first woman in history to receive the award for best director, Harvey Weinstein's conviction for sexual assault, and the leak of Sony's confidential financial documents. The public disclosure of these facts triggered a process that should be referred to as gender equalisation in the film industry. The author also takes a look at the latest events in the industry, such as Agnieszka Holland's election as president of the European Film Academy. In addition, the paper also comments on the aspect of feminine nouns in Polish and the attitude towards them on the part of the women they are supposed to describe. Information is provided on the U.S. and European cinema markets, as well as some diagnoses of problems appearing so far and suggested solutions.

Keywords: film, cinema, women, men

Abstrakt: Artykuł porusza problem dyskryminacji kobiet w świecie filmu. Autorka przygląda się kolejnym etapom walki kobiet kina o równouprawnienie i sprawiedliwe traktowanie w zdominowanej i rządzonej przez mężczyzn branży. Omówione zostają najważniejsze z perspektywy problematyki dyskryminacji płciowej akcje i ruchy, jak: amerykańskie #MeToo czy europejskie #nobodysdoll, ale także przełomowe z punktu widzenia autorki wydarzenia m.in.: Oscar dla Kathryn Bigelow – pierwszej w historii kobiety reżyserki wyróżnionej tą nagrodą, skazanie Harveya Weinsteina za molestowanie aktorek czy wyciek tajnych dokumentów finansowych firmy Sony. Ujawnienie wielu faktów rozpoczęło proces, który należałoby nazwać wyrównywaniem szans między płciami w branży filmowej. Autorka przywołuje także ostatnie wydarzenia, do których doszło w świecie kina, np. wybór Agnieszki Holland na prezydentkę Europejskiej Akademii Filmowej. W artykule zamieszczono ponadto komentarz dotyczący feminatywów w języku polskim i stosunku kobiet do nazw żeńskich. W tekście można znaleźć informacje zarówno o amerykańskim, jak i europejskim rynku kinowym, a także diagnozy dotyczących problemów i propozycje ich rozwiązań.

Słowa kluczowe: film, kino, kobieta, mężczyzna

For quite a few years now, a continuing march of emancipation of women in the film industry has been witnessed. Establishing parity and striving to maintain it has become extremely important both in the film production process as such and at international festivals. However, it is impossible to disagree with the majority of the critics¹ observing these activities, who write that “the enthusiasm accompanying (...) the reports is usually as lively as it is short-lived. In fact, after the joyous news, there comes the time for analyses.”² Although cinema in the 21st century can boast an undeniable dominance of female protagonists, attempts at gaining independence made by female artists and creators still tend to be treated rather patronisingly and with a pinch of salt. It is worth tracing the successive stages of this “revolution”, which ended with the new nomination “rules” set by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

One of the first factors, or rather catalysts, of the much-publicised rebellion initiated by women of cinema was certainly the Academy Award for the US director Kathryn Bigelow, the first woman in the history of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to receive an Oscar for Best Director. Her film, *The Hurt Locker*,³ was to be a harbinger of change. “Well, the time has come [for women – A.T.],” said Barbra Streisand,⁴ announcing the name of the winner. It seemed that this watershed moment would open the eyes of not only American, but of international critics to the fact that something had changed in cinema. The industry, which used to appreciate women mainly as actresses or, possibly, as make-up artists (after all, at least we’re better at putting on our make-up than men), was finally supposed to notice how great they are as directors and cinematographers. A decade after what seemed an

¹ The vast majority of whom being, of course, male (sic!).

² <https://plus.gazetakrakowska.pl/uwaga-ten-sufit-zaraz-sie-zawali-kobiety-kina-ida-po-swoje/ar/c13-14718280> [accessed on: 9 December 2020].

³ By the way, a story about men, of course.

⁴ Considered to be one of the directors who had already deserved the award for a long time.

extraordinarily significant fact at the 82nd Academy Awards ceremony, we know that nothing has changed.⁵ Men continue to be at the forefront among the nominees in the major categories.

The situation looks slightly better in Europe, although also here

“the equality change talked so much about is rather a declaration than an actual fact,” says Magdalena Sroka, former director of the Polish Film Institute. It is true that we are happy to acknowledge already established women filmmakers. However, we still have a problem with noticing and recognizing less well-known or emerging artists.⁶

Another milestone was most definitely the criticism hurled at the organisers of the 2015 Cannes Film Festival after women wearing flat shoes had been barred from the red carpet.

Numerous guests, including women in their fifties or with various medical conditions, were turned away from a premiere because their shoes, even though smart, were flats,⁷ according to information published by the Screen Daily portal, usually covering the financial aspects of the film industry. For example, producer Valeria Richter, who has part of her foot amputated, was told she couldn't enter the red carpet without high heels. It only became possible after long negotiations with the Palais staff.⁸

The problem was back with a vengeance at Cannes in the following year later, when Julia Roberts suddenly took off her shoes while strolling

⁵In 2021 Chloe Zhao won best director, becoming the second woman to win in this category in the show's history. At the 93rd Academy Awards, the first ceremony after the new guidelines were unveiled, seven women took home an Oscar.

⁶ <https://plus.gazetakrakowska.pl/uwaga-ten-sufit-zaraz-sie-zawali-kobiety-kina-ida-po-swoje/ar/c13-14718280> [accessed on: 9 December 2020].

⁷This story was tellingly dubbed “Flatgate.”

⁸ <https://tvn24.pl/kultura-i-styl/na-czerwony-dywan-tylko-w-szpilkach-w-cannes-afera-ra544003> [accessed on: 9 December 2020].

the red carpet and decided to continue barefoot. The gesture would have perhaps seemed insignificant three years earlier, but in 2016 it triggered a wave of admiration among critics and audiences.

Julia Roberts did not violate etiquette, as she had arrived wearing the required high heels. The fact that America's favourite took them off at the premiere as a gesture of solidarity is a totally different matter. (...) Julia Roberts has torn up the rule book and thrown it out the window, *Mirror.co.uk* concluded, delighted. And she just didn't give two hoots whether it was appropriate or not.⁹

The actress's conduct sparked a discussion about the unequal treatment of men and women also in terms of what they wore, even though the festival's director Thierry Frémaux insisted that there were no stringent rules regarding outfits at Cannes, and the required formal evening attire did not require the women to wear high heels. When asked about it, the stars admitted that the director's declaration was rubbish, as there was obviously an additional "implicit dress code" that included footwear.

The festival "shoe controversy" was a prelude to the emergence of a crucial topic of this paper, namely #MeToo. Although the slogan itself and the movement had already come into existence many years earlier,¹⁰ they

⁹ <https://www.plotek.pl/plotek/1,78649,20067607,julia-roberts-boso-w-cannes-otym-mowi-dzis-caly-swiat-zdeptala.html> [accessed on: 9 December 2020].

¹⁰ "The Me Too slogan was first used by Tarana Burke on the social networking site MySpace in 2006 as part of a massive promotional campaign of 'empowerment through empathy' addressed to women who had experienced sexual violence, especially coming from poor backgrounds. Burke came up with the slogan shortly after talking to a 13-year-old sexual abuse victim. The girl's confession left Burke lost for words and unable to respond appropriately, which she regretted greatly afterwards. Consequently, she founded the Me Too movement and started using the phrase to raise awareness of women in the context of the problem of sexual abuse." [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Me_Too_\(ruch\)](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Me_Too_(ruch)) [accessed on: 9 December 2020].

gained public attention worldwide¹¹ in 2017 thanks to actress Alyssa Milano. The movement received huge publicity as a result of the harassment charges levied against film producer Harvey Weinstein and many other giants of the art world.

The group came to include prominent politicians, TV executives, publishers and stars of the entertainment and art industry. The severity of the accusations that forced them to resign or caused them to be dismissed varies. They range from the most serious ones: of rape, sexual assault and psychological abuse of victims, as in the case of Weinstein, singer R. Kelly awaiting trial in custody, or actor and comedian Bill Cosby, convicted in 2018, to aggressive, sexual or sexist comments addressed to subordinates, bullying, intrusive sexual advances, and degrading those who rejected them. The exposure of such behaviour halted the careers for instance of Amazon Studios head Roy Price, long-standing all-powerful CBS Corporation CEO Leslie Moonves, and talk show hosts Charlie Rose of CBS and PBS, as well as NBC's Matt Lauer (who became the model for the protagonist of the TV series *The Morning Show* about harassment at a television network).¹²

The tsunami that briefly turned the film world upside down took a black hue at the 2018 Golden Globe Awards. Famous actresses wore black dresses to the ceremony to honour the victims of harassment and to draw attention to a serious problem which the cinema world turned out to be unable to deal with in any way. The all-black dress code, which, it is worth noting, included also black tuxedos, worn by some of the

¹¹ It was recorded that by 15 October 2017, the phrase had been used over 200,000 times and tweeted over 500,000 times by 16 October. More than 4.7 million people used the hashtag on Facebook, sharing 12 million posts over the first 24 hours. It was also recorded that 45% of users in the US have a friend who had shared #MeToo on their social media account. [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Me_Too_\(ruch\)](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Me_Too_(ruch)) [accessed on: 9 December 2020].

¹² <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kultura/1948824,1,metoo-skazani-z-hollywood.read> [accessed on: 9 December 2020].

male stars as a sign of solidarity, was related to the Time's Up initiative,¹³ started by several hundred actresses, screenwriters, directors, agents and representatives of other film professions. "No more silence. No more waiting. No more tolerance for discrimination, harassment or abuse."¹⁴

2018 was a symbolic year in terms of the fight for equality in cinema also on the old continent. While at the award ceremonies in Hollywood, the actresses chose to wear black, but still donned evening attire and high heels, the European response was completely different. Another initiative, #NobodysDoll, emerged during the preparations for the Berlinale International Film Festival. The idea, conceived by German actress Anna Brüggemann, was that women on the red carpet in Berlin could, and perhaps even should, turn up wearing gym shoes and tracksuits, and no make-up. Interestingly, the idea met with mixed reactions. Some applauded it, and the festival's director claimed that at Berlin, unlike Cannes, there had never been any dress code: "I can advise every woman who is coming to the Berlinale to wear exactly what she wants. We will certainly not be turning back either women who wear flat shoes, or men in high heels,"¹⁵ he said. However, a considerable number of female artists felt offended by the overtone of the campaign, which in their opinion suggested that they used to dress only to impress men. The biggest issue, which seemed to sink the whole initiative, turned out to be the word "doll", against which many of the artists protested.

One of the visible effects of the campaigns, movements and initiatives mentioned above has been the public ostracism affecting Roman

¹³The campaign was included in the activities of the National Women's Law Center, an organization offering legal assistance to victims of sexual harassment in the workplace regardless of their gender.

¹⁴ <https://www.elle.pl/arttykul/time-s-up-o-co-chodzi-w-akcji-gwiazd-hollywood> [accessed on: 20 December 2020].

¹⁵Cf. Dieter Kosslick's statement, <https://kultura.gazeta.pl/kultura/7,114438,2302658,3,berlinale-2018-nie-bedzie-obcasow-i-obcislych-sukienek-bunt.html> [accessed on: 20 December 2020].

Polański more than 40 years after he had been accused of raping a 13-year-old girl – earlier, the tendency seemed to be to sweep the matter, although generally known, under the rug. Not much would have probably changed if it hadn't been for the recent new allegations appearing against Polański. In any case, a number of new protests against the director gained much publicity. It is worth remembering the events that took place at the Łódź Film School. Students appealed to the university's president to cancel the planned meeting with the director.¹⁶ Speculations also continue to this day that the petition to cancel the meeting and the subsequent protest outside the school walls may have been extra-academic initiatives. It is difficult to judge, but there is no doubt that it was not the only objection against the lenient treatment given to Polański in the world (especially that of film) for years now. Demonstrations also took place during the Césars award ceremony.¹⁷ “Near Salle Pleyel, where the (...) ceremony is taking place (...), a group of around one hundred protesters has gathered. Some of them are holding placards saying: Polanski the rapist, Twelve nominations for rape, César of shame.”¹⁸ In the aftermath of these events, the entire board of the French Film Academy resigned, “emphasising that they had de-

¹⁶ “Mariusz Grzegorzek, president of the Łódź Film School, appeared on stage after the award had been given to Polanski. He read out the grounds for his decision not to cancel the meeting with Polanski, in which he wrote, among other things, that ‘Human life is a complex, throbbing phenomenon that requires mindfulness and respect. We artists in particular should understand this.’ Concluding, the president of the Łódź Film School made it clear that the students protesting against Polanski represented one per cent at most of the entire community associated with the university. In his opinion, ‘if we’re trying to live in a democracy, the 99 per cent, i.e. the crushing majority’ should not yield to an outraged minority.” <https://film.wp.pl/roman-polanski-nagrodzony-w-lodzi-rektor-filmowki-skrytykowal-protest-studentow-6451435083236993a?nil=&src01=f1e45> [accessed on: 13 December 2020].

¹⁷ French Film Award.

¹⁸ <https://kultura.onet.pl/film/wiadomosci/cezary-2020-protest-przeciwko-polanski-emu-policja-uzyla-gazu-lzawiacego/3xddbxc> [accessed on: 13 December 2020].

cided to resign to calm the situation and to allow the Césars to remain a great celebration of cinema.”¹⁹ Other important and significant signs of change included the successive convictions of those who had been taking advantage of their clearly stronger position in the film labour market for many years. The change is noticeable, at least in this area, and, as it seems, irreversible. A sign of transformation in the way of thinking is represented by events such as Amaani Lyle’s lawsuit, which she lost in 2006 (sic!)²⁰ against a team of (male) screenwriters contributing to the creation of one of the most iconic series in television history, i.e. *Friends*. As Kelsey Miller, author of a book about the series, wrote: “Harassment accusations are an everyday occurrence in Hollywood. Allegations such as these [raised by Lyle – A.T.] would usually never leave the walls of the building, and virtually never ended up before courts” (Miller 2019, 311). This time was different and the screenwriter’s case was effectively brought to trial. However, this is not the reason why I am mentioning these proceedings. The reason is rather the bizarre line of defence adopted, according to which the reprehensible way in which the scriptwriters behaved: the unrefined – as they were referred to – jokes, terms derogatory for women and gestures universally regarded as ones imitating sexual acts were presented in court as an integral part of the creative process, required to produce a script of an appropriate quality and level of wit.

The court received a large number of expert opinions whose authors strongly argued that Lyle’s success would be tantamount to an irreparable blow to free speech and to the elimination of the right to free creative expression. (...) This chorus in support of Warner Bros. was also joined by activists and NGOs, including Feminists for Free Expression and the Foundation for Individual Rights for Education. The latter’s director, Greg Lukianoff, said that the case could put an end to free and open exchange of ideas (...)

¹⁹ <https://kultura.onet.pl/film/wiadomosci/cezary-2020-protest-przeciwko-polanski-emu-policja-uzyla-gazu-lzawiacego/3xddbxcx> [accessed on: 13 December 2020].

²⁰ The proceedings lasted several years.

and turn “harassment” into an exception whose weight would cause the First Amendment to collapse (Miller 2019, 312).

The trial ended with a ruling whose grounds were similar to those cited above, thus contributing significantly, as some argue, to the further marginalisation of women’s role in the industry. If it were held today, it would proceed totally differently, without even the slightest doubt.

The situation is no different in Poland. In the context of the #MeToo campaign, accusations have appeared of repeated sexual propositions towards actresses and, interestingly enough, also actors.²¹ One of those who admitted having been the target of indecent propositions is Polish actor Marcin Dorociński, currently known to the global audience from the Netflix series *The Queen’s Gambit*. A look at the sheer number of press headlines on the matter appearing online is enough to conclude that it did not receive major attention from journalists and readers, and actually led to no further actions. The reasons for this may be twofold. First of all, neither any names were mentioned nor specific accusations were made. Secondly, the issues of child abuse turned out to be more important in Poland at the time, overshadowing the issues of the film world, which would seem adult enough. But is it really only and always adult? It is impossible not to mention here the accusations raised by Paulina Młynarska in relation to her work on the set of Andrzej Wajda’s film *Kronika wypadków miłosnych*:

I was 14 when Andrzej Wajda (...) forced me to play a very daring erotic scene, naked, with the now late Piotr Wawrzyńczak, then 18 years old. I was under the influence of tranquillisers and alcohol given to me by other adults working on the set. (...) Why did no one in a team composed of several dozen adults object? Why didn’t anyone say: ‘Wait a minute, what do you think you’re doing? It’s a child! You can’t just drug a child, undress

²¹ This aspect was ignored by most media in the stories coming from overseas, and yet there is not the slightest doubt that men in Hollywood must have encountered and experienced such practices too.

them and drag them in front of the camera to make them pretend they're having sex, which they don't have the faintest idea about yet!'.²²

I have mentioned the interview with Młynarska because the exploitation of children (of both sexes) in the film industry is an aspect that has been missing from the extensive global discussion about the transformations the industry needs.

Discussion on a number of scandals related to harassment, not infrequent, as it turned out, became an inherent part of the debate on unequal pay between men and women in the film industry. The scandal, which theoretically everyone had known about, exploded with the force of a nuclear bomb when data leaked from Sony's servers. The company's confidential data revealed how huge the gender pay gap was – with even the most respected, recognised, award-winning and popular actresses earning statistically half of their male counterparts.²³ The amount of pay in film would seem to be relatively simple to establish: the awards won and one's popularity are easily measurable elements on the basis of which the offered earnings can be assessed.

Meanwhile, it was revealed [after Sony's confidential documents leaked – A.T.] that gender was the key aspect when determining earnings. Cooper, Renner and Bale got more for their parts in the film [*American Hustle* – A.T.].²⁴ Jennifer Lawrence and Amy Adams were paid less (this concerns not just the amount on the cheque, but also the share of box office revenues). Actually, if you are wondering whether it is not a question of market value or talent of the actresses by any chance, it is worth pointing out that Jennifer Lawrence has starred in one of the highest-grossing franchises in

²² <https://www.radiozet.pl/Filmy/Paulina-Mlynarska-oskarza-Andrzeja-Wajde.-Zm-usil-mnie-do-zagrania-nago-sceny-erotycznej> [accessed on: 13 December 2020].

²³ Cf. men earned \$419 million, women earned \$226 million – data for 2015, https://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,16436356,Sandra_Bullock_najlepiej_zarabiajaca_aktorka__51_milionow.html, [accessed on: 13 December 2021].

²⁴ Full names and surnames: Bradley Cooper, Jeremy Renner and Christian Bale.

cinema history (*The Hunger Games*), while Amy Adams had already had four Oscar nominations (at the time of the film's release).²⁵

Unequal earnings are not the only “quirk” of the film world, which has in fact worked hard for decades to consolidate male dominance. According to various studies,²⁶ only around 16% of film industry workers are women.²⁷ By the way, as the author of an article about Hollywood's financial disparities rightly points out, one does not really need to conduct any research to know that the percentage share of women in particular industries continues to be negligible. In the context of unequal treatment, it is also worth looking at the language formulas used in film descriptions, reviews, and opinions provided by ordinary viewers. No in-depth analyses are required in this area either to note that the standard expression goes: “Ms X, who appears alongside Mr Y”, the other way around only in exceptional cases, even if the actress has won many more awards and is more highly appreciated than her on-screen companion. The following piece of information outdoes all the other reports: “Most male stars in Hollywood have it written in their contract that they must accept the female lead candidate.”²⁸ The New York Film Academy's report on gender (in)equality is also worth recalling in this context. The report was published back in 2013, but one should think that not much has changed since then.

Of all the people who have a say in the film industry, only 30.8% are women. On top of that, actresses also spend more time without their clothes on

²⁵ <https://kultura.onet.pl/film/wywiady-i-artykuly/nierowne-miliony-hollywood/8v5zcy> [accessed on: 13 December 2020].

²⁶ “The percentage has not changed since the 1990s, when regular surveys started to be conducted” <https://kultura.onet.pl/film/wywiady-i-artykuly/nierowne-miliony-hollywood/8vv5zcy> [accessed on: 13 December 2020].

²⁷ Cf. <https://kultura.onet.pl/film/wywiady-i-artykuly/nierowne-miliony-hollywood/8vv5zcy> [accessed on: 13 December 2020].

²⁸ <https://tvn24.pl/kultura-i-styl/na-czerwony-dywan-tylko-w-szpilkach-w-cannes-afera-ra544003> [accessed on: 9 December 2020].

than their male counterparts, with 26.2% of female characters dropping their clothes and only 9.4% of male characters seen without them. Only 10% of films are balanced when it comes to the ratio of men and women appearing in them.²⁹

The global situation is no different from what we are dealing with in Polish cinema. The earnings of Polish female filmmakers are lower, and their number is far smaller compared to the number of men in the industry.³⁰ The *Pilot Report on the position of women in Polish cinema* written by Monika Talarczyk-Gubała shows that “the value ranges around 30%: 27% in the Directors Guild, 30% in professional associations, 30% among Polish Film Institute experts, 28% in film production in general, etc.”³¹ The report points to the problems women struggle with in the Polish film industry. One of the author’s numerous conclusions that are worth mentioning is that women filmmakers have clearly smaller opportunities, e.g. due to the biological role assigned to them. “It is repeated like an incantation that we don’t want more leniency with regard to women, and that the artistic criterion and the quality criterion should determine the way in which a film is judged. But it’s already working like this! Clearly the best ones pass successfully through the schools, committees, and selection procedures. Can we say the same about the male majority? I doubt it.”³² The author of the report describes facts still visible more clearly and strongly on television and in the social media. Increasingly often, women of film are speaking up about their doubts concerning their social rights. However, it is impossible not to get the

²⁹<http://codziennikfeministyczny.pl/naga-prawda/> [accessed on: 20 December 2020].

³⁰ It seems that the reasons for this can be sought in the system, as this inequality is not visible at the student level, for instance.

³¹ Cf. the report available on the website of the Polish Film Institute, <https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kultura/film/talarczyk-gubala-wywiad-kobiety-kino-polskie/> [accessed on: 13 December 2020].

³² <https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kultura/film/talarczyk-gubala-wywiad-kobiety-kino-polskie/> [accessed on: 13 December 2020].

impression that the fight for these rights focuses primarily on other aspects of life, and to the smallest extent on the professional position of women. Talarczyk-Gubała's proposition seems significant, namely that: "women in power, also in the field of culture, continue to prefer to remain neutral or distanced from the issue of gender equality. It is as if, representing an office, they had to conform to the dominant ideology."³³

Due to the factors described above, the struggle for an equal position of women in the world of film started to take a more institutionalised form at a certain point. Reports,³⁴ regulations, and agreements started to be drafted to give women the opportunity to claim their well-deserved place. "One of the industry events at the 44th Polish Film Festival in Gdynia was a debate entitled *2020 is coming – Gender equality in the audiovisual industry. Opportunities and threats*. The title of the debate refers to the aspiration to have an equal number of women and men in the decision-making bodies in Polish cinema in 2020."³⁵ There is no denying that great credit for the possibility of holding such a discussion in Poland should be given to female directors who have been very successful not only in the Polish film market, but also abroad. The debate was made possible by the creation of the Women of Film initiative in 2017. Thus, the discussion that took place in Gdynia had its roots in many previous actions, but also resulted from numerous observable factors: pay inequality, lack of parity in decision-making bodies (panels of judges, expert commissions, etc.), but also, interestingly, in the completely different rules of "assigning themes" for film productions to women and men. Kinga Dębska, one of the most interesting figures in Polish cinema, says:

³³ <https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kultura/film/talarczyk-gubala-wywiad-kobiety-kino-polskie/> [accessed on: 13 December 2020].

³⁴ Cf. the aforementioned report by Monika Talarczyk-Gubała, <https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kultura/film/talarczyk-gubala-wywiad-kobiety-kino-polskie/> [accessed on: 13 December 2020].

³⁵ <https://pisf.pl/aktualnosci/rownouprawienie-kobiet-i-mezczyzn-w-branzy-audio-wizualnej-podsumowanie-debaty/> [accessed on: 19 December 2020].

There is still a lot to be done when it comes to the position of women in film, as we are still not appreciated enough. For instance, women are not offered historical films, the big-budget ones. We're more the ones supposed to cover themes such as family, home and children – in other words, those addressed in low-budget films. Male producers, belonging mostly probably mainly to the older generation, don't have enough confidence in us to entrust us with big budgets.³⁶

One idea is repeated like a mantra in all diagnoses and articles dedicated to equality in film. Parity should be maintained in the proportion of nominations and film awards that men and women are given. In fact, all the aspects described boil down precisely to guaranteeing an equal position to both sexes and to acknowledging which awards should be given to those who actually deserve them.

One doesn't have to be (...) an expert in the field of economics or sociology to know that success does not only come as a gift sent from heaven, it is not taken in with one's mother's milk, and not even hard work in the industry will necessarily bring it. An unpleasant reality is experienced much more easily and more frequently, with more barriers preventing success than sources thereof. One's gender and background and the consequent disadvantages are just some of the hurdles.³⁷

This seems to be precisely the essence of the issue presented in the paper and of the "beautiful disaster", which the new Academy regulations in fact are. The question which those who have drafted the still-new rules should ask themselves is how to make sure that women and men get the awards they deserve. Should the regulations determine who is to decide on the nominations and winners? Or perhaps these

³⁶ <https://pisf.pl/aktualnosci/rownouprawnienie-kobiet-i-mezczyzn-w-branzy-audio-wizualnej-podsumowanie-debaty/> [accessed on: 20 December 2020].

³⁷ <https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kultura/film/paulina-januszewska-oscar-y-nowe-zasady/> [accessed on: 20 December 2020].

should be agreed upon in advance? The director of the Polish Film Institute says:

I am in favour of parity in rating and decision-making bodies. On the other hand, I find it hard to imagine myself making recommendations in relation to proportion of the results, i.e. that the post-session results should include 50% female directors and 50% female producers. I do, however, definitely support guaranteeing gender pluralism at the level of the people who make the decision.³⁸

This way of thinking has led to parity being taken into account increasingly frequently in the structuring of juries (at the most important festivals, women are increasingly often chairpersons of juries) and various expert commissions. But is parity really being implemented? “We’ve made it! The rules of work of experts evaluating film projects in the Polish Film Institute have come to include a provision saying that ‘the number of women among the leaders of the Committee of Experts should not be lower than 35% of the total number of leaders’ and that ‘at least one expert on the committee should be a woman,’”³⁹ Agnieszka Wiśniewska, editor-in-chief of *Krytyka Polityczna*, exclaimed in her article *Pełny metraż w fabule to reżyserska męska twierdza* [*Feature fiction films are a stronghold for male directors*]. But let us look at this success level-headedly – admitting one female expert to each committee actually seems rather like a small concession of the male world towards women claiming their due rights than an act of equalising opportunities. Of course, this way of perceiving the reality is an example of plain nit-picking, which is not worth pursuing. If there is no other way, should one take what is given to them? This attitude probably influenced the fact that the composition of bodies such as Motion Picture Academies start-

³⁸ <https://pisf.pl/aktualnosci/rownouprawnienie-kobiet-i-mezczyzn-w-branzy-audio-wizualnej-podsumowanie-debaty/> [accessed on: 20 December 2020].

³⁹ <https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kultura/film/talarczyk-gubala-wywiad-kobiety-kino-polskie/> [accessed on: 20 December 2020].

ed to be somehow diversified. In the U.S. Academy, “[a]s *Variety* reports, for example, the number of women has doubled from 1,446 in 2015 to 3,179 today, and the share of people from outside the U.S. has also increased (they account for 49 per cent).”⁴⁰ In the Polish Film Academy, as of September 2019,⁴¹ women account for only 29% of the 691 members. Looking at the Polish film industry, one cannot help but conclude that the percentage is not very high. According to Polish observers of the film market in Poland, “Merely addressing the topic triggers negative emotions in some filmmakers and decision-makers in the cinema community. They immediately make it clear, and this includes women too, that they are against parities and quotas.”⁴² Why is that? There is a substantial likelihood that dividing the world according to gender triggers in them the same kind of opposition as the creation and inclusion of feminine forms in the language, which (after all) still encounters very strong resistance in Poland. “This can be changed, of course, provided that the general public is persuaded that feminine forms of the aforementioned names are necessary, and that their use will prove that women have equal rights in terms of exercising the respective professions and functions,”⁴³ the Polish Language Council indicated in its statement of position. The problem, however, seems to consist in the fact that women in the Polish “professional” world are characterised by resistance towards emphasising their gender, while a real professional revolution should involve stating it always and everywhere. We seemingly keep fighting for our cause, but we’re still too shy and it’s as if we were waiting for the other side’s permission and kind acceptance. “A

⁴⁰ <https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kultura/film/paulina-januszewska-oscarzy-nowe-zasady/> [accessed on: 20 December 2020].

⁴¹ Such a list can be found at: <http://pnf.pl/o-akademii/czlow/> [accessed on: 20 December 2020].

⁴² <https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kultura/film/talarczyk-gubala-wywiad-kobiety-kin-o-polskie/> [accessed on: 21 December 2020].

⁴³ Statement of position of the Polish Language Council (RJP) on feminine forms of names of professions and titles, RJP 14 March 2019 [accessed on: 20 December 2020].

year ago, we signed an agreement on behalf of the Festival (...). Last year was tough. But this year, the atmosphere is already much better. These are small steps, but unless you give up, it will be heading very slowly in the right direction,⁴⁴ said Wojciech Marczewski, Chairman of the Programming Board of the 44th Gdynia Film Festival, patting us on the back. Meanwhile, in December 2020, five out six awards of the Polish Filmmakers Association for outstanding artistic achievements and contribution to the development of Polish cinema were given to men. It can also be treated as an interesting fact confirming the proposition that the report entitled *Gender equality in the audiovisual industry*, published on the website of the Polish Film Institute, contains statements made mostly by men. It should be hoped that in the case of Polish cinema, the Women of Film initiative will prove to be a milestone.⁴⁵ In December 2020, the *Film Industry Code of Ethics and Good Practice* was published,

supposed to set working standards and to prevent ethical violations in artistic education, cultural institutions, the audiovisual industry and the creative professions. Its aim is to raise awareness of the phenomenon of discrimination, to enrich the equality policy and to spread good practices in the industry.⁴⁶

This is undoubtedly a giant step forward.

The desire to introduce parity expressed by members of the Women of Film initiative in Poland is by no means an announcement of terror, revenge on men or depriving 'gifted and able male directors' of their rights to awards and recognition. Systemic regulation would make it possible to distribute

⁴⁴ <https://pisf.pl/aktualnosci/rownouprawienie-kobiet-i-mezczyzn-w-branzy-audio-wizualnej-podsumowanie-debaty/> [accessed on: 23 December 2020].

⁴⁵ Cf. <https://www.facebook.com/kobietyfilmu/>, accessed on: 21 December 2020.

⁴⁶ https://www.sfp.org.pl/wydarzenia,5,31039,1,1,Kobiety-Filmu-oglaszaja-Kodeks-etyki-i-dobrych-praktyk-branzy-filmowej.html?fbclid=IwAR2FchkQbqsJH7q-CzlOk-MyRSrM2YFzz8TLjbc_4Ayp1s8XPSAk3pzE38oA [accessed on: 23 December 2020].

co-financing equally. Between 2005 and 2015, women directed only 28% of all films in Poland. Is it because girls don't want to be film directors? Because their gender proves that they are not ready or sufficiently gifted or able to make real, great cinema? These arguments, claiming that parity will introduce a quantitative (rather than a competence-based) division, echo the fears of those for whom giving up male influence is tantamount to a certain threat. In Hollywood, the epicentre of world noise and attention, as Paweł Pawlikowski put it, accepting his Academy Award for *Ida*, the distribution is even worse. Looking at the 2007–2017 list (1,100 films), women directed only 4%.⁴⁷

Pawlikowski's words probably do not come as a surprise to anyone. For decades, "(t)he dazzlingly glamorous and painfully politically correct Hollywood has only been able to feed a moving statement on #Me-Too to audiences (Oprah – we remember!) and feign coming changes. Well, none are to be seen for the time being."⁴⁸

No transformation could be noticed, at least not until 2020, when the aforementioned new rules were published regarding the criteria to be met by films (and actually the filmmakers) to compete for nominations and win the Oscar race for Best Picture. To be eligible for an award, films must meet two out of four representation and inclusion standards: a) on-screen representation, themes and narratives, b) creative leadership and project team, c) industry access and opportunities, and d) audience development. The rules are based on equalising the rights of the following social groups: women, racial or ethnic groups, LGBTQ+, people with cognitive or physical disabilities, or who are deaf or hard of hearing. A success? I would actually refrain from calling it that. First of all, the rules described here have met with a very negative response on the part of film audiences. Moreover, one cannot help the impression

⁴⁷ <https://offcamera.pl/article/kobiety-w-hollywood-nie-robia-filmow/581> [accessed on: 23 December 2020].

⁴⁸ <https://offcamera.pl/article/kobiety-w-hollywood-nie-robia-filmow/581> [accessed on: 23 December 2020].

that today's world needs a reasonable and balanced approach more than forcibly introduced rules, which are the equivalent of the stick rather than of the carrot. We obviously do realise that things have gone too far: the film industry, like so many others, has succumbed so strongly to racial and gender inequality that it will take a long time to adjust this extremely creaky machine. "Parity is something that sometimes needs to be imposed to produce a different kind of behaviour and way of thinking, but one must know that quotas are artificial. It's a prosthesis which is inserted to make a difference, but once the situation has changed, it is removed."⁴⁹ All will be fine, provided that this particular prosthesis was intended only as a switch or lever supposed to change the existing way of thinking. If the "prosthesis" is removed out at the right moment, it will fulfil its function, but if not, it will only lead to a situation in which women in film (both filmmakers and actresses) will always be treated by others, but also treat themselves, as a minority group, requiring additional protection and special rights, for which we know how to fight loudly and effectively, as the recent years have shown.

It is difficult to say which path the anti-discrimination policy in global cinema will take. It is equally impossible to ignore the fact that the film industry is subject to various determinants on different continents and that its decision-makers pursue very different development directions. It is hard to predict how Hollywood will fare under the new Academy Awards rules, which, like it or not, will determine the kind of films that will prevail in the coming years. Perhaps it would be easier to predict the future of Polish and European cinema?

The potential harbinger of much-awaited transformation may be Agnieszka Holland, a Pole with a definitely well-established and very high position on the international scene. In December 2020, Holland became President of the European Film Academy.⁵⁰ When greeting the new

⁴⁹ <https://pisf.pl/aktualnosci/rownouprawnienie-kobiet-i-mezczyzn-w-branzy-audio-wizualnej-podsumowanie-debaty/> [accessed on: 24 December 2020].

⁵⁰ It should be added that she is the third person ever heading this esteemed body. Her predecessors were Ingmar Bergman and Wim Wenders.

president, the chairman of the Board noted that “the future of the Academy is assured with these two new appointments⁵¹ and that their experience and standing in the industry backed by a re-invigorated board membership bodes well in these increasingly mercurial times in which we live.”⁵² Will the fact that a Polish woman is in power in the world of European film translate into the position of women in general in the world of cinema? This remains to be seen.⁵³

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⁵¹ Matthijs Wouter Knol will take over from Marion Döring as EFA Director.

⁵² [https://www.europeanfilmacademy.org/News-detail.155.0.html?&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=869&cHash=185a6b7378c32b7cf6e28ad0b4504d5c](https://www.europeanfilmacademy.org/News-detail.155.0.html?&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=869&cHash=185a6b7378c32b7cf6e28ad0b4504d5c) [accessed on: 20 December 2020].

⁵³ “The time is challenging and to save the creative power of independent cinema and the involvement of our audience, we need to use all our experience and imagination,” says Agnieszka Holland, “I believe there is an important role for EFA here and I am happy to be part of it.” ([https://www.europeanfilmacademy.org/News-detail.155.0.html?&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=869&cHash=185a6b7378c32b7cf6e28ad0b4504d5c](https://www.europeanfilmacademy.org/News-detail.155.0.html?&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=869&cHash=185a6b7378c32b7cf6e28ad0b4504d5c) [accessed on: 20 December 2020].

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Filmoznawczyni, glottodydaktyczka, której zainteresowania naukowe koncentrują się wokół filmu, serialu, telewizji oraz wykorzystaniu tych mediów w procesie edukacyjnym. Kierowniczka Centrum Języka i Kultury Chińskiej Uniwersytetu Śląskiego w Katowicach. Jest autorką i redaktorką artykułów i książek związanych z nauczaniem kultury polskiej i języka polskiego, m.in.: *Nowa polska półka filmowa. 100 filmów, które każdy cudzoziemiec zobaczyć powinien* (Katowice 2012 i 2015), *Krótkometrażowe filmy aktorskie i animowane w nauczaniu języka polskiego jako obcego* (Katowice 2018), *(Nie)codzienny polski. Teksty i konteksty* (Katowice 2018), *Licz na Banacha* (Katowice 2019) oraz *Polska półka historyczna: 100 faktów z historii Polski, które każdy cudzoziemiec znać powinien* (Katowice 2020). Prowadzi blog i kanał filmowy *Polska Półka Filmowa*: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeXplj05NyRVcWKg85wOITw>, <https://www.facebook.com/Polska-Półka-Filmowa-100108104897142>.

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