

Dina Iordanova, Review of Ewa Mazierska, Matilda Mroz, and Elzbieta Ostrowska, eds.
'The Cinematic Bodies of Eastern Europe and Russia: Between Pain and Pleasure.'
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Mazierska, Ewa, Matilda Mroz, and Elzbieta Ostrowska, eds. *The Cinematic Bodies of Eastern Europe and Russia: Between Pain and Pleasure*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016. 272 pp. £75.00. ISBN 978-1-4744-0514-0.

This book, initiated and seen through by a trio of Polish women working in Western academia, is filling a gap in the knowledge of Eastern European cinema. Each of the co-editors has done related work in the past; this time around they invite the wider community to engage in writing that explores the representations of the body, sexuality, and gender/queer matters as they relate to the cinema of the region and preface the collection with a nice essay.

The book is structured in line with the traditional geocultural assemblages that put the cinema of Russia together with the cinematic tradition of East Central Europe. In a way, it is good to see such an approach persist, even though the vast territory of the former Soviet Union is only touched upon in two of the twelve chapters. On the other hand, it is not really likely that many will be truly engaged with all chapters of the book (I only did it for the purpose of this review), as it is an established fact that more than twenty-five years into the aftermath of the Soviet bloc, the study of these cinemas no longer adheres to this drained clustering.

The volume brings together a group of scholars from different generations who work across North America and Europe. All contributions are engaging and up to standard, exploring a

variety of important subject matters—from the work of important directors such as Andrzej Wajda (E. Ostrowska) and Bela Tarr (C. Watt), through to masculinity in the 1950s Yugoslav film (N. Jovanovic) and Czech cinema of the 1960s (D. Sofra), post-Communist queer cinema (B. Williams, A. Mihailovic), and tableaux vivants in recent films from the region (A. Petho), as well as texts on other aspects of Hungarian and Polish cinema (H. Kiraly, M. Bugaj, D. Ostrowska).

Yet some essays made a deeper impression on me than others—and it is these texts that I am likely to look to assign to students and point out to doctoral students. First of all, Ewa Mazierska's level-headed assessment of the oeuvre of Walerian Borowczyk as “pornographer.” Not only is this text comprehensively researched and clearly written, but it brings into the picture the all-important contextualization that considers factors in the director's background and intellectual formation. All too often, studies over-engage with scrutiny of text at the expense of context. I admire Mazierska's systematic work toward correcting this omnipresent methodological shortcoming, and I hope to see other scholars follow suit and continue her approach. The other essay that stands out is by Helena Goscilo, who surveys the post-Communist trajectory of representations of the body and masculinity in Russian cinema. Impressive.

The hard-working collaborators on this volume have made a formidable contribution. It is a shame that the cost of this book will be too high for most individuals to acquire a personal copy.

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