



Strasbourg, 18 September 2014

## ANALYSIS OF THE THEMES DEALT WITH IN FILMS SUPPORTED IN 2013

This study concerns the **themes addressed in films supported in 2013**, i.e. **72 projects**. Since Eurimages finances art-house films, we thought it was important to find out what subjects the film writers were concerned with and whether they were linked, for example, to topical themes, changes in society, etc., or whether they tend to concern culture, literature, philosophy ... We also thought it was important to find out whether women have different concerns and a different vision from men.

### 1. Types of film of projects presented in 2013

#### a) by gender of the director:

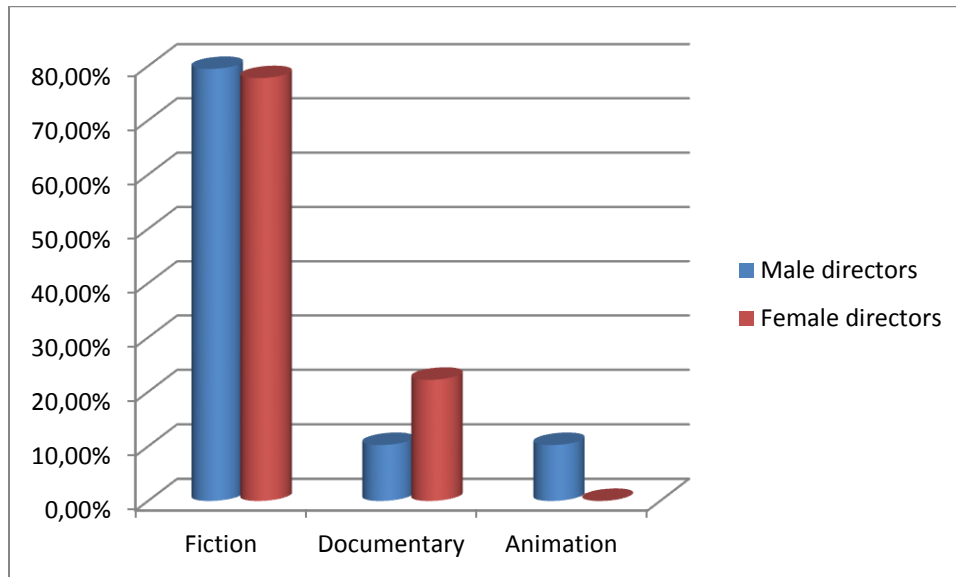
Eligible projects				
Films (Type)	Totals	Male directors	Female directors	%
Fiction films	99	82	17	17.17%
Documentaries	14	9	5	35.71%
Animations	7	7	0	0.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18.33%</b>

Supported projects				
Films (Type)	Totals	Male directors	Female directors	%
Fictions	57	46.5	10.5	18.42%
Documentaries	9	6	3	33.33%
Animations	6	6	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>58.5</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>18.75%</b>

It can be seen that:

- a very large majority of the films supported were fiction films: 82.5% of the eligible films and 79% of the films supported;
- the percentage of female directors in the projects supported (18.75%), compared to the eligible projects (18.34%) is half a point higher, which confirms their higher success rate in 2013, as already shown by the budgets study (DGIV/EUR (2014))... ;
- the presence of women is much higher in documentaries than in fiction films, whereas there are no female directors of animation films.

The percentage breakdown of type of film supported by gender of the director is as follows:



It can be seen that a very large majority of film directors, both male and female, focus on fiction films.

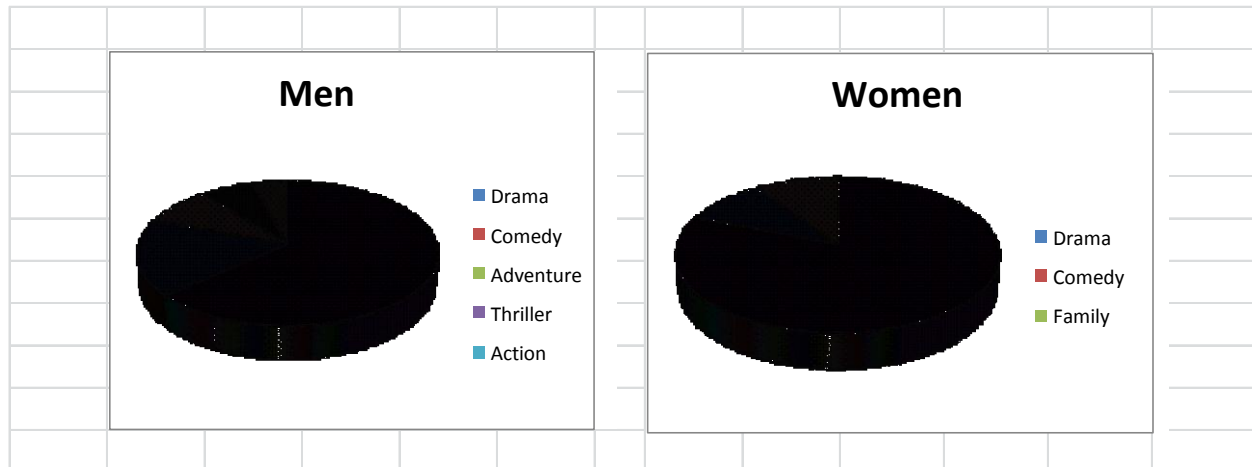
**b) Fiction supported projects by genre of film and gender of the director:**

Fiction projects supported by film genre						
Genre/Fiction films	Totals	Percentage	Male directors	% men	Female directors	% women
Drama	38	66.67%	29.5	63.44%	8.5	80.95%
Comedy	9	15.79%	8	17.20%	1	9.52%
Adventure	4	7.02%	4	8.60%	0	0.00%
Thriller	3	5.26%	3	6.45%	0	0.00%
Action	2	3.51%	2	4.30%	0	0.00%
Family	1	1.75%	0	0.00%	1	9.52%
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>46.5</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

It is noticeable:

- that most of the projects supported by Eurimages are “dramas” (68%), followed by “comedies” (16%);
- that women are mainly present in the “drama” genre (81%), followed by “comedy” and “family films” (9.5% in each case);
- while men are present in a larger range of genres and are to be found mainly in “drama” (over 63%), they are also often present in the “comedy” genre (over 17%).
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## Breakdown of fiction films directed by men or women, according to film genre



## 2. Analysis of the themes addressed

This analysis was carried out using the synopses of the 72 films supported. The most difficult aspect of the work was to place the films in predefined theme categories which could be applied over time so that the results obtained and their evolution can be compared from one year to the next.

### a) Categories

We have identified the nine following thematic categories<sup>1</sup>:

- 1) Human relations
- 2) Specific life-styles, social problems
- 3) Feelings, psychology
- 4) Politics, economy, ecology
- 5) Literature, history, biopics,
- 6) Women's status
- 7) Human interest stories, violence
- 8) Science-fiction, fantasy, the paranormal
- 9) Others

The “**human relations**” category often concerns conventional or unconventional couple relationships, adulterous relationships, complicated family relationships in the context of films about broken families, parent-child relationships and sometimes relationships between friends, neighbours, groups...

In the second category “**Specific lifestyles and social problems**”, reference is often made to certain regions of Europe, remote areas, inhospitable regions (the Far North, high-lying mountain areas...), and regions at war or dominated by the Mafia. These films also illustrate the contrast between rich and poor, the exclusion of certain minorities, life in prison, and rural life in deprived areas. The social problems addressed are more diverse and often draw on topical subjects: violence at school, obesity,

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<sup>1</sup> NB: a film may, of course, address several of these themes.

euthanasia, old age and the end of life, adoption, immigration, surrogate mothers, high-performance sports, war reporters, prostitution and also cryonics and scientific experimentation...

The third category “**feelings and psychology**”, which is often linked to the first two, deals with feelings such as loneliness, courage, grief, domination, harassment and perversity, rebellion against a system, manipulation of the media, the need for love, particularly in the case of children, teenagers’ need to assert themselves, the absolute need for success, jealousy, betrayal, solidarity, feelings of guilt, sacrifice, religious faith and fundamentalism, the conflict between reason and passion, the meaning of life in general,...

On the other hand, there are fewer films addressing issues relating to “**politics, the economy and ecology**”, despite the economic and financial crisis in Europe. Only one project deals with corruption and the non-transparency of banks, another with the economic crisis in Portugal and a third with the destruction of forests. The other projects in this category concern more traditional themes such as unemployment and smuggling, or controversial political periods of the past.

In the “**literature, history and biopics**” category there are 25 projects dealing with various themes and different periods of history such as political activism in Latin America in the nineteen-sixties, the 1870 Franco-Prussian war, the first and second world wars, the Balkan war, the Angolan War of Independence, the 30-year war between Catholics and Protestants, apartheid in South Africa, communism, the Cold War, the civil war in the Netherlands in 1653, the civil war in the Lebanon, the Armenia/Azerbaijan conflict and the civil war in Darfur.

In the “**women’s status**” category there are only 6 projects dealing with specific situations such as religious divorce in Israel (“Get”: liberation of women by their husbands), the situation of women in Albania, women forced into prostitution or women who were courageous enough to find their own place in a world dominated by men.

#### **b) Number of the themes addressed**

The 72 projects supported addressed 216 themes, i.e. an average of 3 topics per film.

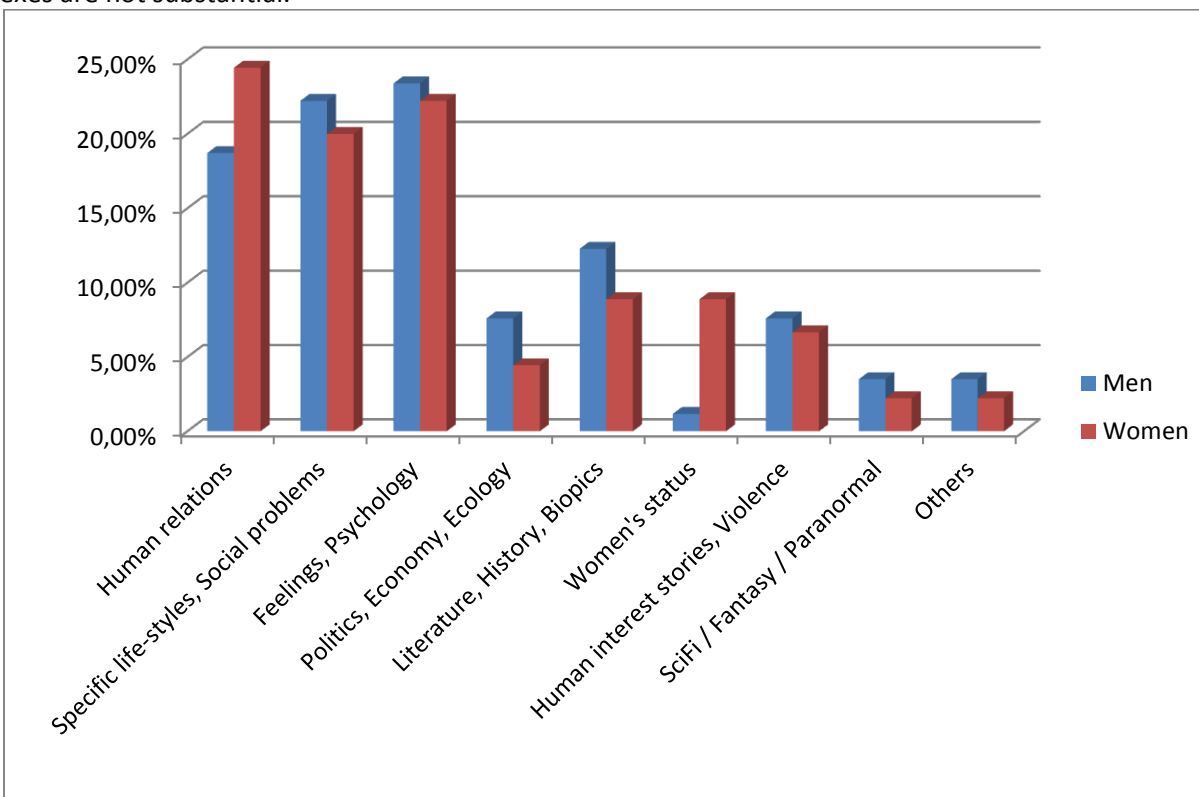
<b>Analysis of the synopsis</b>	<b>Total projects</b>	<b>Total themes</b>
Men and Women	72	216
Average	3	
Men	58.5	171
Average	2.92	
Percentage of men out of the total	81.25%	79.17%
Women	13.5	45
Average	3.33	
Percentage of women out of total	18.75%	20.83%

This table shows that the films directed by women address a wider range of themes: 3.33 themes on average per film, compared to 2.92 for men.

c) The breakdown of the themes addressed is as follows:

CATEGORIES	Total themes	Percentage	Men	Percentage	Women	Percentage
Human relations	43	19.91%	32	18.71%	11	24.44%
Specific lifestyles, Social problems	47	21.76%	38	22.22%	9	20.00%
Feelings, Psychology	50	23.15%	40	23.39%	10	22.22%
Politics, Economy, Ecology	15	6.94%	13	7.60%	2	4.44%
Literature, History, Biopics	25	11.57%	21	12.28%	4	8.89%
Women's Status	6	2.78%	2	1.17%	4	8.89%
Human interest stories, Violence	16	7.41%	13	7.60%	3	6.67%
SciFi / Fantasy / Paranormal	7	3.24%	6	3.51%	1	2.22%
Others	7	3.24%	6	3.51%	1	2.22%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

The first 3 categories are those most often addressed in films supported by Eurimages (65% in total). In these categories, there are slightly more women concerned by “human relations” and slightly fewer by “Life-styles and social problems” and “Feelings and psychology” but the differences between the two sexes are not substantial.



There are far more male directors in the “Literature, history and biopics” category and in “Politics, economy and ecology”, whereas there are far fewer in the “Women’s status” category.

Finally, there are as many female as male directors of films dealing with “Human interest stories and violence”.

## Conclusion

All in all, it can be seen that the themes addressed by both women and men focus on human relations, feelings, and social and humanist values. Stories which often analyse the human soul and delve into the darkest recesses of the lives of men, women, couples, teenagers ... which talk about life, human nature and the complexity of human behaviour... or those which describe the lives of individuals who, in making choices, are torn between their free will and external constraints.

Sometimes far-fetched and often purely fictional stories, which also inform us about traditions and the social and political situation in different European countries, poverty and the difficulties that some social classes or marginalised minorities have in surviving.

It comes as no surprise to discover that men seldom address issues concerning women’s status, while women do not hesitate to address issues such as violence and human interest stories.

What is more surprising, in our opinion, is that very few male or female directors seem concerned with themes linked to crucial, topical issues, political problems, armed conflict, climate change, environmental degradation and the endangering of the planet ... or trying to imagine what the future might be like.

It should, however, be pointed out that this study is merely an analysis of the synopses of these films, which is insufficient to correctly assess their full content. Some of the elements that support the main account, for example the choice of background, the social or historical context in which the story takes place, can become subjects in their own right whereas they are not always included in the linear narrative of the film, which focuses more on describing the key moments in the plot.

Moreover, the study concerns only 72 films, 13 of which were directed by women. The sample is therefore too small to be able to draw general conclusions in particular whether one can say that women’s concerns and vision differ from men’s.

Nevertheless, the outcome of this study is interesting and although it concerns an insufficiently representative sample, it has given us the opportunity to establish an approach and a methodological framework for analysing future data, with a view to a study that can evolve over a period of 4 or 5 years.

We therefore intend to continue to conduct this analysis in 2014 with regard to **all eligible projects**, using, in addition to the synopsis, the analysis of readers and above all the **film director’s note of intention**, which should contain further relevant information. The combined data from 2013 and 2014 will provide us with a much larger sample and a broader view from which we will probably be able to draw more accurate conclusions concerning the themes that are of concern to film writers, whether male or female.