



„PETER AND THE WOLF”

New Polish Films: WITH SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Andrzej Wajda's School: THE MASTER AND HIS TRAINEES

“Peter and the Wolf”: SECOND OSCAR FOR A FILM MADE IN SE-MA-FOR STUDIO

Russia, Afghanistan and Belarus: IN POLISH DOCUMENTARIES

KINOC

Polish Cinema 2008



**THE TRAGEDY OF PRISONERS OF WAR, THE MISERY OF THEIR FAMILIES
ANDRZEJ WAJDA'S “KATYŃ”**

“Kino” monthly, a journal providing a perceptive and original insight into various aspects of the film industry, has accompanied Polish cinema for over forty years now. In line with this tradition, in this special English language issue, we present a selection of articles published in “Kino” in the last year. They include reviews, interviews, as well as articles concerning the history of Polish cinema and opinion columns. However, we focus on the most interesting Polish feature films (of which 41 have been made there between the beginning of 2007 and May 2008), as well as documentary and animated films of the last year. Some of them could be seen at various international festivals, where they received numerous awards. The most prestigious award, an Oscar, came to the short animated film, “Peter and the Wolf”, which is a British-Polish co-production, directed by Suzie Templeton and made in the Studio Se-Ma-For in Łódź. On the other hand, the most awarded Polish film was “Tricks” by Andrzej Jakimowski, which till April 2008 received 12 awards, including at the festivals in Gdynia, Venice, Tokyo, Mannheim, Sao Paulo and Miami.

However, what counts more than awards is the fact that Polish viewers have regained pleasure in watching Polish films. In 2005, the total number of viewers watching Polish films in cinema was only 700,000; in 2008 it was over 8 million. It is also worth adding that many of recent Polish films are international co-productions with German, Austrian, Italian and Dutch partners. In this special issue the new Polish films are presented by their authors, and reviewed by the best Polish critics, including some young ones. We also write about some films which are currently in production due to interest they attracted.

NEXT ISSUE OF “KINO POLISH CINEMA” IN SPRING 2009

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JERZY KAWALEROWICZ

When he said in one of his interviews, "I saw everything as if I was looking from behind the camera", he revealed perhaps the most characteristic feature of his films.

LIFE IS UNPREDICTABLE

PIOTR ŚMIAŁOWSKI SPEAKS WITH
ANDRZEJ JAKIMOWSKI



ANDRZEJ JAKIMOWSKI

The first film by Andrzej Jakimowski, “Squint Your Eyes” (2002), suggested that its director possesses a unique talent. His second film, “Tricks”, confirms this opinion.

– There has been a 5 year gap between your début and the making of “Tricks”. You gave the impression of not being at all worried that this process lasted so long, seeming to know exactly what you want and that you will achieve it.

– I don’t feel compelled to making films. I do it when I feel like it and when I feel that I have something important to say, and this does not happen all that often. Besides, my films are very personal so I write the screenplays myself, and writing a screenplay – similarly to books – requires time.

– As with your first film, “Squint Your Eyes”, you refuse to use any kind of tricks that would show a character in too definitive a way.

– I try to avoid explicitly defined characters and I hope that I do not have many of them in my films. Besides, I believe that you do not meet such clearly defined people at all in life. To tell you the truth, I don’t even seem explicitly defined to myself. Of course I envy those omniscient authors and their characters who know everything about themselves, and in addition, eagerly reveal their desires, sufferings and various other experiences before the camera. But I prefer my characters. They also feel something and strive towards something, they just don’t like to talk about it.

– Each of your characters is bound up with a clear, distinct mood. Do you start creating the profile of a character by imagining a general atmosphere that surrounds them?

– Not really. By having an outline of a character in my head I begin to wonder about what takes, scenes, what situations could tell me and the viewers something interesting about him. This is what interests me at the beginning. Yet, I would never dare to say that I invent my

characters. I think that even the most prominent writers can’t do that. Of course, sometimes I take a certain creative initiative, but I am not always pleased with the result and if, whilst working on the set and later in editing, I can’t find anything convincing, I simply abandon the character or even the whole plot that surrounds them.

– The protagonist of the film, a barely ten-year-old boy, conveys an immense sensitivity. As if he didn’t want to put off his father or as if he believed that he shouldn’t try to interfere with the course of events too much.

– The boy becomes aware of the fact that if he behaved in a different manner he would put his father in a difficult position. Meanwhile, what he really wants is to reawaken in his father a wish to come back, but without his father realising that he’s trying. The boy is at the stage of his life when a person begins to experiment and provoke the world around him. He discovers that you can cause things to happen in a certain way although the

consequences are unpredictable. But it is this unpredictability that gives him hope that maybe, with a bit of luck, he might achieve his goal.

I don’t believe in fate. Fortunately, life is unpredictable and leads us through winding paths. In my opinion it usually leads us to our goal in the end, it can be kind. That is what I talk about in “Tricks”, but I would not call this kindness *fate*.

– Stefek (the name of the boy) shows stubbornness and perseverance in his repeated gestures through which he asks fate for kindness. It becomes a kind of ritual, a childish prayer...

– Yes, because the boy subconsciously feels that fate is more likely to be generous when he consciously goes after what he wants. Through these gestures he tries to influence matters that are out of his control.

– An important element of “Tricks” is the ever present railway. Stefek often sees his father on the platform. The trains could also be a part of his childish fantasy. What did the railway mean to you in the film? ▶



“TRICKS”: DAMIAN UL, RAFAŁ GUŹNICZAK



STEFEK AND HIS FATHER ON THE PLATFORM (DAMIAN UL, TOMASZ SAPRYK)

► – The railway perfectly symbolises the world’s organisation and the power of the outside forces which each person must take into account. Seen through Stefek’s eyes, it’s something inaccessible and mysterious; he doesn’t understand its mechanism. He is discovering that he understands the system better when he looks at it from above, from the point of view of the railway controller.


– Trains and railway stations often appear in student etudes. They are thought of as

fascinated by the truth that often appears in the improvised behaviour of these people, which you noticed while you were still a documentary filmmaker?

– Yes, very much so. I just adore authentic things. I could look at them for hours. That is why I like arranging unexpected situations on set. I hate repeating takes many times, as it is really only the first take that records something spontaneous. It is, however, a very difficult way to work. Part of the material in

recording the truth. I’m not harming anyone. Besides, not only the actors’ performance but also their presence on set is a kind of convention, in which everyone is aware of the fact that someone could record something at any moment.

– I should have asked about this at the beginning of our conversation, but when you were talking about the personal tone of your films I hesitated about asking this question. Your film gives the impression of



I try to avoid explicitly defined characters. Of course I envy those omniscient authors and their characters who eagerly reveal their desires. But I prefer my characters. They also feel something and strive towards something, they just don’t like to talk about it.



ELKA, STEFEK’S SISTER (EWELINA WALENDZIAK)

visually attractive, often because of their ugliness. Did you look at the railway that appeared in “Tricks” in that way too?

– I have not seen an ugly train yet. I like them all. It’s a pity, though, that hiring them costs so much. Because of this we had to film all the scenes that took place on a railway in only four days, because we simply didn’t have the money for more.

– Almost all the most important roles in “Tricks” are played by amateurs. Are you still

“Tricks” is made up of private moments stolen from the actors: for example a portrait of the boy or a single glance, a sentence uttered by the actor before I said *action* or immediately after I said *cut*.

– That’s almost as if you were using hidden cameras...

– A film director shouldn’t have scruples – if he wants to achieve the intended effect. After all, I am only really

referring to something precise, a painful experience in your life. Is that the case?

– My father died not long ago.

Now I can only meet him in my dreams or in my imagination. The ending of the film has another meaning which might not be perceived by the viewers, that probably only I can see. ■

“TRICKS” IS REVIEWED ON PAGE 67

Our knowledge about Katyń atrocities is far from complete, because Polish historians still have no access to certain documents kept in Russian archives. However, from historical perspective Wajda’s “Katyń” is as reliable as possible.

KATYŃ: A FELLOWSHIP OF SILENCE

PIOTR ŚMIAŁOWSKI TALKS WITH
STANISŁAW M. JANKOWSKI,
THE HISTORICAL CONSULTANT
FOR THE FILM “KATYŃ”



STANISŁAW M. JANKOWSKI

– Polish historians who have, in various years, co-operated with film industry as historical consultants have usually – which may surprise some – approached possible factual inconsistencies fairly liberally. Do you regard it as acceptable?

– I wasn’t immediately able to adapt to this way of thinking. During my first reading of the screenplay for this film about the Katyń massacre I was still very devoted to the rule that even the smallest detail should be in accordance with facts – a rule which in my profession is very important. It took Andrzej Wajda to convince me that I was wrong because we were not, after all, shooting a documentary. Of course, factual consistency should be preserved when possible; however, it is thanks to fictitious events that we are able to present characteristic moods and situations most poignantly. Wajda’s film begins on the 17 September 1939 when the Soviet army crossed Poland’s Eastern border. Two waves of people meet on a bridge: on the one hand we have those who are fleeing the West from the Germans and on the other – those who are fleeing the East from the Soviets. In reality such meetings occurred later, on the 17 September the German army had not reached that far. However through the allegorical character

of the situation, in which refugees from both the East and the West meet, Wajda showed that on that very day Poland’s destiny, taken in the hands of two military forces, was decided.

– In Wajda’s film, life in the camp is demonstrated through scenes of Christmas Eve, the general’s speech which is supposed to comfort the soldiers, and also through conversations among the officers about the tactical manoeuvres of the September Campaign. Virtually identical descriptions of such situations appear in many diaries found with the bodies of the officers in Katyń.

– We know almost everything about life in the Kozelsk camp. Fifty diaries were found with the bodies of the officers. In 1989 Jan Stepek published a book “The diaries found in Katyń”, which was a study of twenty-two of them. I compiled the remaining diaries after 1991. Furthermore, we also have the reports of the camp authorities from the NKVD, which I am studying at the moment.

– One of the protagonists of “Katyń” is Lieutenant Jerzy, who lands in the Kozelsk camp immediately after the September defeat, however, thanks to mere coincidence, manages to survive. About forty officers from all three camps had similar luck. What else, besides for good fortune, allowed them to escape death?

– Several officers of German origin were supported by the German Embassy. Those who could be useful to the Soviet Union survived. Similarly, all the agents recruited by the NKVD were also deemed useful and so survived. In case Polish intelligence or the intelligence of any other country took interest in why those particular people were not executed, it was most probably decided that a group of other Polish officers should be allowed to survive – officers who were not agents and who, using the language of the secret service, were to *cover for* these agents.

– Wajda’s film shows Kraków shortly after the end of the war as a city which instinctively lives by the desire to maintain the memory of the Katyń massacre. At the same time everyone lives in fear of the Communist authorities and what they might do to those who know anything and dare speak about it. Therefore, the memory of Katyń was a phenomenon that everyone confronted individually, without having the courage to share their experiences with others... ►

► – It is a very complicated matter. At the beginning of 1945 Kraków choked on the apparent freedom. However, as soon as in March – a fact which not many people, including Wajda, were aware of – deportations to Siberia began. Over two thousand AK (Home Army) officers, representatives of the Polish Government in London and members of the intelligentsia were deported. Because the deportations were taking place at the

the Soviets – in order to strengthen their propagandist actions concerning the Katyń case – filmed a documentary presenting the exhumation. Even witnesses appear in the Soviet film, according to which the massacre was performed by the Nazis. Wajda quotes parts of these films. – The Katyń issue became the object of an extreme propaganda struggle between the Germans and Soviets. The Russian film was often shown on the market square in



ANDRZEJ WAJDA ON THE SET OF “KATYŃ”

I hope that, if Russian viewers saw “Katyń”, they would first and foremost see the cruelty of the Communist system. After all, millions of innocent Russians were murdered in a similar way.

same time as interrogations and arrests of people who could know the truth about the Katyń massacre, people began to link the two things. Kraków was overtaken by fear. Yet simultaneously, this fear gave people the feeling of a certain fellowship – a fellowship through silence and the need for resistance.

– And what kind of mood could be detected among Poles two years earlier when, in April 1943, the Germans first announced that in the forest near Smolensk they had discovered the graves of Polish officers executed by the Soviets and when they began to publish lists of the identified bodies in “Goniec Krakowski” (Polish newspaper)? Did Poles believe in these reports?

– At that time society was very confused. After all, every one knew that German propaganda was untrustworthy. Nevertheless, many people believed the Germans. Goebbels wrote in his diary that the Katyń case gave him enough propaganda material for at least a few months, and rightfully so. Viewing the Katyń lists became a ritual for many Poles, thanks to which they learned the truth about the fate of their loved ones. If, however, they failed to find their names on the lists they could maintain hope that their fathers and husbands were still alive.

However, after the war, the Soviet propaganda and the Communist newspapers promulgated the belief that many of the officers, whose names were found on the lists published by the Germans, were in fact alive. This information only prolonged the uncertainty of the Katyń families.

– In 1943 the Germans filmed a documentary showing the exposed bodies of the victims of the massacre, a year later

Kraków and in a few cinemas. At the time the NKVD collected information through agents on whether the public applauded during the screenings, or if anyone said anything, etc. Reports of this exist to this day.

– The details concerning the making of the Soviet film were kept very secret. I have heard, however, that after many years it was discovered that the NKVD had executed close to one thousand people before starting to make the film, and it is their bodies – and not the bodies of the Polish officers murdered in 1940 – that in fact appear in the film.

– The Soviets, after recapturing the area of Smolensk from German power in the autumn of 1943, found eight collective graves in the Katyń forest with over four thousand bodies. These bodies were thoroughly described earlier by the technical committee of the Polish Red Cross. The NKVD eliminated the whole cemetery with bulldozers. Indeed, there are no bodies of Polish officers in the Soviet film. There are just two corpses, but historians have been unable to determine where these came from. The notion that the NKVD had executed close to one thousand people especially for the film is possible, but we do not have any evidence that it is true. Newspapers and forged correspondence from 1941 were planted alongside the bodies in an attempt to deceitfully indicate that the massacre had been performed by the Germans when they took over the region after their attack on the USSR.

– Let me go back to the diaries found with the bodies of the officers in Katyń. In 1943 the Germans took them, along with the discovered letters, to Kraków. However, in

September 1944 they moved away this evidence. In your book “Forty an hour” you write that shortly after, in February 1945, the articles were most probably burned near Dresden and this is why to this day we only possess the copies of the diaries and documents. How were they made?

– Dr Jan Zygmunt Robel, whose character actually appears in the film, was an employee of the Institute of Forensic Medicine and Criminology and in 1943 and 1944, when studies were carried out on the Katyń documents, he took home and hid some diaries which particularly interested him. Someone – unfortunately we do not know who it was to this day – took some of the documents out of the Institute in 1944 and passed them on to Professor Friedberg in the Archive of New Acts. Friedberg’s wife cleaned them and read them at home. A small amount was probably returned to the widows that they knew personally and the remaining ones

were passed on to the Kraków diocese, where they were discovered only in 1952 by the Communist secret services. Nonetheless, all the originals that are preserved make up only a trace of the Katyń legacy lost in the fire in Dresden.

– Wajda’s film ends with the scene of the execution in Katyń. Who decided on its final episode? After all, no-one really knows how the Polish officers died.

– Wajda and I discussed this scene at length, the director contemplated on how to present it for a long time. Finally he decided to film the officers standing over the ditches into which they would soon fall. In “Katyń” there are also scenes in which the officers are shot in the basements of the NKVD. In that case we were absolutely sure of how to show them as accounts of the NKVD officers involved in these executions exist. I have to admit that I was worried about how the execution scenes would turn out in the

film. However, when I saw them in the pre-edited version of the film I was literally shocked. I didn’t know how to get my thoughts together...

– How did the families of the victims of the Katyń massacre react to Wajda’s film?

– The characters of “Katyń” and their fates are presented in such a way that every one who lived through this tragedy was able to identify a part of their own experiences in the film. The granddaughter of General Smorawiński called me not long ago and asked me for Wajda’s address in order to thank him for undertaking the subject of the Katyń massacre and for showing her grandfather in the film.

– What could the reaction of Russian viewers be to Wajda’s film?

– I hope that, if Russian viewers saw “Katyń”, they would first and foremost see the cruelty of the Communist system. After all, millions of innocent Russians

were murdered in a similar way. However, I am afraid that leading Russian politicians will return to Gorbachev’s idea, who shortly before officially admitting Russia’s role in the massacre, demanded finding evidence of killing over eighty thousand Red Army officers by Poles in 1920, which is of course untrue. I would not be surprised if Russia made a film about an alleged Polish crime in response to “Katyń”.

– Do you regard your involvement in the film about the execution of Polish officers in Katyń as a sort of crowning of your work as a historian, who has studied all the circumstances of this crime?

– Of course. I am proud that I could help Wajda in the realisation of this project and that many of my suggestions appeared on the screen. I felt that my knowledge served a noble purpose. ■

“KATYŃ” IS REVIEWED ON PAGE 64



“KATYŃ”: THE INTERNED SOLDIERS AT KOZIELSK (PAWEŁ MAŁASZYŃSKI)

“KANAL” 50 YEARS AGO: THE PARADOX OF RECEPTION

TADEUSZ LUBELSKI

It seems obvious nowadays, that the 50th anniversary of the Polish film school should be counted from the premiere of Andrzej Wajda’s “Kanal” [literally – “Sewer”]. Half a century ago, however, its premiere was not much of an artistic event. At the beginning, there was no indication, that it would be the starting point for a new wave in Polish cinema, let alone the most important one in its history.

At first, Wajda’s film caused confusion, which was reported in an anecdote in Zygmunt Kałużyński’s review in the “Polityka” weekly (1957, no. 12) – which, even if it was made up, was made up very well. The critic was standing in a long queue to buy tickets for the film, when a couple leaving the cinema after the previous screening told him: *It’s not worth waiting for.* “Kanal” attracted long queues of viewers, but the reception was mostly negative. This hostility is now understood, and it could be foreseen even back then. Jerzy Stefan Stawiński, the screenplay’s writer, was fully aware of this, which is proven by the auto-commentary in the film’s programme, reprinted below. For a dozen or so years, the Warsaw Uprising was a forbidden topic in Polish public life, and even when it was spoken about – it was usually to disavow it. This situation only changed in 1956 when there was a political turnaround. It was expected that the first few films which broke the silence would present the insurgents in a positive light, would give them justice. Released in the spring of 1957, “Kanal” was supposed to fulfil these first, most basic and most obvious expectations.

But it didn’t, or even didn’t want to, as we can conclude from the writer’s statement, written in anticipation of future attacks. It can be said that the creators – while avoiding any artistic calculation – wanted to present to the collective consciousness their own, bitter and tragic vision of the uprising. Negative criticism seemed to have been anticipated, and even Wajda himself didn’t defend the film too vehemently. Following the first wave of hostile reception (after the pre-release screening at “Po Prostu” club, where “Kanal” was severely criticised), he juxtaposed in his notes the audience’s expectations with his right to have his own vision of the Warsaw Uprising as a defeat, in spite of heroism; defeat decided by a higher power that the insurgents hadn’t taken into account. Such a tragic vision of contemporary

Polish history became the blueprint for all future depictions by the Polish Film School. *A story about the so called heroism of an ordinary soldier, ending in some emotive image, never would have interested me as material for a film, even though I know, that this is the type of film that our audience wants,* added the director in the same notes.

As a matter of fact, looking back many years later, Wajda himself was not content with “Kanal”. “I think, that I didn’t fully exploit the potential of the topic and Stawiński’s story”, he told Stanisław Janicki. He regretted that he did not make the first part, set on the ground, as short as possible (*it’s neither a documentary, nor a set-up for the characters’ dramatic story*), to concentrate on the journey through the sewers. Similarly, he regretted that he did not find a powerful enough shortcut to begin the story, such as the beginning of David Lean’s “The Bridge on the River Kwai”: *They are burying the dead, and one of the soldiers says: “Here lies... Weaver, I’ve forgotten who we buried”.* It turns out that they are burying their own men and do not even know who they are. *When you have something like this, you do not have to make your film any longer. If you do not manage to grab the action by the throat and show its convulsions, all you can do is develop the plot.*

Judging by the first, post-premiere wave of reception, it wasn’t the artistic deficiencies that bothered “Kanal’s” audience most. They were mostly put off by two things: the lack of a credible depiction of the Uprising itself and, above all, the lack of sympathy towards the insurgents, and a clear indication of their heroism.

This first, historic deficiency was fully reported by Władysław Bartoszewski in his often quoted review for “Stolica”. *Let’s be honest: “Kanal” is advertised as the first film about the Warsaw Uprising*, wrote Bartoszewski. *This should oblige us to answer the following question: does “Kanal” provide*



OUT OF THE SEWERS: WIĘCZYŚLAW GLIŃSKI

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI, THE WRITER OF “KANAL”, WROTE THE FOLLOWING IN THE PROGRAMME FOR THE FILM:

„Kanal” is not a film about the Warsaw Uprising. It does not aspire to be. Showing the full extent of the Uprising and presenting the whole truth concerning this event would require a huge epic work. We had different intentions. In writing the short story “Kanal” and then the screenplay, I merely wanted to show one of the tragic and, at least for me, one of the most memorable episodes of the extermination of a city with a million people. I have created characters for the film, but in actuality their horrifying journey really happened at the end of September 1944 to insurgents in Mokotów, when they tried to reach the centre of Warsaw by underground sewers. Here, the boldest fantasies were taken over by reality.

For many years, there was nothing written about the Warsaw Uprising; its participants were stigmatised as criminals. Polish society rightfully demands this wrongdoing be amended. “Kanal” is the first film that talks about this, probably most tragic, chapter in Polish history; this puts even more responsibility on the shoulders of its creators. I am afraid that neither this film, nor this story, can satisfy the demands of those who await a grand-scale glorification

of the Uprising. “Kanal” is a brutal film, it presents the naked truth, it is not a colourful story about Polish heroism. I would rather call it an epic about wasted heroism. Young people who, after spending several years in the underground, come out to fight for the liberation of Warsaw, were pushed into hell. In this place, there are no rules of fighting on the frontline, where people die for their homeland, bearing a white and red flag. Here, in the sewer, death is horribly pointless. None of these romantic combatants wants to die in this way. In such conditions, people’s masks fall off, myths are destroyed and faith is crushed; everyone is naked. Those, who entered the sewer, already fought heroically for two months among ruins and flames, attacked by tanks, airplanes and mine-throwers; but this, at least, was a reasonable fight. Now, pushed into hell, left with no support or hope, they die under the city, horribly, like rats. There were beautiful people among them; “Kanal” is supposed to recall their tragedy and pay tribute to them; but, above all, it is supposed to be an accusation and a warning. A time, in which people die like that, should never be repeated.

JERZY STEFAN STAWIŃSKI

► a faithful image, in ideology and history, psychology and narrative, of the events of the Uprising, or at least a fragment of it? The answer is no”. He then went on to analyse the main mistakes and most implausible aspects of the film: the fate of the soldiers from Mokotów was in fact decided over-ground, not under; the division of a company into groups after entering the sewers was incomprehensible (a disciplined and unified squad would have been much more likely to survive); no uprising leader ever pondered his decisions like Zadra (the psychological falseness of the end scene where the sergeant is shot was stressed by all reviewers); the liaison between Stokrotka and the composer was improbable. According to Bartoszewski, the only authentic aspects of the film were the character of Korab and the mass scenes at the beginning.

Yet another harsher criticism was the lack of emotional compensation. It was probably articulated most explicitly by Juliusz Kydryński in Kraków’s “Życie Literackie” weekly. We have

love Poland. The critic decided to delete this whole passage from the review, only years later reprinting it in a four-volume selection of his texts entitled “My Film Library”.

Other leading film critics from the time, Bolesław Michałek (in “Teatr i Film” journal) and Zygmunt Kałużyński (in “Polityka” weekly), were unanimous in accusing Wajda of weak psychological motivation and avoiding to show what caused the tragedy of the characters. Kałużyński even went so far as say that the authors were trying to play down the events, which is the direct opposite of what would be regarded the most important characteristic of the School. In this first film about the Uprising, he wrote, such an attitude is not completely unjustified: they probably didn’t want to aggravate the wounds, while attempted to show many true events, in which they succeeded, since their film neutralises numerous emotional traumas. One of the few positive opinions was offered by Jerzy Płażewski who interpreted Wajda’s film as a tragedy. Płażewski wrote in “Przegląd Kulturalny”: To



SOLDIERS OF WARSAW UPRISING: TADEUSZ JAN CZAR, TERESA BEREZOWSKA, EMIL KAREWICZ

waited for thirteen years for a Polish film about the uprising. Warsaw Uprising! For how many people in our country are these two words still the most vivid recollection of a tragedy, not only national, but also personal? How many people have lost their loved ones? How many consequences of this uprising – so heroic and lofty – were suffered by the whole nation?! Regardless of its political aspects, the nation is proud of it, and rightfully so. And what of all this can we see in the film? asked the critic, only to answer himself later on in the article: two moments of direct combat, a decrepit commander, his deputy – a drunkard, scoundrel and womaniser, two implausible love plots, one character of a mother, as if transported from a painting by Artur Grottger [famous Polish painter, specialising in battle scenes] and a lot of vulgarities. I consider it my duty to point out, that this film, from the plot, through dialogue, to the acting, is completely unsuccessful, Kydryński summed up.

Even Aleksander Jackiewicz, who was of a generally favourable opinion of the film, accused Wajda (in the “Trybuna Ludu” newspaper), of not giving viewers the chance to identify with the characters. “Kanal” is, most of all, an artistic account of the time, it’s dominated by the motif of death, but death does not amount to an individualised drama, nor does it hold much power. It is an external study of death: the viewer observes this death, but does not feel as if he is dying alongside the characters. This is due not only to the artistic concept, but also a certain coolness, with which the authors approached the topic. If this is not visible in the scenery, it certainly paralyses the characters. They are too contrived, poetic and decorative. They operate like robots, even though they’re supposed to be normal boys, who whole-heartedly

present some new truth after nine years, Wajda couldn’t resist the association of heroism on the frontline... He showed heroism through the filter of futile sacrifice. He made the battle of Somosierra more poetic by adding muddy sewers. But most importantly he did not show Leonidas, happily feasting before a heroic death, but deceived, desperate and frightened men. And this other bitter and unpopular truth shows his respect for the defeated characters.

It was not until a few weeks later, after a triumphant screening at Cannes festival on 7 May 1957 that a new wave of opinion began to dominate. It suddenly turned out that Wajda is of the same calibre as Bunuel and Bergman. He comes from the same tradition as Feudillade, Borzage, Vigo and Franju. He is the only European, who has the power of expression worthy of “Land Without Bread” (Las Hurdes), and “The Forgotten Ones” (Los Olvidados), in an era of intellectual weakness and laziness from the effeminate literary community (Ado Kyrrou in “Positif”, June 1957); that we feel, maybe for the first time, that an artist tackles the subject (of war) out of his own personal need (Lindsay Anderson in London “The Times” of May 14, 1957), that we have discovered the temperament of a true filmmaker, and we await with optimism his future works, especially if Wajda finds out what else is conventional and academic in storytelling and character building (Andre Bazin in “Cahiers du Cinema” June 1957). After many years of a social-realist drought, Polish art had hardly ever a chance to hear such compliments. Andrzej Wajda came home from Cannes a changed man. The whole of Polish cinema started being treated differently.

TADEUSZ LUBELSKI



DEATH TRAP: TADEUSZ JAN CZAR, TERESA IŻEWSKA



DEATH IN THE SEWERS

“Kanal” is a brutal film, it presents the naked truth, it is not a colourful story about Polish heroism. I would rather call it an epic about wasted heroism.

After a seventeen-year break, outstanding Polish director Jerzy Skolimowski („Le Départ”, Berlin International Film Festival 1967 – Golden Berlin Bear; “The Shout”, Cannes Film Festival 1978 – Grand Prize of the Jury; “Moonlighting”, Cannes Film Festival 1982 – Best Screenplay), has made his new film “4 Nights with Anna” in Poland. We talk to Kinga Preis, who plays the role of Anna, about the film and her work with the director. In 2006 Kinga Preis received the Zbyszek Cybulski Award, the most prestigious award for the young Polish actors.

TWO WOUNDED PEOPLE

KINGA PREIS TALKS TO MAGDALENA LEBECKA



KINGA PREIS AS ANNA

– I have heard that the screenplay for “4 Nights with Anna” was inspired by an Asian story, which was adapted by the writers – Jerzy Skolimowski and Ewa Piaskowska – to fit the reality of the Polish province.

– I wasn’t familiar with such details. We shot the film in the north-east of Poland between Szczytno and Olsztyn, but the place is symbolic, and so is its time frame. Here time passes slowly, which can be seen in the poor quality of life, in the mouldy and disintegrating surroundings and, finally, in the people.

– You play the title character – nurse Anna.

– But she’s not the main character. The main protagonist is the man who works at the hospital’s medical waste incinerator. The woman is the object of his fascination, the one whom he constantly observes and stalks.

– What is the motive behind this fascination?

– To be fair, nobody knows! I don’t play a sexy beauty, nor an outstandingly intelligent person.

– But there has to be something about her that fascinates this man.

– What draws him towards her is not her beauty, but a crack, a flaw, something radiating from within her. There is this key episode in the prologue that casts some light on his motives. The main character witnesses the rape of a woman, whose face is hidden. The meaning of this scene is ambiguous: we don’t know if his reaction is determined by fear or fascination. The identity of the victim also remains unclear...

– ...and so does the nature of this vision: whether it was a dream, an erotic fantasy, or reality?

– Exactly. This scene was played by a body double; only parts of her body are visible – a fragment of her thighs, breasts. We played this scene later, off-screen. We conveyed the brutality of this scene just by using our voices, without touching each other, standing back to back.

– You were, I presume, the only choice for this role.

– Skolimowski called and told me that he had the role of my life for me, and that we had to meet up – and then he disappeared for a long time. Unexpected obstacles kept piling up. I started worrying that if we couldn’t even reach each other during the pre-production stage, the project would never be completed. At last, shortly before shooting began, our first meeting took place, the surroundings were, as the director warned me, *slightly substandard*.

On the fourth floor of an old, run-down tenement house, in what looked like a drinking den, we were to play a scene, in which this man sneaks into Anna’s apartment, while she sleeps. When I saw this place: a ladder standing in for a window sill, on which the character was supposed to quietly creep, I thought that this was some kind of bizarre joke. When my partner (in the end, someone else played the part), fell from the ladder with a thud, while Mr Skolimowski himself was imitating the outside noises: the sound of the city, quarrelling drunkards and meowing cats, I was laughing my head off in bed! I couldn’t believe that this was Jerzy Skolimowski, the director of “Identification Marks: None”, “Barrier”, “Walkover”!



JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI ON THE SET OF “4 NIGHTS WITH ANNA”



KINGA PREIS ON THE SET

– After all Skolimowski was the leading figure of the Polish New Wave.

– I almost began panicking that something might happen to me whilst riding this crazy wave! He is a mad artist: you can expect anything from him. But, his extravagance aside, this outstanding director turned out to be an exceptionally friendly person. On the set, he was as energetic and vigorous as a 15-year-old.

– What genre does “4 Nights with Anna” fit into: a psychological drama with some elements of a thriller, a psychopathological study?

– While reading the script, I thought that it was a psychological drama, whose main characters were these two heavily wounded people. Loners by choice, but also forced into such an existence by the cruelty of fate, desperately seeking

someone to share their misery with. But Mr Skolimowski tried to break the convention; he was constantly trying to change things, to add some comedy.

– This shows that there was a spirit of improvisation during the making of this film.

– Yes, the changeability and flexibility of ideas was amazing, the director kept introducing new elements. On the set, we usually shot different scenes from those planned in the script. Mr Skolimowski would look through the material every day and check the rhythm: he knew exactly what to do in order best to connect the finished episodes. Once a week, he would watch whole sequences, so that when we finished shooting, half of the film had already been edited.

– The whole story is told from the subjective point of view of the man; he is the bearer of

the look. You exist only as a passive object in his consciousness. How did this translate into your acting?

– I was aware that I was dependant on my partner, that I was only helping to convey his story and therefore I had to submit to his vision. I kept wondering what was so different about Anna that could have fascinated him. I had to see in her an inability to cope with emotion. I imagined that such a rape leaves its mark on everything, every gesture: such a person won’t have a drink and relax, as she worries what could happen to her; she won’t enter into close relations with anyone, because she’s too scared. Anna is nice, but she’s a bit slower, lost in thought, she’s sinking into herself, she performs everyday activities automatically – she washes, gets up, digs in her garden... She’s also more melancholic, with this kind of sadness, that can’t be shaken off.

The challenge of my task was that I had to build a large part of my role in my sleep, in contact only with my pillow and bed sheets. When one is awake, during the day, the reactions are created consciously, with control over every gesture. Here I did not control my state, which I enjoyed I involuntarily hugged, talked, screamed in my sleep, revealing fragments of my memories and past emotions.

– The film’s cinematographer, Adam Sikora, a man of outstanding visual sensitivity, shares with Jerzy Skolimowski a passion for painting.

– They both watched a series of rehearsals very closely, testing camera positions, and even placed a camera under the bed. I was moved, when they showed me one of the shots of me undressing before I go to bed. They wanted to persuade me that they didn’t want to offend me by exposing my nakedness in a vulgar way. And indeed, these scenes, seen through the binoculars, that the main character uses to peep at the woman, were beautifully lighted and very picturesque. They were usually shot from afar, from the point of view of the stalker. The important thing was to get a sense of the character, her facial features. Her physicality was less important.

– This may be a risky analogy, but the concept of the character of Anna resembles the figure of the somnambulist, withdrawn, silent Yvonne, whom you recently played in an opera adaptation of Witold Gombrowicz’s drama “Yvonne, Princess of Burgundy”.

– I would say that in the reality created by Skolimowski it is this terribly lonely, autistic man who is Yvonne’s counterpart. He’s the Yvonne of this film. ■

Praga is the name of the oldest, though far from the most picturesque part of Warsaw, situated in the centre of the city on the right bank of the river Vistula. It survived bombing during the war, and managed to keep its own unique character.



ŁUKASZ PALKOWSKI

DEMOLISH OR LOVE

ŁUKASZ PALKOWSKI TALKS TO PIOTR ŚMIAŁOWSKI

– You don't live in Praga and never have. How did your interest in this place come about?

– I've never lived there, but I went there very often as a teenager. I was into heavy metal back then, and there was a shop called "The Hole" in Praga, the only place where you could buy heavy metal T-shirts, posters and badges. I clearly felt the unique atmosphere of this place – as if, on crossing the Vistula, something took over me. I knew, of course, what kind of world I was entering. My visits to this district often ended in brawls on Ząbkowska Street, and losing all my money. This, however, never made me resent Praga, let alone made me fear going there. The danger of getting hit in the face was part and parcel of my trips to "The Hole" and made them more of a thrill.

– While writing the screenplay for your debut, did you research the places that were supposed to appear in the film?

– No. I wasn't interested in making new observations. The first time I went to Praga in six years was with my cinematographer to gather materials for "Preserve". I left with the impression that nothing had changed since I was last there. My cinematographer, Paweł, didn't know Praga at all. He thought that many of the things in the screenplay were made up. By the end of the pre-production, he said to me, surprised: *Man, it's all true!*

– It's worth adding, that your co-writer, Marcin, has lived on the right bank for a couple of years.

– In fact, it all started with Marcin's idea. He wrote a draft for a short feature

"Praga climates", which was, among other things, about the making of porn films at Różycki bazaar.

– Praga is often considered a crime ridden district and people who live there are also often thought likely to be criminals. You subvert these stereotypes in "Preserve". At the beginning of the film, all of your characters seem to be either criminals or alcoholics. But, later on, as you examine their lives more closely, it transpires how simple and inaccurate this first depiction was.

– I hope that this gradual change in portrayal will keep the viewer interested in the characters, as well as in the transformations they're going through. The best way to demystify stereotypes is to refer to them and show their absurdity.

– Many minor roles in your film are played by actual residents of Praga. How did you persuade them to take part, how did you win their trust?

– We, from the left-bank of Warsaw, consider the residents of Praga bandits, and in return, they consider us a bunch of tie-wearing sissies. Each side holds the other in contempt, and this barrier is hard to break. But "Preserve" was, luckily, not the first film set in Praga that I worked on. Just after I graduated, I was an assistant on a film set there. Everyone in the crew warned me back then, that some people from Praga might be a nuisance to us, might steal our equipment. When we were shooting a car accident scene, we needed a crowd of onlookers. So I stopped locals passing by and asked them to take part. I reasoned that everything would be

all right, as long as we paid them, like other members of the crew. But if we just asked them to stand there and gave them nothing in return, and then they saw other people work and earn money, or even worse, if they felt exploited, I thought they could start a brawl. When working on "Preserve", I already knew what to do. The good relations we had with the residents of the tenement block in which we were filming were a result of a coincidence. When we arrived there with our cameras to take some trial shots, they immediately became very interested in what we were doing. When they found out that we were going to shoot a film, they started telling us, that the new owner of the building wanted to throw them out and demolish it. They started treating us as their allies, who would make a documentary and help them save their homes. One woman even claimed that she had already seen our film on TV. We soon managed to contact the owner who, as it turned out, just wanted to renovate the building, but had a hard time reaching an agreement with the residents... But from then on, we were treated as their own. I had no problem persuading them to stand in front of the camera. Can you imagine more authentic characters? We paid them normal daily rates, of course, and the whole crew were told to treat them as real actors.

– In "Preserve", you show Praga through the eyes of a newcomer, who finds an apartment there after splitting up with his girlfriend. In general, Marcin tries to keep friendly relations with everyone, but he's also capable of such shameful things, as



CONSUMED WITH ENVY... (SONIA BOHOSIEWICZ, TOMASZ KAROLAK)



“PRESERVE”: A GIRL FROM PRAGA...
(SONIA BOHOSIEWICZ)



...AND A STRANGER FROM THE UPTOWN (MARCIN KWAŚNY)

▶ publishing photographs made by a boy from his tenement under his own name. So, almost all evil in this world comes from the left bank of the Vistula...

– Because that is the point of view of people who live in Praga. Even though they're no angels themselves, things like plagiarising someone else's photographs is shocking to them. That sort of conduct is proof of a complete lack of principles, and there always has been a certain very important, unwritten code of conduct in Praga.

– But most residents of Warsaw still don't conceal their contempt towards Praga.

– And this causes a self-defence reaction from its residents: if you consider us inferior, then we will show you. But, actually, they consider us superior. They are impressed by our knowledge, vocabulary, clothing. But if such a person, whom they consider better, treats them with contempt or harms them in some way, they will want their revenge.

– “Preserve” shows that time seems to have stopped in Praga. You called the residents of the tenement, in which you filmed, “the connoisseurs of time”. So when anyone from outside of Praga appears – even your crew – this calmness is ruined. This, too, may be the reason for their hostility...

– Of course. Particularly since left-bank Warsaw interferes a lot with Praga's life now. People from the left-bank want to change this place, with no regard for what the people who have always lived there think. Modern buildings, pubs, some cultural projects, are supposed to revive the district, make it more attractive for tourists. Have you ever seen, though, any of the longest dwelling residents of Praga visit any of these places or benefit from

Modern buildings, pubs, some cultural projects, are supposed to revive the district, make it more attractive for tourists. Have you ever seen, though, any of the longest dwelling residents of Praga visit any of these places or benefit from their existence in any way? For them, these changes mean a slow decline of their world.

their existence in any way? For them, these changes mean a slow decline of their world. Soon, they won't be able to sit on a chair in front of their tenement and chat with everyone who passes by. Our interference is killing the atmosphere of Praga. But we keep interfering nonetheless, because we find this place a curiosity. We behave just like the Japanese, who take pictures from the windows of their taxi in one of the scenes.

– You filmed “Preserve” at Konopacka, Stalowa and Śródkowa streets. I have read their histories. Konopacka was the first street in Warsaw to have trams, then horse-drawn, in 1866. Stalowa was the home of Praga's intellectual and financial elite. Your film shows, that this former greatness of these places is long gone.

– Konopacka and Stalowa were the best streets in Praga for many years. Today, they are part of the slums. The tenement, where we filmed “Preserve”, is 117 years old, and doesn't look to have ever been renovated. It doesn't have a façade, the top floor has been shut for many years, there is no money to lay a new roof. Konopacka and Stalowa are the clearest examples of Praga's downfall. The slow decline started as early as in 1915, when the Russians, leaving Warsaw when World War I broke

out, blew up the bridges on Vistula. Communication between the left and right bank became difficult for a long time, and thus the police didn't have full control over Praga. The crime rate significantly increased, and the first gangs were formed. When the bridges were rebuilt, the atmosphere of lawlessness in Praga remained.

– You have shown “Preserve” at numerous festivals, including Tarnów, Koszalin, Zwierzyniec and Kazimierz. How did the audiences at these festivals react to the portrayal of Praga in your film?

– To my surprise – enthusiastically. I was really worried about the initial screenings. I wasn't sure if “Preserve” would be understood outside of Warsaw. In Tarnów and Koszalin, I had to have a drink before the screening to calm my nerves. But the viewers read more into my depiction of Praga. Some saw it as a universal representation of a forgotten and dying place. I've also met people, who had similar experiences of Praga to those I had as a kid. Some guy gave me a high five recently and said: *I never got hit in the face there, but I used to go to “The Hole”, and I know, it's like that there.* ■

“PRESERVE” IS REVIEWED ON PAGE 74



“JOURNEY” BY DARIUSZ GLAZER

THE SCHOOL OF FILM, THE SCHOOL OF LIFE

IWONA CEGIEŁKÓWNA

Andrzej Wajda has been running his own film school, the Andrzej Wajda Master School of Film Directing for six years now. How does this school differ from other film schools, who are the students, what makes the films produced here so successful in Poland and abroad?

The boom of Polish film schools and courses began in the 90s. And it continues to this day. In Warsaw alone, there are several film schools: Academy of Film and Television, Linda's and Ślesicki's Warsaw Film School, not to mention cut-price courses in filmmaking. And then there's the

Andrzej Wajda Master School of Film Directing. The Wajda School (as it is often called) is celebrating a small anniversary – its first students came to the Documentary and Feature Film Studio on 21 Chełmska Street in Warsaw exactly six years ago. What distinguishes it from other film schools?



"7 X MOSCOW" BY PIOTR STASIK



"7 X MOSCOW"



"SUBURBIAN TRAIN" BY MACIEJ CUSKE



"SILENCE 2" BY ANNA SKORUPA

► **IDEA**

In autumn of 2001 during the Warsaw Film Festival, Andrzej Wajda announced that his Master School of Film Directing would open the following March. The community reacted ambivalently. Is it really necessary to open another film school in a country, which produces less than 20 films a year? But the founders of the enterprise, Andrzej Wajda and Wojciech Marczewski, claimed it was. They did not intend to compete with existing schools. They were motivated by something else. On the one hand, the general situation of the Polish film industry, in which newcomers have very few opportunities; on the other, the rapid development of digital filmmaking, which has contributed to the depreciation of the profession of directing.

The new school aims to fill the gap in young creators' lives after they graduate from traditional universities. This is the most difficult time for them. It is often the case that a young filmmaker, left to their own devices, does not withstand the pressure of the free market. S/he takes up random jobs or withdraws from filmmaking. The Andrzej Wajda Master School of Film Directing offers the students a team-work environment, a model transferred from a film school in Copenhagen, where Wojciech Marczewski used to lecture. *Mastery in this school is a team effort of the lecturer and the student* – explained Andrzej Wajda at the opening press conference. During a one-year course, a student has to make several shorts, and in the documentary course – one short film.

The School does not teach the basics of this profession, but helps those who already know them start their professional careers. Teachers are the students' partners, who inspire them only in certain aspects.

From the beginning, the courses at the Master School were very popular – each year there are over 10 candidates per place for the feature course and 5 for the documentary course. The candidates are not put off by the high cost of the course – both money wise (10 thousand PLN for a one-year feature course, 5 thousand for documentary, compared to approx. 5 thousand at the Film School in Łódź), and in terms of effort needed (seven intensive 10-14-day sessions with up to 14 hours of classes per day). Student fees, however, cover only a fraction of the school's expenses. The whole enterprise was made possible by a generous sponsor, Mr Ryszard Krauze. There are scholarships for the most talented and letters of recommendations for those seeking private sponsorship for their projects. The school, whose patron is the European Film Academy, applies each year for subsidies from various EU institutions participating in the Media programme.

HOW TO MAKE FILMS?

This is what the teachers at Wajda's school try to teach. Each course is practical: it includes the development of individual projects, work on set and editing. All classes are Master Class level. The curriculum encompasses all stages of production: from screenplay, through casting, to working on the set with actors

The School does not teach the basics of this profession, but helps those who already know them start their professional careers. Teachers are the students' partners, who inspire them only in certain aspects. The feeling of community and a creative atmosphere are the characteristics most often stressed by both graduates and teachers.



"RENDEZ-VOUS" BY MARCIN JANOS KRAWCZYK

and cameramen. Most importantly, the best projects are produced under the School's supervision. The students mainly use digital cameras (the school have several latest models). Last minute changes are made at the school's editing room, using electronic equipment. This is followed by heated debates between the students and teachers. The feeling of community and a creative atmosphere are the characteristics most often stressed by both graduates and teachers.

One-year feature and documentary courses are not the only programmes the school has to offer. There is also an international (and free!) Ekran programme – a feature directing course. Here, young filmmakers work on their projects in teams consisting of writers, producers and cinematographers. The first Ekran programme included work on the screenplay for Anna Jadowska's "It's Me, Now", which later won an award for best debut at the Polish Film Festival in Gdynia.

The school also offers 4-month courses for secondary school students – the so called Film Kindergarten, conceived by Andrzej Wajda. The most interesting screenplays from the teenage filmmakers are produced at the School. Apart from practical skills, the participants also learn the basics of film theory and analysis.

These students work together at the "Chełmska" Film Factory, which is similar in format to former Production Units. The Factory, which gathers directors, editors, cameramen and sound directors, is hard to get into, since its main premise is its exclusiveness. After their projects are accepted (only the best get through, and the competition is immense), the young filmmakers have an opportunity to work with an international teaching staff and to exchange their experiences with their older classmates. Important is the fact that the famous teachers appear at the school very often; its creators, Andrzej Wajda and Wojciech Marczewski, are present at almost every class, even those for the youngest, teenage students.

And these names are the biggest draw. Who wouldn't like to hear remarks, even critical ones, from such big names as Andrzej Wajda, Wojciech Marczewski, Edward Żebrowski, Marcel Łoziński, Agnieszka Holland, Jacek Bławut, Stanisław Różewicz or Krzysztof Zanussi? They are joined by famous European creators – Thomas

Vinterberg, Andrei Sokurov, Ildiko Enyedi and Volker Schlöndorff. And leading Polish actors appear on the sets of the students' films too.

But the school is only as good as its students. All candidates are university graduates, mostly from artistic and film departments. The school also admits non-professional filmmakers with considerable achievements: the films of Jakub Niescierow, Maciej Cuske or Marcin Sauter have won several independent film festivals.

FILMING THE ORDINARY

During the six years of the Master School's existence, it has co-produced hundreds of student shorts and films. Many of them have won prestigious awards at national and international film festivals. Here are some examples: "Behind the Fence" (including Grand Prix Cinema du Réel, Paris '06), "Suburban Train" (including Grand Prix at "Cinerail – Metro and Train on Film" Festival, Paris '07) by Maciej Cuske and "At the Datcha" (Best Documentary at the International Film Festival in Belgrade '07) by Thierry Paladino. Recently, Bartek Konopka's "Three to Take" and Tomasz Wolski's "Hospital" have won the Grand Prix at the Polish Slamdance.

It is worth noting that, even though every young filmmaker graduating from the School develops their own handwriting, some common features can be found even in their short films. The topics they tackle, for example, are pointedly different from the stereotypes that dominate our screens. There is no open violence, gang wars, pseudo-romantic kitsch or superficial comic book characters. The authors turn to ordinary people, they portray the present day with tact and tenderness and attempt to say something positive about the world. And, even if it is too early for such a prediction, the critics will hopefully slowly begin to talk about a new Polish cinema, whose birth we may witness soon. Maybe the graduates of Wajda's School will be referred to in similar fashion to their older colleagues from the time of the cinema of moral concern? Who knows? They belong to a generation, for which anything is possible.

IWONA CEGIELKÓWNA

Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, the chaplain of “Solidarity” (Solidarność) was murdered in 1984 by the officers of the Communist Security Services, at the age of 37.

THERE WAS ONLY ONE FATHER JERZY

PIOTR ŚMIAŁOWSKI SPEAKS WITH RAFAŁ WIECZYŃSKI, THE DIRECTOR AND AUTHOR OF THE SCREENPLAY, AND ADAM WORONOWICZ, THE LEADING ACTOR.

– The film shows the life of Father Jerzy from his childhood in the countryside to his martyr’s death at the hands of the officers of the Security Services in 1984. Plausibly showing the changes which take place within a person over decades is a difficult task. Aside from this there’s the extra challenge of illustrating a man’s path towards his religious vocation, something else cinema has problems with.

RAFAŁ WIECZYŃSKI: Father Popiełuszko is too often perceived in the context of his tragic death – we analyse its circumstances, and thus neglect the spiritual aspect of his priesthood. That’s why I concluded that I should analyse the events from his perspective. He strove towards sainthood. To illustrate how this need was born and strengthened within him I cannot limit myself to showing just a few, even if very important years of his

existence. Fortunately, his life, full of tension and drama, is ideal material for a film.

– In your opinion, which moments of his priesthood shaped Father Jerzy for the role of “Solidarity’s” chaplain?

R. W.: The most influential factors were his childhood and the atmosphere of his family home. It is here that his dedication to God was shaped. His faith, which became even greater in the later years of his priesthood, has had a big effect on many people, even today, and hence the phenomenon of Father Jerzy.

ADAM WORONOWICZ: In my opinion the turning point for Father Popiełuszko was his first visit to Huta Warszawa towards the end of August 1980. He went there practically by accident – the steelworkers on strike were looking for a priest who would agree to celebrate

similar situations by Cardinal Wyszyński and Pope John Paul II: overcome evil with good.

– Masses in the name of the homeland were celebrated in St Stanisław Kostka’s Church on the last Sunday of every month from the beginning of the 80s. Father Popiełuszko’s sermons touched on various issues: freedom, honour, independence, solidarity, truth, work, but also our national uprisings, including the Warsaw ghetto one. Poetry recited by prominent actors was an important part of the Mass too. How do you plan to synthesise so many subjects and meetings with believers, in order to capture their essence?

R. W.: My main concern is that scenes from the Masses for the Homeland show Father Jerzy’s intellectual and spiritual development. He spoke eloquently about things that others only instinctively felt. Yet he never referred to politics, in his sermons there was no encouragement to fight against the authorities.

A. W.: After each mass he asked people to walk out of the church in peace, to not allow themselves to be provoked by anyone – after all, amongst the crowd there were always officers from the Security Services (SB) dressed as civilians. Thanks to him there weren’t ever any confrontations, even though the SB officers tried to disturb the peace in various ways. In the 80s he led a peaceful, non aggressive protest against the authorities. However, when forcefully enlisted into the army, his reaction was different. He constantly angered his commanding officers by, for example, adorning his uniform with rosary beads. He was harshly punished, but the priest still rebelliously disregarded their orders.

– On the other hand, when Cardinal Glemp became Primate of Poland and there were some misunderstandings between him and Father Jerzy, Popiełuszko never acted against Glemp’s wishes. Was this only a matter of loyalty?

R. W.: Most of all – humility. Even when people began to treat him as their spiritual leader he always acted in accordance with the Church hierarchy. In his sermons he quoted John Paul II, Cardinal Wyszyński and also Cardinal Glemp. The advantage of this was that the authorities weren’t able to question his sermons. After all, he made reference to the kind of figures that even the Communists had to respect.

– Did Father Jerzy know that he might have to pay with his life for what he was doing?

R. W.: He knew that he played a very important role in the opposition and that the authorities were getting more and more ruthless towards people like him. It was becoming more and more dangerous around Popiełuszko, the loop around his neck was slowly getting tighter.



RAFAŁ WIECZYŃSKI ON THE SET OF “POPIELUSZKO”



ADAM WORONOWICZ WHO PLAYS THE LEADING PART AND RAFAŁ WIECZYŃSKI, DIRECTOR

Fortunately, the life of Father Popiełuszko, full of tension and drama, is ideal material for a film.

Sunday Mass there. However, I think that for them, like for Father Jerzy, that meeting was a revelation. Down to earth workers met a like-minded chaplain who understood them, and they understood him. He seemed to find his vocation anew. The workers accepted him, and he saw that during this turbulent time of the strike they needed spiritual support. From that moment he stood by them.

– After the Mass in Huta Warszawa Father Popiełuszko admitted how much he had feared that meeting. However, was it merely nervousness about entering a new environment?

A. W.: At the time it was very easy to involuntarily fuel anti-government sentiment, which could lead to riots. Yet, Father Jerzy always warned against the desire for revenge. He followed the evangelical rule which was repeated in



THE PEOPLE OF WARSAW ADMIRE FATHER POPIEŁUSZKO

I think that by killing Father Jerzy, the authorities crossed a certain boundary, and lost their power to intimidate the people.



AT THE ST. STANISŁAW KOSTKA CHURCH IN WARSAW

► **– A few weeks before Father Jerzy’s death, his friends came up with a plan to send him to Rome to study and in this way stave off the danger. Was this at all possible?**

R. W.: I do not think so. Popiełuszko felt that he could not leave the people who trusted him. He was only prepared to leave if the order was given by the Primate. However, Józef Glemp believed that he didn’t have the right to give such an order and that Popiełuszko should make this decision himself. It was deadlock.

A. W.: It must have been a terrible crisis for Father Jerzy. After all, he must have feared for his life.

R. W.: In spite of this, he was consistent in his actions. That was his path to martyrdom.

– Popiełuszko’s murder, committed by the Security Services, was not only supposed to eliminate the priest who was dangerous for the authorities, but also bring the opposition to their knees. Meanwhile, his death evoked a completely opposite reaction.

A. W.: In that moment everything that had been silenced by martial law came to life. Something in the system began to crumble. I think that by killing Father Jerzy, the authorities crossed a certain boundary, and lost their power to intimidate the people.

R. W.: That was probably the last example of a specific Romanticism in Poland. The people believed in an idea and fought for it. I would like to bring this atmosphere to life.

– Before filming you went to visit Father Jerzy’s mother...

A. W.: Visiting her was our obligation. The meeting with Popiełuszko’s mother confirmed in my mind how I should play Father Jerzy. I was afraid that I might remind her of her son, bring back painful memories. But after a moment I realised how wrong I was. There was only one Father Jerzy. I am an actor, a different person and that is how his mother treated me. I had to look for the means to bring me closer to a general truth about Father Jerzy. On set we experienced many emotions, fears, soul-searching. But without that we wouldn’t have achieved anything.

– Did you look for support or a blessing from people who knew him?

A. W.: No. I was afraid that if I did they might have thought I was trying to impress them in some way.

R. W.: However, Adam made a great impression on them anyway. During the first week we filmed the scenes of the Mass for the Homeland. Amongst the extras there were many people who had attended Father Jerzy’s real Masses. After the shoot many came up to me and said Adam looks very much like him.

A. W.: When I found out that I would play Father Jerzy I felt that the character would completely absorb me, that working on it would be fascinating. I felt that as an actor I was experiencing a very important moment.

– During the conference which announced the beginning of filming, a question regarding the Security Services’ files on Father Popiełuszko came up. What did they contain?

R. W.: Reading these files was part of the research. Looking at these documents I wanted to understand as much as possible, to see how those events were seen from the perspective of the people from the other side. However, by the time I went to the Institute of National Remembrance the script was practically ready and I didn’t plan to change anything. I will not use the archive film material either. It is necessary to be familiar with it whilst making such a film, but I think trying to combine the footage into our film would have created a certain distance in the viewer. And my aim was to make “Popiełuszko” as engaging as possible. ■

During the Communist era, the fact that there were Soviet troops stationing in Poland was a taboo subject. Waldemar Krzystek’s “Little Moscow” will be the first film to discuss it on the big screen. The tragic love affair between a Russian girl and a Polish boy is based on a true story.



WALDEMAR KRZYTEK ON THE SET OF “LITTLE MOSCOW”

WHEN LOVE WAS A CRIME

AGNIESZKA JAKIMIAK SPEAKS WITH WALDEMAR KRZYTEK

– In the film “Little Moscow”, which you are currently finishing, a love story which takes place in the 60s (an important date: 1968, when the troops of the Warsaw Treaty entered Czechoslovakia), the place of action is very important. It takes place in Legnica, a town in Western Poland where Russian troops were stationed from the end of the war until 1993. Whilst writing the screenplay did you refer to any real events?

– I am from Legnica and my mother told me this story. At the cemetery in Legnica, beside the military sector there is a grave of a Russian girl. She drew everyone’s attention because she was incredibly beautiful. Everyone knew that she was Russian; it was also said that she was fascinated with Poland, that she was learning our language, read our newspapers and books. One day her body was found by the river – she had committed suicide. It was soon discovered why: she had been ordered to return to Russia, because she had an affair with a Pole. In those years, her grave was very well-kept, there were always flowers and several candles lit. This story became the canvas for my film.

– At the time, Poland belonged to the so-called Socialist bloc, we were allies in accordance with the Warsaw Treaty. There was constant discussion of the Polish-Soviet relationship. You show the other side of the story.

– Officially, there was a strong bond between Poland and the USSR, but the



FORBIDDEN LOVE: POLISH BOY AND RUSSIAN GIRL (LESŁAW ŻUREK, SWIĘTAŁANA HODCZENKOWA)

reality was completely different. In my film gates are ever present – and that is how it was in Legnica at the time. The Russians arrived at a separate platform at the railway station and went to their own gated neighbourhood escorted by the army. Their terrain was surrounded by a three-metre wall and Poles were not allowed to enter there.

– Why should this story be told now? Polish cinema doesn't really go back to the heritage of the PRL (People's Republic of Poland), not even in the way that you do it, showing the system's influence on people's fates.

Russians, they were my friends. I was even able to visit them at their homes, I observed their lives. What's interesting is that they changed as a result of living in Poland. First, they started to dress differently, then to think differently. The character Vera from my film, for whom this change ended tragically, is an example of this process.

– In the film there is the subplot of Russian Armenian parents, who want to baptise their child but they are afraid to do so. Is this a true story?

– It's another story from my childhood; it was my mother who secretly baptised

film I carried out a proper investigation, but even though we have access to facts, protocols, documents, we are still unable to say anything for certain about people from 40 years ago; we do not have the right to declare that we know everything about them. Sometimes we judge too easily, we depend on facts and documents too much – without knowing the emotions, motivations, dilemmas of the people who have passed away and cannot give their testimonies.

– It would not have been possible to show this ambiguity on screen if it were not for the actors. You employed both Poles and



AT THE SOVIET BASE

– “Little Moscow” is not a political statement, but a question about the right of a political system or an ideology to decide about a person's life. In the times of censorship many subjects could be smuggled into films, books and some magazines, but one issue was never broached: that after 1945 Russian troops were stationed in Poland, that Russians had their own airports here, their families lived here, Russian schools were being opened, small Russian cities were being formed. That is why this gap had to be filled. In my film I demonstrate that many unrecorded, tragic human fates were concealed during this period. Our film industry for a long time could not afford to make a film which showed the power of military Russia. It is only now that we have found the appropriate means, and I believe that it is better not to broach a subject if it is not possible to discuss it properly. Besides, I wanted to make this film for another reason. Andrzej Wajda once said that you have to make films which no-one else will make. I realised that I should make a film like this; I was brought up twenty metres from the Soviet neighbourhood in Legnica. Children always know each other – so I knew

the Armenian family's child. I had enough first-hand knowledge to write the screenplay. Much was added during the research phase: I visited the old Soviet barracks, airport, neighbourhood.

– In the 60s, there was no indication that this system would collapse and the Soviet troops would leave Poland.

– The key scene in my film addresses this issue: Vera says that she wants to stay in Poland and the major of the KGD teaches her a key lesson about the obligations of a USSR citizen: there is no place for *I want* in the Soviet Union, only *I must*. In the Russian barracks her desire is perceived as rebellion against the system.

– Your film also discusses the problem of remembrance. You reconstructed the story of people from the past so there are many things that we may not know about them. You send Vera's daughter on a trip to find out the truth about her mother, 40 years after her death. Yet what happened to her parents still remains vague and incomplete.

– Yes, that is why there is no easy happy ending in the film. Her daughter will never fully know what happened. She will only get to know half of the truth, just like us, who follow the couple's path so many years later. Whilst researching for the

„Little Moscow” is not a political statement, but a question about the right of a political system or an ideology to decide about a person's life.

Russians in your film and most of the dialogues are in Russian.

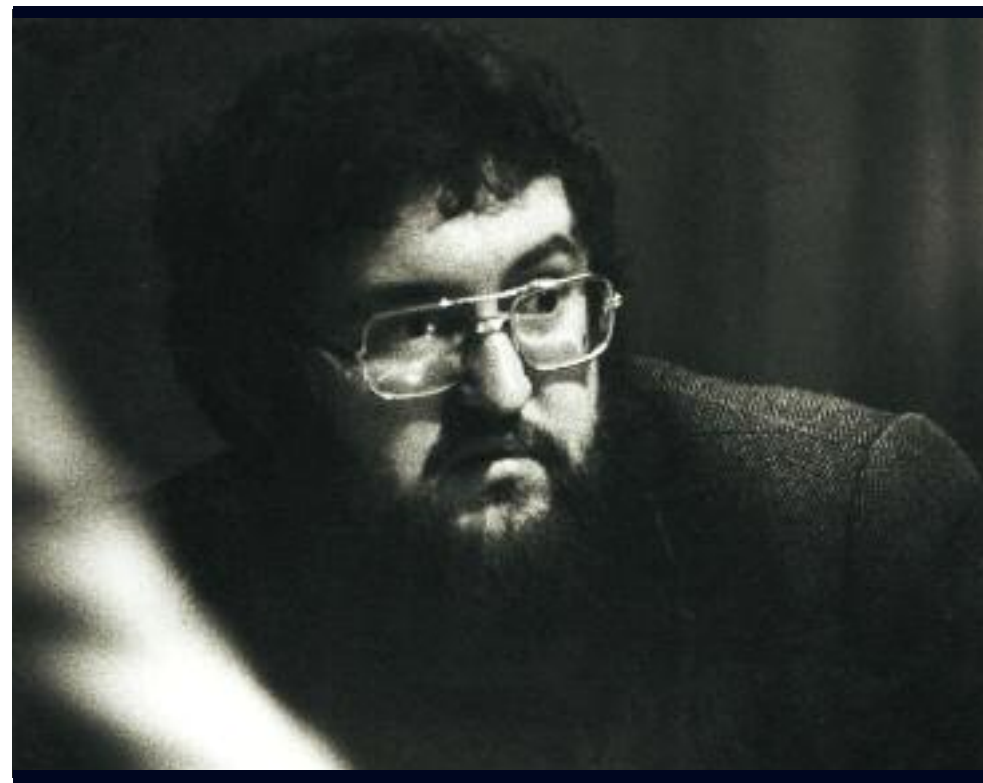
– Unfortunately, a Polish-Russian co-production was not possible. I am especially sorry about this as the film isn't biased towards a Polish point of view, and this is uncommon in Polish films about the relations between the two countries. In Polish art the image of Russians as people with their own problems and dilemmas is hardly ever shown, the ruling stereotype is still the *Russian gangster*. We tried to present the Russians as fairly as possible and our film wants to challenge the superficial understanding of *Russian mentality*. The Russians in our film are just as lost in the obscure mechanisms of the system as the Poles. The leading characters – Michał and Vera, appear innocent, untouched by the duplicity of the ruling system. Emotions take over this couple suddenly and violently and that is when their real struggle begins.

– The hardest role was maybe that of the actor playing the KGB officer, Alexei Gorbunow.

– He had to convey convincingly his virtually natural dedication to the political system and its ideology.

– How did you find the actors who played the roles of the Russians?

– I watched sixty films in Moscow and then I tried to get in contact with those actors who were not like the stereotypes we have of Russians. We needed subtle people, who would be able to render the drama of the characters. ■



“MICROPHONE'S TEST” (1980)



“89 MM FROM EUROPE” (1993)

LOOKING THE TRUTH IN THE EYES

T A D E U S Z S O B O L E W S K I

Those who tried to find an unmasking of the system in which we lived in Marcel Łoziński's films from the 70s were right to do so. But these films refer also to the world in which we live today. Łoziński talks about a person pressured by a group, about liberty, conformism and rebellion. He also shows that the act of filming is never innocent, that the media are naturally inclined to manipulate people.

In the 70s, Łoziński and his friends from the Warsaw Documentary Film Studio (Krzysztof Kieślowski, Tomasz Zygadło, Bohdan Kosiński and others) created a strong and supportive group that, at a certain point, was able to drag the board of the studio into a game with censorship. In the 70s the studio on Chełmska Street was one of those enclaves of Communist Poland in which the borders of freedom were

stretched. Without the documentaries from Chełmska Street, a film of such importance for the development of the contemporary awareness as “Man of Marble” by Wajda, would have never been made.

It seemed to him that lesson had been learned and he could move on, enter other territories that, until then, he had not explored, make intimate movies like “Anything Can Happen”

Łoziński's mistrust towards reality is rational – this director is a child of the propaganda era, brought up in a world where the truth was constantly drowned and regulated. He read Orwell and Fromm.

▶ (1995), in which he filmed his 6 year-old son, Tomasz, asking people in a park questions difficult to answer. However, the new reality pulled him into line. In the feature documentary "How To Do It" (2006), he presented the backstage of political marketing. For three years he filmed an experiment, conducted by a distinguished media creator, Piotr Tymochowicz, who took on the challenge of introducing a complete nobody into the world of politics as an active political figure. By tracing this deceitful experiment, Łoziński demonstrated how much modern democracy has become a media spectacle in which the candidates' opinions, their real qualifications, objectives and ideas are all insignificant – the goal is power in itself.

This documentary, shown in cinemas, has been compared to another feature film made by Łoziński years ago – "Recipe for Life" (1976, premiere 1981), which has also maintained a certain validity. This documentary comedy shows the mechanism of voluntary enslavement, a group escape from freedom. A fenced in summer camp for newlyweds becomes the natural metaphor for an authoritarian state, which demands and awards conformity. However, the situation presented in "Recipe for Life" could reoccur today, in some small society terrorised by a group of usurpers or in a large corporation. The relationships between the group of leaders, the passive majority and the few rebellious individuals could be of similar nature. Łoziński has no illusions when it comes to group conformism, but at the same time he shows how one small gesture of resistance is enough to expose the prevalent order, to bowl over the usurpers. Łoziński's films from that period clearly present the good and the bad side of society.

Łoziński perfectly exemplifies the features of what we call the Polish school of documentary. His films at the same time describe a particular human situation and offer its generalisation or metaphor. They are loyal to the characters, they follow them, but simultaneously maintain the clear perspective of the author. They speak about reality, but emerge from a preconceived idea. What distinguishes Marcel Łoziński's cinema from modern documentaries, becoming his *trademark*, is the element of provocation, psychodrama introduced into the film, which is usually exposed to the viewer.

Łoziński does not want to reproduce reality in a *one-to-one* proportion. He does not deceive himself that the camera will record the pure truth, he does not believe in *cinéma-vérité*. The intention, what he wants to say is more important to him than what has been incidentally recorded. Łoziński's mistrust towards reality is rational – this director is a child of the propaganda era, brought up in a world where the truth was constantly drowned and regulated. He read Orwell and Fromm.



"HOW TO DO IT" (2006)



"RECIPE FOR LIFE" (1977). MARCEL ŁOZIŃSKI (THE FIRST FROM THE LEFT)

Łoziński's experience of history, deprived of romantic illusions of purposefulness and sense has strongly penetrated into his films. "Witnesses" from 1987 is a priceless historical documentary – a description of the slaughter of Jews carried out by Poles in Kielce in 1946. The crowd, aroused by a rumour of a ritual murder, deliberately murdered 42 Jews that had survived the Holocaust, with the help of the militia and army. The film relates the incident through the testimonies of Polish witnesses. It not only presents the course of the incident, but most importantly, the attitudes of the narrators. It also demonstrates another element, which forms the main motif of Łoziński's documentaries, the inertness of the crowd, *herd* thinking and action, and shows those few people, who become conscious of what has happened and are able to look truth in the eyes.

Through precise knowledge of social evil, Łoziński was aware from the beginning of how much the representation of reality could be manipulated and how well reality can mask itself from us. It is not enough to observe, in order to reveal truth, it is necessary to agitate it, interfere and sometimes introduce an outside element. Social reality is a battle ground, an arena of manipulation and violence. In order to face it, a documentary film maker must use his *secret weapon*.



"SO IT DOESN'T HURT" (1998)



"ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN" (1995)

Łoziński says about his method: *I know about certain things – that they happen for sure. However, for some time when I'm there with the camera they may not be revealed. That is why sometimes I "thicken" reality, so to speak. I provoke certain events that I know take place. We have an aquarium. Plants ripple beautifully in it, the fish swim quietly, the sand is clean. It is obvious, however, that sometimes there are storms in this aquarium. If I could watch for a month I would probably catch*

something, however I know that I can't. So I take the aquarium in my hands and shake it lightly. The sand goes to the top and then you can see that it isn't that clean after all. The fish begin to move differently. According to me this situation is more normal than the calm one. It's just that I have to provoke it, otherwise I wouldn't record it.

In what is considered his masterpiece – "Anything Can Happen" (1995) – the one who is shaking the *aquarium of reality* is the director's son. The six year-old boy runs up to random people in a park and asks them indiscrete questions: are you satisfied? Are you lonely? How long does a person live? Those old people in the park seem to be – for the first time in Łoziński's films – excluded from the social game, captured as if beyond time, resting after having lived. The small boy, who does not know life yet, seems to be an alien from another planet, like Saint-Exupéry's Little Prince. He has something to offer these people, which has often appeared in Marcel Łoziński's films – in "A Visit", "The Touch", "89mm from Europe". This boy, unaware of the camera's presence, does what his director-father would like to do: be able to approach a stranger, sit with him on a bench, obtain something from him and give him something in return. A small gift. A moment of selfless attention.

TADEUSZ SOBOLEWSKI

MARCEL ŁOZIŃSKI'S "IF IT HAPPENS" IS REVIEWED ON PAGE 77

THE EXCLUDED

KASIA ADAMIK TALKS TO IZABELA ILOWSKA



KASIA ADAMIK

In 2002, US “Variety” magazine named Kasia Adamik, the director of “The Offsiders”, one of the 10 most promising young filmmakers in the world. She has lived in Paris and the USA. “The Offsiders” will be her first film shot in Poland.

– “The Offsiders” – a film about sport or about the homeless?

– Both. While reading a newspaper, my mum (Agnieszka Holland – editor’s note) found an article about the Polish team winning a silver medal at the Homeless World Cup. We found out later, that Mirosław Dembiński had made a documentary about it, “Losers and Winners”. The fact that the Polish team was successful at this event immediately spurred my imagination. Homelessness is a very serious issue, and sport throws a positive light on it.

– Have you been able to reach the true heroes of this story?

– We learned everything that was to know about them, but I wanted to present them in a more filmic manner. The team includes an ex-sailor, a failed Soviet astronaut, an unemployed miner, an alcoholic former priest and a banker. I also wanted to show as extensively as possible the reasons for their homelessness, to show how easy it is to end up living on the street.

– You said that you wanted the film to show homelessness in as realistic a way as possible. How did you prepare yourself for this task?

– I began my research by visiting night shelters and hostels, talking to the people living there. I’ve also been in contact with people who try to overcome their homelessness. The most shocking thing for me was to learn how easily one can become homeless. All it takes is a little stumble. And the road back is not easy.

– Łukasz Palkowski, the director of “Preserve”, has talked in an interview about his graduation film about the homeless, which still remains unedited. He assumed that there would be some tragedy, some mystery behind homelessness. But the real causes were in most cases quite trivial: alcohol, sometimes a woman. Do your heroes have different stories?

– I agree that homelessness is mainly caused by alcohol, women, prison sentences or depression. And if you don’t have any family or friends, also loneliness. I wanted my heroes to be

credible, but also interesting as characters. I wanted to avoid creating a lyrical, fairy-tale or poetic image of homelessness. I tell the stories of a couple of men, whose lives were at times tragicomic. This can happen to anyone, who just doesn’t have the money to pay the next instalment of their debt.

– Is there a chance to get out of homelessness?

– I have noticed, that time is an important factor. The longer a person is homeless, the more likely it is that they lose hope that their luck will change. They

are overcome with apathy and don’t see any point in doing anything. Sport or success gives them positive energy. Sport is a symbol of struggle, a struggle with themselves and their surroundings to achieve something important. Sport motivates them to act, to change. In my film, there’s friendship between the athletes, which is also a positive incentive.

– It turns out, then, that a story about homelessness can be optimistic.

– The first part of the film is darker, more realistic. But I wanted the film to be reassuring, positive instead of depressing.

As the story unfolds, we move away from the darker tones, but the transition appears incidental.

– Do you think such a film can change how people perceive homelessness? Can any film change anything anymore?

– It is hard to change anything with one film. But if more films like this one are made, I’m sure that public awareness can be changed. But it’s a lengthy process.

– Real homeless people worked as extras in your film. Was that a problem for you?

– They are normal people, and that’s how they should be treated. When

working on a film, emotions become secondary. You can feel empathy or compassion when writing or researching such a story, but then it is just work, a constant struggle to show something good on screen. You yell at the homeless extras, just as you yell at other crew members.

– You have lived abroad for a long time. Do homeless people in Poland differ in any way from those in France or in the USA?

– Homelessness as social exclusion is present in Poland, as it is abroad. In the USA, you can become homeless overnight. ▶



“THE OFFSIDERS”

► I've heard many such stories, they happen all the time. And the pattern is mostly the same: a middle-class family, a house, two cars – then the man loses his job, and three months later the family is on the street. Maybe they didn't have any savings? Or extended family, who could help them?



“THE OFFSIDERS”: JACEK PONIEDZIAŁEK, MAREK KALITA, RAFAŁ FUDALEJ

– One of your characters, Staszek, came to Warsaw to seek a better life, but didn't succeed and now he lives on the street. An image of thousands of Poles working abroad comes to mind. Many of them didn't succeed either.

– Of course. Homelessness is often a result of all kinds of journeys. There are many homeless Poles on the streets of Paris. They are people who came to find jobs but had no luck. They don't know the language and end up on the street.

Homelessness as social exclusion is present in Poland, as it is abroad. In the USA, you can become homeless overnight. A middle-class family, a house, two cars – then the man loses his job, and three months later the family is on the street.

– Can the feeling of community and a shared aim, albeit momentary, change the lives of the homeless?

– The most important thing is the will to help one another. It's also important to believe that things can change. You shouldn't give up. In the film sport is both one possibility of change and its allegory.

– Is there anything about the homeless that made a lasting impression on you?

– What amazed me most were the human feelings of pride and shame. They often stop people from seeking help, looking for an alternative. Many of the homeless have families, friends, who can help them. But pride stops them from asking, from admitting defeat. They often come from small towns or villages and are simply too ashamed to come back.

– You said once that “Offsiders” would be inspired by English comedy. Is it indeed?

– We thought so at the beginning, but it didn't come out that way; our film is different. I was mainly interested in the formula that the English filmmakers perfected, namely presenting a stereotypical story with a social issue as the backdrop, concentrating on a collective hero and a common project, which allows people to overcome hardship and open up to the world. One fine example would be “Full Monty”. “Offsiders” takes place in a completely different reality, and doesn't have much to do with British social comedy. I was also inspired by photographs of the homeless from different parts of the world.

– You have collaborated numerous times with your mother, Agnieszka Holland. For years you've been asked what it is like to work alongside such a famous and acclaimed director.

– First of all, I'm proud to be Agnieszka Holland's daughter. She taught me everything I know about filmmaking, she was my film school. Not so long ago, inheriting your parents' profession was considered normal. If you were a carpenter's or a shoemaker's son, you learned the profession, and then you took over your father's workshop. Thus, the secrets of the profession were transferred from generation to generation, the secrets you wouldn't want to tell outsiders.

– Where do you see your future?

– At the moment I'm moving to Warsaw. I have lived in many places. Films I can make anywhere. Filmmaking is getting harder and harder nowadays, so I would like to make them, where there are opportunities. You shouldn't be limited to just one place.

– You have debuted in the USA with “Bark!”. Did it require a lot of effort?

– The beginning of my directing career could be made into a Hollywood story. It started in 2000 when Andrzej Wajda had just received the honorary Oscar for lifetime achievement. There was a party. A producer who I already knew approached me. He told me he had a great screenplay and wanted me to direct it. I was surprised and unsure, but I read it nonetheless. It turned out to be

great. I met the writer, Heather Morgan, and then we spent three months working on it together. The story was original, crazy, funny, it had everything I like, everything I always look for. It was beginner's luck.

– In 2002, the prestigious “Variety” magazine named you one of the 10 most promising filmmakers in the world.

– Had I stayed in the USA, this honour might have, to some minimal degree, helped me with my further career. But soon after, I went to Slovakia, to work on “The True Story of Juraj Jánošík and Tomáš Uhorčík”, which didn't get finished due to financial issues. Some time has passed now, and Hollywood has a very short memory.

– Our brilliant actor, Gustaw Holoubek, once said that theatre is just a fairy-tale about fulfilment or the unfulfilment of human dreams, a place to uncover the truth about the human condition. Can the same be said about cinema?

– Cinema certainly is a fairy-tale, but most films do not uncover the truth about the human condition. For me, as a director, it is especially important to create a piece of a different reality, to build something that will draw the viewer in and seamlessly transport them to a different place. So that it's a journey. And a meeting with people.

– Will “Offsiders” be such a journey?

– I hope it will. And I hope that when the viewer sees the credits, they will suddenly realise: *Oh, I'm at the cinema!* ■



“THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY”

THE AMERICAN DREAM...

MARIA KORNAŃSKA SPEAKS WITH JANUSZ KAMIŃSKI

Janusz Kamiński, an Academy Award winner for cinematography in “Schindler's List” and “Saving Private Ryan” by Steven Spielberg, is the cinematographer of over 30 other films. They include “Amistad”, “The Lost World: Jurassic Park”, “Artificial Intelligence: AI”, “Munich”, “Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull”, all directed by Steven Spielberg, “Jerry Maguire” by Cameron Crowe, “The Diving Bell and the Butterfly” (Le Scaphandre et le papillon) by Julian Schnabel.



JANUSZ KAMIŃSKI

– Did you dream about Hollywood since you were a child?

– I don't think this dream appeared so early. Just like every boy I liked going to the cinema, especially to see American films. I remember distinctly how great impression “America, America”, “The Graduate”, “Vanishing Point”, “Easy Rider” made on me. And, like every young person at that time, I wanted to leave Poland and



"INDIANA JONES AND THE KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL"



"THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK"

As opposed to American cameramen, I create more with the heart than with technical correctness. I believe that sometimes it is worth choosing a *wrong* light if, in this way, the drama and mood of the scene is enhanced.

▶ get to know the world. I was 20 years old when, in 1980, I found myself in Greece. A fellow Pole that I had met by accident at a flea market told me that I should apply for political asylum and try to get to America via Vienna. He also told me that he had a brother in Chicago and that brother would certainly help me if I happened to end up in America.

Columbia College. You didn't choose a specialisation there. We formed four-person groups. Someone acted, another directed and another filmed. We made eleven-minute films on a 16mm camera. It was pure coincidence that I stood behind the camera, but that was how my future life was decided. My camerawork was appreciated. For the first time in my life I was told that I did something well. I was happy. I felt very inspired and I plunged myself into work. I put together about 40 etudes for my friends. Simultaneously I worked at the university as a lighting man to pay my way.

– You finished university – what then?

– I moved to Hollywood. That was logical. I applied to the American Film Institute in 1987 and I was admitted for a one-year program. I got a job working for Roger Corman. After some time I was promoted to the position of second camera man. I also worked for television. My first serious independent film, very low budget of course, was "Grim Prairie Tales..." by Wayne Coe (1990), which was a western in the convention of horror. An interesting combination. It was a great experience for me.

– There are many stories about how you first met Spielberg. How did it really happen?

So a friend and I went to Vienna, I applied for asylum, and was taken under the protection of the International Rescue Committee. I didn't want to stay at the refugee camp so I took up any job I could and that is how I survived 8 months waiting for a visa. Precisely on the 11 February 1981 I landed in America, in Chicago. The brother of the person I had met in Greece did end up helping me. The Polish Welfare Association did also. I didn't know the language very well. I couldn't expect too much. I worked in a factory for \$4.50 an hour. After I'd been there long enough to get a raise they fired me. Another young person without qualifications and who didn't know the language was waiting on the street.

– Were you disappointed by America?

– No. I found another job. I earned a bit and signed up for Film and Fine Arts at

– I was filming the television film "Wildflower", directed by Diane Keaton (1991). An ambitious film about the 30s in a run down American provincial town. It didn't take long to complete the film – 22 days. I tried to make the lighting similar to that in "The Grapes of Wrath" by Ford. They showed "Wildflower" on the cable channel Lifetime and somehow everyone noticed it. Spielberg contacted me immediately – he was still working on "Jurassic Park" at the time.

– It sounds like a real heart-throbbing Hollywood dream.

– My life seems a bit like a Hollywood screenplay. Positive incidents and fortunate coincidences have played a big part. I am superstitious and sometimes wonder how long my good luck will last and what it means.

– I don't think you have anything to worry about. In any good Hollywood screenplay there must be a happy ending... What were you offered by the director of "Jaws"?

– A trial – the mini series "Class of '61" for Amblin Entertainment. From our very first meeting we talked about "Schindler's List". He asked me what I thought of the film being black-and-white. I told him that I thought that in visual terms the Holocaust was mostly remembered in black-and-white. The preparations for "Schindler's List" took a year and a half. In the meantime I was also filming "The Adventures of Huck Finn" by Steve Sommers.

– How did you find working with Spielberg?

– Perfect. I respect him as a man, director and producer. He is a professional of the highest order. He just knows how to



"SAVING PRIVATE RYAN"

do cinema. He can afford to take risks. I think that he appreciated my *different*, European sensitivity. As opposed to American cameramen, I create more with the heart than with technical correctness. I believe that sometimes it is worth choosing a *wrong* light if, in this way, the drama and mood of the scene is enhanced. Similarly, an out-of-focus image can be an advantage to the drama and atmosphere. I'm not a fan of special effects, that is, I believe that tricks should be done with the camera, whilst filming. This method is of course much more risky. If it doesn't work – it's a flop. When we worked on "Saving Private Ryan", we were using tricks with the camera and they

worked. But first we rehearsed for three weeks in Los Angeles. We managed, for example, to darken the colouring of the actors' faces. This worked in landing operation scenes and it helped the actors. Every such idea requires invention, experimentation, trials and, most of all, work. But, I think that is what cinematography is all about.

– You were born under a lucky star.

A brilliant career in Hollywood, awards, Oscars. It turns out that sometimes the American dream does come true.

– A position in a profession is achieved through talent, but most of all through work. And that is what counts. Well, and maybe a bit of luck. ■

Janusz Kamiński is not the only Polish cameraman who works in Hollywood and Western Europe. The following is a list of chosen films, in which cinematography was carried out by Polish cameramen.

ANDRZEJ BARTKOWIAK:

TERMS OF ENDEARMENT (1983, PROD. USA) DIR. JAMES L. BROOKS
PRIZZI'S HONOR (1985, PROD. USA) DIR. JOHN HUSTON
LETHAL WEAPON 4 (1998, PROD. USA) DIR. RICHARD DONNER

PAWEŁ EDELMAN:

THE PIANIST (2002, PROD. FRANCE – GERMANY – UK – POLAND) DIR. ROMAN POLAŃSKI
RAY (2004, PROD. USA) DIR. TAYLOR HACKFORD
OLIVER TWIST (2005, PROD. UK – CZECH REPUBLIC – FRANCE – ITALY) DIR. ROMAN POLAŃSKI

ADAM HOLENDER:

MIDNIGHT COWBOY (1969, PROD. USA) DIR. JOHN SCHLESINGER
THE PANIC IN NEEDLE PARK (1971, PROD. USA) DIR. JERRY SCHATZBERG
SMOKE (1995, PROD. GERMANY – USA – JAPAN) DIR. WAYNE WANG

SŁAWOMIR IDZIAK:

THREE COLOURS: BLUE (TROIS COULEURS: BLEU, 1993, PROD. FRANCE – POLAND – SWITZERLAND – UK) DIR. KRZYSZTOF KIEŚŁOWSKI
BLACK HAWK DOWN (2001, PROD. USA) DIR. RIDLEY SCOTT
HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX (2007, PROD. UK – USA) DIR. DAVID YATES

EDWARD KŁOSIŃSKI:

EUROPA (1991, PROD. DENMARK – SWEDEN – FRANCE – GERMANY – SWITZERLAND) DIR. LARS VON TRIER
THREE COLOURS: WHITE (TROIS COULEURS: BLANC, 1994, PROD. FRANCE – POLAND – SWITZERLAND), DIR. KRZYSZTOF KIEŚŁOWSKI
THE FAREWELL (ABSCHIED – BRECHTS LETZTER SOMMER, 2000, PROD. GERMANY – POLAND), DIR. JAN SCHUETTE

RYSZARD LENCZEWSKI:

LAST RESORT (2000, PROD. UK), DIR. PAWEŁ PAWLIKOWSKI
MY SUMMER OF LOVE (2004, PROD. UK), DIR. PAWEŁ PAWLIKOWSKI

WITOLD SOBOCIŃSKI:

PIRATES (1986, PROD. FRANCE – TUNISIA) DIR. ROMAN POLAŃSKI
FRANTIC (1988, PROD. USA – FRANCE) DIR. ROMAN POLAŃSKI
TORRENTS OF SPRING (1989, PROD. UK – FRANCE – ITALY) DIR. JERZY SKOŁIMOWSKI

PIOTR SOBOCIŃSKI:

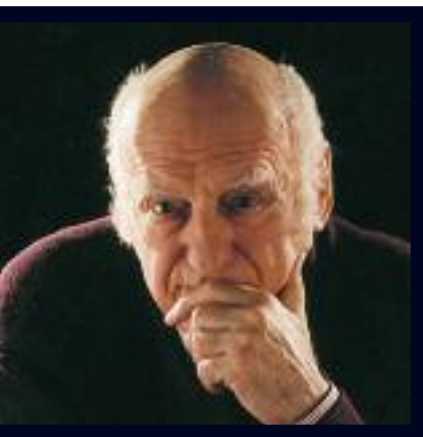
THREE COLOURS: RED (TROIS COULEURS: ROUGE, 1994, PROD. POLAND – FRANCE – SWITZERLAND) DIR. KRZYSZTOF KIEŚŁOWSKI
MARVIN'S ROOM (1996, PROD. USA) DIR. JERRY ZAKS
HEARTS IN ATLANTIS (2001, PROD. USA) DIR. SCOTT HICKS

DARIUSZ WOLSKI:

THE CROW (1994, PROD. USA) DIR. ALEX PROYAS
PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: THE CURSE OF THE BLACK PEARL (2003, PROD. USA) DIR. GORE VERBINSKI
SWEENEY TODD: THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET (2007, PROD. USA – UK) DIR. TIM BURTON

JERZY ZIELIŃSKI:

CAL (1984, PROD. UK), DIR. PAT O'CONNOR
THE JANUARY MAN (1989, PROD. USA), DIR. PAT O'CONNOR
WASHINGTON SQUARE (1997, PROD. USA) DIR. AGNIESZKA HOLLAND



JERZY KAWALEROWICZ

Jerzy Kawalerowicz is one of the grand masters of Polish cinema, awarded numerous times for his films at both Polish and international festivals. In Venice, he received the George Melies award in 1959 for “Baltic Express”, in Cannes in 1961 – The Special Jury Award for “Joan of the Angels”, in Berlin in 1978 – Silver Berlin bear for “Death of President”. And his 1967 “Pharaoh” was nominated for an Oscar. Jerzy Kawalerowicz died in 2007.

A MAN ALONE IN THE WORLD

IWONA KURZ

How to review his work, and any attempt to synthesise it, was always problematic for critics. *The pharaoh of cinema, a craftsman* (as if he weren't an artist), *beautiful but cold* films – such descriptions showed respect mixed with distance: we appreciate them, but are not captivated.

Jerzy Kawalerowicz was a member of the Polish film school generation. More than that – as the head of the KADR production unit, he was co-responsible for this formation's most important films, made by Andrzej Wajda, Andrzej Munk and Kazimierz Kutz. In some sense, all of what we tend to call Polish school was born at KADR. Paradoxically, though, Kawalerowicz stayed on the sidelines.

It seems that his departure from Polish film romanticism (and thus also partially a break from audiences' expectations and tastes) was a result of his different understanding of the nature of cinema, or even his vision of humanity.

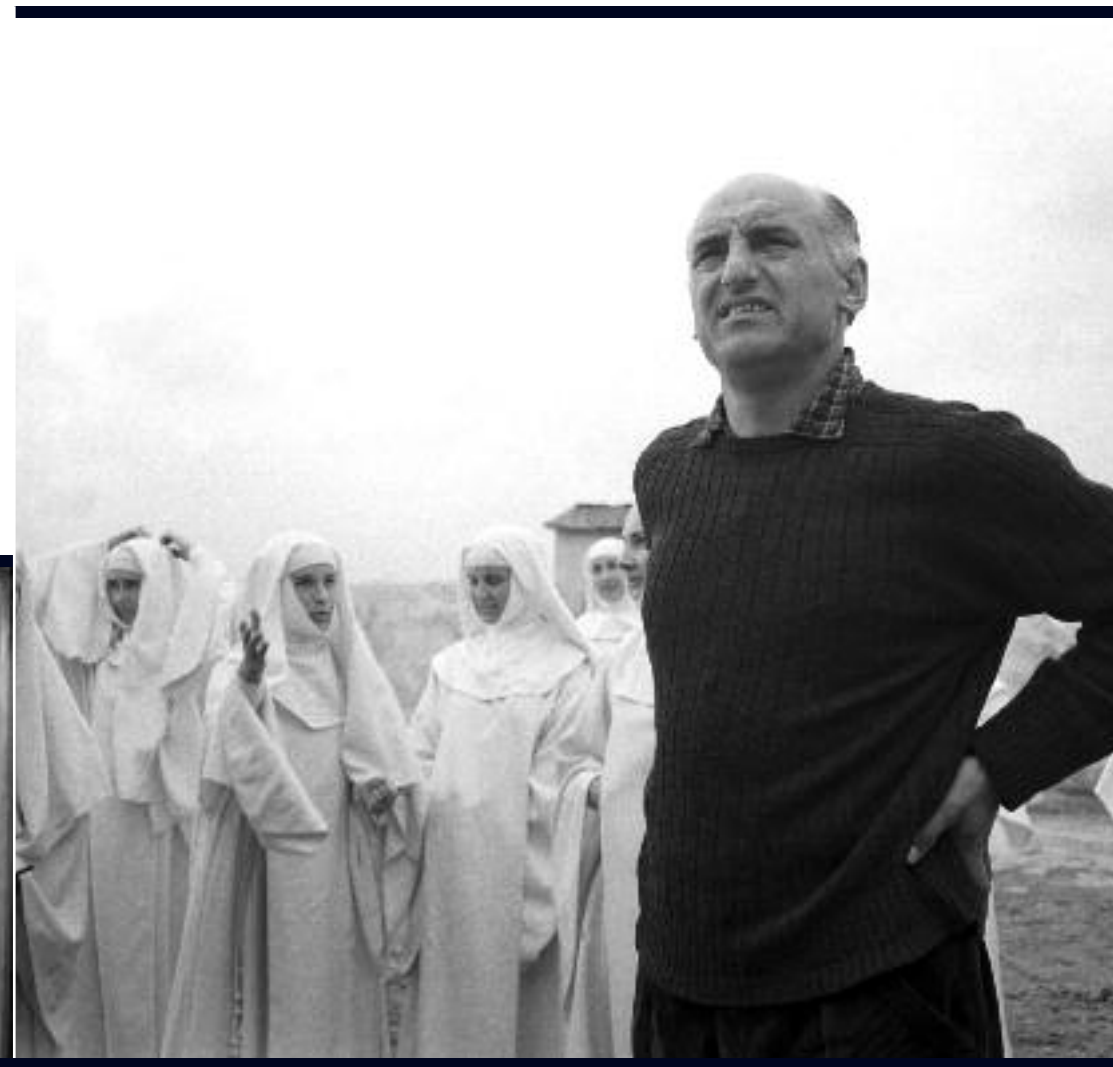
The first thing that distinguishes the Polish school is their shared generational experience. Kawalerowicz (born in 1922, Munk in 1921, Wajda in 1927) was, of course, forced into physical labour during the German occupation; when he recalled the wartime many years later he mainly emphasised the feeling of time lost and of being starved of education, with which he entered the postwar world. In some sense, he left history behind, unlike Wajda or Munk, for whom history was an element, which devoured individuals, and a pretext to pose questions concerning Polish tradition and identity.

These questions were of less importance to Kawalerowicz. For him, history was a necessary element of scenery when he worked on literary works set in the past, an indispensable element of thickening the reality. He put a lot of effort into his portrayal of the past: it's sufficient to recall his detailed research for “Pharaoh” or “Death of President” (1977); the recreation of 1920s Warsaw scenery was not much easier than recreating ancient Egypt. He wanted to faithfully rebuild the spirit of a given era; this is well exemplified by the lack of erotic kisses in “Pharaoh”, since they were not present in the artwork from the era, he didn't have them in the film. The image of the past in these (and not only these) films, is extraordinarily evocative: his heroes, however, are not victims of history, but accidental players on the stage on which the power struggles are fought. *Szczęśny*, the hero of “Cellulose”, was growing up to communism in certain social conditions (even though “Cellulose” was, at the same time, a simple modern story of social advancement), “Real End of the Great War” presented the impact of war on the human psyche and relations between people, but in “Baltic Express” he showed the world and characters cleansed of history. This was the case in his films ever since, regardless of the costume. What became prominent was the power relationship between individuals and institutions, the structure, in which a person has to move.

He borrowed this element from literature. He treated it differently from other Polish school directors, for whom literature contained important meanings. For Kawalerowicz, literature, read



“BALTIC EXPRESS” (1959)



JERZY KAWALEROWICZ ON THE SET OF “JOAN OF ANGELS” (1961)



“DEATH OF THE PRESIDENT” (1977)

carefully and respectfully, was more of a source or a pretext for the structures he was creating. The artist was not supposed to refer to the community they were part of, but to formulate an autonomous statement, whose form would come from within, from their own understanding of the story.

The most important film inspiration, to which the director admitted, was Italian neo-realism. Kawalerowicz began his film studies early, by taking the Film Preparatory Course in postwar Kraków, whilst also studying at the Academy of Fine Arts. Not only in Poland was neo-realism being discovered, and spurred the revival of film language. It was an especially radical change for Polish cinema, which was still dominated by pre-war conventions. Suddenly, the camera was set in motion (both on set and outside the studio) and the actors started just being in front of it, instead of playing costume parts. Kawalerowicz was a pioneer in this respect, which is visible in the first film he made on his own, “Cellulose”, based on Igor Newerly's novel (1953). Modern camera work and editing, as well as great acting characterised the film, which far surpassed social realist propagandist films and the clichés of Polish cinema.

More than anything, the director was seeking the most effective film language, and in this sense, he did his neo-realist homework most radically. He worked with a detailed script (over time, his precision, even pedantry, became legendary), he would draw layout plans for individual scenes to break with the editing tradition based on the chronological order of scenes or symbolic



"PHARAOH" (1966)

► and associative editing (which was close to Wajda, to end with Polish School references). When he said in one of his interviews *I saw everything as if I was looking from behind the camera*, he revealed perhaps the most characteristic feature of his films. In other words, the theme, maybe even individual scenes, provoke or demand certain formal solutions. Not only the theme, though, but also the constant search for some organic form, deriving from within the work. Setting the film on a train ("Baltic Express") or in a desert ("Pharaoh") results in consequences beyond what is in the plot – these are not mere events on a train or in a desert: these are separate worlds, autonomous forms of reality. Kawalerowicz's excellent visual imagination allowed him, through precise planning and execution, to present a complete

vision of the world and its inhabitants. The empty rhythm of the train revealed the uniqueness and at the same time banality of every journey, the ever-present sand and image of the desert stressed the loneliness of a young ruler, a cold, empty world gave indication of possible cause for insanity („Joan of the Angels"), and crowded Warsaw streets ("Death of President") expressed a swirl of ideas and emotions.

That is why the most important sentence in all of Kawalerowicz's films, at least for me, is the one uttered by the rabbi in "Joan of the Angels" (1960): *The angel has left Mother Joan, and so she is left all by herself*, he says, in response to priest Suryn's suggestion that the woman is possessed by the devil. In a sense, his characters are all people left on their own, even though they react to their loneliness in different ways.

There is drama and tension resulting from human nature, hidden under the aesthetic, sophisticated form. The distance attributed to Kawalerowicz can be interpreted as an expression of his attitude towards the modern world. If in his films I were to look for a statement summarising Kawalerowicz's attitude to cinema I would quote "The Inn", rather than "Pharaoh". There is everything in there: life in the world on the verge of a catastrophe, a warm-hearted distance towards this world and a completely fresh admiration of its beauty.

IWONA KURZ

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MAŁGORZATA SZUMOWSKA

ALMOST A PSYCHODRAMA

MAGDALENA LEBECKA SPEAKS WITH MAŁGORZATA SZUMOWSKA



JULIA JENTSCH IN "33 SCENES FROM LIFE"

In her "Stranger" (2004) Małgorzata Szumowska dealt with hope, experienced by expectant mother. In her latest film tells about the tragedy of dying. For her films, "Happy Man" (2000) and "Stranger", Szumowska was twice nominated for the European Film Award in the category of European Discovery of the Year.

– Why the symbolic, Christ-referring number in the title – "33 Scenes from Life"? Does it have anything to do with the age of Julia, the film's protagonist?

– I was 33 years old when the outline of the future screenplay came up. During my pregnancy I kept a journal in the form of casual, sometimes one-sentence notes on what had happened to me in the previous year. Each of these points eventually has grown into a separate scene. The number is purely coincidental, whilst together they form a chronologically developing story. My German producer from Pandora Film, to whom I sent these notes, decided that it was a good idea for a movie.

– The parents of your protagonist, Julia, die. Similar incidents accumulated in your life in a short period of time. Are you prepared for

▶ **the fact that “33 Scenes from Life” will be interpreted with a biographical key?**

– This is not an autobiographical film! I did not create a story about myself, the axis of the film is made up of occurrences that happened to me, but they are only the canvas which I filled with fictitious micro-occurrences. Besides, which director doesn't use his own life to some degree? The question is how skilfully s/he does it.

My mother was a popular writer, and my father a well-known journalist, therefore discussing the film in the context of my private life is inevitable in Poland, even though it is very irritating. However, in Paris, Copenhagen or Berlin no one will care about this. They just want to see a good movie. Artistic cinema often has a personal dimension, which is never synonymous with real life. In my opinion Polish cinema lacks this personal dimension, as if people were afraid of using their own experiences, treating this as a form of exhibitionism. Maybe this has something to do with a Catholic upbringing. I don't know.

Julia Jentsch plays a different type of woman than me, although I do admit that there are some similarities. However Julia draws on her own experiences, uses herself. I chose her because I know that she can breathe truth and life into a character.

– **What intrigued you in this German star?**

– Her gift of persuasion, screen truth. In “Sophie Scholl”, where she played the leading role, I believed her without reservations, although the film was a bit artificial in my opinion...

– **On your set there was also a well-known Danish actor Peter Gantzer (who played in the films of Lars von Trier, among others), and also a group of Polish artists linked with Krystian Lupa's Cracow theatre. It was not only an ethnic clash but also a confrontation of extremely different thespian conventions. How did you try to control this specific melting pot?**

– The idea of an international cast was part of this European, multicultural project from the beginning. Despite some worry that foreigners would not be able to convincingly impersonate Poles, you get the impression that they are all performing in the same language, even though this is not so; they are speaking in German, English and Polish. And a month of rehearsals was enough! I enjoy this unique experiment in Polish cinema because it is proof of the universality of my story. But, on the other hand, it was a difficult project.

– **Was it because the film concerns extreme experiences of the physiology of sickness and death. How do you talk about them?**

– Realistically, sometimes even brutally. This project required that the actors feel

what the story is about. They accepted this without discussion or imposing their own interpretations. However, not everyone accepted this demand easily. For example, Peter was used to a *hygienic*, i. e. five-hour working day. He was shocked when I criticised him for how he had performed in one of the scenes, which – as it turned out – was a blatant infringement of the labour code which is in force in Scandinavia. You can't say you performed badly... I don't like it... You say: it was great but let's do it again. However Peter perfectly adjusted to this new style of work.

Julia's task was the toughest. She had to play a person who sometimes reacts irrationally, in a way which is extremely different to the accepted ways. She was

keen to understand her behaviour and I tried to explain that it cannot be comprehended and that there is no place for discussion about the conception of the character here. She comes from a theatre academy tradition, where they concentrated on intellectual analysis and a precise acting task, whilst in this film it was impossible. What for Lupa's actors was natural, evoked resistance in Julia. However, while editing the film I saw that she understood everything and in each take she is real. She is a fascinating actress, she never fakes. If she doesn't know how to perform, she doesn't perform and this approach is more convincing than if she tried to force something.

– **So looks as if you imposed on actors your own method: between an “emotional**

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JULIA JENTSCH

swing” and authoritarianism. Did a psychodrama come out of this?

– Yes, almost. I think that without this sometimes exaggerated emotional swing this film would not have been made because that is the state in which the main character found herself.

– **What aesthetic convention did you use?**

– A very severe, ascetic realism; at times it seems like a documentary. I even resigned from using any extradiegetic music. Paweł Mykietyn's II Symphony appears in some episodes because Julia's husband, a composer, is preparing for a concert in Cologne.

– **The cameraman in all your films, Michał Englert, always introduces his own ideas regarding cinematography.**

– This time, however, I had a very precise vision: I wanted cinematography to be minimalist, ordinary, *ugly*, consistent with the dirty, hyper-realistic performance of the actors. However, Michał proposed very long takes with a practically static camera. Ultimately, the cinematography is not ugly. I don't think Michał knew how to shoot ugly takes.

What is important is that this visual style suits the story. I always work with practically the same group of people. The

editor, Jacek Drosio, has edited all my films. I trust him, we understand each other without speaking. I like team work. Similarly, I am working with Pandora Film and with the Polish producer STI for the second time.

– **You have always quoted your master, Wojciech Has, who warned against shallow realism and encouraged not to be afraid of metaphors.**

– Today every kind of symbolism or metaphor irritates me, and for this story it would be simply deadly. Moreover, the more I love what I am doing now, the more I dislike my previous, overblown stories. In this sense I am very atypical, as I don't become very attached to my films. When I make a new film, I abandon the previous one. Just like idols. I once had them, now I try to rely only on myself.

Certain values were imprinted in me, now I am verifying them. It was always important for me that a film had to be a morality play, or a parable with a distinctive message. Yet in this film I am describing an open situation, without trying to judge my characters; there is no moral lesson to learn, because it is not my role to preach.

My producers were worried that Julia would turn out to be a horrible egoist. Yet she is not perceived in this way at all by the viewers. They like her just the way she is. Maybe because she is human, wacky and not always correct.

What clearly differentiates “33 Scenes from Life” from my previous work is humour. You can define it as a tragic-comedy or a black comedy.

– **A comedy which you filmed at the oncology ward, in a dissecting room, at a cemetery?**

– Indeed, we filmed the film in these places too. And it sometimes happened that the great tension was released through hysterical laughter. I used my own experience; I had breakdowns in similar situations, but people are stronger than they think.

– **You take up a subject treated as a taboo in our culture. Do you think that you will help others to accustom themselves to the fear of death through your film?**

– I hope so. I want to share my surprise that in similar situations I reacted in a way which contradicts the current understanding of tragedy. I show that tragedy, along with despair, has another side; there are no models of behaviour in such circumstances, for example, pattering Hail Marias with a woebegone face. After all, it happens that in that moment you run to a pub to get completely drunk. Or other atavisms come to life, such as craziness regarding sexuality.

– **Was making of this film for you a form of auto-therapy?**

– Certainly, even though the word auto-therapy makes me laugh. Maybe it was more a confrontation of my own fear of death. The documentary “What is there to be afraid of”, which preceded this production, had a similar meaning.

– **You borrowed a scene from this cheerful short film (which is a recording of rural funeral customs), showing the protagonist taking photos of her dead neighbour. There are also metaphysical accents in the documentary...**

– However, there is no room for this in my feature film. Because this is such a specific story that any manifestation of metaphysics could smell of sentimentality. Reality verifies our expectations, it shows, at least in my case, that in such situations everything boils down to extreme details and there is not much room for sentiment.

I grew up believing that death is not the end of everything. I still believe in that but I don't think that this can be used as a subject for my film. Andrei Tarkovski had the privilege of contemplation about what happens after death in his works-meditations. I am not Tarkovski and I am not trying to be. However, it is only now that I understand better what Ingmar Bergman talks about in his films. ■



DANUTA SZAFIARSKA IN “TIME TO DIE”

A LADY FROM THE PAST ERA

MAGDALENA LEBECKA SPEAKS WITH DOROTA KĘDZIERZAWSKA AND ARTHUR REINHART

– “Time to Die” – this is something that the protagonist of your movie, Aniela, often repeats. It is an afterthought on the world today, but also a calm acceptance of passing.

DOROTA KĘDZIERZAWSKA: This is a one-role film, the leading character virtually does not come off the screen. She and the dog which she talks to. The presence of the dog – a silent partner, allowed us to avoid internal monologues, which I do not really like. All the other characters: the son, granddaughter, neighbours appear and then almost immediately disappear, they are only temporary insertions.

I had been thinking about a screenplay written especially for Danuta Szaflarska for some time, because she is an incredible

actress and person. The starting point for the screenplay was a story of an elderly woman from a village near Warsaw. After the war, several tenants were lodged into her wooden villa, which had a spectacular stove, crystal windows and beautiful mosaics on the floor boards. The house deteriorated and decayed, devastated by the new tenants and the woman spent the rest of her life fighting to regain her property.

Aniela from my film is also a woman endowed with a strong character. She has a sharp sense of humour, yet she can be overbearing and even authoritarian.

– According to the prevailing standards, old age, in particular that of women, is scandalously unphotogenic, because our culture affirms youth, making old age



“THE CROWS” (1994) BY DOROTA KĘDZIERZAWSKA



“I AM” (2005) BY DOROTA KĘDZIERZAWSKA

a taboo. Why did you decide to take this issue up now?

D. K.: I just felt that the time came to tackle it. Certain coincidences always help and release the imagination. In this case my relationship with my grandmother, whom I see in the character of Aniela, certainly had great significance. Grandma – that was my safety. My parents worked, sometimes they were at home, at others, not, but my grandmother was always there. Even though she passed away a long time ago, in a sense she is always with me.

– What kind of challenge is photographing a 90 year-old woman – especially one continuously present in the film frame – for a director of cinematography?

ARTHUR REINHART: First of all, Danuta Szaflarska is a beautiful woman and it is hard to find actors as professional and prepared for the role as her. It was very hard work, though. Of the 28 days of filming Danuta spent 26 days on set, at the same time performing at the theatre in the evenings. There is a lot of text in the film and yet Danuta knew it all by heart!

D. K.: She made a mistake once and used a different word. Her utterance still made sense, but Danuta interrupted the take. She says that whatever is written in the screenplay is holy and that is exactly how it should be said.

Danuta works like a magnet, attracting people to herself. We could listen her fascinating stories for hours. Besides she is a very cheerful person, she will find a good side in every situation and in every person. Sometimes I felt like a bitter old lady in comparison to her.

– Filming a movie like this has to have a special character. What aesthetic style did you use in “Time to Die”?

A. R.: We wanted to tell this story as simply and modestly as possible. The camera remains practically static

throughout the entire film. I use a lot of close-ups, we concentrate on Danuta’s face so as to listen to her story as carefully as possible.

– The film is monochromatic. What was the intention behind that decision?

A. R.: Whilst looking for the perfect building we looked at over 900 old, wooden villas, or more specifically their remnants, because several of them disappear irreversibly each year. We also looked at many old photos of similar houses from the time of their greatness, but they were black-and-white photos. That imposed a particular vision of the picture.

D. K.: I have always felt resistance towards colour and I have always tried to reject it. Finally a subject has come up which is aided by this deficiency.

A. R.: For me as a cameraman filming a black and white film is much harder, I had to adjust to different means. Theoretically, this is something that everyone knows, however, you have to experience it to feel the difference.

– The dog is also black-and-white. But these are his natural colours.

D. K.: The one we chose earlier failed despite his friendliness. On set it turned out that he was not up for it; he was afraid of the silence and refused to cooperate. We carried out a quick casting. The first of the new candidates walked around the room in which the whole crew had come together and then he rolled on his back at my feet. It is how he stayed with us.

– There is also a dreamlike-imaginative layer in the film which intertwines with a realistic one.

D. K.: The wooden villa – a microcosm of a house surrounded by a garden and enclosed as if in a bubble, is the film’s third character. We rarely go outside it. But the unreal takes are sparse. We wanted to stay

firm on the ground and let ourselves go only for a moment.

A. R.: The place where Aniela most likes to spend time, think, brew tea and where she observes the world is her glass veranda. There are hand-cast windows in which the sun reflects wonderfully. We took advantage of this pleated glass whilst filming the optical scenes.

Danuta works like a magnet, attracting people to herself. We could listen her fascinating stories for hours. Besides she is a very cheerful person, she will find a good side in every situation and in every person. Sometimes I felt like a bitter old lady in comparison to her...

– You recently finished filming “Tristan + Isolde” in the United States. The director, Kevin Reynolds, considered you one of the best cinematographers in the world. Have you learnt anything from your Hollywood experience that could enrich your independent cinema?

A. R.: On the contrary, I think that Hollywood could learn a lot from our small movies. By deciding on working with me, Kevin wanted to overcome the stereotypic, plastic vision and I believe that I was able to leave my mark on this film.

Kevin visited us on the set of “Time to Die”. He couldn’t believe that on such a low budget we filmed on a 35 mm, we



DOROTA KĘDZIERZAWSKA



“TIME TO DIE” (2007) BY DOROTA KĘDZIERZAWSKA

► had Super Techno, a Panavision camera... He said that he himself would like to work with such a dedicated and concentrated crew.

– You have been making independent cinema together for some time. You control the creative process yourselves – from the screenplay phase, to editing and production. In this artistic tandem where are the boundaries between the roles of director and cinematographer?

D. K.: I write the screenplay myself, I cannot do it any other way, however there are no rigid boundaries. Arthur often turns my attention to something, gives me a hint. And vice versa.

A. R.: For example Dorota starts to grumble that she doesn't like something in the frame.

D. K.: But it's not about showing who rules or to compete for who knows better. We do everything to make our film the best. That is all we care about. ■

“TIME TO DIE” IS REVIEWED ON PAGE 70

KRZYSZTOF ZANUSSI ABOUT QUEEN HEDWIG

PIOTR ŚMIAŁOWSKI

Zanussi wrote the first draft of a script about Saint Hedwig a couple of years ago. Since then, the text has been extended. Filming will probably begin this year. This is going to be one of two projects that the director will make in Poland after a three-year hiatus.

Hedwig of Anjou was the only woman in history to sit on the throne of the King of Poland. She only lived for about 25 years – we do not know her exact date of birth – but she became an object of religious and artistic worship. In 1986, Pope John Paul II pronounced her blessed, and then, in 1997, canonised her.

There are three primary motifs in Hedwig's biography: her marriage at the age of barely four, to seven-year-old William Habsburg in 1378, her coronation in 1384, following many months of bargaining between Polish magnates and Hedwig's mother – Elizabeth of Bosnia, Queen of Hungary and Louis of Hungary's widow, and her 1386 marriage to Lithuanian prince Jagiełło. As a condition of this marriage, Jagiełło had to be baptised in the Christian church. As Władysław's wife – this was the name assumed by the prince upon his baptism – Hedwig became famous for her ardent campaigning for the Christianisation of Lithuania and a peaceful resolution to the dispute with the Teutonic Order.

Krzysztof Zanussi will present mainly the story of Hedwig and William's engagement and a miracle, which made the Queen sacrifice her personal happiness and agree to marry the considerably older Jagiełło, a prince of a formerly pagan country. He will omit the struggle for power during the two-year period when there wasn't a monarch, just before Hedwig's coronation and the beginning of her reign. This subplot will be included in



KRZYSZTOF ZANUSSI



QUEEN HEDWIG PAINTED BY JAN MATEJKO



SARCOPHAGUS OF THE QUEEN HEDWIG TOMB BY ANTONI MADEJSKI

The narrator in the film is a bard, who will be the defender of Hedwig's honour. Her opponents were spreading gossip, that the Queen became Habsburg's mistress before marrying Jagiełło.

a TV series about the queen, which will be shot at the same time as the film.

I wrote the film script, says Krzysztof Zanussi, and the series was co-written by Michał Komar and myself. The narrator in the film is a bard, who travels from fair to fair soon after Hedwig's death, telling people the story of her love for Habsburg. The bard will be the defender of Hedwig's honour. Her opponents were spreading gossip, that the Queen became “Habsburg's mistress” before marrying Jagiełło.

The film will start with a scene depicting the childhood wedding and the ceremony, in which they are put to bed together. This will be a kind of prologue. In medieval times, this type of wedding ceremony was the first stage of entering into a proper marriage. The final stage is a night spent together, when the couple reaches an appropriate age, which at that time was 12. By then, though, Hedwig was already sitting on the Polish King's throne. William was supposed to come to meet her at the Wawel Castle. This moment will be the proper beginning of Zanussi's plot.

The circumstances of Habsburg's stay in Kraków are still the subject of heated debates between historians researching Queen Hedwig's life. Some claim that the youngsters fell madly in love, while others say that they were too young to experience such *passionate feelings*. *I, of course, will present their relationship as a great love affair, says Zanussi. Only then will the whole story become appropriately dramatic. This does not mean, however, that I misrepresent facts. The sources from the time simply appear to be very unclear. We will never know many things. That's why I will have to create a myth about Hedwig. I select events, that I am sure really took place, and present Hedwig in a positive light, thus help creating her myth. I am fascinated by her spontaneous religious devotion. The sacrifice she made, giving up her love for Habsburg, was not only made for the benefit of the state, but also for Christianity. A voice which, according to reports at the time, she had heard in the cathedral, told her to accept Jagiełło's proposal. This was the miracle that shapes the way we understand her life. With her wisdom and gentleness, Hedwig lead Poland into a new era – the great era of the Jagiellonian dynasty, during which Poland was the most powerful it has ever been. This was the end of the middle ages with its characteristic barbarism.*

The marriage of Hedwig and Jagiełło was hastened by Polish magnates, who sought an ally in the growing dispute with the Teutonic Order, worried at the same time that the possible marriage between the Polish queen and William would subordinate Polish interests to the Habsburg dynasty. That is why William was not let into the Wawel when he came to Cracow. The

young couple had to meet at the Franciscan monastery, and Hedwig was always accompanied by someone, so that they could not fulfil the last stage of their wedding vows. When William finally managed to enter the Wawel Castle, the magnates threatened to kill him. *Habsburg took risks on other occasions too, says the director. At one point, he was in Cracow secretly, and to kill him then, somewhere in a street, wouldn't have been such a scandal as if the visit had been an official one. I wanted to show that this couple was in some way cornered. Even while dancing they had to whisper to each other. Hedwig saved Habsburg at Wawel Castle by lowering him from her window on bed sheets. When trying to reach him herself later, she was stopped by the guards and tried to smash the gate with an axe. This shows how passionate her feelings were.*

The film will include a scene showing Hedwig and Jagiełło's wedding, a condition of which was that Hedwig's husband couldn't come near her for three years. The film will end with Hedwig's death, which the director wants to present as the fulfilment of her sacrifice.

In working on “Queen Hedwig”, Zanussi faces the problem of employing teenage actors for two main parts. “Hedwig's and William's age should be viewed from the perspective of their times”, explains Zanussi. *Back then, a 12 or 14-year-old girl was an adult. In constructing her character, I relied on Długosz's account [famous Polish historian], which described her as an exceptionally mature and wise woman. Other historical sources describe William as “a fine young man” with dashing good looks. I follow these sources. This allows us to avoid seeing them as children, and cast slightly older actors.*

Another issue on this production will surely be set design. There is now no trace of the era in which Hedwig lived in Cracow. *The Romanesque and Gothic styles were replaced, even “flooded” by Baroque, says Zanussi. The interiors of the Wawel Castle look completely different now to during Hedwig's reign, not to mention other places, where the Queen stayed. Therefore, it is not possible to use authentic objects in the film. We have found some exterior locations in Malbork, but other sets will have to be built from scratch. We will obviously use computer effects, but I think they are still too imperfect to base key scenes on them – computer editing is always visible.*

“Queen Hedwig” will be a Polish, Hungarian and Austrian co-production, and the crew will be international. The sets will probably be designed by a Hungarian. Sławomir Idziak, who has worked on some huge projects abroad, including “Black Hawk Down”, “King Arthur” and, more recently, “Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix”, will be in charge of cinematography. “Queen Hedwig” will have a budget of approximately 20 million PLN. ■



■ ANDRZEJ MALESZKA

OUT OF NOSTALGIA FOR THE MARVELLOUS

JAKUB SOCHA SPEAKS WITH ANDRZEJ MALESZKA

The television series “The Magic Tree” has been shown all over the world and has received many awards, including an EMMY. A film version is currently in production.

– “The Magic Tree” seems to be liked everywhere. Do you feel like an artist of the globalisation era, who transgresses cultural boundaries?

– It has got nothing to do with globalisation. My films are fairy tales and discuss things we all have in common: yearning, especially children’s yearning, a deep need for miraculous events, a need every child has (and many adults do too). Such marvel does not signify complete detachment from the real world, but more an attempt to complete the partial picture which we are given by our senses. I also make films about the relation between the small man and large world, about the fact that in an encounter with a big, anonymous threat we actually stand a chance. That is why I am understood by viewers from various countries. I also think that when we are children we see the world similarly, regardless of where we grew up. Many emotions are identical. “The Magic Tree” has as large an audience in South American countries as in Scandinavian ones. I watched the film with those audiences and the reactions were practically identical to those in Poland. Although some preferred the surrealistic story about the library in which books can be eaten, whilst others that of the eyeliner with which you can draw yourself another face. In that one a girl painted herself the face of a film star and lived a double life.

– Does the success of a film also depend on the publicity and PR?

– Publicity is absolutely essential, because a film does not exist without an audience. But I do not believe that you can promote a mediocre film. Certainly not when the audience consists of children. The promotion budget for big productions is about 30 million dollars. We are never going to be able to afford that. That is why for the promotion of my films, I look for creative people, who use innovative methods to reach the audience. This is not a job for cold people from advertising. They will not create a rapport between the film and an audience, because they usually do not like the people they are talking to.

– “The Magic Tree” is reminiscent of Kieslowski’s “The Decalogue” – they are both short stories about core values, which we overlook in everyday life. Whilst making “The Magic Tree” did you think about the common concept that linked the whole series or did you concentrate on particular episodes?

– The main motif of the series is the story of the Magic Tree that was used to make hundreds of ordinary objects. Each of them maintained some magical power and ended up in the hands of ordinary people. This is the mythical equivalent of dispersed power. The films are imbued with a sense of hope that something amazing will happen to all of us. But each part of the series is separate and has different characters.

– How should stories based on fairy tales which have been repeated many times before be told?

– I make modern and original fairy tales. I link real occurrences with the miracles, because that is how children see the world. But, first and foremost, these are films. They have to have the elements that make up the energy of a film – powerful emotions and expressive characters. And they have to have an element of surprise, which makes us wait in suspense for the next scene. What I most like in this genre is the game between what we anticipate and the unexpected. A child wants the story to have something they’re familiar with, as this gives a sense of security – and at the same time they want to be continuously surprised. It is a constant breaking of the mirror in which the world is reflected and then putting it back together anew.

– Do young actors enrich the roles through their own sensitivity and experiences?

– I work very closely with actors, especially child actors as early as when I’m writing the screenplay. It’s not about asking what the screenplay should be like, but finding out what evokes emotions. I often rehearse with an incomplete screenplay and it is only then that I finish it.

– You make films assuming your audience are children, but many of your viewers are adults. What do you think attracts them: the quality of these films, or maybe nostalgia for times gone by?

– My films are not easy to classify. The target audience is anyone who usually has their feet on the ground but quietly believes in miraculous events, for example



■ “THE MAGIC TREE”

those who secretly play the lottery. Age is not important. Besides, when adults see a child struggling against difficulties, they simply see an equivalent of themselves. They see an adult fighting against something beyond their scope. We constantly come up against tough opponents, such as bosses, politicians, people stronger and richer than us. That is why we like to see how an even smaller person manages, gains a type of miraculous strength and doesn’t give up. Besides, our childhood never lasts long enough. We want to go back to that wonderland.

– Unlike in blockbusters, like “Shrek”, you do not include pop-culture motifs. Don’t you like irony and distance?

– I think that parody or quotation doesn’t make up a child’s language. Children prefer to eat ice-cream, not a parody of ice-cream. Irony and distance are opposites of truthfulness.

We need to look for a new language to tell film fairytales, also those for adults, but this does not mean we have to reduce them to parody. If we make fun of the wolf, people will find another monster to bring out their fear. But the alternative to stupid films will never be boring films. Aside from hunger and pain, boredom is the worst experience. Children in

particular hate boredom. That is why I try to make films full of incredible events, to lead the viewers through a fascinating world. Besides fairy tales, I’m inspired by classic adventure stories; all those wonderful stories that smell of exotica and danger. I transform them in my own way, but respect their rules.

– You once said that reality is as you create it. What role do your films play in this construction?

– I once said that I hated a passive acceptance of what fate has in store. One

The dice cannot be painted. You can only try to keep throwing it as long as possible.

I do not like talking about films in terms of fulfilling certain tasks. I believe that the most important thing in cinema is expanding the imagination. People who can imagine what another person is feeling are usually good people. That is why, if cinema has any purpose, it is to open up the imagination.

– It has been said that “The Magic Tree” represents a difficult optimism. Do you agree with this?



The films are imbued with a sense of hope that something amazing will happen to all of us.

of the episodes of “The Magic Tree” is about a boy who finds a dice with only black and white sides. The black side signifies bad luck, the white good. Philip keeps getting the black side and is haunted by misfortune. He has two possibilities: do nothing or take a risk. The boy comes up with a third option: to paint the whole dice white. He wants an easy life without risk. But that is not possible.

– Children have one fantastic characteristic – their resistance to bad luck. Children face unbelievably difficult experiences, yet they have incredible strength consisting of their faith in a positive conclusion. Even in the most difficult situations they find a mysterious energy, which allows them to maintain this faith. I transfer this into films. ■

Animation is, apart from documentary, the most dynamically developing field of film art in Poland. Artistic cinema can serve as an antidote for the visual kitsch flooding television and the multiplexes.



"THE CATHEDRAL" BY TOMASZ BĄGIŃSKI

"KIZI MIZI"
BY MARIUSZ
WILCZYŃSKI"TURNING THE INSTRUMENTS"
BY JERZY KUCIA"ICHTHYS" BY MAREK
SKROBECKI"PEOPLE OF ISRAEL WENT INTO THE MIDST OF THE RED SEA ON
DRY GROUND" BY KRZYSZTOF KIWERSKI

ANTIDOTE FOR KITSCH

ADRIANA PRODEUS

After a period of stagnation in Polish film, animation – a field of film stemming from fine arts, such as painting and graphics, combined with the most advanced technologies – nowadays has vast potential. The golden age of Polish animation started in the second half of the 50s and lasted all through the 60s.

At the same time, feature film saw the emergence of the most distinguished figures in Polish cinema, who created the Polish Film School. It was not by accident, that the achievements of Jan Lenica, Walerian Borowczyk, Daniel Szczechura, Ryszard Czekala or Mirosław Kijowicz coincided with the works of Andrzej Wajda,

Wojciech Jerzy Has, Andrzej Munk or Jerzy Kawalerowicz. Filmmaking was by then completely state-funded, and the films were produced in large, state-owned studios. And, despite censorship having still existed, the greatest film artists in Poland knew how to avoid it. A favourable political climate (following the repressive Stalinist era), expression of great individualities and a vibrant artistic atmosphere during that time gave birth to a legend, which filmmakers of today still invoke.

Polish animation has its roots in fine arts, and has always been philosophical. Formal experiments, as well as political statements, were often made. The legendary "Tango" by

Rybczyński, made in 1980 at Se-ma-for Studio in Łódź, won an Academy Award for Best Animation Short Feature in 1983.

Twenty years later, "The Cathedral" got an Oscar nomination – Tomasz Bagiński's parable, based on a fantasy short story and the paintings of Polish artist Zdzisław Beksiński. Even though it was not as innovative as "Tango", the film showed technical possibilities available to 3D animators in Poland. Bagiński's next project, "Fallen Art" received a BAFTA. The author of "The Cathedral" defies the heritage of avant-garde artistic animation and sees his works as part of computer art and new media. He is sometimes accused of being superficial in content and imitative in design, but he is nonetheless considered a distinct personality in the realm of animation. It is owing to his success, that many people started noticing this art form.

The second Academy Award winner in the history of Polish animation was the co-production of Se-ma-for and British BreakThru Films – Suzie Templeton's "Peter & the Wolf" (2006), with music by Sergei Prokofiev. This monumental production has revived the industry and encouraged foreign filmmakers to cooperate with Poland. The Quay brothers, for example, plan to make their next film in Łańcut.

Kamil Polak's "Świtez" – a loose adaptation of a romantic ballad by Adam Mickiewicz, currently being finished at Se-ma-for – also stands a chance of winning an Oscar. The film, being a combination of 2D and 3D animation, with hundreds of masterfully painted sceneries, has been occupying the department of animation at the Film School in Łódź for the last few years. The film is a heroic undertaking, considering the small budget, and would be a challenge even to a much larger studio with many more animators.

The most distinguished artists of Polish animation, using traditional techniques, with their own distinct *handwriting*, released their latest works a couple of years ago (in 2000: Jerzy Kucia's "Tuning the Instruments", Piotr Dumala's "Crime and Punishment") and keep the audience waiting for the next ones. But it will surely be worth the long wait. Jerzy Kucia – the master of intertwining sound and image in abstract poems, from which dream-like bits of memories emerge – is working on "The Fugue for Cello, Trumpet and Landscape". It will be a personal endeavour, an attempt to seize – through the combination of music, graphics and painting – the subtle relations of meanings and emotions triggered by a landscape. Piotr Dumala, known for his narratives scratched in plaster that penetrate the gloomy psychologies of Kafka and Dostoevsky, has decided to work on a feature film with experimental animated sequences. The black and white "The Forest" will be a claustrophobic, almost silent story of two men facing death.

Witold Giersz, author of such films as "Little Western" (1961); "Waiting" (1962); "Red and Black" (1964), is the only one of the

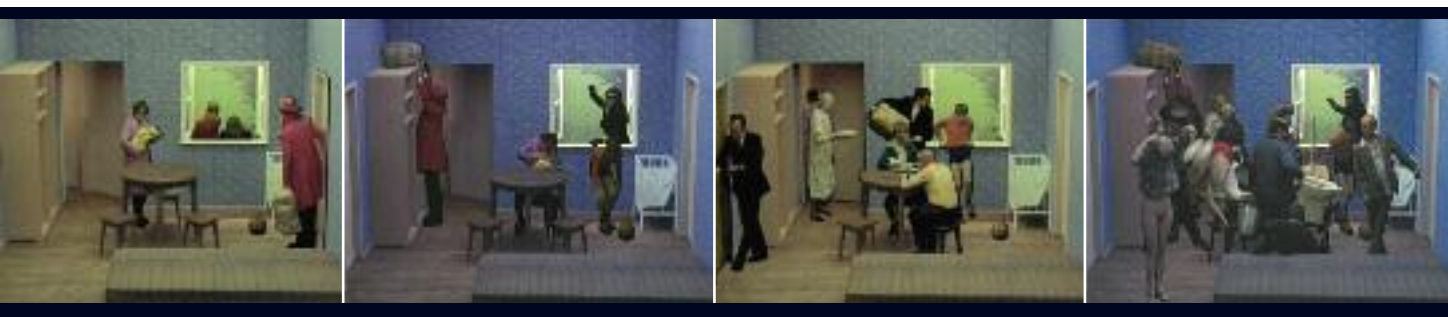


"CRIME AND PUNISHMENT" BY PIOTR DUMAŁA

Ground" (2007) was created by Krzysztof Kiwerski, director of the famous anti-war "Zero option" (1983).

Aleksandra Korejwo, an artist famous for her classical music variations animated in salt, awarded with the Clio Award and an Annie Award nomination, is working on her new film: a 12-minute "Frederic Chopin – Scherzo".

Tamara Sorbian-Kasprzycka, author of the award-winning "Adagio Cantabile" with Albinoni's music, a film inspired by the paintings of Witold Wojtkiewicz, a Polish painter who lived at the turn of the 20th century, plans to tell in her next film, "Stopped Time", the story of the last day in the life of Bruno Schulz, a Polish writer („Cinnamon Shops"), who was killed in Drohobycz ghetto in 1942.



"TANGO" BY ZBIGNIEW RYBCZYŃSKI

The legendary "Tango" by Rybczyński, made in 1980 at Se-ma-for Studio in Łódź, won an Academy Award for Best Animation Short Feature in 1983. The second Academy Award winner in the history of Polish animation was the co-production of Se-ma-for and British BreakThru Films – Suzie Templeton's "Peter & the Wolf" (2006), with music by Sergei Prokofiev.

▶ oldest generation of filmmakers, who still takes up new challenges. The artist, known for his fauvist use of colour, animates stone paintings, as if taken from Lascaux caves.

Marek Skrobecki is one of the most talented classical puppet animators in Poland. He learned animation at Aardman Studios and Jim Henson's Creature Workshop, to become a very skilled animator. Following the excellent "DIM" (1992), featuring life-sized puppets, Skrobecki created the award-winning "Ichthys" (2005) – an example of the artistry of puppet animation. He also worked as the set designer for the Oscar-winning "Peter & the Wolf". His next project is "Danny Boy" – an 18-minute social satire tackling the problem of alienation of the individual.

Mariusz Wilczyński has been the discovery of the last couple of years. Starting with "Times Have Passed" (1998), he has emerged as a creator who uses simple yet refined drawing, accompanied by and intertwined with music. He is known to the general public as an author of animated inserts for Kultura TV Channel, for which he received a Hot Bird TV Award twice. Wilczyński's films "Unfortunately" (2004) and "Kizi Mizi" (2007), shown at the National Gallery in London, MoMa and Anthology Film Archive in New York, have put Wilczyński among the world's top animators. The musical rhythm and poetic imagery bring these films closer to lyric, and their recurring characters and motives: cat, dog, king, child, woman, old woman create a small theatre of reminiscence.

„Zoopraxiscope" (2005) is the latest film by Hieronim Neumann – the director of the award-winning "Event" (1987). This seemingly facetious story of male-female relations is in fact a tribute to Eadweard Muybridge. An interesting 3D visual poem "People of Israel Went Into the Midst of the Red Sea on Dry

Animation also seems to tempt filmmakers, who have so far been making feature films. Andrzej Barański, with the help of painter Edward Dwurnik, has created "The Countdown", an amusing story of housing project residents, drinking beer in front of a local shop. The duo is now working on an animated feature "Oasis": set in 1980, the time of the biggest economical crisis in Poland, in a public toilet under a large city.

Lech Majewski, an auteur of personal, erudite artistic features, also experiments with animation. His next production will combine live action with animation of Bruegel's paintings.

Also seem interesting the numerous projects of the younger generation of animators. It is remarkable that there are more and more female directors among them. Izabela Plucińska, for example, whose debut "Jam Session" received the Silver Bear in the Short Film Competition at the 55th International Film Festival in Berlin in 2005, has started working on a Polish-German co-production "Esterhazy", based on a book by Irene Dische and Hans Magnus Enzensberger, whose main characters are rabbits during the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Owing to the digital revolution, everyone can make a film at home and release it on the Internet – which opens doors to talented people, who would otherwise remain unnoticed.

The interest in animation is growing, and so is the number of talented artists and possibilities of financing them. If the most talented animators resist the temptation of advertising or large productions abroad, if they are able to find their own language among the chaos of unlimited technological possibilities, then we will definitely witness the heyday of this art form.

ADRIANA PRODEUS

"Peter and the Wolf", a stop-motion animation from British and Polish filmmakers, made in Se-ma-for Studio in Łódź, is only 29 minutes long. But it is an extraordinary film, a technical and artistic masterpiece. It has received awards at numerous festivals, including one of the most prestigious: the Academy Award for Best Animated Short Feature.

ABOUT PETER, BAD PEOPLE AND THE WOLF

ANDRZEJ KOŁODYŃSKI



PETER SAVED THE DUCK

The Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev wrote *the symphonic fable for narrator and orchestra* in 1936, basing its libretto on a Russian folk tale. In May of that same year, he conducted the performance of his work in Moscow, narrating the text between musical fragments himself. In January 1940, the ballet version of the piece was staged in New York. Thus, the

lustrous career of Peter, Bird, Duck and Wolf on stages around the world began.

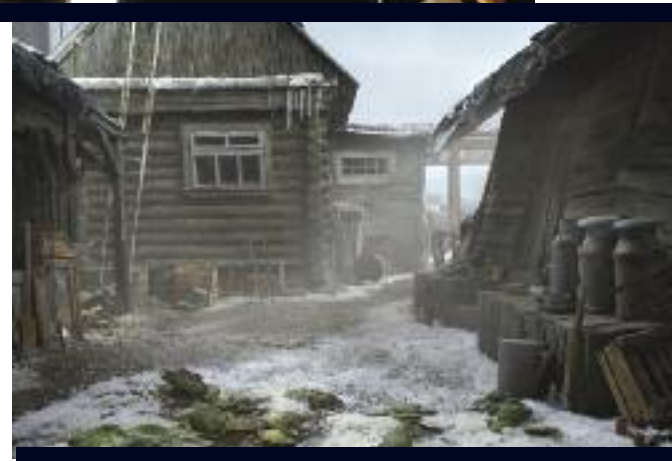
In some versions, the spoken narration illustrated the choreographic scenes, while in others it preceded the action on stage. The contents, though, remained the same: on a sunny morning, Peter comes out in front of the homestead he lives in to ▶



SUZIE TEMPLETON ON THE SET



RECORDING THE MUSIC OF SERGEI PROKOFIEV



THE SET DESIGNED BY MAREK SKROBECKI



THE WOLF FROM THE TALE

▶ play on the meadow with Bird and Duck. Cat appears and tries to catch Bird. Angry Grandfather makes the boy return home. Then, Wolf emerges from the woods. Bird and Cat find refuge in a tree, but Duck has no time to escape... Just then, Peter comes back and, with the help of Bird, lures Wolf to the tree, where he captures it by the tail with a long rope. Hunters come to help, and they all take Wolf to the zoo, with Peter leading a triumphant parade.

It is a simple story, whose meaning seems to be encapsulated in the sentence printed on the sleeve of the film's pressbook: *Boys like Peter are not afraid of wolves*. But on screen, events take a different turn, which gives this sentence another, deeper meaning.

Credit for this goes to the director, Suzie Templeton. This young film-maker attracted attention of the critics with her two puppet animations, “Stanley” (2000) and “Dog” (2002). What they have in common is not only precise animation, but also a very personal, sensitive vision of the world, in which the storyline, given in a brief, poetic form, reveals an abundance of dramatic meanings. Suzie Templeton was approached to direct the film by producers from BreakThru Films, Hugh Welchman and Alan Dewhurst, who pointed out that this is a *classical tale of transformation told to the accompaniment of wonderful music*. A story, in which an *inconspicuous-looking boy succeeds* always appeals to children.

Suzie Templeton began by sketching the characters and set decorations, and started writing the script with Marianela Maldonado. The script had an ambitious aim – to interpret music, rather than illustrate it. At the same time, the search for the right

studio began. From among hundreds of proposals from all over the world, the Se-ma-for Studio in Łódź was finally chosen. The decision was probably influenced by the fact that this was the studio in which another Oscar-winning animation, Zbigniew Rybczyński's “Tango”, was made.

Thus began the biggest Polish-British co-production in the history of animation. New versions of the scripts were made, and the director went on a documentary trip to Moscow and St. Petersburg, as it was known from the outset that the film would take place in Russia. Just like in Prokofiev's work, but with a twist. Most importantly, the summer was changed into a harsh, Siberian winter. Zbyszek Żmudzki, the Polish co-producer, says that the director *brought a lot of pictures from Russia – of small-town, shabby architecture, high-rising housing estates and woods, as well as pictures of a little boy, Maksim, who became the prototype of Peter*. The sets were to be completely realistic, built from natural materials and resources. Such set decorations are not usually used in animated films. The wood, from which Wolf comes out, is 22 metres long and 16 metres wide, with 1700 trees, bushes, grass and stones. The town and run-down homestead are fully realistic, as is the frozen lake, where Duck dances and Cat falls into the blowhole.

Set designer Marek Skrobecki (who earlier directed “Ichthys”, featuring life-size puppets) is known to his collaborators for his attention to detail. Even the 1cm buns in shop windows are wrapped in paper with Russian print and, if you look carefully, even metro tickets have appropriate inscriptions. Wheelbarrows

abandoned in the corners have signs of usage, as if left there a moment earlier. Hyperrealism? Not only that. Skrobecki succeeds in infusing the whole work with magic, which allows us to perceive the simple, yet extraordinary history of Peter with intense emotions.

The so called animatics were used for the film. Zbyszek Żmudzki explains: *An animatic is a filmed storyboard, with schematic, simplified motions of characters and the camera. This allowed us to check if the plot is clear, if the accents and climaxes come in the right places. Especially important in this musical film was to precisely synchronise the images and the soundtrack. Suzie [Templeton] did not have a storyboard, instead she would immediately create an animatic in Adobe Flash software, even during the shooting. After the scene was shot, she would insert it into the animatic and improve the scenes that had not been shot yet.*

The issue of synchronising puppets' movements to the soundtrack was absolutely crucial. The 24-track recording for the soundtrack, to achieve spacious sound, was done earlier at London's All Hallows Church by the Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Mark Stephenson. This recording was then put into tables, with frame by frame images, as the outline for detailed works. Prokofiev's music is almost onomatopoeic: the flute represents Bird, the oboe is Duck, the three horns – Wolf, the clarinet – Cat, etc. The stop-motion animation was filmed note by note, in close connection with the music, using light-weight Canon cameras with Nikon lenses, which allowed for achieving an extraordinary resolution of 13 megapixels. On average, 100 frames make up a 4-second shot. There are 420 shots in the film. To make one shot, half a day was needed for preparation, and at least one day for shooting, although work on particularly complicated shots took as long as one week.

It is impossible to describe all the technical difficulties, but it is worth noting that action within one scene often took place on 8 planes, therefore the puppets had to be shot on a blue screen. Then, the supports for the puppets were removed and set decorations, such as snow, fog or drops of water, were added in post-production. This is all the result of the never-ending patience of the animators. Zbyszek Żmudzki explains: *The most complicated scenes were animated by Adam Wyrwas. Suzie said that he is the best puppet animator in the world. His puppets not only move, but act and convey emotions. My favourite scene, with perfect animation, is Duck's dance on ice. This can really enter the hall of fame of the best animated scenes in history. Krzysztof Brzozowski is another one of our great animators.*

Puppet construction was obviously also an issue. There were several heads with different facial expressions for Peter. There were duplicate characters, silicone faces and hands, whole figures made of latex, hair and animal fur applied with tweezers, layer by layer... tremendously laborious and precise work, which seemed to never end.

Is it surprising then, that this film, less than half an hour long, took five years to make? That a team of almost 200 people worked on it in Great Britain and Poland?

The world premiere took place on 23 September 2006, in the famous Royal Albert Hall, with live accompaniment from the Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Mark Stephenson.

In Suzie Templeton's realistic, yet poetic version, Wolf is not locked up in the zoo. Trapped in the net of ropes, it is brought into town, where Grandfather tries to strike a deal, but Peter decides otherwise. He frees Wolf, accompanies it through the rows of hostile people, to the road leading to the woods, and lets the animal go. It is not only a happy ending, but it proves that the boy has grown up, he is no longer submissive, afraid, he is able to make his own decisions. *Boys like Peter are not afraid of wolves* sounds here like a brave life credo, not only for children.

ANDRZEJ KOŁODYŃSKI

HUMANS AND VIRUSES

GRZEGORZ JONKAJTYS
TALKS TO PIOTR ŚMIAŁOWSKI



GRZEGORZ JONKAJTYS

– The theme of epidemics and other dangers forcing people to flee the land has already been used numerous times in feature films. But animated films are watched with a different approach, the images are noticed first.

– An animated film is a story told in a briefer manner. What is important are symbols, the language of associations that invoke additional contexts in fractions of

make human faces non-realistic an escape from the imperfection of animation?

– Yes, although I have to say that while working on “The Ark”, I wanted to face the challenge of realistic facial animation. This turned out to be really hard and was never achieved. I should add that I have never seen a computer-generated human face, which was not empty, and which managed to convey emotions. People look

the port, it resembles the biblical Ark. It is huge, but there’s a certain grace to it. The shot is in warm colours. The interior, on the other hand, resembles a submarine. It is also pretty dirty and dark. Thus, there’s a juxtaposition of positive and negative colours, as well as the biblical and the modern.

– I wanted to convey such a contrast. Please notice, though, that the interiors are



“THE ARK”



THE FIRST SKETCHES OF THE HERO'S FACE....



...AND THE FINAL RESULT

Grzegorz Jonkajtys’ animation “The Ark” has received the “Best of Show” award at SIGGRAPH 2007, the computer animation and visual effects festival. The festival, which takes place in the USA, is the largest event in the world showcasing the application of computer technologies in film, with 905 works submitted to the contest. Jonkajtys’ film was also qualified for the official selection of the 60th International Cannes Film Festival.

– I’ve heard that work on animation often starts without a complete screenplay. First only a vague idea exists; the details take shape as the work progresses. Was it also the case with “The Ark”?

– The storyboard was the script for my film. The basic idea was such: the land is attacked by a vicious virus, and people have to flee by ships – the arks – to the sea. Since I’m a graphic designer, I’ve simply skipped the stage of writing the screenplay, and instead created the drawings for individual, subsequent shots – a storyboard.

a second. But “The Ark” uses the theme of escape only as an excuse to talk about something else. Is it a story of people fleeing an outbreak, or a story of a micro-drama, taking place inside the human mind?

– The main character of “The Ark” is the leader of the people looking for the healthy land. There are some animal-like features in his face, it is hard to imagine it expresses happy feelings. How was your idea of this face born?

– At first I thought of a dog’s head, but I abandoned this idea. But, even though it’s a human, one can see certain remnants of the concept of the dog’s head. The faces of secondary characters also resemble animals, especially positions of their eyes. Such a solution has a very simple reason: since the story takes place on an ark, some visual associations with animals should be present.

– Creating an animated face is reportedly very hard. Many animators try to avoid it at the start of their career. Was your decision to

in mirrors every day, they meet with other people. That’s why they are able to sense certain falseness in even the most realistic computer equivalent of a human face. Stylisation is thus a very convenient method for animators, allowing for the exaggeration and simplification of a character’s facial expressions.

– The main character is almost always present on the screen. We observe him in various situations, surrounded by numerous small objects. This must have required a large team.

– There were many people working on such details as the model of a shoe or piece of clothing, the models of small objects that you mentioned, others worked on the interior of the cabin, the corridor or the interior of the hall. I simply wrote down all the things I needed for the film and, if someone was willing and had time to do something, I asked them to do it.

– The colours of the ark and its construction are a very interesting combination. In the first shots, when we just see one vessel in

not all modern. They look more like a World War II submarine. The computer is the only electronic device in there, and it’s also quite dated. This interior is neither contemporary nor futuristic.

– You have lived and worked in America for a couple of years. At Café FX, you have co-created visual effects for such films as “Gothica”, “Hellboy”, “Sin City”, “Pan’s Labyrinth” (El Laberinto del Fauno) and, more recently, “The Happening”. Did you have the same technical resources while making “The Ark” in Poland?

– We were able to use the Motion Control device for “The Ark”, which is owned by Platige Image Studio. Motion Control is in fact a robot, used for shooting in motion. It performs precision movements in space with an attached camera, and repeats the same trajectory many times. But we didn’t use an analogue film camera, as this would have considerably raised the cost of the production, and we would have had to process the film and scan it. We used



This is the technique used by Tim Burton on “Corpse Bride”. When his film was released, I had already started working on “The Ark”. We came up with the same method independently which, I must say, makes me very proud.

► a digital camera instead, and then made stop-motion sequences by combining the still frames in a computer. Thanks to Motion Control, we were able to repeat every pre-programmed motion, e. g. with different lighting. Besides, the photographs were at a much higher resolution than scanned film. This is the technique used by Tim Burton on “Corpse Bride”. When his film was released, I had already started working on “The Ark”. We came up with the same method independently which, I must say, makes me very proud.

– It depends on the project. If the director has artistic intuition and can draw himself, then indeed you only execute his vision. But if there’s only a rough outline of the shot, you can present some interpretations, and the director usually accepts one of them. There’s a lot of space for your own creation in animation for feature films. For “Pan’s Labyrinth”, for example, we had to create the motion and gestures for a couple of characters from scratch, and we could not transfer the motion from the human to the character, because the creatures were not humanoid. The director, Guillermo del Toro, only gave us vague guidelines – e. g. what happens to the characters or where on the screen they should be located. The rest was up to us. The work on “Sin City” by Robert Rodriguez and Frank Miller was also very

interesting. Even though the film is an accurate adaptation of Miller’s graphic novel, we had to add numerous details to the original drawings.

– All the films on which you worked are features. Doesn’t that encourage you to work with actors in the future, as a director?

– Of course. I may make an animated film, but I would like, above all, to make a feature. I would use the experience I’ve gained in animation and visual effects. Directors who have no experience with computer technologies, often don’t know, that some effects, though seemingly complicated, can be easily achieved. They give up certain scenes while writing a script, because they seem too costly to them. I, on the other hand, know how to create spectacular shots at a low cost. ■

– Let me get back to your work in the USA. Is there any room for real creativity in making visual effects for feature films? Doesn’t the work consist mainly of executing orders from the director, who already has a precise idea of a certain shot?



THE PICTURE IN THE MOTION CONTROL TECHNIQUE

Walerian Borowczyk is one of the most interesting, but least known Polish artists (not only filmmakers). When he died in February 2006, the press tried to help us recall his work. They stressed his role as pioneer of animation, but also his achievement in artistic erotic cinema.

REVIVE THE SPIRIT, SET THE BODY IN MOTION

IWONA KURZ

Both genres, animation and erotic cinema, were equally unknown to Polish audiences, and both – albeit for different reasons – functioned underground. Only “Story of a Sin” (1975) was widely distributed in Poland, while “The Beast” (La Bete, 1975) and “Immoral Tales” (Contes Immoraux, 1974) only briefly showed up on our screens at the



“THE GAMES OF ANGELS” (1964)



"GOTO, ISLAND OF LOVE" (1968)

beginning of the 90s. His animated films, especially those made after Borowczyk left for France in 1958, were practically known only to festival audiences. The Polish press rarely celebrated the numerous awards won by the director (including the prestigious Max Ernst lifetime achievement award in animation in 1967) and if they did acknowledge Borowczyk's successes, failed to mention the nature of his achievements.

Walerian Borowczyk is known for his association with erotica and is remembered as a controversial figure. He was comfortable with such labels. He knew what he was doing, when he was singling out eroticism as a special sphere of human life, particularly misrepresented. In an often cited interview for "Kino" more than two decades ago, he said: *Eroticism, sex is, after all, one of the most moral sides of life. Eroticism does not kill, does not destroy, does not urge to do bad things, nor does it lead to crime. On the contrary: it soothes, it brings joy, fulfilment, gives selfless pleasure.* This statement is, above all, a protest, especially since sexuality was such a taboo topic in Poland.

Żeromski's novel "Story of a Sin", which the director was adapting for the screen at the time, seduced him with its realism in the form of an abundance of historical details, but also its surrealism: miraculous events, unexpected plot twists and, above all, exceptionally strong emotions. This film, the first he had made in Poland in years, fascinated Poles by its eroticism. The book was just a pretext for the director, just like several other works he had adapted: "Rosalie" (1966) based on Guy de Maupassant's short story or "Lulu", based on Frank Wedekind's drama.

Żeromski is interested in social conventions (and attempts at transgressing them), but Borowczyk constructs his characters in a completely different way. His heroine is entangled in a reality she does not understand, in a mechanism, which not only surpasses her, but operates against her will. In the book "My Polish Years" (2002), the director described the main character as an *artificial duck* – an eighteenth-century concept invented by Jacques de Vaucanson, who constructed a mechanical bird, which performed all the functions a real one would. He defined the role of an actress (in the director's hands), and of a character (in the hands of other characters or external, impersonal processes) as comparable to robots or machines. This is particularly visible in a key love scene between Łukasz and Ewa (the protagonist of this film), when the man arranges his lover in a pose from a photograph he found in a book. Borowczyk regarded photography as a root of identity when he was working in animation.



LIGIA BOROWCZYK AS "ROSALIE"

Borowczyk's adaptation of "Story of a Sin" reveals a deep aesthetic awareness. During the early 70s, when this film was made, the appreciation of kitsch had already begun, its potential was seen in wider terms than simply *the art of happiness*. Pedantic recreation of the reality of the beginning of the century was not caused by his attention to historical detail; rather, it was an expression of Borowczyk's attachment to the beauty of the world and, above all, to the style of its depiction.

Żeromski's adaptation points at certain characteristics of the entire Borowczyk's oeuvre. The beauty and sophistication of the



"IMMORTAL TALES" (1974)

recreated reality (the use of costumes, often from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and detailed scenery), as well as frame composition, period-specific music (consciously evocative of high art), an attention to detail and polished photography can in themselves satisfy the viewer.

But this stylistically refined setting places the heroes (or, more often, heroines) inside a mechanism, which operates beyond their will, a mechanism, in which they are mere cogs, as opposed to initiators. The most often cited recurring theme in Borowczyk's films – from "Goto, Island of Love" (Goto, l'île d'amour, 1968; his

feature debut), through "Immoral Tales" and "The Beast", to "Behind Convent Walls" (Interno di un convento, 1978), "Immoral Women" (Les Héroïnes du mal, 1979) and "Lulu" (1980), to name a few – is anatomical detail: the giant phallus of the Beast, a huge cucumber, used to satisfy one of the heroines of "Immoral Tales" or a rabbit used for the same purpose by another one. The very nature of these motifs illustrates Borowczyk's unique style. When his films are described as *bloody and full of sex (in one of the scenes, the heroine has sex with a giant cucumber)*, it's difficult not to laugh. It is not simply laughter at whoever wrote the description. After all, this description is not completely inaccurate; associations in the "The Beast" are in fact surreal, horror and humour exist side by side, conjoined with much sophistication. This combination is garish, sharp and sometimes hard to accept, since it leaves the viewer feeling helpless. Borowczyk's cinema is defined by a contrast between a world of sublime manners, alleged innocence of the girl and the wildness of desire, embodied, as we can suppose, by the beast. As a result, lust becomes the chief mechanism of this reality, with its source being the well-mannered and seemingly innocent girl. Even though this description does not entirely suit Borowczyk's more recent films, where we observe a certain exhaustion of his main motifs (such as lust), his work cannot be reduced to pretty if somewhat indecent films. They escape such evaluation, just like dreams, where we understand everything, while in fact understanding nothing.

The themes cited here also show that there is no reason to radically separate Borowczyk's animated and feature films. Not only because the director himself considered such distinction to be misleading (*this must have been conceived by archivists*, he said ironically in an interview for "Cahiers du Cinema"). He believes the reason for making films lies always *in the hands*, whether these hands are directing puppets or people. It is just a matter of different material, material which has nothing to do with the artistic expression of the director anyway.

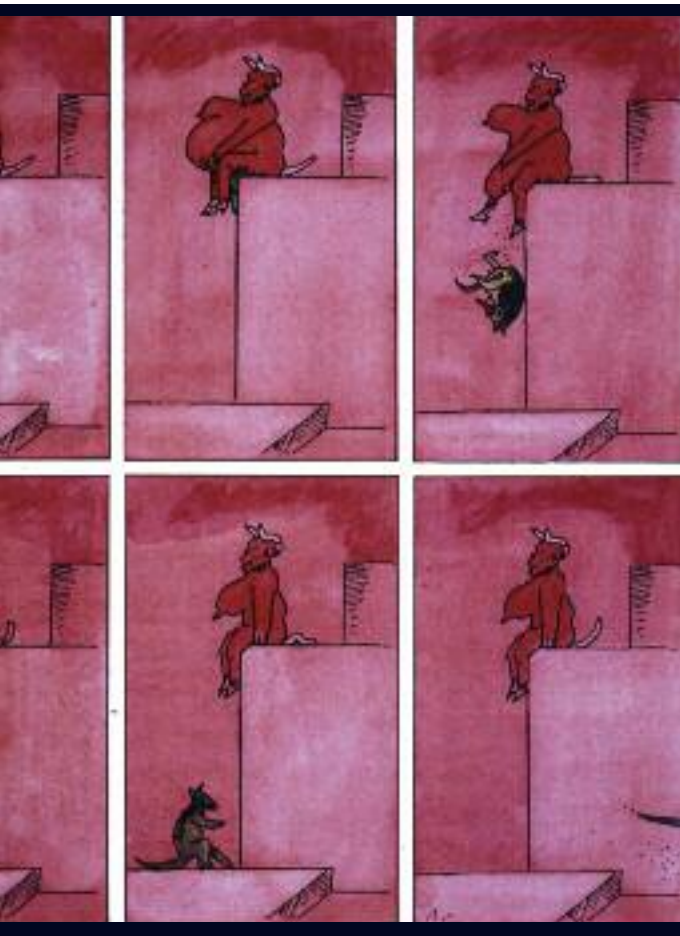
So, even though Walerian Borowczyk would limit his characters' imagination – including his animated characters – by stressing their similarity to robots and machines, he himself was a eulogist of unlimited imagination (particularly his own). The legend of an artist has to include one vital element: *already in his childhood...* Raised by a ticket inspector with a passion for painting, Walerian Borowczyk experimented with puppet theatre, where the artist creates a reality which is wholly under his command.

He became interested in animated film while studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow, even though after graduating he mainly occupied himself with motionless forms: posters, lithographs and graphics. He returned to animation after meeting Jan Lenica. Borowczyk enlightened Lenica about the true potential of this art form. Their joint efforts resulted in their 1957 film, "Once Upon a Time", which gained considerable recognition throughout the world. A new era had begun: not only in Borowczyk's life, who soon left Poland with his wife, Ligia (who later played in some of his films, acting most frequently with just her face) but also in the history of animation. Borowczyk and Lenica came up with an innovative approach to animation and a new direction, away from animation for children.

"Once Upon a Time" was made using readily available materials: coloured paper, figures cut out from illustrated magazines and geometric forms were mixed in a kind of collage. In another of their films, "House" (1958), the graphic facade of the block of flats conceals a world ruled by both living objects, and old photographs and drawings. One of the motifs in this film is based on photographs of fencers from the experiments of Étienne-Jules Marey who, like Eadweard Muybridge, tried to analyse and *capture* motion using a photographic camera. "School" (1958), on the other hand, is entirely constructed of photographs of an army recruit. Photographs often appear in



"THE BEAST" (1975)



"SCHERZO INFERNAL" (1984)

Associations in the "The Beast" are in fact surreal, horror and humour exist side by side, conjoined with much sophistication.

aspects. The soldier in "School", attacked by a stubborn fly, exposes his own ridiculousness, the grotesqueness of his automated, mechanised gestures, his fixed (much like a photograph) identity.

This is even more poignant since these objects and pictures exist on the verge of extinction. "Renaissance" (1963) presents the world of objects that come back to life after a catastrophe, of ruins rebuilding anew. A simple technical solution: reversed film movement, is at the core of this film. It allows us to feel the tangibility, physicality of things and shows us how paradoxical our hope for their permanence is. Similarly to his other films (both animated and feature), there is an intentional use of music, the trumpet gains strength just before the bomb goes off.

Simultaneously, these films again reveal the mechanisms of consciousness and corporeality. Maybe even more than that: they point to the mechanics as the core of existence. Like in "Le Phonograph" (1969), a big machine which manufactures associations and ideas, or in the cruel "The Games of Angels" (Les Jeux des anges, 1964), where creatures are constructed and deconstructed, manufactured and disassembled all at the same factory, created as if straight out of a nightmare. Or in the marital games of the Kabals in the films: "The Concert of Mr and Mrs Kabal" (Le Concert de M. et Mme. Kabal, 1962) and "Mr and Mrs Kabal's Theatre" (Théâtre de M. et Mme. Kabal, 1967), where in the latter, Mrs Kabal, hollow and mechanical, monstrous in her resemblance to a robot, invites Mr Kabal for a journey inside her body – to help her with her indigestion after she eats a butterfly.

This tension between the mechanism and spirit is presented in a different way in film-catalogues: animated encyclopaedias of objects, notions and phenomena. Both in "Grandmother's Encyclopaedia" (L'Encyclopédie de grand-maman, 1963), and "Joachim's Dictionary" (Le Dictionnaire de Joachim, 1965) the arbitrary alphabetical order is juxtaposed with the freedom of human associations, images and concepts.

Animation – originally meaning *bringing to life* – is therefore at the core of Borowczyk's work, both animated (as a film genre), and feature. In the first instance it's a creative, invigorating and reviving action, a breath bringing to life objects and imagines. In the second case this process of revival is connected to a creative gesture, in which the creator has control over his puppets, thus depriving them of their autonomous lives. Animation means creating a whole world, but can such worlds exist apart from the mechanics and automatics of desires and dreams?

Hence, when Walerian Borowczyk says that *the human in fact always does the same thing*, we can interpret this statement as his testimony to a certain subject, but also a sign of his awareness of repetition, of this inevitable automation. *I was born with imagination*, said the director (with characteristic self-confidence). One can paraphrase these words as *I was born to repeat the creative act*. Thus, there is the creative force of life on one side, and the inevitability of mechanical repetition on the other, the freedom of the invigorating stream of energy on one and a compulsion to repeat formulas to express it on the other.

IWONA KURZ



DAMIAN UL

"TRICKS" ON PAGE 67

► Borowczyk's films, he is a pioneer of *found footage* techniques, in which artists define their own, or their characters', identity through *found* visual materials.

The role of photography as a material for film is vital for Borowczyk's works. For surrealists, photography was an important form of expression. They saw it as both a tool for artistic expression and a way to uncover the body's unknown

POLISH AUDIENCES HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR A MOVIE ABOUT THE KATYŃ MASSACRE TO CLEANSE AND HEAL THEM. ANDRZEJ WAJDA'S "KATYŃ" IS SUCH A SYMBOLIC GOODBYE TO THE DEAD.



WIKTORIA GAŚIEWSKA, ARTUR ŻMIJEWSKI



MAJA OSTASZEWSKA



ANDRZEJ CHYRA

Katyń
DIRECTED BY ANDRZEJ WAJDA. WRITTEN BY ANDRZEJ WAJDA, PRZEMYSŁAW NOWAKOWSKI, WŁADYSŁAW PASIKOWSKI; BASED ON THE STORY BY ANDRZEJ MULARCZYK. DIRECTORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY: PAWEŁ EDELMAN, MAREK RAJCA. MUSIC BY KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI. CAST: MAJA OSTASZEWSKA (ANNA), ARTUR ŻMIJEWSKI (ANDRZEJ), MAJA KOMOROWSKA (MARIA), WŁADYSŁAW KOWALSKI (JAN), WIKTORIA GAŚIEWSKA (NIKA), ANDRZEJ AND ANNA'S DAUGHTER, ANNA RADWAN (ELŻBIETA), ANDRZEJ CHYRA (JERZY), JAN ENGLERT (GENERAL), DANUTA STENKA (RÓŻA, GENERAL'S WIFE). PRODUCED BY AKSON STUDIO/ TELEWIZJA POLSKA S.A./ TP SA. CO-FINANCING: POLISH FILM INSTITUTE. PRODUCER: MICHAŁ KWIECIŃSKI. WORLD SALES: TELEWIZJA POLSKA S.A. POLAND 2007. 125'

KATYŃ

PIOTR WOJCIECHOWSKI

The media premiere of "Katyń" was followed by press conference. On stage, in front of the screen, there is Andrzej Wajda, the actors, some important crew members and one of the producers. In front of them – a huge Multikino theatre. The first rows are occupied by young people, who got jobs in the media. Smarty-pants, professionals, con men, showing off their cameras, sophisticated telephoto lenses, miniature tape recorders. They film, take pictures, record, some of them even ask questions. This generation has learnt the truth about the massacre and the crime of the lie that followed it at their history lessons. They did not have to lie about Katyń, inquire about the truth or uncover it. They did not have to dodge, because they were not risking anything in this case. Surely most of them have thrown those murders and lies into the rubbish bin of historical commonplaces – you kill at war, you lie in politics.

Some of them came to the screening out of curiosity, the majority, however, were sent by their bosses. And Wajda has shown them what they have already known for a long time, but had to see with their own eyes: the brutal tragedy of the

murdered and those, who waited with waning hope, and then wanted to tell the truth about the culprits. Moreover, Wajda shown them the tragedy of liars and their accomplices, the silent witnesses of those lies.

For the boys and girls of Warsaw media, Katyń has been an awkward martyrological banality, an embarrassing addition to the familiar conflict with Russia over export of meat and import of energy. And this film has splashed blood from shot brains, spraying it like pink smoke, throwing them between the grinding stones of Nazism and Stalinism. They visited the world of their grandparents and great-grandparents and will never be the same again.

I know that, so please leave out the question: is "Katyń" a masterpiece or not. And stop asking: was Wajda great, or did he fail.

I know where he succeeded – in showing again what a masterpiece Poland is. "Katyń" will be shown in Poland in two hundred copies. It will not do miracles, only refresh the meaning of the waning words of our anthem: *[Poland] has not perished yet, so long as we still live*. And surely many Polish Catholics, holding a rosary in their hands, will recall the dying hand clutching a rosary, before

the body of pilot Piotr is buried under the sand by a "Staliniec" bulldozer. The young people, who know about the Second World War only from history classes, will be led down the path of emotions, to a place where they have never been.

For people to become a society, and for society to become a nation, their members must have more than just historical knowledge. Someone has to instil in them shared emotions, admit to the *school of uniting experiences*. This is especially important because historical knowledge is now

often treated with disrespect. Many say *Why burden your head with it, it can all be found in the Internet*. The awareness of such new experience of history was certainly one of the challenges for Andrzej Wajda.

When I hear the question about a masterpiece, about greatness, from people from the movie industry, I prefer to speak about limitations Wajda encountered. The first film about Katyń had to be made with awareness of limitations greater than in any other film. It had to be nested in a crack between myth and history. Therefore the

reconstruction of events had to take precedence over freedom of vision. Wajda admitted that he had to burden the film with some basic knowledge which allows the audience to comprehend represented events. This is why captions appear to identify places and time.

The film also had to be faithful to the myth: the mixture of legends and emotions that are still present in the tradition of families of victims of the Katyń massacre, in Polish literary, journalistic and artistic traditions, in those emotional contents created during dozens

of years of fighting against silence and Soviet propaganda that had their advocates even in Poland. During the press conference following the film's premiere, we learned that Wajda took up the topic, which was present also in the legends of his own family. His mother waited in vain for her husband, who was killed in Katyń. One wonders whether did the grandfathers, cousins, neighbours of hundreds of people, whose names were shown in the end credits, including extras, also go through this valley of death? The theatre was silent before these names, as if standing over an open grave.

The film tells the stories of men through women – their longing, illusions, suffering, despair, faithfulness. One of the most important challenges that Wajda faced was to harmonise male parts, that advance the historical plot, with the female ones, that embody the myth. No wonder, then, that the peculiar poetics of the movie is most fully expressed, where a clash between these two discourses occurs, as when Anna (Maja Ostaszewska) says goodbye to her husband, Andrzej (Artur Żmijewski), rotamaster of the 8 Uhłans regiment, on the verge of the Soviet POW selection point; when, in occupied Lviv, distrustful Anna meets a friendly Soviet officer (Sergei Garmash); where general's wife (Danuta Stenka), preparing Christmas Eve in Cracow is

juxtaposed with her husband (Jan Englert) deep in thought before Christmas Eve at the camp.

By far the most severe limitation of creative freedom, experienced by Wajda, was the obligation to speak to everyone, even to those indifferent to and ignorant of Katyń. "Katyń" had to become a poster and a tool in teaching history. By assuming these functions, the film became even more significant, but its duty to inform influenced its style. To fit both the outline of national epic and the lyricism of individual emotions into a feature film format, Wajda had to concentrate and intensify the narration and, above all, allow the symbols to speak. Hence, the image of the General at the camp table deep in thought, with his hands covering his face to conceal tears or prayer, brings associations with the Christmas Eve in exile, painted by Jacek Malczewski. This powerful, metaphorical scene is juxtaposed with an image of a typical bourgeois house, represented with psychological subtlety. The General's wife asks for an additional place for an unknown guest; a place for her husband cannot serve this function, since he can come any time. A symbol is not only added to another one – they are also juxtaposed. Wajda builds his plot from such split symbols, providing irrefutable arguments for the viewers' minds and subtleties seeping into our collective, unconscious memory.

Pathos is present in his style. Abandoning pathos would mean abandoning truth.

Thanks to the abundance of symbols and unique style, "Katyń" crowns what the director himself called the *panorama of Polish fate*. We can now perceive the majority of Wajda's films as subsequent parts of this peculiar cinematic fresco – from "Ashes", "The Promised Land" and "The Maids of Wilko" to "Lotna", "Katyń", "Kanal", "Ashes and Diamonds" and "The Crowned-Eagle Ring". And further – to "Man of Marble" and "Man of Iron". It is astonishing, how this filmmaker and painter enters into dialogue with literature, history and the memory of his generation. It is moving and fascinating how subtly he weaves the motifs from one film to another.

When a determined, blonde girl, Agnieszka (Magdalena Cielecka), playing the part of an Uprising liaison officer, appears in "Katyń", we have to recall the character from "Kanal" played by Teresa Iżewska. Her fate is sealed: Agnieszka enters into the Hades of Secret Police basement for refusing to lie on the tombstone's epitaph for his brother, who was killed in Katyń. The story is finished, the meaning is now full – Agnieszka will hear stanzas from Sophocles' "Antigone" before her final sacrifice.

The same similarity in appearance, character and fate can be seen between the proud, charming, hot-headed partisan





IN KOZIELSK

► “Tur” (Antoni Pawlicki) and Maciek Chełmicki from “Ashes and Diamonds”. Just like Maciek – Tur-Tadek wants to live, to love and to study, but he keeps acting like a resistance fighter, in the way the war created him, in a leather jacket tied with a belt, and a handgun in his knapsack. They both die the same unnecessary death, killed by their peers in Polish uniforms, but with Soviet pistols. They are both brought to the screen to begin a dialogue with the contemporary young viewer.

What happened to “The Maids from Wilko”? – time changed them into war widows, into Katyń mourners. The cavalrymen from “Lotna” have reached their end in mass graves in the East. I shall recall what Andrzej Wajda said about the dependence of “Polish school” on literary works. The lack of good literary material was, according to him, one of the reasons why we waited such a long time for a film about Katyń massacre. At last, Andrzej Mularczyk wrote

“Katyń. Post Mortem”. If we assume that the literary vision has to precede the movie, we would have to wait for other books so that other directors might undertake discussion with Wajda’s version of Katyń’s reconstruction and its myth. Wajda himself said that there is room for a film looking at this crime from the vantage point of wartime politics, of the dealings between bloody dictators and statesmen, of building the post-Yalta balance of power on Katyń’s lies. I do not know whether other films investigating the topic of the massacre of Polish officers in the East will be made. The ruthless laws of free market will decide about that. It is worth reminding, though, that at the same time as Mularczyk’s and Wajda’s “Katyń” went into production, there was another script about Katyń awaiting production, and now there are two splendid books on this topic, apart from Mularczyk’s work. One is a better-known, non-fiction “Katyń”, written by American Paul Allen and published by Świat Książki and a not as well-publicised collection of short stories, “Indicement” (published by the Catholic University of Lublin) by Bohdan Królikowski, a writer, cavalryman and distinguished

chronicler of the history of Polish Cavalry. Today, then, no filmmaker can use the lack of literary inspiration as their excuse for not making films about Katyń.

I have written about numerous limitations that the director of “Katyń” had to overcome. Finally, I have to say that Wajda’s new film creates another chapter in Polish national mythology. Wajda fulfils the task ascribed to artistic and intellectual elites, namely to demythologise the history and, at the same time, constantly recreate myths, emotional narrations, handed down from generation to generation, that build our community and establish the meaning of our history. In making this film, Wajda had to sacrifice some of his creative freedom to serve certain universal values, such as faithfulness, truth and community. Equally, we too deprive ourselves of some of our freedom by surrendering to his cinematic vision. We allow the myth to overwhelm us, to leave a mark on our memory. I am convinced, though, that by sacrificing part of our personal freedom, we gain the feeling of participation in a community, bound together by sharing emotions. ■



DANUTA STENKA

ANDRZEJ JAKIMOWSKI’S “TRICKS” IS THE MOST OFTEN AWARDED POLISH FILM OF LAST YEAR. SELECTED AWARDS INCLUDE EUROPA CINEMA AWARD FOR THE BEST EUROPEAN FILM AT IFF VENICE, GRAND PRIX “GOLDEN LIONS” AND BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY AWARD AT PFF GDYNIA, SPECIAL AWARD OF JURY AT IFF MANNHEIM-HEIDELBERG, GRAND PRIX “GOLDEN PROMETHEUS” AT IFF TBILISI.



DAMIAN UL

TRICKS

KRZYSZTOF ŚWIREK

Little Stefek, the main character of the new film by Andrzej Jakimowski, does not know his father. All he has is an old grubby photograph, which gives only a vague idea of what his father looked like. One day, he sees someone, who looks similar to the blurry face in the photograph. He asks his older sister Elka, if this is their father, but she says that it is not. But the boy does not believe her. From this moment on, he constantly thinks about how to learn the truth, even in the most roundabout way.

It would be difficult, had the boy and his sister not been playing a very peculiar game for some time. The siblings are convinced that events can be enticed, that fate sometimes can be obedient, if persuaded properly. They believe this can be achieved by a small sacrifice, sometimes just by being cunning or a combination of both. So, Stefek regularly shows up at the train station platform, from which the man leaves for work every morning. Sometimes they talk. The boy tries to prolong these conversations, for

example by throwing a handful of coins on the tracks. A station employee, who checks the trains every morning, has to pick up all the coins. As long as he is under the train, it cannot leave, so the conversation goes on. And maybe it will bring the boy closer to the truth.

Andrzej Jakimowski tries to encourage our imagination, so the *tricks* of the siblings look more like probability theory in action, than cheap magic. He tries to show the characters’ peculiar relationship with reality. Besides, if we see this as being just as important as the plot then “Tricks” is not dissimilar to Jakimowski’s debut, “Squint Your Eyes” (2002). The main character of the latter said that, by squinting one’s eyes, one can see that past events do not pass, they just move further away from us, but always remain in our thoughts. In “Tricks”, the characters *squint their eyes* to see not what happened in the past, but what is about to happen.

Jakimowski’s new concept is more risky than the previous one, but his characters do their



TOMASZ SAPRYK, JOANNA LISZOWSKA

best to persuade us of its plausibility. Above all, their interventions into the scheme of events are preceded by lengthy, patient observations. During one of such scenes, the boy grows impatient and tells his sister *nothing is going on here, to which she replies there’s always something going on*. You only have to be sufficiently sensitive to the signs reality provides. And when another plan succeeds, it is yet another lesson for the boy, fascinated by the possibility of *tempting fate*, as he himself calls his favourite game.

The attempts at influencing luck are not motivated solely by

one’s yearning for an event to happen or desire to check if one can rationally forecast events. It is equally important to sacrifice something; small things, if it is about something insignificant, and important things, when it comes to tempting fate about the most fundamental issues. The characters believe that they have to sacrifice something to gain something. Turning the *tricks* from simple games into proper actions requires demanding something not only from fate, but also from oneself. This is a significant transition, which turns wishful thinking into joint responsibility. ►



EWELINA WALENDZIAK, DAMIAN UL



RAFAŁ GUŻNICZAK, EWELINA WALENDZIAK

► This idea is also noteworthy due to the fact that Jakimowski's film is about people who were never spoilt. Stefek's mother works as a shop assistant, so the boy's older sister, who works part-time, has to take care of him. "Tricks" is about people whose daily lives requires sacrifices, that they have to make without asking for anything in return.

The bargaining, maybe even the trump card that the siblings have when playing the game with fate is their selflessness. In

decisive moments, Stefek and Elka, the main initiators of the events, try to see if their small deeds made to benefit others are accepted by fate. Will a bag of food left in the street go to the person who needs it most? Will the passers-by be provoked to buy apples from an unlucky seller? The games the siblings play most often are concerned with the happiness of others, not their own, and the purity of intentions turns out to be a benefit in the game against fate.

Andrzej Jakimowski, the writer and director of "Tricks", has an ability to convey serious topics in an unpretentious and funny way. His films are reassuring, but not naive, he portrays his characters with warmth, but he doesn't forget about irony, which spices up their relations.

The portrayal of the siblings' relationship is undoubtedly positive, yet not simplistic, owing to its realism. The girl introduces her brother to reading from reality. She is also very caring

– she takes Stefek everywhere to keep an eye on him, she feels responsible for him. Elka feels like she is Stefek's father and mother, as she herself says in one of the scenes. The fact that they are together all the time means they give each other support in their games against fate.

Just as in his debut, the director uses a mixed cast of talented non-professionals, like Damian Ul and Ewelina Walendziak, playing the siblings, with professional actors. In his directing he tries to harmonise the different registers of the two groups – minimum expression of the professionals meets maximum naturalness of the amateurs. The toned down expressions of the actors plays a big part in the director's aim to convey serious messages lightly, as if the film was just about tricks. But instead of a choice between the playful and the serious, Jakimowski offers us both at the same time. ■

Sztuczki

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ANDRZEJ JAKIMOWSKI. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: ADAM BAJERSKI. MUSIC BY TOMASZ GĄSOWSKI. CAST: DAMIAN UL (STEFEK), EWELINA WALENDZIAK (ELKA), RAFAŁ GUŻNICZAK (JERZY), TOMASZ SAPRYK (FATHER), IWONA FORNALCZYK (MOTHER), JOANNA LISZOWSKA (VIOLKA). PRODUCED BY ZJEDNOCZENIE ARTYSTÓW I RZEMIEŚNIKÓW (ZAIR) / WYTWÓRNIĄ FILMÓW DOKUMENTALNYCH I FABULARNYCH / TELEWIZJA POLSKA S. A. / CANAL+ CYFROWY LTD / OPUS FILM. CO-FINANCING: POLISH FILM INSTITUTE. PRODUCER: ANDRZEJ JAKIMOWSKI. WORLD SALES: ZJEDNOCZENIE ARTYSTÓW I RZEMIEŚNIKÓW.

MIRON BIAŁOSZEWSKI, WRITER OF PROSE AND POETRY IS ONE OF THE MOST OUTSTANDING AND ORIGINAL WRITERS OF THE 20TH CENTURY, AND HIS FRIEND, BLIND POET JADWIGA STAŃCZAKOWA, ARE THE REAL CHARACTERS IN A FILM ABOUT THEIR FRIENDSHIP. THE FILM ABOUT THEIR TALE IS FAITHFUL TO THE DETAILS OF THEIR UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP.



KRYSZYNA JANDA, ANDRZEJ HUDZIAK

A FEW PEOPLE, A LITTLE TIME

SEBASTIAN JAGIELSKI

The screenplay for the film about Miron Białoszewski's friend, blind poet Jadwiga Stańczakowa, was completed 10 years ago, but filming couldn't commence then due to lack of money.

In the opening scene of "A Few People, A Little Time", we can hear Jadwiga's voice, but cannot see her, since the screen is pitch black: *Now / that you're gone / I'm twice as blind / I've lost your eyes.* Their story is shown from her point of view, it is she who after Miron's death, recalls the years spent with him. But Jadwiga's (played by Krystyna Janda, in surely one of her most outstanding roles) point of view is in fact not entirely her own. She saw and learned about the world, which she now tells us about, through Miron's eyes. In one of the scenes, Jadwiga examines the texture of a monastery wall with

her fingertips. As she softly traces the bricks, Miron describes to her what is happening in the street. Tadeusz Sobolewski wrote in "The Child of People's Republic of Poland": *Białoszewski was a kind of priest, a mediator. We, his "followers", didn't worship him, but the world seen through him.* The director of this film seems to see the world from the same point of view as Białoszewski. He records the mundane; there are no spectacular events, no thrills, yet there is great attention to detail, to every passing moment. Events do not lead towards any aim or resolution, the characters do not evolve, do not go through any improbable transformations. They just are. This cinema is free of action, plot, suspense, it is concentrated on details and gestures. The suspense develops – paradoxically – from calmness and silence, as for example, in

a rather moving scene, when Miron ruthlessly criticises Jadwiga's first poetic attempts. Intriguingly enough, in the first scene in Jadwiga's apartment, we are blinded by the sunlight from the kitchen window. The same happens later: the sun, like an intruder, bursts through the cracks in the windowframes in Miron's apartment and the light reflects off Jadwiga's fair hair or a piece of paper. At Jadwiga's again, lamps create unnatural shadows, dancing on the walls... This intensive brightness of Barański's film spurs numerous interpretations. Jadwiga is only able to observe the sharpest contrast between light and shadow. Miron worked at night and hated the sun, which distracted and irritated him. What is most important, though, is that the light filling the frames of Barański's film creates an aura of festiveness and uniqueness. The relationship between the two poets, born out of love of art and based on a spiritual bond, has brightened their lives and made them happier.

Oversensitive and egoistic Miron needed someone who would take responsibility for him, while the friendly and warm Jadwiga wanted to be needed, wanted to give herself to someone. They were trying to rescue each other; she wanted to

rescue him from overwhelming everyday life, and he wanted to rescue her from loneliness and depression. After Miron is gone, there are no more bright frames, just a dark screen.

"A Few People, A Little Time" is a film about Stańczakowa and Białoszewski, about a relationship, which is somehow above sexuality and passion. It is also a film about a particular perception of the world, about intense experience, about creativity, which gives meaning to their existence and about the deep need to write. Barański's film is also a colourful depiction of the life of Warsaw's artistic bohemia in the 70s (with famous Tuesdays at Miron's apartment). The director contrasts the enthusiastic opinions of Białoszewski's followers' with the disinterested reactions of normal people, who do not understand his creations.

By and large, Barański's film is one of the most beautiful Polish films of the last few years. ■

Parę osób, mały czas

DIRECTED BY ANDRZEJ BARAŃSKI. SCREENPLAY BY ANDRZEJ BARAŃSKI, BASED ON THE BOOK BY JADWIGA STAŃCZAKOWA "DZIENNIK WE DWOJE" ("A DIARY OF TWO"). DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: DARIUSZ KUC. CAST: KRYSZYNA JANDA (JADWIGA), ANDRZEJ HUDZIAK (MIRON), IGOR PRZEGRODZKI (GRANDFATHER), ARKADIUSZ DETMER (TADEK), MONIKA OBARA (ANKA). PRODUCED BY TELEWIZJA POLSKA S.A. – FILM AGENCY / SKORPION ART. WORLD SALES: TELEWIZJA POLSKA S.A. POLAND 2005. 104"



KRYSZYNA TKACZ, KRYSZYNA JANDA

DOROTA KĘDZIERZAWSKA'S FILM "TIME TO DIE" WAS MADE FOR ONE ACTRESS – THE LEGENDARY DANUTA SZ AFLARSKA, THE FIRST STAR OF POSTWAR POLISH CINEMA (SHE PLAYED THE LEADING ROLE IN THE 1946 "FORBIDDEN SONGS", THE FIRST FILM MADE AFTER THE WAR). THE NOW 90 YEAR-OLD OUTSTANDING ACTRESS STILL PERFORMS IN THE THEATRE AND FILMS. FOR HER ROLE IN KĘDZIERZAWSKA'S FILM SHE RECEIVED AN AWARD AT THE 2007 POLISH FILM FESTIVAL IN GDYNIA.



Pora umierać
 WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY DOROTA KĘDZIERZAWSKA. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: ARTHUR REINHART. MUSIC BY WŁODEK PAWLIK. CAST: DANUTA SZ AFLARSKA (ANIELA), KRZYSZTOF GLOBISZ (ANIELA'S SON), PATRYCJA SZEWCZYK (ANIELA'S GRANDDAUGHTER), KAMIL BITAU (DOSTOEVSKY). PRODUCED BY TANDEM TAREN TO PIOTR MIKLASZEWSKI, WOJCIECH MARYAŃSKI / KID FILM ARTHUR REINHART / TELEWIZJA POLSKA S.A. – FILM AGENCY. CO-FINANCING: POLISH FILM INSTITUTE. WORLD SALES: KID FILM ARTHUR REINHART. POLAND 2007. 104'

DANUTA SZ AFLARSKA

TIME TO DIE

BŁAŻEJ HRAPKOWICZ

Dorota Kędzierzawska took a big risk by deciding to make a film with really only one character. Her Aniela is a lonely woman whose only companion is her loyal dog Fila. No one visits her besides her son and granddaughter, and even they do so rarely. Her sharp-tongued, accurate, humorous observations are certainly meant only for the ears of animals. She is therefore a true protagonist of a monodrama who, in order to sustain the viewer's interest, requires an outstanding personality and great directing skills. Fortunately, Kędzierzawska is able to make her characters intriguing, yet do it economically, and the leading lady, Danuta Szaflarska, keeps you glued to the screen. The actress had the biggest responsibility – that of single-handedly carrying the film, conveying its meanings, conclusions and message. Such is the nature of a monodrama.

The substance of "Time to Die" basically boils down to the actions of the main character, followed by Arthur Reinhart's camera. What is the director interested in? Certainly old age. However, Kędzierzawska rejects a stereotyped approach to this issue. Her portrayal of a person in the last phase of life is complex and does not end with depicting the most prosaic

aspects of old age, such as forgetfulness, living through memories, even though some of them are present in the film.

Aniela, as has already been said, is lonely, her only companion is her dog (a wise move by the director as it introduces humour and prevents monotony). Her son and granddaughter rarely visit and her neighbours show little interest in her. This is a reflection of the times: elderly people are no longer needed. And so – *age is a heavy burden?* Not necessarily, as Aniela has much dignity, is wise from experience and has a sarcastic sense of humour, thanks to which she distances herself from the unfriendly world or proves she won't allow herself to be pushed around. Hence, when a nurse rudely says to her: *Take off your clothes!* – Aniela responds: *Kiss my ass!*

So, Kędzierzawska shows that in today's world old age often means loneliness, but also a sense of power and one's worth. However, that is not all, because the so called *autumn of life*, as schematically as it may sound, is inseparably linked to reminiscing. However, Kędzierzawska introduces this aspect as a secondary plot, avoiding sentimentality. The protagonist's memories are accompanied by thoughts about

the current state of the world which are accurate and somewhat pessimistic.

A lady from a past era – that is how the director described the leading character of her film in an interview for "Kino". Indeed, Aniela was brought up with a system of values no longer current, hence her bitter and sarcastic comments regarding reality. How is it possible not to become bitter when you are surrounded by arrogance, the cult of money, contempt for others, whilst you have completely different principles: respect for others, courtesy in interpersonal relations, sincerity? Aniela is shocked by the disrespect with which her neighbours attempt to buy her house, which they call a *hovel*. Shaking her head she turns to her dog: *Do you see what is happening? Waste of time talking about it.*

Forgotten values is important subject broached by the director. By watching "Time to Die" we become aware of how much we are able to accept certain types of behaviour as normal – even though they are actually quite unacceptable. Aniela's principles seem so unfamiliar, when in fact they're just the norms of decency. When Kędzierzawska touches on these issues, her film becomes sad, pointing to the climax, which summarises the heart of its message.

Her own son wants to deceive her by selling her house without her knowledge. It is a blow which almost leads to Aniela's breakdown. She decides on

a dramatic death for herself and begins the whole ritual: she puts on a black dress, lies on the bed and lights candles. And suddenly the unexpected happens: she jumps out of bed and reprimands herself: *Time to die? Are you crazy?* The scene at first seems unexpected, but it is in fact the logical conclusion to the film.

So what does Aniela do now, besides talking to her dog? She goes outside during a storm, enchanted by the heavy raindrops that fall on her head, she soars into the air on her garden swing, delighted as if she were a child – and once again she asks herself: *Am I crazy?* No – the director seems to answer for her – it is not insanity. It is a zest for life, even greater because it is near to the end.

The main theme of "Time to Die" is presenting life as a gift. Arthur Reinhart's elegant black-and-white cinematography emphasises the beauty of the world that surrounds us, which is, however, no longer universally appreciated. Aniela, in the moment in which she refused to die, was led by a desire to experience the beauty of life. This desire survived within her despite everything. However, she is also motivated by a desire to find a meaning to life, and arrive at a calm, dignified death, the best conclusion to a difficult, yet worthwhile existence.

Where does Aniela find this meaning? In a noble gesture towards others, a gesture made despite the nature of the world



DANUTA SZ AFLARSKA

which surrounds her. In the final scenes children from the music school, which the villa has been donated to, are running around in it. There is uproar and chaos. Meanwhile, Aniela sits on her armchair on the veranda and dies. Just like that – without drama, pathos, the tearing of garments; on the contrary, calmly, accepting the fact that her time had come to come off the stage. Besides, death has its

good points, as Aniela says: *At least I won't be forced to drink tea from a mug.* Where does this comment come from? From beyond the grave? From heaven, where Reinhart's camera takes us? That is something we don't find out.

We know that death is in the natural order of things; that it is irreversibly part of nature. Dorota Kędzierzawska celebrates life in this film, but also tackles

death. With humour and lightness she presents the portrait of a woman, for whom both past and present exist but the future is uncertain. Similarly to her protagonist, the director rejects a mournful tone – "Time to Die" is filled with a joy for life and acceptance of all it has in store, its difficulties, and its inevitable end. There are not many films in the cinema which discuss difficult issues in such an

accessible and wise manner; there are few films which show the life of an ordinary person with such affection, yet without philosophical pomposity and sentimentality, and simultaneously without an exaggerated distance. Most importantly, there are few optimistic and invigorating films, which at the same time are not naive. Dorota Kędzierzawska's film fills this gap. ■

THE PREMIERE OF "TWISTS OF FATE" WAS PRECEDED BY THE RUMOUR THAT THE FILM IS ABOUT LUSTRATION. THE DIRECTOR ASSERTED THAT IT IS NOT – AND RIGHTLY SO. BUT WHAT IS IT REALLY ABOUT?



KAMIL MAĆKOWIAK

JERZY STUHR, ANETA WIRZINKIEWICZ

TWISTS OF FATE

BOŻENA JANICKA

Jerzy Stuhr's film received the award for best screenplay at the Polish Film Festival in Gdynia. The jury were most probably impressed by the way the different layers of the narrative were intertwined. However, the screenplay is more than just the way in which the story is constructed, so let's examine it more closely.

The protagonist is a student. He earns money by writing other people's Masters Theses and sometimes his friends sit his exams for him. He has one distinctive characteristic: he lies constantly, as if it did not occur to him that sometimes it is easier to just tell the truth. On his way somewhere (he earns extra money by selling gossip stories to the press) he notices another passenger hiding his face under his jacket. The mysterious passenger disappears, leaving his jacket and a mobile phone in its pocket. The following twist of plot

suggests a criminal story: the student discovers that the disappearance was contrived and in a parallel story the missing man's wife hesitates for a suspiciously long time whether she should inform the press about her husband's disappearance. Meanwhile the student, looking for a story to sell to the press, searches and finally finds the man in the mountains in the South of Poland, where he is trying to hide.

However, it turns out that it is not a criminal story after all. The actions the student undertakes to find the missing man only serve to get the viewer hooked on the story; in comparison to what the student finds out from the man they seem insignificant. The man is running away from something, he is a university professor who used to be a confidant of the Communist Secret Services, now completely broken by the unmasking that awaits him. His *life confession* occurs whilst he is drunk, before an incidental, as he believes, listener – the student. And it is this confession that is the key to the film.

There is another layer of the plot concerning the professor's old friend, whom he had falsely accused of co-operating with the Secret Services; then yet another strand concerning that friend's daughter, unaware of who her real father is, brought up by an ex-confidant. There are plots concerning the girlfriends of the protagonist and the various romantic complications. The film

has everything to make it engaging, what's more, it's skilfully constructed. The only thing missing is clarity, but why should there be any?

Let us consider again what the film is actually about. Is it about a student-liar? Despite having unique qualities, the story is constructed in such a manner that he mostly comes across as a player in a fictitious game. Is it about an ex-confidant terrified by the possibility of his Secret Service past being uncovered? This perhaps is a more interesting story, but the character is not. This man's problem is not that by agreeing to co-operate with the Secret Services he became a villain – he was already one, and his co-operation was just a consequence of that fact. After all, he admits bad conduct, in which his association with the Secret Services only helped what was already in motion. For example, to steal his friend's girlfriend he contrived a situation which would extremely compromise his friend. But what has this story about a corrupt character, immoral even before joining the Secret Service got to do with the dramatic problem of lustration? It is difficult to tell.

Another plot concerns an innocent friend who many years before was falsely accused of being a confidant but gives up on trying to clear his name and simply wants to leave his job (he lectures at a university). Is this the problem of the innocent victims of lustration, but without the drama of fighting to regain their good name? The director was right: this is not a film about lustration. So what is it about?

As the action develops you cannot help but be surprised, not so much by the enigmatic nature of this story, but by its strange whimsicality. Surprising, because the issues which are skimmed over here could be the material for a film of much greater importance. Yet, the main idea of the screenplay is to add more and more characters with their own partial stories. The sensationalist backbone of the plot excludes the possibility of the film being more serious. In summary, Stuhr suggests that there are two generations, both surrounded by lies and deceptions, though the nature of these has changed with the new generation. And maybe – I am formulating this speculation with slight embarrassment as it is supported by a very weak argument – there is a glimmer of hope that the world is getting better, if the student – with the support of both women – decides not to publish the revelations he has obtained in order not to ruin the man. Yet the excellent and prominent writer, outstanding actor and respected director would not create such a multilayered narrative to say so little. He had to mean something else. But what – I cannot tell. I don't know. ■

Korowód

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JERZY STUHR. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: BARTEK PROKOPOWICZ. MUSIC BY PAWEŁ SZYMAŃSKI. CAST: KAMIL MAĆKOWIAK (BARTEK), KAROLINA GORCZYCA (KASIA), KATARZYNA MACIĄG (ULA), JAN FRYZC (PROFESSOR ZDZISŁAW DĄBROWSKI), ALEKSANDRA KONIECZNA (IRENA, ZDZISŁAW'S WIFE), JERZY STUHR (RECTOR). PRODUCED BY FILM STUDIO ZEBRA / POLSAT TV / FILM STUDIO OTO. PRODUCER: JULIUSZ MACHULSKI. EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: FUNDACJA FILM POLSKI, HIGH POINT. POLAND 2007. 112'



KAMIL MAĆKOWIAK, KATARZYNA MACIĄG

LECH MAJEWSKI, DIRECTOR, PROSE WRITER, POET AND PAINTER, HAS BEEN WORKING MAINLY ABROAD SINCE 1981. MAJEWSKI'S FILMS HAVE BEEN SHOWN AT MANY INTERNATIONAL FESTIVALS, HIS VIDEO-ART – IN MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES AROUND THE WORLD. A SERIES OF VIDEO-ART WORKS "BLOOD OF A POET" SERVED AS THE CANVAS FOR "GLASS LIPS", WHICH IN 2007 WAS SHOWN TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL AND THEN BECAME PART OF THE VENICE BIENNALE.



GLASS LIPS

MAGDALENA LEBECKA

Four years after the premiere of "The Garden of Earthly Delights" Lech Majewski is returning to the big screen. Is his new work a full feature film? A visual poem? Or a bold artistic experiment? Yes, "Glass Lips" is all of these, as well as a different version of a more complex project. Therefore it is worth taking a closer look at how it was made. In the beginning there was a picture, or more precisely a stream of intense visions from the unconscious. They are the

primary elements in Majewski's creative process.

Written in white verse in the screenplay for "Blood of a Poet" (a reference to Jean Cocteau's film) they were shot by Majewski in the form of separate, self-contained scenes in the style of video-art. What distinguishes Majewski from others who use video art is that he creates his works through purely filmic means. DiVinities, as the artist himself calls his works (a contamination of words: divine with the digital

technology DVD), are characterised by a painterly composition of takes, a refined game of shadow and light and subtle colour used for conveying an often brutal and dramatic plot. It is not without reason that Lawrence Kardish, the curator of the prestigious Museum of Modern Art in New York, where Majewski's individual retrospective took place, called him the pioneer of artistic video-art, comparing him to Matthew Barney, the artist behind the series "Cremaster".

DiVinities are shown on a loop on many monitors in their natural habitat, the gallery. Either simultaneously displayed on walls as if moving frescos, or frozen in monochromatic

photograms and colourful light-boxes, they can be put together in countless combinations. This is a break from linear narration, and so each screening can be different.

The almost two-hour cinema version of the project, entitled "Glass Lips", was made in the same way as "Blood of a Poet". The plot centres around the intimate biography of a poet who has been placed in a psychiatric hospital. The film has a strange and dreamlike texture, it depicts the poet's painful experiences of clashes with hostile surroundings, the mythologising of these experiences, traumatic memories from his childhood, erotic fantasies, expectations concerning the future filled with fear and the sense of disabling loneliness. This is an extremely subjective perspective – a complex model of the psyche on which a vivisection is carried out, uncovering – layer after layer – deeper levels of meaning.

The protagonist of "Glass Lips" is a victim of the myth of the damned poet; an artist punished for his talent with despair and a penchant for self-destruction. This type of character is the *leitmotiv* which often appears in Majewski's pieces. Basquiat, of the earlier film which Majewski scripted, was similar – a black genius who died prematurely of a heroin overdose. The violent relation between Basquiat and his father echoes the relationship of the young poet and his cruel parent in "Glass Lips".





► Majewski's most recent work, despite the appearance that his new project contradicts the previous one, is linked with the previous one by the obsessively repeated themes and self-quotations, tested in various materials and genres. There are surprising and refreshing references to biblical symbolism (Abraham's fulfilled sacrifice). And of course Majewski pays homage to old masters, in this case, among others, Roger van der Weyden. You can also find references to Böcklin, Bacon, de Chavannes and even to Bruno Schulz.

„Blood of a Poet” and “Glass Lips” have the same ontological status, floating between dream and reality. The characters’ existence is defined by rituals: a family meal at the table is ritualised, eating from a dog’s bowl, the act of parents dressing their son for receiving Communion, while simultaneously tying him and parents performing hieratic dance around the boy. The final scene, inspired by Cranach’s “The Source of Youth” has the same meaning as the earlier part of Majewski’s film – submerging in water becomes the mystery of resurrection. In this arrangement, where the linear logic of events does not exist, nothing is irreversibly foregone. Not even death...

This deeply moving story has, to use Fromm’s language, an ‘archetypical skeleton’, that allows us to access the mythical roots of reality, as well as put us in touch with the unconscious.

Lech Majewski, either directly, or through the voices of the characters of his books („Hypnotiser”), has always argued, along the lines of Wittgenstein, that nothing exists that has not been named. By making a film with an exceptionally rich soundtrack, written by Józek Skrzek, and no dialogue, Majewski, however, proved that most important are entities beyond words.

Majewski’s latest exhibition, in Kraków’s Starmach Gallery, was a selection of excerpts from “Blood of a Poet” and its title was borrowed from Fromm – “Anamnesis. The forgotten language”... ■

Szklane usta

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY LECH MAJEWSKI. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: LECH MAJEWSKI. MUSIC BY LECH MAJEWSKI, JÓZEF SKRZEK. CAST: PATRYK CZAJKA (SEBASTIAN), JOANNA LITWIN (MOTHER), GRZEGORZ PRZYBYŁ (FATHER), DOROTA LIS (DORIS). PRODUCED BY ANGELUS SILESUS / TELEWIZJA POLSKA S.A. – TELEWIZJA KULTURA / SUPRA FILM / SILESIA FILM / ATLAS SZTUKI / ARS CAMERALIS / OPUS FILM. CO-FINANCING: POLISH FILM INSTITUTE. PRODUCERS: LECH MAJEWSKI, MICHAŁ TATAREK. WORLD SALES: ANGELUS SILESUS. POLAND 2007. 97”

FEATURE DEBUT OF THE YOUNG DIRECTOR. THE EPONYMOUS “PRESERVE” IS THE DISTRICT OF WARSAW WHICH ACTS AS A RELIC OF PREVIOUS EPOCHS.



SONIA BOHOSIEWCZ

PRESERVE
KRZYSZTOF KWIATKOWSKI

Łukasz Palkowski’s film was the star at the last Polish Film Festival in Gdynia and received three awards – journalists’, audience’s and for best debut. Palkowski has brought freshness and optimism to Polish cinema.

In People’s Poland, Praga was a different, dangerous world. The intelligentsia from Śródmieście or Mokotów would never go to Brzeska Street, the symbolic centre of the troubled district. The last decade has brought new life to the right-bank of Warsaw. Abandoned factories are being turned into trendy clubs; pricey cafes and restaurants keep sprouting, and new apartment buildings appear in-between the old blocks of flats.

In “Preserve” Palkowski delves deep into the old Praga. He isn’t a slightly frightened tourist, merely interested in its quirkiness. In the closing credits, he thanks *the residents of Konopacka and Stalowa streets*, and has stressed his respect for the residents in TV interviews. This may be why his film is full

of warmth and humour, instead of just another film about Polish moral decay.

The main protagonist is a photographer, an *outsider* in Praga, a man who seeks success at any cost. A reportage about an exotic district is supposed to be a stepping stone in his career. But Praga, which he treats instrumentally and with superiority at first, teaches him a lesson. He does not immediately acclimatise to his new surroundings and neither do the other residents to him. But gradually their mutual discovery turns into a fascinating journey for the protagonist and the viewer, a journey through the forgotten corners of Praga, but also through the world of people living as if at the margin of history.

The characters of “Preserve” are local drunkards, an old photography shop owner, a newsagent, and an ex-policeman turned taxi driver. And a local *classy lady*, the subject of everyone’s gossip, dashing played by Sonia

Bohosiewicz. They are simple people, refused entrance into the opening of an exhibition of photographs taken of them. But they have moral principles that the newcomer does not. The backyard drunks will not accept money from a man who stole photographs from a small boy and passed them as his own. Such a man simply does not exist for them. They’d rather have no beer than lose their sense of morality.

Doesn’t Palkowski beautify this neighbourhood? Doesn’t he forget how degrading poverty can get, how hard it is to live a dignified life when there are no prospects? Maybe, but for me, “Preserve” is a film about the search for beauty. Palkowski sees the charm in a shabby backyard, the lyricism in boorish songs, with such lyrics as *What the fuck do I need your fucking flowers for?* Such material, though superficially vulgar, often holds true, great drama.

Palkowski shows us authentic people, talking without the help of the internet, people who support one another and experience tragedies and joys together. They form a community governed by their own unwritten rules, handed down from generation to generation. They probably haven’t heard of the poet Antoni

Stonimski, but still they follow *his rule: If you don’t know how to behave, behave decently just in case.* The residents of Stalowa Street do not need any codes of law, any police, they do not even need religion. But, like in an anarchist utopian vision, they have each other.

After watching “Preserve”, I was thinking about Robert Altman’s film “A Prairie Home Companion”. Not without a reason this master of cinema, on the eve of the 21st century, recalled the climate of provincial America, filled with warmth and solidarity. But in Altman’s film you could sense this lifestyle was coming to an end. “Preserve” is like a fairy-tale, in its idyllic atmosphere even death can be dismissed with a smile. But that is also the strength of Łukasz Palkowski’s parable. The director is saying that *community* is not only a term used in sociological analyses, that you can still face the challenges of life together. And I believe him. ■

Rezerwat

DIRECTED BY ŁUKASZ PALKOWSKI. WRITTEN BY ŁUKASZ PALKOWSKI, MARCIN KWAŚNY. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: PAWEŁ SOB CZYK. MUSIC BY SEBASTIAN KRAJEWSKI. CAST: MARCIN KWAŚNY (MARCIN WILCZYŃSKI), SONIA BOHOSIEWICZ (HANKA B.), GRZEGORZ PALKOWSKI (GINGER BOY), ARTUR DZIURMAN (ROMAN), TOMASZ KAROLAK (RYSIEK). PRODUCED BY PAISA FILMS. WORLD SALES: OPEN. POLAND 2007. 100”



MARCIN KWAŚNY

“GOD’S LITTLE GARDEN” CONVEYS THE EXQUISITE ATMOSPHERE OF THE EASTERN BORDERS OF POLAND. THE FILM „AS SNUG A BUG IN A RUG” (1998), OF WHICH “GOD’S LITTLE GARDEN” IS A KIND OF SEQUEL, WAS VERY SUCCESSFUL NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY, RECEIVING 18 AWARDS AT FILM FESTIVALS.



KRZYSZTOF DZIERMA

GOD’S LITTLE GARDEN

BOŻENA JANICKA

It is on the cinema screen that the viewer sometimes sees a certain world that they’d like to visit again, spend more time in, out of curiosity, for pleasure, or because, if this place was deserted, the real world around us would be as flat as a supermarket car park.

In the Polish collective imagination, such a nostalgic place is the Eastern region, which once belonged to Poland. Now lost, yet the Eastern borders of postwar Poland still retain some of the old marvellous atmosphere. We believe those, who tell us that this is what it feels like, because we really want it to be so. We also believe Jacek Bromski, who has recognised this longing for lost world with masterful intuition.

A reawakened myth always bears some danger: when fulfilling the audience’s needs quite literally, sentimentality is difficult to avoid. But it can be avoided by the employment of comedy or fairy-tale. The scenery, social observations, the reality will relate to a mythical world, while the plot and characters will allow for distance. Thus, “God’s Little Garden” is a fairy-tale comedy, which can only be told in the setting and atmosphere of a mythical small village near Białystok.

But “God’s Little Garden” does not take place in the middle of

nowhere, it is connected to the modern world. The Police inspector is sent here, because he is unfit to work anywhere else but, nevertheless, he is sent from the central office. A suspiciously brown Italian investor wants to build a supermarket, which would be open all week, even Sundays, and, in exchange for a small bonus, the whole community council votes in favour of this plan. The Police officer’s daughter returns from Białystok with an illegitimate baby. But the best character of the film is a repentant gangster with recent plastic surgery on his face, a witness in a trial, who the Police put into hiding in this provincial town.

But everyone, including after some time, the key witness in a trial, become locals. It is worth noting, that the word *local* is used (or was used until recently) to describe their nationality by the residents of the eastern border’s countryside. Locals: the priest and his housekeeper, the chief of the local Police station, his wife, daughter and father (an elderly sex maniac, by the way), the barmaid in the local bar, aware that nowadays she has to be sexy. Newcomer Marusia who sings angelically in the church choir, is now a local. But the most authentic manifestation of the term is the surrounding landscape of the pompously named village, King’s Bridge.

Could a fable with similar figures not be located in a village in some other part of Poland? No – a real fable, if it is to be believable, has to be set somewhere that has not been fully discovered, *far, far away*. Somewhere, where *isolation* borders on *splendid isolation*, even though for the Police it is just a provincial town.

In this peculiar combination of fable and comedy, keeping a balance between the two ingredients can be problematic, since the comedic elements are naturally more appealing and more likely to dominate.

Another problem is that the film seems too long, an indication that some scenes were not necessary. Journalists were of a similar opinion about the film “Rys”. Its director, Stanisław Tym was offended. I hope that Jacek Bromski is less touchy. ■



ALEKSANDER SKOWROŃSKI, WOJCIECH SOLARZ

U Pana Boga w ogródku

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JACEK BROMSKI. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: RYSZARD LENCZEWSKI. MUSIC: HENRI SEROKA. CAST: KRZYSZTOF DZIERMA (PARISH PRIEST), ANDRZEJ BEYA-ZABORSKI (CHIEF OF POLICE), WOJCIECH SOLARZ (MARIAN CIELECKI), EMILIAN KAMIŃSKI (JERZY BOCIAN). PRODUCED BY FILM STUDIO OKO – WYTWÓRNA FILMÓW DOKUMENTALNYCH I FABULARNYCH – VISION. CO-FINANCING: POLISH FILM INSTITUTE. WORLD SALES: VISION FILM. POLAND 2007. 115’

AFTER MANY YEARS OF PENETRATING SOCIO-POLITICAL SUBJECTS ONE OF THE MOST PROMINENT POLISH DOCUMENTARY FILM MAKERS, MARCEL ŁOZIŃSKI (NOMINATED FOR AN OSCAR FOR THE FILM “89MM FROM EUROPE”), HAS STARTED TO POSE QUESTIONS ABOUT UNIVERSAL MATTERS.



TOMASZ ŁOZIŃSKI (18 YEARS OLD)

IF IT HAPPENS

TADEUSZ SZYMA

The unique film “Anything Can Happen” was made in 1995. The film, dedicated to the director’s father, received several prestigious awards in Poland and abroad and has to this day remained a model of reflective screen poetry. The director’s charming six-year-old son, Tomek, in the company of a group of much older people comes across as a child philosopher. Tomek at times sits on park benches and at others, rampages through the shaded park lanes on a scooter. The director clashes his surprising questions and unexpected statements with the real world of transient things, marked by suffering and death.

And now, twelve years after having completed that documentary with his exceptionally photogenic six-year-old son, Marcel Łoziński has decided to go back to the issue, this time with his now eighteen-year-old son. His most recent documentary is the result of this unusual attempt to renew and reformulate the content of his own masterpiece, also intriguingly and philosophically entitled with a different quotation from young Tomek’s declaration: *If it happens*. Tomek then asked: *What would happen if the Sun joined the Moon?* It seems impossible, but... After all, *anything can happen!*

The idea for the film is, once again, simple, or even simpler, although it required considerable craftsmanship in its realisation. In “The Purple Rose of Cairo” we could see the imaginary exit of the characters from the screen to the audience, whereas here we are witness to the entrance of a character of past events, now older, into the screen reality of many years ago. Now we see him as a young adult who – perfectly blends into the panoramic background of the park from that memorable day – discretely observes and is surprised by the world, and also by his younger self. He’s surprised by the small boy with a scooter, who bluntly and curiously chats to the pensioners resting on the park benches, painfully versed by life... He asks awkward questions, expresses paradoxical opinions and listens to stories about passing years, about a separation from a husband or wife, about going away forever and remaining forever in memory.

Marcel Łoziński’s new film is, one could say, a new version of the superb old one. It has been slightly shortened, re-edited and completed by only a few minutes of new takes with the eighteen-year-old Tomek who remains silent, watching and listening attentively and reacting with a twitch of the face, a gaze and a slight smile at the events from many years ago. He watches it as if from the inside, as if he were inside the old film – from the point of view of an observer participating in a

psychological-artistic experiment.

What has been added to the film is rather more conceptual than real and it is for the most part exhausted in the artistic intention, in the bold and original idea and also in what the viewer suspects, whilst observing Tomek’s behaviour and the empty benches in one of Warsaw’s parks. The difficult metaphysical and existential questions, the ambiguous ascertainties, the childish, surrealistic imagination remain the same – they only appear in a situation changed by the many years gone by. And Tomek seems to confirm the validity of Professor Leszek Kołakowski’s opinion that the period of true happiness of a person’s life is marked by the caesura of the first five years.

From among all the new shots in the film, the sight of the empty park benches, where life boomed twelve years earlier, is the most impressive. Tomek’s casual interlocutors reappear in the film as if they were the shadows of the old characters, a bit like ghosts that continue to haunt the memory, induced after many years. However, despite the empty benches in the park, those people, already elderly then, have not quite left. ■

A gdyby tak się stało

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY MARCEL ŁOZIŃSKI. CINEMATOGRAPHY JACEK BŁAWUT, ARTHUR REINHART. PRODUCED BY FILM STUDIO KALEJDOSKOP / TELEWIZJA POLSKA S.A. – CHANNEL 1. CO-FINANCING POLISH FILM INSTITUTE. PRODUCERS WOJCIECH SZCZUDŁO, ZBIGNIEW DOMAGALSKI. POLAND 2007. 39’



TOMEK ŁOZIŃSKI (6 YEARS OLD)

MANY OF OUR YOUNG DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKERS HAVE GONE ABROAD TO LOOK FOR SUBJECTS TO EXPLORE, FOR EXAMPLE THE INHERENT DIFFERENCE OF OTHER COUNTRIES THEY'D LIKE TO UNDERSTAND.



"KITES"



"THE FIRST DAY"

Kites (Latawce)
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY BEATA DZIANOWICZ. CINEMATOGRAPHY: JACEK PETRYCKI. PRODUCER: KRZYSZTOF KOPCZYŃSKI. PRODUCTION COMPANIES: EUREKA MEDIA, TELEWIZJA POLSKA S.A. – CHANEL 2. CO-FINANCING: POLISH FILM INSTITUTE, AGENCJA SCENARIUSZOWA. POLAND 2007. 52'

The First Day (Pierwszy dzień)
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY MARCIN SAUTER. CINEMATOGRAPHY: MARCIN SAUTER. PRODUCER: KRZYSZTOF KOPCZYŃSKI. PRODUCTION COMPANIES: EUREKA MEDIA, TELEWIZJA POLSKA S.A. – TELEWIZJA KULTURA. CO-FINANCING: POLISH FILM INSTITUTE, THE ADAM MICKIEWICZ INSTITUTE. POLAND 2007. 20'

KITES. THE FIRST DAY

BŁAŻEJ HRAPKOWICZ

A documentary is when a character opens up to you – says Jacek, who runs a film course for young people from an Afghan school as shown in Beata Dżianowicz's film "Kites". The goal of a documentary filmmaker is to familiarise oneself with the subject, understand it, establish a rapport, maybe even something like an Aristotelian friendship: pure and selfless. Then it is possible to read from words, gestures, mimicry – not only individual aspirations, dreams, disappointments but the whole picture: the reality that surrounds the protagonists, which reflects on their behaviour.

Globalisation seemingly overcomes borders, but it also poses questions about the possibility of dialogue across cultural difference, which has become ever more visible. Is it possible to reach another person and understand their way of thinking, conditioned by a tradition which is so distant from our own? Can a documentary become a helpful instrument? Can film as an art form be a universal means of communication? Polish artists have started to ask themselves such questions, have made an effort to show people living in very different conditions and have asked, aren't they really just like us? The multi-award

winning film "The Seeds" by Wojciech Kasperski and two new productions: Beata Dżianowicz's "Kites" and Marcin Sauter's "The First Day" are good examples – three films which are slightly different production-wise, but otherwise very similar.

THE POWER OF THE MEDIUM
Afghanistan. A school. Under the watchful eye of their teacher children arrange themselves in a line. One of them is invited to recite the Koran. The camera observes the other students, who are more interested in the device than in the words from Islam's Holy book. Then Jacek is introduced to them. He will be running a documentary making course, a perfect opportunity for the students to get to know themselves, thanks to discovering and developing their own way of perceiving the world.

Beata Dżianowicz observes Jacek's meeting with the young people, she examines the unique process of both teaching and

helping the children develop. Jacek corrects the children's directorial mistakes, at the same time allowing them great autonomy in their individual projects. The method is effective. We see how the students' material improves, ceases being manipulated and strained, becomes more natural. An incredible take shows a small boy lying on the ground, only the feet of passers-by around him. The static camera is just watching. Suddenly, the poor, begging boy looks at the camera. There is everything in his gaze – the whole truth, life.

The director edits fragments of her own work with the scenes shot by her students. As a result her work acts as a kind of commentary for the films made by the students, substituting voice-over we normally expect to hear in documentary films. Soldiers patrolling the streets, a huge Coca-Cola billboard... In this chaotic and internally unstable world, Dżianowicz, together with the students, tries

to find people, their dreams, emotions, desires, and to show their strength – which grows as if in spite of the reality. The most important, almost symbolical story of the students' films shows a boy who, whilst chasing after a kite, stumbled upon a mine and lost a leg. Now he is watching a film about himself, soon he will fly kites once again. The kites, like dreams, which rise into the air, above the cruel reality. They will not be destroyed by bombs or mines.

Dżianowicz rejects the sweeping generalisations about Afghanistan, promulgated by the media, focusing on individual human fates. Her film is also a reflection on the medium itself, which here is both the tool of the artist, as well as a platform for understanding between cultures. The director shows that cultural and religious barriers can be pushed into the background through documentary, the art of getting to know people and oneself.

THE STUDY OF NOSTALGIA

In Marcin Sauter's short, the first day marks a turning point in the lives of the Siberian families observed by the director: the children are beginning school. Here it means parting from their families. School enrolment is similar to enlisting in the army – teachers appear in the villages, enquiring in which houses there are children, then they take them away. They sail down the river to school on board a small ship. Taken from a familiar and safe environment they suddenly find themselves in a very different and unknown place.

"The First Day", unlike "Kites", is not based on a specific screenplay. Instead the director trusts his own intuition. Sauter is able to draw us into the world which he is presenting, only slightly aesthetising it. Yet, he doesn't lose sight of his protagonists, managing to draw emotions from them, even those ever so subtle, which are

revealed through gestures and glances.

The subtly observed everyday activities in the homes of the protagonists, filled with the warmth of happy families are juxtaposed with the pompous and stilted atmosphere of the school, at the beginning of the academic year. The lesson during which the teacher repeats: *This is Russia. Our homeland* comes across as cold and unwelcoming. In any case, the patriotic slogans are quickly ignored by Sauter, who concentrates on the children, who are looking out of the window, lost in their thoughts, thinking of their parents. Ideology, politics, the system – everything loses its meaning when we look at the faces of the people.

In the last scene the children are playing in a meadow – they are running around, picking flowers, teasing each other. And still, somewhere in-between the frolics, in the short moments of rest they are missing home. And we miss it with them.

BELIEF IN COMMUNITY

Beata Dżianowicz and Marcin Sauter visited distant corners of the globe and want to pass on important conclusions – in a world full of chaos, violence, confusion, media hype and false stereotypes, it is still possible to make contact with others. Although the ideological and religious background is important, it doesn't have to be a barrier. In the age of intercultural friction and conflicts this message is crucial – a sign of humanism, an antidote to the heartless absurdities of reality.

Polish documentary makers are proving that being *citizens of the world* is not enough for them, that they desire to be something more – members of a world-wide community, based on emotional bonds. Is their existence a positive consequence of the changes caused by globalisation? Dżianowicz and Sauter seem to believe so.

Such a belief is necessary. ■



"KITES"



"THE FIRST DAY"

POLISH DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKERS ARE NOT INDIFFERENT TO THE FATE OF THEIR NEIGHBOURS – THE CITIZENS OF THE COUNTRIES WHOSE TERRITORIES WERE ONCE PART OF THE POLISH REPUBLIC OF NATIONS.



Lekcja białoruskiego
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY MIROSLAW DEMBIŃSKI.
CINEMATOGRAPHY: MACIEJ SZAFNICKI, MICHAŁ ŚLUSARZYK.
CO-PRODUCTION: MIROSLAWA DEMBIŃSKA, PIOTR DUDANOWICZ.
PRODUCER: FILM STUDIO EVEREST AND TELEWIZJA POLSKA S.A. CO-FINANANCING: POLISH FILM INSTITUTE. POLAND 2006. 53"

A LESSON OF BELARUSIAN

T A D E U S Z S Z Y M A

When in January 1991, after half a century of the USSR depriving Lithuania of its independence, it was being decided if Lithuania would be able to regain its independence – in Vilnius, by the television tower that had been raided by Russian tanks the day before, Poland showed its support. It did it not only through providing the much needed medical aid, but also by recording what was happening. This was undertaken by Wojciech Szumowski's film crew. The heated report entitled "Do not abandon us!" also included dramatic images of the heroic defence of that institution and the clashes between the two unequal groups in which fifteen innocent civilians died and seven hundred were wounded.

When in December 2004, on Kiev's Maidan, thousands of Juszczenko followers showed their support for his presidency, endangered by an electoral forgery, young people from Poland joined them. This event became the topic of Mirosław Dembiński's documentary "Dwarfs Go to Ukraine".

The author of this fascinating film has been interested in the events taking place in Belarus for some time, maintaining close contacts with those who oppose Lukaszenko's regime. A real manifestation of a productive co-operation was the fact that in the summer of 2005 Dembiński invited to Poland groups of young Poles living in Belarus and Belarusian teenagers from Minsk, and trained them in filmmaking. A couple of months later, in March 2006, the young students repaid Dembiński his favour. It took place when Dembiński was making another documentary in the difficult conditions of preventive censorship and persecutions of the militia. The film was to be about the protest raising in the Belarus society against the authoritarian government and the forgery of the results of the presidential election.

Dembiński, who was going to Belarus, was turned back at the border. However, the students of the Belarusian College of Humanities were able to smuggle their own video camera, which they had been given by the Adenauer

Foundation, past the barrier of militia to the main site of Minsk's protests. Their college was created in 1991, on the threshold of independence in this ex-Soviet Republic, however after its delegalisation by the authorities it continues its didactic activity underground. It is still the only school in the whole country which teaches all the subjects in the native language

Unbelievable as it may seem, in the formally independent Belarus, the teaching and promotion of the native language and tradition is carried out in secret schools, as if it were under foreign occupation.

The protagonist of "A Lesson of Belarusian" is Franek Wiaczorka – the son of one of the most famous leaders of the opposition, a man who for years has been imprisoned by the officers of the regime. The boy's independent attitude has been formed by the difficult experiences of his childhood, related to the constant absence of his father, who was kept in arrest on many occasions. We get to know Franek and his courageous peers in a series of

ingenious oppositional manifestations. Firstly, those organised as part of the pre-election campaign of Aleksander Milinkiewicz, Lukaszenko's main rival. Although the authorities attempt to limit and contain these demonstrations, the youngsters show their support for Milinkiewicz in all possible ways, by distributing independent newspapers and leaflets, campaigning, carrying out street surveys and filming interviews. Later, they show their support in a different way. During the elections, in the midst of a snowy blizzard in freezing weather, they camp in protest against Lukaszenko on Minsk's main square. There they are brutally attacked by the troops of the Belarusian militia. All of this is shown in the film very quickly, immediately attracting the viewer's interest and deeply moving him. The rhythmically chanted phrase *Nothing will stifle Belarus* remains in the viewer's memory for a long time.

Despite the many difficulties encountered during the making of this film, such as the brutal pacification of anti-Lukaszenko

demonstrations and putting to prison the crew's translator, Dembiński managed to do something incredible. Directing from Poland, with the help of a mobile phone, and supplementing the original footage with additional material obtained from Polish and Russian correspondents, he achieved a suggestive effect of following the dramatic events as if from the inside, as if through the eyes of the protesters, who at times were risking their lives. The vividly told and perfectly composed in terms of drama, "A Lesson of Belarusian" pleads to a sense of interpersonal solidarity, is honest and moving, especially in its final scenes. It immediately conquered the hearts of viewers and juries, obtaining a series of awards and gained recognition in Poland but also in Amsterdam, Paris, Prague, Kharkiv, Brussels and Berlin. The Moviesquad DocU of the young jury is the second award in the history of this event (after Dariusz Jabłoński's "Photographer") to be given to a Polish director at this most important international documentary film festival. ■



THE FIRST POLISH GAY AND LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL TOOK PLACE IN 2006, IN WARSAW. LAST YEAR, IT CHANGED ITS NAME TO "SUBWERSJA". THE FESTIVAL PRESENTS NOT ONLY FEATURE FILMS CONCERNING HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS, BUT ALSO DOCUMENTARIES. IN ANNA KAPLIŃSKA'S "LAKE PEARL'S", WE MEET CHAIM, A RUSSIAN LIVING IN JERUSALEM, WHO HAD TO COPE WITH BEING A MEMBER OF TWO MINORITIES.



CHAIM

LAKE PEARL'S

M A L W I N A G R O C H O W S K A

For the first 35 minutes of the documentary, without knowing the synopsis, the viewer can rightfully be surprised why the film is shown at the gay and lesbian festival. There is no mention of sexual minorities almost until the very end. The director of "Lake Pearl's", Anna Kaplińska, tells us about Jerusalem, shares her fascination with this multicultural city, the feeling of alienation she experienced. At the forefront of her story are two characters: a lively Dvora, who came to the kibbutz from Morocco and Chaim, who came from Russia. They share a complicated national and religious identity. Chaim says: *Kosher-smosher. What is it all for? We were Jews in the Soviet Union – without religion, without anything. Then we come here, and if we don't conform to the prescribed idea of Jewishness, we are not Jews any more. It can be shocking for some people. I, who suffered for my Jewishness, am not a Jew here, but a Russki!?!?* Some of Chaim's friends from India, who consider themselves the descendants of Israel's tribes scattered hundreds of years ago, appear in the same episode. *Some of them were so keen to prove their Jewishness that they underwent circumcision more than once,* comments the author.

The closer we get to know Chaim, the harder it becomes to judge him. How do you treat a person who, seemingly casually, says: *My grandpa fought bandits [in Ukraine] who today are regarded Ukraine's heroes. They later got him, I think, he was found hung from a tree. Or when he*

expresses his radical political views: *I'm not for totalitarianism or suppressing the Arabs, but there should be some control over this nation, so they don't attack other countries. Only force can show these people where their place is.* On the other hand, Chaim turns out to be deeply religious, he strives for spiritual purity, there is even a moving scene, in which he sings Jewish and Gypsy songs to a bedridden old man.

But still, throughout the whole story, it is not clear where to look for sexual identities as complicated as the cultural ones. Dvora vividly expresses her philosophy of marriage: *A wife shouldn't want to be like her husband, her job is to make him feel like a king. Then, he will make her his queen.*

But the fact that the film is shown at the LGBT festival imposes certain interpretations. The audience, unwittingly, starts to wonder why the story about Jerusalem fits thematically to this event. Isn't Chaim's voice a bit effeminate, by any chance? His intonation, his smiles... But such interpretation may turn out to be exaggerated, and would not even come to mind, if "Lake Pearl's" was watched in a different context. Why then, such suspicions appear? Are we not witnessing here a *gay hunt*, reminiscent of a *Jew hunt*? Does it not come from our need to pigeonhole people?

The viewer awaits an explanation. And it comes at the very end. But first, there are Chaim's declarations that he wants to have many children. And finally, during an intimate conversation with the director,

he makes a confession or rather does not deny that he loves a man. Subsequently we see Chaim with his friend. It is a poetic image of love, nothing more. That is all that is said about gay relationships in this film, but this is more powerful and helps to understand the situation of a homosexual in a restrictive society better than numerous lengthy analyses.

Hence, one scene and a couple of unfinished sentences get us closer to the hero. And they encourage some new questions: What is it like to be a member of two minorities? Has Chaim emigrated, because the double discrimination due to his two affiliations was unbearable? He declares that he has found his place in the Jewish community, even though they call him a *Russki!* But then there is his second inconvenient identity with which he cannot come to terms.

Chaim says: *A man has to be a kind of enigma, as opposed to an open book.* How does he reconcile these two conflicted identities: of a religious Jew, who should raise a lot of children, and a gay man? Does he reconcile them at all? Can we conclude that he is repressing his sexuality and identity in a wider sense? We do not find out. After all, Chaim guards his secrets.

Chaim is above all just Chaim, than he is gay. We rarely see this type of homosexuals in films. Kaplińska has found and filmed an extraordinary character, she has shown a man with a sexual orientation, that is just one of the ingredients of his personality. ■

Sznirele Perele
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ANNA KAPLIŃSKA. CINEMATOGRAPHY BOGUMIŁ GODFREJOW. PRODUCED BY PWSFVIIT (ŁÓDŹ), HERITAGE FILMS. POLAND 2003. 60'

MARCIN KOSZAŁKA'S DOCUMENTARY "EXISTENCE" BECAME A SENSATION EVEN BEFORE IT EMERGED FROM THE PROJECT PHASE. AT FIRST IT WAS PLANNED AS A TWO-PART STORY: ABOUT ONE MAN'S CONSCIOUS DECISION TO DONATE HIS BODY TO SCIENCE, AND ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS BODY AFTER HIS DEATH. BUT THE PROJECT EVOLVED, AND THE AUTHOR OF THIS ARTICLE TELLS US WHAT IT FINALLY BECAME.



JERZY NOWAK

EXISTENCE

MAGDALENA LEBECKA

The film dates back to still life photography classes at the Faculty of Cinematography at the University of Silesia. Second-year student Marcin Koszałka decided to photograph preserved cadavers at the Medical Academy. Back then, I was going through a phase of listening to the music of Dead Can Dance. I was interested in the underground, in the shocking photography of Joel-Peter Witkins, Kantor's theatre of death, the idea of Übermarionette and mannequin, says the director, Marcin Koszałka.

Just then, an idea was born of a documentary about a person who decides that upon death, he wishes to donate his body to science. Jerzy Nowak, a remarkable 80-year old actor, decided to participate in this, not only artistic, experiment.

What was most controversial (or as others say, most revolutionary and brave) about the project, was its structure, in which the death of the protagonist becomes the turning point. This is how Marcin Koszałka described the project back then: "Existence" will unfold on two temporal planes – when the character is still alive, and post factum. Then, the camera will concentrate on the students, who learn anatomy on the formalin cadaver. Let me say right away, though, that no naturalistic effects should be necessary, the death won't be shown on screen. It is a story about an attempt to stop time;

about an artist, who constructs his own epitaph, who deliberately leaves a mark.

I know that tackling such a difficult, ultimate topic of the taboo of death means taking one-way ticket. A mistake will be difficult to defend.

A leak of information to the media heavily polarised public opinion.

There are stupid people, said Andrzej Konic, a friend of the Nowaks, who claim, that some things should not be discussed in public, but experienced in monastic seclusion. That's not true. Life and death are normal human things.

The project became even more unique due to its emphasis on collaboration between the director and the protagonist, who was invited to co-create the film. As a result Jerzy Nowak took a long awaited and long postponed journey to his childhood country – Bohorodchany in Ukraine.

Jerzy Nowak comments on this: Koszałka would constantly be in doubt. After we shot the scene at the cemetery, where I was praying by my parents' grave, he would ask: did you act, or was it genuine emotion? Both! After so many years of work, you no longer know what is acting and what is real. Everything we actors do, in a sense, we do to be liked by others.

During the long process of making "Existence", Marcin Koszałka worked as a cinematographer on several feature films, and he also made

some other films of his own. The project hit a serious obstacle after the death of professor Skawina, the head of the Department of Anatomy at the Jagiellonian University, who was really involved in the project and very helpful.

Marcin Koszałka says: Some academic bodies were afraid that the film could be harmful to the medical community, but Professor Konstanty Ślusarczyk from the Silesian Medical Academy was all for it from the outset. Probably because "Existence" can be an opportunity to promote a certain attitude, to support a certain idea. Maybe some day, while watching this documentary, someone will consider giving their body to science?

Professor Konstanty Ślusarczyk: I loved the script: it presented the central topic just the way I see it. It was emphasised that the dissection scenes would be marginal to the whole film – there would be a couple of shots in the lab, that wouldn't show much, instead requiring the viewers to work things out for themselves. And the most important issue is the meaning of Mr Nowak's life, the meaning of human existence in general. I was especially won over by the "Rembrandtian style" of photography.

I also deeply care about public discussion of such issues. But no one really wants to talk. Even doctors are not willing to tackle the subject of death. This is why I was enthusiastic, that at last there was a chance of reaching the deeper meaning, transgressing the unhealthy sensationalism.

The most important decision was made relatively late. Was

the abandonment of the second part, which was to be shot after the protagonist's death, somehow influenced by pressure from the public or the producers? Marcin Koszałka replies: I was obviously listening to what other people had to say, but I subconsciously understood which way to go. People grow up – when you're young, you have crazy ideas; with age comes appropriate distance. I got to know Mr. Nowak better and better, so it would have been inconceivable for me to wait for his death to continue my work. But this is not all about my mental comfort. I suspect, that the media would have directed their attack at me – branded me a cynic, who exploits his protagonist – thus losing sight of the deeper values.

Thanks to diverging from the literalness of this particular case, from showing this particular body, the film shows a much wider perspective. It becomes a tribute to all those, whose physical remains lie in the formalin sarcophagi that I photographed. In essence, it is about the awareness of passing time, the attitude towards life and death, when this death is near.

In one of the scenes, Mr. Nowak says: "If I knew the time of my death, life would become unbearable."

At DARKLIGHT studio, I am watching the final pre-edited version, the film is still 'raw', no colour corrections, no soundtrack. The shots are calm, well thought out. After processing, the images will become warmer, friendlier and more hopeful in tone, as the director says. To avoid visual clichés, even the pale greenish,



JERZY NOWAK

fluorescent tonality of the scenes shot at the Silesian Medical Academy will be neutralised.

Subsequent scenes intertwine, as in a baroque painting, which glows with changing hues. The beauty of the sequence in Florence contrasts with the plain interior of the mortuary; contemplative scenes

are juxtaposed with the dynamic ones; the physiology of death goes hand-in-hand with youthful vitality; the humour is streaked with despair, the terror is dispelled with laughter; life leans towards death.

The closing sequence: under the surface of intensely blue water, completely immersed, swims a man, the hero of

"Existence". He moves freely, he's agile, but the gestures seem careful and slow. This unreal vision bears soothing calmness, the feeling of liberation. In a symbolic sense, the waters are intermediaries between life and death, they are the end and the beginning of all that is earthly – going away becomes returning. ■

Istnienie
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY MARCIN KOSZAŁKA. CINEMATOGRAPHY: MARCIN KOSZAŁKA. PRODUCERS: JERZY DZIEGIELEWSKI, ALEKSANDER KUTELA, KRZYSZTOF RAK, ANNA SKONIECZNA, SŁAWOMIR BONIECKI, JACEK KULCZYCKI. PRODUCER: HBO POLSKA, OTO FILM. CO-FINANCING: POLISH FILM INSTITUTE. POLAND 2007. 69"

This issue of "KINO Polish Cinema" is also available on the Internet

www.polishcinema.org.pl

More reviews of the new Polish films can be found on the web site

Film Organisations, Associations & Festivals In Poland

FILM ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANISATIONS IN POLAND (SELECTION)

Polish Film Institute

Poland, 00-071 Warsaw,
Krakowskie Przedmieście 21/23

phone + 48 22 42 10 518
fax + 48 22 42 10 241
e-mail pif@pif.pl
www.pif.pl

The Polish Film Institute, established in 2005, is the newest film institute in Europe. Its main objective is to support Polish films at all stages of their creation, from scriptwriting, through production, to advertising, marketing and distribution. The Institute also supports the most important events and initiatives developing and promoting Polish film culture, such as festivals, exhibitions, publishing of books and journals. Furthermore, part of its budget is used to develop current and prospective filmmakers, most importantly financing students' films and film clubs. In addition, in 2007 the Institute was engaged in establishing nine regional film funds, which became a new source of financing film production in Poland.

Ministry of Culture and National Heritage The Department of Film

Poland, 00-071 Warsaw,
Krakowskie Przedmieście 15/17

phone +48 22 421 01 38,
+48 22 421 05 59
e-mail kinematografia@mkidn.gov.pl,
bslomczewska@mkidn.gov.pl
www.mkidn.gov.pl

The brief of the Department of Film in the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage is to support Polish cinema in its widest sense. Its tasks include supporting jubilees of some prominent figures of Polish film industry, providing expert opinions on applications for international coproduction certificates and, together with the Law Department, managing processes linked with commercialisation and privatisation of state film institutions.

National Film Archive

Poland, 02-595 Warsaw,
Puławska 61

phone +48 22 845 50 74
fax +48 22 646 53 73
e-mail filmoteka@fn.org.pl
www.fn.org.pl

The National Film Archive is one of the oldest film institutions in Poland; it came into existence as the Central Film Archive in 1955. The Archive's collection is one of the largest in Europe, consisting of 15,000 film prints, over 20,000 film posters, almost 38,000 film stills and over 25,000 volumes of books.

The Association of Polish Filmmakers

Poland, 02-595 Warsaw,
Puławska 61

phone +48 22 845 51 32,
+48 22 845 55-45
fax +48 22 845 39 08
e-mail biuro@sfp.org.pl
www.sfp.org.pl

The Association of Polish Filmmakers, established in 1966, is the largest society of Polish filmmakers, counting about 1,400 members. Its tasks include supporting filmmakers at different stages of their careers, animation of film culture in Poland through organisation of film festivals, such as the Polish Film Festival in Gdynia and "The Young and Film" in Koszalin, retrospectives and other film events.

National Chamber of Audiovisual Producers

Poland, 00-724 Warsaw,
Chełmska 21, bld. 28 C

phone +48 22 840 59 01
www.kipa.pl

The National Chamber of Audiovisual Producers, set up in 2000, continues the work of the Association of Independent Film and Television Producers. It brings together about hundred state and private firms, including Telewizja Polska S. A., Akson Studio, Opus Film, Apple Film Production, Canal+ Cyfrowy, Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych i Fabularnych and film studios, representing their interests in the discussions on parliamentary bills concerning cinema, and promoting international collaboration.

Telewizja Polska S.A. – Film Agency

Poland, 00-999 Warsaw,
Woronicza 17

phone +48 22 547 81 67,
+48 22 547 67 32
fax +48 22 547 42 25
www.tvp.pl

Telewizja Polska S.A. – Film Agency is the largest film producer in Poland. It was established in the mid-1990s by the board of directors of Polish State Television as Television Agency of Theatre and Television Production. Every year the Agency produces or co-produces more than ten full-length feature films, including superproductions like "Katyń" and low-budget films like "Tricks", as well as numerous television series and television dramas.

FILM FESTIVALS IN POLAND IN 2008 (SELECTED)

5th Planete Doc Review World's Festival of Feature Long Documentary Films

Warsaw, May 9 – 18, 2008

contact
Against Gravity
Poland, 00-023 Warsaw,
Widok 5/7/9
phone +48 22 828 10 70
e-mail info@docreview.pl
www.docreview.pl

The Planete Doc Review festival, which in 2008 had its fifth edition, presents the most interesting documentaries of the last years, divided into several categories. They compete for a number of awards, the most important being the Millennium Award. There is also a competition, named Audio Foto Doc, for the best radio documentary programmes, press coverages and press photographs. The screenings are accompanied by political debates, open to the general public. The Planete Doc Review gained the status of a 'cult' event in Poland.

48th Krakow Film Festival

Kraków, May 30 – June 5, 2008

contact
office Poland, 30-102 Kraków,
Morawskiego 5, apt. 434
phone/fax +48 12 294 69 45
e-mail info@kff.com.pl
www.kff.com.pl

The Krakow Film Festival, which this year will have its 48th edition, is the oldest film festival in Poland of world standing. Films compete for the award of the best Polish short film, the best non-Polish short film and, since 2007, the best full-length documentary. The festival also includes many additional events, such as the Dragon Forum and the Krakow Film Market.

27th Festival of Film Debuts "The Young and Cinema"

Koszalin, June 18 – 21, 2008

contact
programme office Stowarzyszenie
Filmowców Polskich,
Poland, 02-595 Warsaw,
Puławska 61
phone +48 22 845 51 32
fax +48 22 845 39 08
e-mail program@mif.org.pl,
festival office
Centrum Kultury 105 in Koszalin
karolina.adelt@ck105.koszalin.pl
www.mif.org.pl

Since its birth in 1973 'The Young and Cinema' Festival in Koszalin has focused on film debuts. Until recently the Koszalin event had an international character, showing mainly films from East Central Europe. Nowadays, however, only Polish filmmakers can compete for the Festival awards in categories such as full-length feature films, short feature and documentary films, as well as animated films. The best foreign debuts are presented in parallel, non-competitive programmes. One of the festival's traditions are the discussions of filmmakers with the viewers, named 'Sincerity for Sincerity' and the discussions of young filmmakers with each other.

38th International Film Festival – Lubuskie Film Summer

Łagów, June 22 – 29, 2008

contact
Klub Kultury Filmowej,
Poland, 65-047 Zielona Góra,
Kazimierza Wielkiego 21
phone/fax +48 68 325 59 84,
+48 68 452 97 62
e-mail lff@lff.pl
www.lff.pl

Lubuskie Film Summer is one of the oldest film festivals in Poland. It specialises in presenting films from countries of the former Soviet bloc, such as Lithuania, Latvia, Russia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary which these days are rarely

shown in mainstream cinemas in Poland. The festival is accompanied by numerous film debates and seminars.

8th Era New Horizons International Film Festival

Wrocław, July 17 – 27, 2008

contact
Era New Horizons IFF, c/o Gutek
Film, Poland, 00-153 Warsaw,
Zamenhofa 1
phone +48 22 536 92 00
fax +48 22 831 06 63
e-mail
festival@eranowehoryzonty.pl
www.eranowehoryzonty.pl

The Era New Horizons International Film Festival is the largest festival of art-house films in Poland. It presents films from all over the world, attracting mainly young audiences with more focused interests. Initially, "New Horizons" was staged in Sanok and Cieszyn, but since 06, due to its immense popularity the Festival has been hosted in Wrocław. The films are presented in several parallel sessions, including a competition for the main prize, New Polish Films and New Polish Short Films. The screenings are accompanied by numerous events.

33rd Polish Film Festival

Gdynia, September 15 – 20, 2008

contact
Organizacja Pomorska
Fundacja Filmowa
Poland, 81-372 Gdynia, Armii
Krajowej 24
phone +48 58 621 15 09
fax +48 58 621 15 83
e-mail fundacja@festiwalgdynia.pl
www.festiwalgdynia.pl

The Polish Film Festival, which this year will have its 33rd edition, is regarded as the most important event in the Polish filmmakers' calendar. The Festival presents virtually the entire film production in Poland from the previous year. Alongside the main competition for professionals, there is a competition for the best independent film and

student's etude. The audiences are also lured by numerous additional cultural events.

24th Warsaw International Film Festival

October, 10 – 19, 2008

contact
Warsaw Film Foundation, p.o.
box 816, PL-00-950 Warsaw 1
phone/fax +48 22 621 46 47,
+48 22 621 62 68
e-mail wff@wff.pl,
warsawfilmfestival@gmail.com
www.wff.pl

4th Cent East Market Warsaw

October, 15 – 19, 2008

www.centeast.eu

The Warsaw International Film Festival is a continuation of Warsaw Film Week, introduced for the first time in the mid-1980s. Its aim was to present the main achievements of world's art-house cinema. Nowadays the Festival, which in 2008 will have its 24th edition, privileges cinema from East Central Europe. The films are divided into a number of thematic sections. The Warsaw Festival also includes CentEast movie market and screenings promoting the work of young Polish filmmakers.

15th International Film Festival "Etiuda&Anima"

Kraków, November 14 – 21, 2008

contact
Stowarzyszenie "Rotunda"
Poland, 30-060 Kraków,
Oleandry 1
phone +48 12 633 35 38
fax +48 12 633 76 48
e-mail biuro@etiudaandanima.com
www.etiudaandanima.com

The Festival "Etiuda&Anima" was established in 1994. Its aim was to present Polish and foreign students' etudes. In 2005 it was enriched by a competition for the best animated film. Since then the filmmakers,

students, professionals and amateur filmmakers compete for the prize of Dinosaur (for the best student's etude) and Jabberwocky (for the best animated film).

16th International Film Festival of the Art of Cinematography Plus Camerimage

Łódź, November 29 – December 6, 2008

contact
Fundacja TUMULT
Poland, 87-100 Toruń, Rynek
Nowomiejski 28
phone +48 56 621 00 19
fax +48 56 652 21 97
e-mail
camerimage@camerimage.pl,
office@camerimage.pl
www.camerimage.pl

The International Film Festival of the Art of Cinematography Plus Camerimage, which will be organised this year for the 16th time, is a leading film event in Poland and the largest festival of cinematography in the world. It took place for the first time in 1993 in Toruń and since 2000 moved to Łódź. In the main competition full-length films fight for an award for the best cinematography. The Festival also includes a competition for best student's etude, Plus Camerimage Market, as well as workshops and lectures given by renowned cinematographers.

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outtakes

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Filtering

Censorship in cinema, the political kind, that existed years ago, is now a bygone. But Hays Code (USA, 1930), which concerned moral issues, still remains in cinema's collective memory. Detailed instructions, e. g. that the outer side of a woman's thigh can be shown, while the inner side cannot, are recalled as anecdotes. One thing Hays cannot be accused of, however, is a lack of imagination.

Besides, the problem of expanding the borders of what's admissible on screen sex-wise, has not yet been resolved. Difficult issues are best sorted out in the famously precise German. In this language, it would look like this: *Forschungen zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der geschlechtlichen Moral*. I won't deny, that I owe this sentence to "The Good Soldier Svejk" by Jaroslav Hasek. And if a viewer sometimes exclaims I wish censorship was back!, you know that they are just infuriated by an awful combination of violence and sex they see. Only some dinosaur may demand the return of real censorship. Besides, they do not know, that there is a new, safer term, namely – filtration.

I have seen Dani Levy's film "Mein Führer – Die wirklich wahrste Wahrheit über Adolf Hitler!" in one of Warsaw's cinemas, on the last day of its screening. There were not more than five of us in the auditorium, when – surprisingly – a school group entered. For some reason or other, they were all girls, or rather grown-up women, probably senior grade. By taking them to the cinema, their teacher (history professor?), probably thought that they would learn a thing or two about Hitler, even if, by virtue of the rules of comedy, the film was going to be funny.

But the Hitler they saw on the screen wasn't funny at all. Surrounded by an entourage of clowns, throwing their hands in the air with a throaty "Heil Hitler!" (these being the only moments that the girls laughed, by the way), he was an interesting and likable guy. A bit nervous, but what can you do with a troubled childhood like this and a father, that beats you. A sensitive guy, who suffers from severe depression, when something doesn't go as intended. A guy with character, trying to keep his face among the clowns. A humane chap, who befriends and truly likes a Jewish professor. Chivalric: he gets smacked by the other guy, but he gets up and doesn't return the blow, since he was the one who provoked it. Had the kids in the cinema been younger, I would have surely heard them say afterwards: *this Hitler guy was cool*.

Can the senior grade see "Mein Führer" as a supplement of their knowledge of Adolf

H.? I don't think so. After all an eighteen-year-old is (or at least should be) smarter than a twelve-year-old. When they see a question in a school test, they will probably give the right, textbook answer. Their perception of this *German politician, creator and dictator of the Third Reich* (taken from the encyclopaedia entry) is shaped by something else altogether: the fact, that Adolf H. lived and operated in the first half of the last century. Their parents, and even grandparents, had not yet been born back then. It's a deep well of time. But not as deep, as we might think, after all, the generation that knows who Adolf Hitler really was is not yet gone.

But there is one thing, that the high school girls learned from the comedy about Adolf H. – Adolf Hitler, if we abandon the trick with the initial in the Polish title – that everything can be funny, that there's no border, that we cannot trespass. Even the final border, *thinner than a hair*. (*What border do you need?* – Marlow asked Jim in Joseph Conrad's "Lord Jim"). This film about Adolf Hitler, who poisoned himself in an underground bunker under the Reich's Chancellor's Office in April 1945, thus joining fifty millions of his victims (the total number of killed in World War II, which is not mentioned in this film – a comedy after all), this film once more recalls a question that became important in our century: a question of what is and what is not permissible in arts. Censorship fights all that is brave and thoughtful, but it does not exist any more in civilised countries. But how is it different from the most intangible form of it – self-censorship, self-control? How do we tell the two apart? What is the relation of the creator's right to follow their own concept and the obligation to come to their senses? Don't certain situations, such as "Mein Führer: The Truly Truest Truth About Adolf Hitler" require some external authority to do it?

With some hesitation and apologizing for its crudeness, I want to quote a description of an effective substitute for coming to one's senses, taken from "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire". It was used on Mostafa, one the judges at quidditch World Championship, who suddenly started clowning around, because he had been enchanted by the veelas. On the commentator's request *Somebody slap the referee!, a mediwizard came tearing across the field... and*, how can one even recall such quotations!, *kicked Mostafa hard in his bottom. Mostafa seemed to come to himself*. That is awfully naughty, what a disgrace. Should have used filtration. But sometimes you can't.



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Grażyna Ika TatarskaPUBLISHING OFFICE:
00-724 Warszawa,
Chelmska 21
tel. (48 22) 841-68-43,
tel./fax (48 22) 841-90-57
e-mail: kino@kino.org.pl
www.kino.org.plEDITORIAL
Andrzej Kołodyński
Editor-in-chief
Bożena Janicka
Editor of the Polish section
Konrad J. Zarębski
Sub-editor
Jerzy Płazewski
Magda SendeckaCONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Grażyna Arata, Iwona
Cegiełkówna, Alicja Helman,
Tomasz Jopkiewicz, Maria
Kornatowska, Magdalena
Lebecka, Tadeusz Lubelski,
Maria Oleksiewicz, Jan Olszewski,
Tadeusz Sobolewski, Tadeusz
Szczepański, Tadeusz Szyma,
Piotr ŚmiałowskiDESIGN
Luxsfera Design:
Justyna Wróblewska i Kasper
Skirgajłło-Krajewski
www.luxsfera.plART DIRECTION
Maciej SawickiTECHNICAL EDITOR
Joanna FiszerPRINTED BY
EBE Lidia Mazur i S-ka Printing
Company
05-510 Konstancin-Jeziorna
Ciechanowska 3
tel. (48 22) 868 04 54
tel./fax (48 22) 868 29 58
email: drukarnia@ebe.com.plEDITOR OF "KINO POLISH
CINEMA"
Bożena JanickaPRODUCTION EDITOR
Grażyna Ika TatarskaEDITOR OF THE ENGLISH VERSION
Kamila Rymajdo

translated by mLingua.pl

TRANSLATION
mLingua Centrum Tłumaczeń
Stary Rynek 100
61-773 Poznań
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Adam Bajerski, Piotr
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Bogumił Godfrejow, Michał
Dobrowolski, Witold Krassowski,
Lech Majewski, Mariusz Makowski,
Mateusz Ożyński, Renata Pajchel,
Robert Pałka, Magdalena
Pawłowicz, Ewa Piaskowska/Skopia
Film, A. Piotrowska, Remigiusz
Przełóżny, Monika
Skrzypczak/Fabryka Obrazu, Michał
Stajniak, Mariusz Trzciniński, Anna
Włoch, Wojciech
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in my own words

TADEUSZ SOBOLEWSKI

A secret service
report

Before the Independence Day of 11 November I received a text message: *We invite you to join our spontaneous singing party, patriotic and otherwise.* We have been meeting on bleak November evenings for a few years now, at our young writer friend's apartment in Powiśle. He is known for his satirical novels, in which he shows how the jingoistic, romantic-nationalistic ideal doesn't suit Poles today. Is our national masochism still in vogue, just as during the time of "Polish school" and young Skolimowski?

But when we meet on Independence Day, we sing patriotic songs. Half-jokingly, half-serious, as if nothing had happened. This is somehow reminiscent of the old Solidarity days, something carnival-like about it. It wouldn't be as fun, had it not been for the presence of young people. The spectrum of generations – from the insurgent great-grandfather in the photograph, to us, who remember the Martial Law, to the high school students, who go to India on student exchanges.

Greta, my goddaughter, will play violin. Stefan, with dreadlocks, picks up his electric guitar. There's bigos heating up in the kitchen. A table with salads awaits in the other room. We drink cold vodka with Coke to warm up. There's a sheaf of worn, colourful ears of grain, all white and red, just as the ribbons pinned to our lapels and sweaters. Why not go all the way? American style, full on. When we first performed the ceremony, we were a little embarrassed, wondering what the neighbours would think. But it caught on. We sing at the top of our voices, songbooks in hand. First "Rota", then "The First Brigade", "The Rifles March". I listen to them, as if it were the first time.

Then, it's time for Warsaw Uprising songs. Anna sings "Nurse Maggie". The first stanza sounds like a humorous, playful, couplet: *She was a modest lady before the action/ Who lived in the Rose Alley/... But in the Uprising – "Nurse Maggie" / She's the most beautiful one I know / At the front until the end / She brings us her radiant smile...* We ask Anna for an encore, and Teresa – a painter in fancy pince-nez, with her short hair dyed yellow like an Easter chicken, suddenly says:

I knew Maggie. She survived the Uprising. A charming lady. She died recently. She was Jacek's mother-in-law...

It's time for different songs. The ones I've been waiting for; the most worn out, though somehow romantic and waned. They're waiting to be dusted off. Anna, whose family is a spectrum of celebrated figures – scientists, writers, Catholics – says capriciously: *I'd like something left-wing now, we could find some of that in our family as well.* And immediately we sing at the top of our voices the glorious 1905 "Warszawianka", and then: *Our blood has long been spilt by the executioners/ The bitter tears of the people keep flowing/ The day of payback will come/ And we will be the judges!...*

I look at the people. If we turned back time and let a secret police agent in, he would have some splendid material for a report: this is the daughter of the longest-imprisoned anti-communist activist in People's Poland; this one – the son of communist minister; these ones are members of the Jewish community; her father was the greatest avant-garde poet; his mother – a love poet, the forerunner of feminism; her grandma – a translator of Russian poetry; she runs a painting education foundation; they are therapists. They are all creative and prosperous. They don't belong to any party, any church, any group – they comprise a class, which in the 20th century has been named the intelligentsia. They don't make up a whole, just as "Solidarity" didn't either.

We live in times of ransacked and impoverished awareness, of a deformed, single-sided view of the past, appropriated by political parties, groups or the media. There's no common ground anymore. We will part ways in a moment. Maybe we will meet at some festival at Kinoteka? Whilst watching Russian, Asian films, maybe documentaries? At a "Gazeta Wyborcza" party? At the Psychoanalytical Society? At the Centre of Modern Art? At the theatre? At a book launch? By accident, at Green Coffee? Will we meet at a Polish film? The last one mentioned here, perhaps due to shared acquaintances, is "A Few People, A Little Time".