

Surrealism in Polish Cinema

February 17-18, 2012

Yale University

Luce Hall Auditorium, 34 Hillhouse Ave.

A conference presented by
Adam Mickiewicz Institute
& Yale's Council on European Studies with
a Title VI National Resource Center grant from the US Dept. of Education

Friday, Feb. 17

5:30pm Opening Remarks and Welcome Address

Krystyna Illakowicz

5:45pm Panel: "The Surrealist Cinema of Wojciech Jerzy Has"

Chair: Elżbieta Ostrowska

- Agnieszka Taborska, *The Daydreams of Wojciech J. Has*
- Izabela Kalinowska, *From Orientalism to Surrealism: Wojciech Has Interprets Jan Potocki*

Discussant: David Goldfarb & Mirosław Przyłipiak

7:30pm Screening: *The Saragossa Manuscript* (Wojciech Jerzy Has, 1965, 180 min.)

Saturday, Feb. 18

10:30am Screening: *From Side to Side* (Dir. Grzegorz Królikiewicz, 1971, 70 min.)

Introduced by Mirosław Przyłipiak

1:15pm Screening: *Third Part of the Night* (Andrzej Żuławski, 1971, 101 min.)

Introduced by Elżbieta Ostrowska

The Adventure of a Good Citizen (Stefan and Franciszka Themersons, 1937, 10 min)

3:30pm Panel: "Discovering the Surreal in Unexpected Places"

Chair: Grazyna Drabik

- Mirosław Przyłipiak, "We Are Ruled by Imagination, not Matter": Surrealism in films of Grzegorz Królikiewicz
- Elżbieta Ostrowska, *A Surreal Horror of War: Andrzej Żuławski's "Third Part of the Night"*

7:00pm Screening: *The Hourglass Sanatorium* (Wojciech Jerzy Has, 1973, 124 min.)

Introduced by Krystyna Illakowicz

Two Men and a Wardrobe (Roman Polański, 1958, 15 min)

Closing remarks

Krystyna Illakowicz & Izabela Kalinowska (Conference organizers)

Film Descriptions

Wojciech Jerzy Has, *The Saragossa Manuscript* (1965, 180 min.)

One of the greatest masterpieces of Polish cinema, Has's film is an adaptation of an early 19th century novel written by the Francophone Polish writer Jan Potocki. The picaresque narrative features a nobleman by the name of Alfons van Worden, who is in the service of the Spanish king and who sets off on a lone voyage through the Sierra Morena. His outlandish journey takes van Worden to an inn where two luscious Mauretanian princesses reveal secrets about his family history, propelling him on a journey that puzzles more often than it enlightens.

Grzegorz Królikiewicz, *From Side to Side* (1970, 70 min.)

The story of Królikiewicz's directorial debut is based on a pre-war murder case. A couple meet during a drunken brawl. The would-be husband is an illustrator who is denied employment by an architectural firm. The couple struggle with fitting into the reality that surrounds them as they float from one petty job to another. They first commit a petty robbery, but their criminal drive escalates until they finally kill an old, invalid couple with whom they have shared an apartment. Visually striking and full of surprises, the film garnered several international film awards.

Andrzej Żuławski, *The Third Part of the Night* (1971, 102 min.)

Żuławski's film debut grows out of memories of World War II. The main character, Michael, is a witness to the death of his wife and child while he manages to escape. A chance encounter with a stranger who resembles his wife sets off memories of a painful past. The film is very graphic and full of nightmarish images relating to war experiences, but it also brings musings on the subjects of a guilty conscience, love as self-preservation, and sacrifice. Images of stairways, closed spaces, and corridors enhance the film's stylistic allure.

Wojciech Jerzy Has, *The Hourglass Sanatorium* (1973, 124 min.)

Has's second masterpiece is based on Bruno Schulz's prose, *The Sanatorium Under The Sign of The Hourglass*. Józef's trip to join his dying father in a mysterious sanatorium expands into a mythic journey to the recesses of time and into the depths of human memory. Everything in the film is transitory: the hospital, cobwebs, clocks, debris, and strange objects are subject to constant change and fluctuation. Space and time expand beyond limits. The setting is eerie and elusive. The film's cinematography captures the meandering, surreal nature of dreams and the unfathomable nooks of human psychology.

Speakers
in alphabetical order

Grazyna Drabik is a freelance writer and translator of Polish poetry into English and Portuguese, with translations published in literary journals and anthologies in the U. S. and in Brazil. She is the co-author of *The New Yorkers: Portraits in Photos & Words*. She teaches in the Department of English at Macaulay Honors College – CUNY.

David Goldfarb currently serves as Curator of Literature and Humanities at the Polish Cultural Institute New York after several years as an assistant professor in the Slavic and Comparative Literature Departments at Barnard College, Columbia University. He has published articles on Bruno Schulz, Zbigniew Herbert, Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz, Mikhail Lermontov and narratology, and East European cinema.

Krystyna Illakowicz (Co-Organizer) teaches Polish in the Department of Slavic Literatures and Languages at Yale. She writes on theatre and film.

Izabela Kalinowska (Co-Organizer) is an associate professor in the Department of European Literatures and Cultures at Stony Brook University. She is the author of *Between East and West: Polish and Russian Nineteenth-Century Travel to the Orient* (University of Rochester Press, 2004). She works on Polish and Russian literature and cinema.

Elżbieta Ostrowska currently teaches film at the University of Alberta (Canada). Her publications include *Women in Polish Cinema* (with Ewa Mazierska, 2006), *The Cinema of Roman Polanski: Dark Spaces of the World* (co-ed. with John Orr, 2006), and *The Cinema of Andrzej Wajda: The Art of Irony and Defiance* (co-ed. with John Orr, 2003).

Mirosław Przyłipiak is a professor of film and media studies at the Pomeranian University in Słupsk, film critic, translator, and documentary filmmaker. His main publications include *Kino stylu zerowego/Zero Style Cinema* (1994), *Kino najnowsze/New Cinema* (1998), *Poetyka kina dokumentalnego/Aesthetics of documentary cinema* (2000, sec. ed. 2004), *Kino bezpośrednie/Direct Cinema* (2008).

Agnieszka Taborska is a writer of French literature and an art historian specializing in French Surrealism. Her recent publications include a collection of essays *Conspirators of Imagination: Surrealism* and short stories *The Whale, or Objective Chance*, as well as translations of books by Philippe Soupault, Gisèle Prassinos, and Spalding Gray. She lives between Warsaw, Poland, and Providence, RI, where she teaches Art History at The Rhode Island School of Design.

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