

Lithuanian Kin

The birth of adaptation out of the spirit of community

TADEUSZ LUBELSKI

The first time Tadeusz Konwicki commented on the practice of film adaptation was in a survey conducted in 1960 by “Kwaralnik Filmowy”, the participants of which were the three key screenwriters of the Polish Film School movement (apart from Konwicki, the group included Jerzy Stefan-Stawiński and Aleksander Ścibor-Rylski). By that time, Konwicki already had one film to his credit (*The Last Day of Summer /Ostatni dzień lata*, 1958/) and was in the process of making a second (*Zaduszki /All Saints’ Day*, 1961/). Still, at the time he was treated primarily as a writer who occasionally ventured into cinema, having recently written the successful adapted screenplay for *Mother Joan of the Angels (Matka Joanna od aniołów*, 1961) by Jerzy Kawalerowicz, based on Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz’s novella. His voice in the survey was that of experience; it belonged to someone prone to occasional turning of other people’s prose into screenplays.

The Platonic Shared Interest

This early comment made by Konwicki attested to a fully formed sensibility of an artist, who will continue to use the tools of two different arts throughout his career. Konwicki makes a clear distinction between two kinds of cinema: the artistic film, which is *an art unto itself, autonomously creative* and the other, immense group of films *made for recreation; for the sake of watching. The recreational film surveys literature in search for elements of spectacle and pictorial beauty; it leans towards dramatic movement and effective architecture of the text*¹. But since the authors of adapted screenplays are working for the sake of financial gain, they often – as mere craftsmen – do not have a full understanding of the literary text. *That is why we often see recreational movies that follow a great work of literature quite closely, and yet are nothing like that work: overwhelmingly weak and ungainly, devoid of that nourishing vitamin that art alone can provide.*

Things look differently in the case of the art film. Here, the author of the adapted screenplay approaches a classic text not because he or she is required to, or because of the nature of an assignment she or he was given, but rather because the adapted work is close to the author and contains elements that she or he would like to express anyway. It is the most Platonic form of sharing an interest between the author of the original work and the author of its adaptation. The adapter, by defending him- or herself [against outside meddling], automatically defends the author. In those circumstances even the boldest alterations of plot and dramatic structure are not damaging to the original work².

Konwicki was optimistic about the possibility of translating literary forms of expression into the language of film. *You can, for example, quite faithfully recreate the author's stylistic choices, his narrative manner, as well as the temperature of the story, its climate and mood, since the latter two are often achieved by means of rhythm and a recurrence of refrains of some kind*³. At the same time he stated that, for him at least, film and literary activities are strictly separated. *I make a semi-conscious effort to separate the two in my own eyes, so that they do not overlap in any way, which would result in each losing its own particular juiciness. When I think of some themes or plans, they immediately fall – naturally and firmly – into one of those two strands. That is to say, if I chance upon an idea, I am not indifferent to whether it will become a book or a film. (...) And I would not like to turn my novels into films, or vice versa*⁴.

Konwicki remained faithful to that last rule. Not only had he refrained from adapting his own work, or the work of others. He also adamantly refused other directors the permission to adapt his own novels, from *A Dreambook for Our Time* (*Sennik współczesny*) to *Bohin Manor* (*Bohin*). In time, though, he started to yield. At first, he agreed to have his own prose adapted by others: he made the first exception in 1973, consenting – in the spirit of support for young and independent film directors of talent – to Krzysztof Wojciechowski's TV adaptation of *The Anthropos-spectre-beast* (*Zwierzoczekoupiór*), called *Skrzydła* (*Wings*). After that, Konwicki gave his permission to Andrzej Wajda to make his version of *Chronicle of Love Affairs* (*Kronika wypadków miłosnych*) in 1985 (that decision was made in the spirit of both admiration for a great director and of being touched by the fact that Wajda forgave Konwicki multiple jabs at his persona the writer made in his books). He even played himself in the film. Last but not least, he unsurprisingly agreed to a 1992 adaptation of *Minor Apocalypse* (*Mala apokalipsa*), directed by Costa-Gavras who played with the source material so loosely, the finished movie could hardly be still described in terms of *Platonic shared interest*.

Furthermore, Konwicki yielded in yet another respect: he started making adaptations himself. It happened twice: in 1981-1982 he made *The Issa Valley* (*Dolina Issy*), based on Czesław Miłosz's novel, and in 1988-1989 he wrote and directed *Lava* (*Lawa*), based on Adam Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve*. In both cases, though, he showed great consequence in applying strict rules of the process which was in new to him. Interestingly enough, he did so in keeping with the understanding of adaptation he had expressed in the article quoted beforehand. Many years later, he was even more adamant about the issue. As he said in a mid-1980s interview to Stanisław Beres: *A literal translation of a book into a movie is an empty and futile job*⁵. However, he still saw the adapter-artist – making *even the boldest alterations of plot and dramatic structure*⁶ of the source material – as an automatic and natural defender of the author. Still, he had a particular understanding of his own role as a director-adapter. This very particularity, as observed by analyzing his last two films, is the proper subject of this article.

Reading His Kin

It should be noted that Konwicki's reluctance towards adapting other people's work did not apply to screenwriting as such. Even in the early phase of his work

in the film industry, he was eager to adapt other people's literary work for film purposes, albeit only with some other director in mind. Apart from the aforementioned *Mother Joan of the Angels*, he also adapted two other works for Jerzy Kawalerowicz: Bolesław Prus' *Pharaoh (Faraon)* and Julian Strykowski's *Austeria*. For Janusz Morgenstern, he adapted Stanisław Dygat's *Disneyland* (made into *Jowita*). Still, in all those cases – at least according to his own version of events – it was Konwicki who initiated the moviemaking process: he suggested particular books which he happened to like and admire to his friends ⁷. (Despite many years that had passed, another script of his – based on Karol Wojtyła's *Brother of Our God /Brat naszego Boga/* – remains unfiled).

When it came to the choice of literary material to adapt, Konwicki's taste was not the ultimate criterion: what mattered were reasons both more grave and more personal. It is likely that in both cases some special situational circumstances played their part. The decision to adapt *The Issa Valley*, made immediately after Czesław Miłosz was awarded the literary Nobel Prize, was prompted by a unique need borne out of the historical moment. Konwicki himself explained his decision years later as an attempt to make up for the Polish literary world's mistreatment of Miłosz. Once the latter "chose freedom" [by emigrating to the United States], a series of "condemning pieces" began: all those *Poems for a Traitor* and works like *Before He's Forgotten*, after which Miłosz's fellow Polish writers did not do enough to make his work popular in his native country [where it was officially banned]. The moment was ripe for a Polish writer like Konwicki to make a "minor expiation" in order to clear the air just prior to the poet's return to his native country in all his Nobel glory ⁸.

In fact, it is worth remembering that the idea was initiated by poet's own family. Konwicki mentions the fact in his diary in 1981, which was ultimately published by underground press: *I never before made movie based on someone else's prose. The idea didn't even cross my mind. It so happened that one afternoon I received a call from the Miłosz's sister-in-law, Grażynka Miłoszowa, who presented me with a certain idea-plot-affair. She and her fiends decided that I'm the only one capable of turning "The Issa Valley" into a film. Surprisingly, this risky idea didn't surprise me in the slightest, even though I wouldn't have come up with it myself in a million years. (...) But it was then and there that trouble arose. Mr. Czesław wasn't enthusiastic. He used many excuses, listing possible problems with the adaptation. He nagged long enough to discourage me. And I'm his fellow cancer (...).*

Still, suddenly, out of the blue, the telephone rings one afternoon and Mr. Czesław's voice pours from the receiver; (...) that Lithuanian-Vilnian cooled warmth, that kindness not truly kind and a permission harsher than forbidding. (...) In any case, he said what he said. We struck a deal across 12 thousand kilometers. As for me, I was still unsure of my situation, totally confused, perplexed by foreboding – and started calling up folks in Warsaw, in order to summon my crew, consisting of the genetic natives of the lands in the delta of Niemen, Wilia and Niewiaża ⁹.

In the second case, taking place several years later, the starting point was an entirely personal encounter with the literary work at hand. For symmetry, let me quote Konwicki's account once again: *Somewhere in mid-1980s I started thinking of Mickiewicz's "Forefathers' Eve" all over again. Not as a grand patriotic work*

corresponding with the martial law [imposed in 1981], though. The poem was returning to me from someplace far apart, perhaps from Nowa Wilejka, as a contemporary work: poetry written by someone the same age as me.

And thus one night I reached to a bookshelf behind my sofa and pulled out a tattered volume, used by both my daughters when they went to school. (...) What I read struck me as a work of a thoroughly contemporary poet. It could have been written in America, or New Zealand. The poet was clearly struggling with his mere existence, doubting and rebelling, getting entangled in mundane duties and everlasting remorse. He was at once furious and continually disarmed for every second of the day by a melancholy feeling, which will not leave him till the day he dies. The poet was desperately looking for salvation in his poetry, even though this salvation would forever stay out of his reach¹⁰.

The common feature of both those situations is obvious: there is a palpable need for sharing, through cinematic means, a “testimony of reading” the work of two great Polish writers. However, the testimony is not of some imaginary, virtual reading (as defined by Alicja Helman¹¹), but of the very personal, private act of reading, offered by a fellow artist. It is by assuming that perspective that one can explain the uncommon, unique choice of the two adapted authors. Both are masters, but also familiar masters – “one’s own”. Tadeusz Konwicki mentioned repeatedly – often half-jokingly – that back in Wileńszczyzna (Vilnius Region), which is one big province unto itself, everyone was related to everyone else: *Everybody married everybody else vertically and diagonally, tightening and entangling ties of blood. Everyone in those parts was but a piece of a mysterious community. One of my high school friends was even named Mickiewicz¹². Incidentally, Czesław Miłosz (just as jokingly, of course) was prone to more explicit explanations of those all-encompassing blood ties. He often recalled his paternal grandfather: a great nobleman, fingers all crooked from stagecoach racing, he fought in the January Uprising [of 1863] and was not even sent to Siberia. He added: Apart from that, he singlehandedly populated the entire county, which is thus full of my relatives¹³.*

Many years later, commenting on the choice of those two works for film adaptations in an interview I conducted with him, Konwicki mentioned – in all seriousness – the metaphorical understanding of this Lithuanian affinity: (...) *I did it not because I happened to want to make a film and I was in search for a plot; there were certain circumstances of the era, of mood and moral compensations that made me adapt “The Issa Valley” and “Forefathers’ Eve”. Both authors are my relatives: maybe not in a literal sense of shared blood ties (even though in Wileńszczyzna everyone was related to everyone else), but within the family of Europe, within the commonality of the land, of custom and of those remnants of Romanticism that were still floating around, like the spirits of the woods of Vilnius¹⁴.*

I may add that it was not an accident that Konwicki embarked upon adapting these two literary works only once his artistic position was sufficiently grounded: namely, after the publication of his most important books: *A Dreambook for Our Time*, *The Ascention (Wniebowstąpienie)*, *The Calendar and the Hourglass (Kalendarz i klepsydra)*, *The Polish Complex (KOMPLEKS POLSKI)*, *Minor Apocalypse* and *Bohin Manor* – as well as after his single most important film: *Faraway, So Close (Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko, 1973)*. Only after achieving such artistic stature

could Konwicki seriously stand in a single imaginary row with his metaphorical relatives: Mickiewicz and Miłosz – as the one who comes after them and overhears various voices and shreds of consciousness in order to unify them again; as one who gathers various threads of someone else’s fate and weaves them into his own, deeply personal work.

Turning Wileńszczyzna into Myth

All it takes is a close look at Konwicki’s filmography that helps to arrive at one basic conclusion: this consummate purveyor of film adaptation reserved a special group of literary works for his personal direction – those created by his “Lithuanian kinsmen”: artists who not only belonged to the same community with him, but also were his predecessors in terms of artistic strategy. The strategy can be defined as communicating with the community of readers/viewers by means of mythologizing Wileńszczyzna.

The choice of words itself suggests the ambiguity of the process, which Konwicki himself acknowledges. It is not by accident that the chapter of his memoirs devoted to the making of *Lava* is entitled *What If I Were from Bydgoszcz*, thus alluding to Antoni Słonimski’s joke, according to which it is doubtful what Konwicki could do if had not been exploring the Vilnius mythology. *They say I exploit Romanticism, Mickiewicz, the [secret societies of] Philomates and the Philarets. Yes, I do feed off Vilnius. But to explode in a Vilniusian patriotic fit; to start crying any tearing hair off my head – that I don’t know how to do*¹⁵.

It was by degrees that Konwicki achieved such highly developed, self-ironic consciousness. It has been noted before that Konwicki started his literary activity by entering into a Marxist polemic with Romanticism, with Marxism *representing common sense at that particular time*. Maria Janion gave a convincing interpretation of *Rojsty*, Konwicki’s debut novel, reading it as a deliberate and subtle demystification of a consciousness formed by Polish Romanticism (with Konwicki’s own mind as the novel’s main focus). As the years progressed, though, the Romanticism he once chased out of the door started to come back through the window, with the unofficially published *The Polish Complex* becoming a single-handed “Romantic revival” of sorts. Janion calls this particular outlook *a Kresovian Romantiscism – both because it takes place in the Kresy [which literally mean The Borderland] and because its fundamental idea is to reach the ultimate limits*¹⁶.

Small wonder, then, that it is *The Polish Complex* (a key work in more ways than one, not only for Konwicki but for the culture of People’s Republic of Poland as such) that includes a self-reflexive essay, which serves as the best explanation of the writer’s awareness of mythologizing of his own land that he himself is perpetrating. I will quote but a brief fragment, which speaks to the very issues under discussion: *Europe has many corners in which several ethnic groups commingled without melting into one entity; [places where] many languages are spoken and colorful communities, customs and religions abound. But my neck of the woods, my Wileńszczyzna, seems more beautiful to me – better, more solemn, more magical. After all, I also toiled to beautify the myth of that border region between Europe and Asia, the cradle of European nature and Asian demons, the flowery valley of eternal peace and human friendship.*



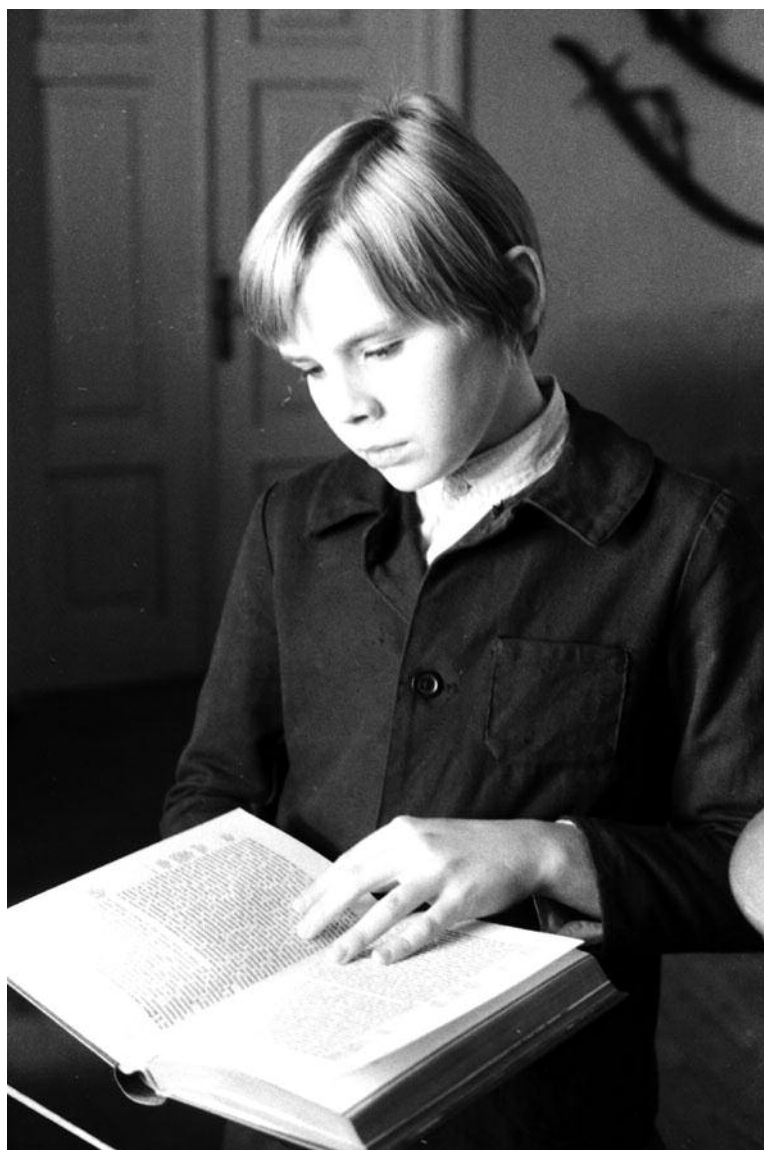
The Issa Valley, dir. Tadeusz Konwicki (1982)

Photo courtesy of Filmoteka Narodowa

*I beautified it for so long, I finally believed the idealized country to be true. Love was stronger there than anywhere else, flowers grew bigger there, people had more humanity in them than at any other place else in this wide world*¹⁷.

It can be easily argued that this idealization of a lost land of childhood is the most obvious – not to say most banal – trait of all émigré writings, which by its very nature ceaselessly reproduce the motif of paradise lost. Czesław Miłosz wrote about this, adding that images conjured up in this kind of a process have an existential dimension, related not so much to the physical, but to the temporal distance. After all, everyone is forever getting further and further away from one’s childhood, no matter how many and how winding roads did they travel. *We can easily imagine an old emigrant, who – while meditating on the country of his youth – realizes that it is not only kilometers that divide him from it, but also the wrinkles on his face and silver hair on his head – the marks left by that severe border patrolman called Time*¹⁸.

However, this existential aspect is very consciously connected in Konwicki’s artistic strategy to another, indeed deciding factor that calls upon the emotions of an entire community – namely, the mythology of Kresy. As we know from rich literature of the subject, the mere definition of Kresy changed within Polish culture of the last century or so. At the beginning, around mid-19th century (Kresy’s “founding myth” is *Mohort*, Wincent Pol’s “knight rhapsody” published in 1854), the term signified *a stretch of land between rivers Dnieper and Dniester, bearing immense significance for the ancient Republic of Poland as the furthestmost military outpost, defending Poland from Tartars and Ukrainian tribes*¹⁹. Even then, though, the idea of Kresy existed but as a memory – it functioned as a myth, *a reminder of a cause as great and heroic as it was lost*²⁰.



The Issa Valley, dir. Tadeusz Konwicki (1982)

Photo courtesy of Filmoteka Narodowa

It was very quickly – as early as in the 1860s – that the territorial meaning of the term began to expand, incorporating wider and wider stretches of the Eastern parts of former Poland. It was not until the interwar period of 1918-1939 that Kresy incorporated the lands once belonging to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and former Eastern Galicia, so that the most important cities of Kresy became Vilnius and Lviv, both of which were never before associated with Kresy, since they both used to be located towards the center of Poland. A “Kresy propaganda” of sorts was introduced into schools and civic education. So-called External Kresy, formally outside of the new borders of the Poland reborn in 1918, lost their significance: the real Kresy

were the “Internal Kresy”, namely the Eastern voivodeships of Second Republic of Poland, treated as material for “purposeful integration”. Ultimately, after Second World War, the lost Kresy became “the territory of longing”, per their monographer Tadeusz Chrzanowski. Accordingly, Kresy became synonymous in today’s Poland with the Eastern outskirts of former Poland, lost to the Soviet Union after World War Two. Since this contemporary meaning of Kresy was heavily influenced by Romantic literature, Vilnius and Wileńszczyzna are still the most sensitive parts of the “territories of longing” and it is not by accident that the cover of Chrzanowski’s book includes a 19th century drawing of the Gate of Dawn [of the church of Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn in Vilnius] ²¹. Fascination with Wileńszczyzna has even deeper historical roots. Poland was at the peak of its power during the reign of Jagiellonian dynasty, which was itself Lithuanian, and the Lublin Union [of 1569] joining Poland with Lithuania was an exemplary case of *peaceful expansion, respecting the religious and linguistic freedoms* ²². Kresy signify, then, less a territory where crucial events took place, but rather a mythic, multi-cultural space, representing a collective, still relevant and never-fulfilled Polish promise.

It is worth mentioning that the very nobleness of such a definition was often questioned, if only for the sake of counterargument. Idealization of Kresy often led to Kresovian megalomania; the Kresy myth itself is treated more and more often – to use Leszek Szaruga’s formulation – as *sentimental self-delusion on the part of Poles* ²³. Maria Janion has suggested that Polish sense of superiority towards the Kresy natives stems from Polish inferiority complex towards the West. *Colonized in the 19th century by occupying powers* [of Russia, Prussia and Austro-Hungary], *we prided ourselves on having once been colonizers, too*, notes Janion, reminding at another point that the Kresy gentry spawned not only valiant knights such as Mohort, but also many cruel and tyrannous individuals ²⁴. The most ²⁵ thorough historical narrative of the Polish presence in Kresy – written by Daniel Beauvois – serves at the same time as the most serious attempt at dismantling the Kresovian mythology. It is by mentioning Daniel Beauvois’ research that Bogusław Bakula makes his point about the Polish narrative of Kresy as being an expression of “a colonial mind”, even if – luckily enough – it does not lead nowadays *to enslaving of anyone, save perhaps the Poles themselves* ²⁶.

Tadeusz Konwicki, whose writing contained a “Kresologian discourse” all its own, was conscious of that ambiguity from the very start. It was early on that he assumed a set of rules that he then successfully followed. He wrote about it further in the previously quoted essay, a mere paragraph down from where we left off: *There was a day, or rather a moment – at the very start of my wimpy literary career – when I told myself I will obey solely one commandment: Thou shalt not use thy word against a member of a different tribe. Thou shalt not use a metaphor, an emotional parable, a moral tendency against another man of different religion or a different language. I might have sinned against my very own, but I never sinned against the other* ²⁷.

By following this rule, Konwicki stuck to the trail blazed by his predecessors: one poet [Adam Mickiewicz], who finished his national Polish poem with an appendix entitled *To My Moscow Friends* and another [Czesław Miłosz], who closed [*The Captive Mind*], his world-famous book of essays on the nature of enslavement with a chapter called *The Lesson of the Baltics*. By deciding to adapt their respective

work, Konwicki knew that even had he made *the boldest alterations of plot and dramatic structure*, he will automatically defend the authors, since he found in them *a trace of something I would myself like to contain in the work*²⁸. And since in both cases he attempted a dialogue with his viewers through the stories of his *Vilnius motherland*, he felt – as an author – as a representative of a certain *community of kinship*.

Even while hand-picking his film crews, Konwicki had the “representative” factor in mind, even though the “representation” was marked differently in various cases. When working on *The Issa Valley*, he tried to assemble a crew of people of Vilnius Region ancestry: his art director was his school-time friend Andrzej Borecki, his cinematographer Jerzy Łukaszewicz was a member of a Vilnius family, together with his twin brother [and famous actor] Olgierd – even though both were born in Chorzów. Almost all of the actors playing main parts in the movie had Kresovian roots: Hanna Skarżanka (born in Minsk and educated in Vilnius; I can still recall the way Konwicki directed her as she was singing her guitar song: *Hania, don't sing just “woman”*; *stress the “o”, dear, the way we do in Vilnius*), Danuta Szaflarska (born near Nowy Sącz, but based in Vilnius throughout the war), Edward Dziewoński (a Kresy native, though born in Moscow), and – the youngest of them all – Maria Pakulnis, born to a Polish-Lithuanian family... In *Lava*, several key parts were cast with actors from behind Poland's Eastern border. When one of the key fragments of Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve* – Adolph's monologue – is spoken by a Lithuanian actor Arunas Smailis (whose only knowledge of Polish came from Konwicki's assistants just prior to the shoot), the [Polish] viewer has some trouble understanding the lines, but she or he also realizes that the director is pulling them into a sense of kinship with one of the neighboring “small nations”. When in a scene at the Senator's ball one sees two Russian actors, Aleksandr Novikow and Sergei Zhygunov (playing Bestuzhev and one of the officers), with the latter laying his Russian accent on thickly upon his line: *Small wonder they curse us here* – the viewer sees it as a possible contemporary comment. Still, at all times the voice that matters most is that of the “next of kin” – the voice of the poem's author.

The Niewiaża, the Vilenka, the Czarna Hańcza Valley...

In Konwicki's mock-diary, published unofficially in 1981 as *Moonrise, Moonset* (*Wschody i zachody księżyca*) – seven years after proposing, in *The Calendar and the Hourglass*, the term lie-diary [łże-dziennik], later degraded by too many imitators for us to use it now – the theme of making the film of *The Issa Valley* plays like a tormented leitmotif. This first film adaptation all his own – made at a remarkable time when liberty suddenly broke into People's Republic of Poland, with Miłosz's name still totally banned mere months prior – was a daredevil task. *You are making a movie of “The Issa Valley”? Wonderful, marvelous! We are so happy; Tazio, this will be, this has to be a remarkable event! I'm being fed those compliments day in and day out. I can't groan, I can't make a face, I can't moan. It needs to be a masterpiece, for it's based on the work of a Nobel Prize winner. Just try making anything less than a masterpiece, and the nation will break every bone in your body*²⁹.

The chief difficulty lied not in Miłosz's freshly bestowed Nobel glory, but in the inherent non-filmic quality of the source novel. The book itself, first published

in Paris in 1955 but unavailable in Poland until 1981, is closer in its formula to a classic *Bildungsroman*, dealing with the main character's gaining of maturity and re-packaged as an autobiographical essay (combined with a pastiche of various forms of educational literature), than to plot-driven prose. The outline of the action is completely dependent of the narrator's perspective, which belongs in fact to the poet³⁰, who utilizes the thinnest of veils to disguise himself. On the surface, the narrator focuses squarely on the experience of a 10 year old boy named Tomaszek, but the child's point of view is in fact assumed extremely rarely, and even then with palpable detachment. In fact, for the narrator of *The Issa Valley*, the memory of childhood is but a starting point for a process recreating the past by an adult. It is a starting point for recreating the fates of people who young Tomasz knew – with the narrator using his contemporary knowledge and sensitivity.

The Issa Valley narrator is not hiding his personal identity in its youthful incarnation. For example, as he reminisces about the little boy growing up with a sense of allegiance to two motherlands at once, he adds that then *constant invoking of the words "we" and "our country" nurtured in Thomas his later distrust whenever heated reference was made in his presence to any flags or emblems*. Later, commenting a conversation Tomasz is having with his grandfather in a library, he speaks of a seed being sowed and suggests that this first, childish intellectual initiation was to result in the future toil of poetry-writing³¹. The novel gains its fullest and richest flavor in this very back and forth: the narrator keeps remembering himself around the age of (around) ten, including all the things he saw and experienced then. Still, at the same time, he cannot and does not want to limit himself to this perspective – his interest in the past lies mainly in how it facilitated the growth of the man he ultimately became.

Still, had that been Konwicki's intention in the first place, he could have probably – despite all implied difficulty – create a film equivalent of the narration that would shift between both perspectives. After all, we already saw him stating that *you can [by cinematic means] quite faithfully recreate the author's (...) narrative manner, as well as the temperature of the story, its climate and mood*³². His intent as an adapter was apparently different this time, though. One can reconstruct it by looking closely at the triple opening of the film: for *The Issa Valley* starts three times, as it were, every time introducing a different narrative approach.

The beginning proper, which accompanies the opening credits, is the first of key synthetic sequences, which then get repeated twice and which themselves incorporate a medley of portraits of the inhabitants of the eponymous valley. At this early stage of the film, the viewer is not yet able to identify them. It is only in hindsight that one can recognize the following characters: a girl serving as a maid in the grandparents' house, aunt Helena looking at the sunset, a Russian convict in hiding (later shot by Balthazar), Barbarka running up the hill in tears, Balthazar himself (unable to collect himself), Romuald riding a horse and leading another one to a date with Helena – as well as, sandwiched in between all this, a stranger: the girl who will never again reappear in the movie. Even at the very first moment, when the credit (*Film Cooperative "Perspective" Presents a Film Based on a Novel by Czesław Miłosz*) is interposed over an image of a young servant girl singing a Lithuanian song while playing carefree in the garden, the sequence can be seen as idyllic. Still, in a matter of seconds – from the title credit onwards – the images rap-

idly become more and more sinister, accompanied by Zygmunt Konieczny's musical theme (strings are obsessively repeating a sound suggestive of bird shrieks, with the sounds of the valley – bells tolling, horses neighing, hooves beating against the ground – completing the soundscape). The tone shifts and becomes anything but idyllic. The viewer can feel that the unsettling tone of the opening sequence is suggested by an external narrator, attaching his own commentary to on-screen events. It is as if he was saying: the world you will see during the screening is different from the one you know; more beautiful on one hand, but also scarier and darker; only children can play there, adults may live their lives more intensely and in a full, but they are still struggling with their destiny and will not be able to escape it.

It is after that sequence is over that the second beginning arrives: a postcard view of an American metropolis [of New York City], accompanied by an off-screen voice of an older man, preceded by a beat with an interposed voice of a younger man, singing those same lines at the piano. After a while the man's face appears in close-up, with the big city lights in the background: *Back in my motherland, where I'm not coming back, / There's a lake great in size...*³³. It may be Czesław Miłosz's most widely known poem – written, contrary to what one may expect while reading it, in Warsaw in 1937, and not in emigration. It was chosen to accompany the scene for a double reason: so that every viewer could easily identify the narrator and in order to make the icon of a man in exile complete.

The third beginning: a close-up of a boy, who may be yawning out of sleepiness, but is still intently watching a scene he is a part of (the close-up suggests that it is through the boy's eyes that we are watching the scene ourselves). It is a serene evening inside a manor house, the servants (who were earlier seen putting out candles towards the end of the first sequence) are singing next to spinning wheels, then we see the grandmother *warming her rump* near the stove and a grandfather sneaking towards a shotgun hanging on the wall. It is now that the viewer is beginning to discern something that can be called the beginning of a plot – and the reader of the source novel can recognize the key characters of it.

Seemingly, out of the three narrative perspectives presented in the three beginnings of the film, it is the third one that serves as an equivalent of one of the two perspectives used in the novel – the one employing a child's gaze upon the world. Still, it is not quite the case. After all, Miłosz openly played down the autobiographical aspect of *The Issa Valley*³⁴, when the director of the film – by juxtaposing Tomaszek's glances with Miłosz's most famous poem – is trying to play up this very aspect. The director openly declared: *The book impressed me in its entanglement with Miłosz's biography with the ethos of a pilgrim, the magic of Wileńszczyzna and the interposing of those elements upon Europe itself. That is why I chose the means I chose: to reach those very purposes*³⁵.

The said “means” make the three perspectives employed in the film align according to a certain logic, dictated by the aforementioned triple opening of the movie: first the perspective of an external narrator, seeking the most efficient way to represent the emotional uniqueness of the world of the valley; second the perspective of Miłosz who – using means all his own – is realizing the very same purpose, thus becoming the “voice of the valley”; and third: the point of view of Miłosz as a *child who is becoming a poet*, and thus remains – at least for the time being – one of many witnesses whose perspective is occasionally assumed, such

as those of Balthazar, Romuald and Barbarka – all of whom had a chance of becoming poets, too.

All those perspectives are dominated by the primary figure – that of the director-adapter ³⁶, who goes as far to signal his presence as to attach his own signature to the film at hand. In the film's centerpiece – the scene showing moviemaking itself – camera lens sharply reflexes the intent face of Tadeusz Konwicki looking ahead. I see the scene as the film's centerpiece because it is within it that all the narrative perspectives come together. The actor Józef Duriasz wanders off (seemingly by chance) onto the set from the world of Tomaszek; it was only in the previous scene that he played Józef Czarny, making an intervention after the attempt on the boy's life. Now, the actor wears a contemporary outfit and plays Czesław Miłosz – he recites his poem called *The Cloud* (written in 1935 and thus the oldest of the ones used in the film, taken from the Vilnius collection entitled *Three Winters*). Still, the set he wanders into belongs to Tadeusz Konwicki. The scene about to be shot – that of Nazis preparing to conduct a mass execution – could belong to any of the movies the director made thus far: even to *The Last Day of Summer* (had that movie used a flashback sequence with rolling tanks instead of a more ambiguous image of flying planes), not to mention *All Saints' Day*, *Summer Sault* (*Salto*) or *Faraway, So Close*. What is most important, Józef Czarny (Duriasz) walking down the set (from right to left, thus violating the respected cinematic convention, but mimicking the movements of the emigrants from East towards the West ³⁷) is a signature Konwicki's character – a wanderer, a pilgrim, moving through space but mostly seeking for self-knowledge ³⁸. In order to trigger those metaphors, two parallel motifs are employed and present in the second half of the scene: the motif of a train passing by and that of the clouds, which also happen to be illustrating the recited poem.

One might say that the director-adapter revealed in that scene is both an artist and a reader; he is somebody who collects various images of the world and eavesdrops on its voices. As he does that, at the same time – being the author of *The Issa Valley* – he submits those images and sounds to a discipline of a distinctive order. One can observe this very process on all three narrative levels we have distinguished so far.

First of all, the process takes place on the plane of the initiation narrative of Tomaszek's life, whose childlike point of view is assumed very often in the movie. It is through the boys' eyes that the viewer sees the bathing Magdalena; it is thanks to his gaze that we witness the killing of the rooster by one of the servants; and it is the image of Tomaszek gazing ahead that opens both the sequence of the Bukowski party and the Easter scene in front of the church. None of those scenes contains so much as a trace of suggestion that Tomaszek understands more of those situations than a normal child would under the circumstances. Tomaszek may see a lot, but still he does not know of the affair Mr. Romuald is having with aunt Helena, so that when Barbarka decides in a fit of rage to turn away from a journey she started, it is him who is chiefly disoriented by that sudden decision. What is more, it happens that assuming Tomaszek's point of view serves exactly the purpose of showing how limited the child's perspective is. When the priest gives the last sacraments to the grandmother, Tomaszek is removed from the room and even though he gazes upon the scene from a window, his gaze stops at a snail making

its way. World abounds with interesting details: a child, in choosing some of them as objects of attention, uses its own, childish criteria.

Still, the mechanism of memory is very much at work; it is thanks to it that a mere collection of impressions gathered by a child can be transformed – through understanding triggered but in hindsight – into a series of different stories, parallel to that of Tomaszek, but organized by separate perspectives belonging to several inhabitants of the Valley. The eyes of Masiulis, the local medicine man, look piercingly at Balthazar; then the same pair of eyes are surprised by a love scene they witness between Helena and Romuald. The viewer will twice witness Masiulis letting go of his magical powers; since he already saw what he saw, he needs no magic to answer Barbarka and Balthazar. Of the two gazes by Barbarka – the first loving, directed upon the bathing Romuald, the second desperate, witnessing the man's infidelity – a cunning plan is born. Most scenes that involve Balthazar are perceived by the viewer from Balthazar's point of view: it is through the eyes of this young gamekeeper that we follow his struggle with the devil (which is his own conscience), and it is right along with him that viewer seems to be shooting at the Russian convict, and then goes to the Rabbi to get some advice.

This last example offers a good opportunity to see how all the scenes we mentioned so far – even if all of them are present in the novel and the dialogue we hear within them comes from Miłosz's book, which remains the case for the entire film – uniformly become a part of Konwicki's world, since they are conjured by purely cinematic means. As soon as he started to “dismantle” Miłosz's novel, Konwicki noticed – as he mentions in *Moonrise, Moonset* – how surprisingly similar it is to the prose of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz. One of the multiple proofs of that was a covert inclusion into the novel of the character of Father Suryn of Iwaszkiewicz's *Mother Joan of the Angels*, divided into two separate characters in *The Issa Valley*: those of Balthazar and the priest named Peikswa. The motif of crime and redemption after committing a mortal sin – and the motif of seeking tzadik's advice. It was during the making of this very scene in Jerzy Kawalerowicz's film of *Mother Joan...* that Konwicki suggested that both the rabbi and the priest should be played by the same actor, Mieczysław Voit. *The ploy was to encode in the viewer's subconscious how impossible the situation was to resolve, how universal human sin is, how helpless are we when facing fate, doom and providence (...). What should I do with Balthazar's visit to the Rabbi in “The Issa Valley”? How to put this scene together, so that it does not repeat the intellectual tropes and the tonal qualities already sucked dry by other filmmakers, as well as by myself in “Mother Joan...” twenty years ago?*³⁹

The answer is provided by one of the finished film's most beautiful scenes. At first, it seems the scene is following Miłosz's novel closely: Balthazar waits for a long time, then gets questioned by the bearded secretary of the Rabbi, after which Rabbi himself appears – *an elfin figure with girlish features* – and gives Balthazar advice in a speech, translated by the secretary and taken directly from the novel. *He says: “No-man-is-good.” (...). He says: “Whatever-wrong-you-have-commited-man-that-and-only-that-is-your-fate.” (...). He says: “Do-not-curse-your-fate-man-whoever-thinks-he-has-another-and-not-his-own-is-lost-and-will-be-damned-forever. Think-not-of-the-life-that-might-have-been-for-such-a-life-would-not-have-been-yours”.* *He stopped speaking*⁴⁰. Still, it is undeniable that the scene has a flavor all its own, thanks to the director. At first, in its early part, it

takes place in darkness and has a fast rhythm due to the hurried strut of the Jew walking down the corridor, carrying the lamp and passing several elders, all whispering nervously and wearing halats and yarmulkes. The image is accompanied by the bird-like strings of Konieczny's score, connected in the film to scenes of particular import to the characters' lives and fates. The scene's dream-like status is further reinforced by the fact that the long corridor leads to a bakery and the images of Balthazar being questioned by the old secretary are accompanied by those of half-naked girls serving rolls fresh out of the ovens. The remarkable cast is a factor, as well: the Rabbi is played with panache by Joanna Szczepkowska, trained for a long time by Julian Strykowski himself⁴¹, and her Yiddish lines are translated into Polish by Włodzimierz Boruński, playing the secretary and speaking with a Kresovian lilt – it is the same Boruński who Konwicki turned into a very icon of a Jew in his *All Saints' Day*⁴².

This and similar directorial choices help to fully grasp the meaning of “auteur adaptation” mentioned by Konwicki: as a “family member”, coming from the same Kresovian community, the adapter can evoke episodes once experienced by the very young Czesław Miłosz and make them into integral parts of his own work of art – as well as make them subordinate to the rules he dictates himself. This way, he does not distort them, and instead ascribes them new meanings. The same strategy is employed by Konwicki the adapter when it comes to Miłosz's poems, which Konwicki selected himself and used in the film in an entirely new function. This new function is determined by the fact that the poems are being recited by actors wearing contemporary costumes – the same actors who in remaining scenes play the main characters of the story⁴³.

The collection of chosen poems forms a composition all its own, which in fact reinforces the emotional power of the film. I already mentioned that *The Cloud*, the desperation-soaked poem recited by Józef Duriasz, is included in Konwicki's personal vision. It is only the seventh and final poem of the set – *So Little* (Berkeley 1969) – which speaks of poetic activity itself and is recited against the background of American skyscrapers by the actor Igor Śmiałkowski (who physically resembles Miłosz and also plays the part of priest Monkiewicz), that is a direct allusion to the Nobel Prize-winning poet and appears right before the film's final image. Even though the first poem in the film – *In My Motherland* – helps to identify the author of all the poetry quoted in *The Issa Valley*, the fact that it is being recited by Zdzisław Tobiasz – whose portrait can be spotted in the grandfather's office (where it hangs as “a likeness of an ancestor”) and who later on appears in a Nazi uniform on the film set – makes one realize that the nostalgia contained in the poem was and is felt by many people belonging to different generations. The function of the four remaining poems is similar. Two of them, taken from the war cycle *The World (Naïve Poems)* which was an attempt at redefining the basic feelings and needs, are recited by people who only happen to be visiting America: *From the Window* is spoken by Tadeusz Bradecki (ksiądz Peikswa) looking as if fresh off the immigrant boat; *The Sun* by Jerzy Kamas (Romuald), who most resembles Konwicki himself (it is as if he was attending a literary meeting overseas, and his hotel nights were riddled with scary ghosts of occupation and politics).

The most meticulous mise en scène accompanies two poems which are afforded the sharpest meaning by the director. Marek Walczewski (Masiulis, the medicine

man) seems to be a walking symbol of a man deserted by everything and everyone: with his military coat on his shoulders, he speaks the lines of the haunting poem *Child of Europe*, written in New York City in 1946 and proclaiming the dramatic instability of all human attachments (*Love no country... Throw away keepsakes... Do not love people...*⁴⁴). The actor is positioned in front of three subsequent places of worship: a synagogue, a Russian Orthodox shrine and a Catholic church. Last but not least, Krzysztof Gosztyła (Balthazar, the one character in *The Issa Valley* who is closest to Konwicki's signature literary characters, struggling and bound by the inevitable nature of their life stories) is a figure of a rebel: holding a bunch of documents under his arm, wearing a costume suggesting a contemporary political activist, he stands opposite a grave of an activist of 1863 and recites the poem *Your Voice* from the rebellious 1968, which declares the utter helplessness felt in the face of someone else's suffering. The self-ironic commentary to the last words of the poem (*and then you're scared of being sentenced for the fact of not being able to do anything*) can be easily recognized by the viewers familiar with the hoarse growl of Konwicki's own voice, damaged due to illness but still carried by its Vilnian lilt. It is Konwicki who lends his voice to the old gravedigger, who is seen twice as he conducts the ceremony of burying Magdalena, who died by her own hand. First, at the end of the funeral service, he shouts towards his young helpers: *C'mon, boys. We gotta close it down!* Then, when Magdalena's head has to be severed for fear of further haunting, he speaks again as he hands the shovel to his sidekick: *That's the sharp one, you know what to do.* It is as if the director himself, by employing this self-reflexive wink, wanted to remind the viewers that he is one of the Issa Valley's natives himself.

In fact, the main activity in adapting the source novel seems to lie in depriving the depicted episodes of their fictional status – it is as if the director was trying to make the viewer realize that each of the events he presents could have in fact taken place (or simply had taken place) in reality. I recall that when I was a reporter on the set of *The Issa Valley*, I thought to myself that it is not really the fictional river of Issa that was being presented – it was all about the actual rivers of Niewiaża (crucial to Miłosz's childhood), Vilenka (crucial to Konwicki) and the most real of all: Czarna Hańcza, on the banks of which the crew was stationed and waters of which bathed Jerzy Kamas when he played Balthazar. I entitled the piece I wrote at that time *Three Rivers*⁴⁵, forgetting about at least one extra river: that of Lega, at which Olecko is located, where a miracle [involving a bleeding cross] occurred in the summer of 1981 and remains recorded by the director in the contemporary parts of the film. Today, I believe that every single viewer can put her or his own river into the blank spot. The wondrous land of Kresy, which embodies the collective allegiance of the Poles, is a place defined by a private myth in Konwicki's film – a myth that envelops every person's most important allegiance: that to one's own self.

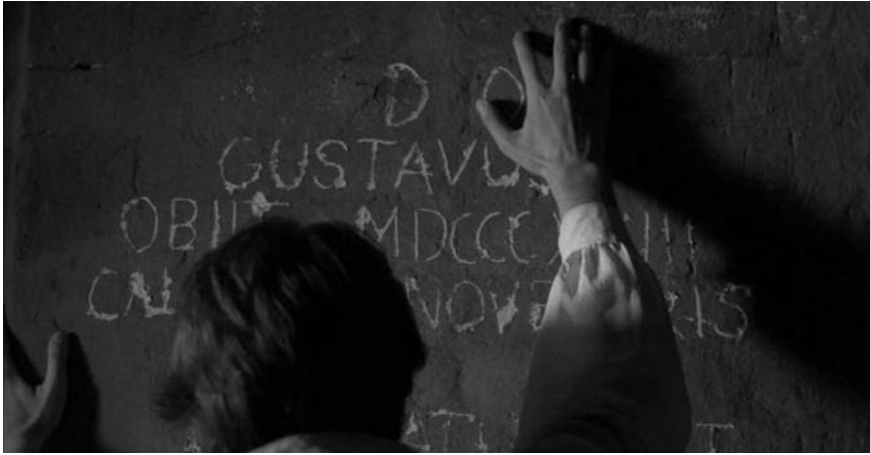
Polish Night of Wonders

The success of *The Issa Valley* was such that it may well have given courage to Konwicki to tackle a project as wildly ambitious as to make a film adaptation of Adam Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve*. This poetic drama – the single most brilliant

work ever written in Polish language – is at the very least a double trap for anyone interested in turning it into a film. The first level of trap is the poem's open structure; it has unfinished nature and the complete separation between every one of its four parts (written between 1820 and 1832), which seem to be joint together solely by force of bearing the same title. That trap is relevant even when *Forefathers' Eve* is produced on the stage – for which it was originally written – and becomes nearly insurmountable when faced with the need of literal treatment and condensation to two hours of screen time (no one ever dared to turn *Forefathers' Eve* into a film). The second level of the trap is connected to the vast tradition of philological and hermeneutic scholarship focused on Mickiewicz's work, as well as the tradition of its multiple stage versions, which were themselves conflicting⁴⁶. Every year brings new scholarship and new productions, making it more and more challenging for every next Polish director to tackle *Forefathers' Eve* anew.

It is with masterly ease that Konwicki avoided both traps, thanks to his initial idea, which followed suggestions by a pair of his most trusted advisors. The first was Mickiewicz himself, who – commenting on *Forefathers' Eve* in the foreword to the French edition in 1834 – pointed out two main elements that unify the separate parts of the poem. *The folk ritual of the Night of Forefathers' Eve, the day of the dead and conjuring of the spirits by repeatedly gathering together the characters of the drama, ties the entire action into a single entity – just as the mysterious character appearing at various points in the drama grants it a particular unity*⁴⁷. This double starting point is assumed by the adapter of Mickiewicz's text – the entire action of the film takes place during a single night of the dead, from dusk till dawn. The persistent mythical power of that event not only connects all the parts of the drama, but also serves as a bridge between itself and the contemporary era, granting the work a truly timeless dimension. Not only seems it perfectly natural that during the night of the dead Guślarz, the master of ceremonies, meets the “mysterious character” Mickiewicz talked of – it is just as natural that in the first scene taking place in the cemetery, shot at the Powązki cemetery in Warsaw in 1988, the viewer recognizes contemporary Poles celebrating the modernized [and Christianized] Day of the Dead [namely All Saint's Day].

The second advisor turned out to be Czesław Miłosz, who wrote about Mickiewicz's drama in his 1977 collection *The Land of Ulro: The reason for the play's jolting effect, whether read in private or seen in performance, must be sought through introspection. Its paramount theme, man in the face of misfortune, is one that compels a personal response*⁴⁸. It may well be that none of the previous adapters of *Forefathers' Eve* was more entitled to following that suggestion than Tadeusz Konwicki. He followed his own path *through introspection* not only as the reader of the play, but also as the author of a film based upon it. He filtered *Forefathers' Eve* through his own self, in order to re-tell the drama as if in his own voice, using poetics all his own. As early as summer 1987, he announced: *The film will be focused on Mickiewicz. The form that will be used is one I feel attached to and which I always (perhaps subconsciously) resort to. And so: a spiritual journey to a native land. It will be Mickiewicz's return – as a spirit or simply as a man trying to fall asleep in Paris – to Lithuania*⁴⁹. Konwicki explained repeatedly that this favorite poetics of his had strongly personal, imaginative roots. *For a long time, I developed a habit, which became particularly*



Lava, dir. Tadeusz Konwicki (1989)



Lava, dir. Tadeusz Konwicki (1989)

*persistent during the martial law era: when I wanted to take a break, pause, experience light pleasure, ease my mind for a second – I traveled in my mind from Vilnius, through the Subocz street, through Markucie, right up to Vilnius Colony. My being there was at times so intense, I might have given a scare to some natives, who would run as soon as they saw me*⁵⁰. The spectacle of Mickiewicz's sleeplessness was, in fact, a creative reworking of nightly fits of sleeplessness that plagued Konwicki himself. The identification went so far that the director even confessed the following: *As I was working on the shooting script for "Forefathers' Eve", I shaped and formed the text as if it was my own. In fact, after a while, I really felt as if it was me who had written those poems*⁵¹. By equating himself with the author – as Maria Janion noted – Konwicki solved the key problem of the interpretation of the work; the source of the story told in *Lava* became the memory of a single character⁵².

Still, even the framing device of the film suggests just how complicated that character is and how ambiguous is the time-space continuum the viewer is faced with when watching the film. The movie opens with a vast panorama of Vilnius, accompanied by the natural sounds of bells and thunderstorm; after few moments the viewer realizes that the point of view is that of an "old Poet" (Gustaw Holoubek), standing on the Trzykrzyska mountain in silence, clad in a characteristic, ancient-looking garment – as the scripts states, *in a dark cloak, with a cape resting on his shoulders*⁵³ – which he will remain wearing for the rest of the film. In the very next shot the Poet appears against a new background – he walks through the parlor and stops on the stairs of an old, decrepit manor, after which he starts his monologue, addressing the viewer directly. The monologue is the first paragraph of Part III of *Forefathers' Eve*, and begins with: *For over half a century now, Poland is on one hand the subject of constant, ceaseless and merciless cruelty of the tyrants, and on another the hub of boundless sacrifice by its people, as well as of resilience so fierce, one would be hard-pressed to find its equivalent in anything but in the persecution of early Christians*⁵⁴. The monologue of the Poet is accompanied by two images that will prove to be the film's leitmotifs: that of a rider galloping on a horse through the forest (Jan Nowicki plays a double role: the Ghost of the wicked landowner in the cemetery scene, as well as Belzebub, who intervenes a couple of times, most prominently when he finishes Konrad's Great Improvisation by a blasphemous suggestion that God is in fact the Devil, or *Tsar*), and that of an eagle rising in its nest at sundown. As soon as Holoubek finishes his opening recitation, the view of Vilnius is replaced with yet another panorama – that of contemporary Warsaw, with the characteristic silhouette of the Stalin-donated Palace of Culture and Sciences. It is towards that landscape that the female Angel (Grażyna Szapołowska) goes towards, clad in white garment with a red sash, which naturally recalls the national colors of Poland. Her first appearance is accompanied by Zygmunt Konieczny's main musical theme: separated, rhythmical sounds precede the choir, singing lyrics easy to recognize as the upcoming Vision of Priest Piotr: *All to the North! As rivers they do flow. Lord! It is the offspring of ours...*, etc. These very sounds accompany the image of the Angel – first by herself and then amongst the contemporary Warsaw crowd, after which we see her in the decrepit manor (later identified as the *house of the late mother* by Gustaw-Poet in a conversation he has with the Priest). The rest of the title sequence shows assorted images of people

crowding the various cemeteries to honor their dead: we see a Jewish cemetery, a Muslim one, and the the Catholic cemetery of Powązki in Warsaw. After the last title of the opening credits disappears, Poet-Holoubek stands in the Gate of Dawn, kneels before it and it is from this image that the story proper emerges.

This initial sequence, apart from introducing the main character and the chief recurring motifs of the film, also establishes two parallels, which are key to the viewing experience *Lava* attempts to trigger. The first is temporal in nature. The opening Mickiewicz line (*For over half a century now, Poland...*) obviously refers to the period between the first partition of Poland (1772) and the time the Dresden installment of *Forefathers' Eve* was written in 1832. But since Konwicki's film opened in 1989, this opening sentence written by Mickiewicz applies in its entirety and without alteration (just like in *The Issa Valley*, all quotations from the source work are unaltered) to Poland's contemporary situation. It was exactly 50 years since the defeat of September 1939 [and the beginning of World War Two, ending in Soviet domination of Poland]. The second parallel has to do with space: the central compositional principle of Konwicki's work, starting with *Ascention* (*Wniebowstąpienie*, 1967) and even with the novel *From the City Under Siege* (*Z obłożonego miasta*) written 11 years prior, is the constant tension between the recreated memory-landscape of the Vilnian valley of childhood and the landscape of Warsaw, which is experienced in the present time by the author who actually lives there. It is the Palace of Culture that has been fulfilling a special function in that landscape for years: on one hand, it is a living symbol of forced servitude [since it was Stalin who donated it], on the other, as an everyday view from the window, it makes the cityscape familiar⁵⁵. The opening sequence, just like in *The Issa Valley*, triggers a triple narrative perspective: it opens the story of Mickiewicz revisiting the land of his childhood; introduces the recognizable world of Konwicki's films; and opens the time-space of myth having to do with the very nature of national perseverance, placed midway between the sense of loss and the hope of restitution.

The second element of the framing device – the film's finale – brings all the aforementioned issues to their logical conclusion. Konieczny's theme first appears with the arrival of the Angel – it is then heard during the scene of the end of the ritual, which closes the film as it closed Part III of *Forefathers' Eve*: it is dawning, the birds sing and – following the very image we recall from the beginning of the film, of Belzebub-Wicked Lord on a horse – Guślarz (Maja Komorowska, in a feat of cross-gender casting) follows the Woman's wish and conjures up her lover's spirit: *Amongst thick stormy billows / A pack of carts follows. / All head to the Northern night, / Horses gallop with all might. / See the one at the front*⁵⁶. But in *Lava* it is no longer mere words: the image becomes real before our very eyes. In a snowy landscape, supervised by soldiers, we see Konrad (Artur Żmijewski) as he is driven north by one of the carts, a bloody wound on his chest. Immediately after that there is an unexpected turn: the passenger of yet another North- (and Siberia-) bound cart is the Poet-Holoubek. He had to enter it by his own volition, since his journey takes place solely in his imagination. This imagined vision of going away – symmetrical with the image of the Poet kneeling in the Gate of Dawn and accompanied by the same sound – closes the “Polish night of miracles” retold in *Lava*⁵⁷.

It is afterwards that the finale comes, accompanied by the choir we already heard, singing the fragments of the Vision of Priest Piotr. Poet-Holoubek is again

standing in front of the same decrepit manor and recites the final passages of the introduction to the Part II of *Forefathers' Eve* (*Who knows this history well, will confirm its author's testimony, etc.*), but his monologue is juxtaposed with a different set of images than we saw in the opening. First comes a self-reflexive image, shot at the gate of the Feature and Documentary Film Studio (WFDiF) on Chelmska Street in Warsaw, where some of the interior scenes were made – we see the crew of *Lava* as they leave the studio after a day's work. Gustaw Holoubek says goodbye to Maja Komorowska, we catch a glimpse of Artur Żmijewski, Tadeusz Konwicki tips his hat to Teresa Budzisz-Krzyżanowska, who just played the part of Mrs. Rolison. The next shot celebrates communal joy: we see glimpses of the Holy Mass celebrated by Pope John Paul II at the altar built next to the Palace of Culture. The final words by Mickiewicz are accompanied by another panorama of Vilnius, capped by a semi-close-up of Poet-Holoubek looking at it. In the very last image of the film, the eagle flies out of its nest, this time greeted by a rising sun.

This finale completes all three narrative perspectives of the film and joins them into a single one. The first is the autobiographical tale recounted from the point of view of the Poet – “old Mickiewicz”, who in his sleeplessness makes his nightly trek through Vilnius⁵⁸. However, it is Tadeusz Konwicki who *formed and shaped the text of “Forefathers' Eve” as his own*, which is reminded to us by the shots of the crew leaving the studio. *Lava* is at a biographical tale, built by the adapter with all the parts of Mickiewicz's play, except (as often is the case in various productions) the scene including Ewa in *a country house near Lviv*. It is within this mixed tape of sorts that the story, developed from the consciousness of the Poet kneeling at the Gate of Dawn, begins with Part I, or *Forefathers – The Spectacle* (with the young Gustaw, played by Artur Żmijewski, still not knowing Maryla, but *feeling at all times that some eyes see his tears*), after which it moves on to Part II – the cemetery ritual shared by the *choir of peasants* and the students of Vilnius, placed squarely in *Poet's memory* – which incorporates the scene in the Priest's house, itself being a condensed version of the Part IV of *Forefathers' Eve* and closing with the Poet's recitation of two first stanzas of *Ghost* – the opening segment of Mickiewicz's entire source poetic drama. After that we hear the Virgin's monologue (the Virgin is here identified as [Mickiewicz's famous object of affection] Maryla) taken from Part I, followed by a staging of Part III of *Forefathers' Eve*, beginning in the cell of Gustaw-Konrad, with a significant change in order of scenes: after the Prologue we witness Senator's Dream (scene VI of the play). What follows next is scene I (at the convent cell), which incorporates the Warsaw Salon (scene VII) almost without any change, and then morphs into Great Improvisation (scene II). After that, in chronological order, we see scene III and V (featuring Priest Piotr), VIII (Senator's Ball) and IX (the end of *The Night of the Forefathers*).

The entire story is presented in the film as imaginary one; scenes gradually emerge from the imagination or the memory of the Poet, during his night and early morning stroll through vacant streets of Vilnius. The logic of the narrative is dictated by subsequent appearances of the Poet, usually announced by the rhythmical motifs of Koneczny's music – none of those appearances leave the structure of the narrative intact. For example, when in the middle of the cemetery conjuring of the ghost of the Girl (Maryla) we see the Poet as he traverses the giant square in front of the basilica, it means that the Poet is headed towards the cemetery, where some-



Lava, dir. Tadeusz Konwicki (1989)

thing exceptional is taking place. Indeed, later in the cemetery scene we witness the appearance of the silent Ghost of Gustaw, with a bloody wound on his chest. A moment later the Ghost disappears, together with all the participants of the scene; after all it was taking place – just like all the others – inside the Poet’s imagination. It is him who is now standing by himself at the cemetery and recites the beginning of *Ghost*, which explains his status: *The dead comes back to the land of youth / Searching for the face of his beloved*⁵⁹.

When he walks through the courtyard of the convent, and after he freely enters Gustaw-Konrad’s cell to comfort the prisoner, who is in fact his younger self – it is chiefly to offer him his famous message from the Prologue to Part III of *Forefathers’ Eve*, directed at the Ghost and closing with the words: *All of you people could, while alone and imprisoned, / By means of thought and faith raze and erect thrones of power*⁶⁰. When, moments later, he appears in the corridor of the Royal Castle in Warsaw (as we know, Mickiewicz never visited that city), he interrupts the Lithuanian actor Arunas Smailis’ rendition of a monologue he himself authored, by interjecting a fragment on the nature of dreams, which in the play’s Prologue is spoken by Gustaw and closes with the words: *I cannot rest, my dreams scare and deceive me, / They are my true toil!*⁶¹. The high point of this string of interventions is of course the Poet’s participation in the Great Improvisation: as the monologue approaches and Konrad starts to circle around his cell nervously, we see the Poet as he approaches the convent. His reflection in the window of the cell appears suddenly, as soon as Konrad starts his Improvisation. After mere ten verses, Konrad disappears. From the words *Me, the master!* onwards, for the remaining twelve and a half minutes, it is Holoubek who delivers the lines (a switch which the screenplay explains as necessary for credibility reason: *It is then that the improvisation is picked up by the Poet, wearing his customary cloak with a cape resting on his shoulders. His hair has been gray for a while. A net of wrinkles around the eyes. Only a man like that can argue with God himself*⁶²). One particularly sophisticated bit of the same series is interjected into the Senator’s Ball sequence. The Poet, whom we have just seen as he traversed the cemetery, takes over the text of Scene



Lava, dir. Tadeusz Konwicki (1989)

III (the conversation with Priest Piotr), which consists of Konrad's dreamy vision, not only imagining but in fact making Rollison jump off the window to his death.

Of course, it does not suffice to say that the Poet is "the ghost of Mickiewicz", or merely *an old Mickiewicz, travelling in his imagination from Paris to the city of his youth*⁶³. It is likely that this aspect of the character may remain in the viewer's consciousness at all times, but the narrative situation from the very start (from the first panorama of Vilnius) suggests a much wider, deeply contemporary status of the character. In his review of *Lava*, Andrzej Werner remarked: *When Konrad-Holoubek is walking through the streets of Vilnius and stands on the hill overlooking the city, one might think that here is a man who is already familiar the approaching century and a half of history of this particular corner of Europe*⁶⁴. The character itself is a sum of the tradition – parts of which is the unusual costume it wears⁶⁵, the mock-Modernist notion of "artist as such" and the tremendous power it owes to Gustaw Holoubek himself. It is not merely a matter of his masterly acting – even though it is indeed hard to imagine a better Great Improvisation⁶⁶, not only because the actor restored many fragments excised in the script itself. Tadeusz Konwicki said that he immediately recognized that the actor was doing that as he spoke his lines, but since he saw how masterly was Holoubek's delivery, he did not let his assistant interrupt him⁶⁷. What is crucial, is the actor's own memory of his turn as Gustaw-Konrad in the legendary [politically inflammatory] production [of *Forefathers' Eve*] by Kazimierz Dejmek in 1967. Even though for most viewers this acting turn was only a part of the legend (if, in fact, they knew about it at all), still the legend itself reminds that a theater production can in fact influence history.

At the same time, as we noted before, the Poet represents the film's author – Tadeusz Konwicki – and those fond of his novels will read the character as yet another incarnation of Konwicki's perennial hero (a reading that is reinforced by such extra-textual details as "a table in Czytelnik café", reminding us of Konwicki and Holoubek's real-life friendship). It is Konwicki, after all, who is returning – in this film and through this film – to the land of his youth (in fact, it was during the 1988 shoot that he visited most of those places for the first time since 1956, which was



The Issa Valley, dir. Tadeusz Konwicki (1982)

Photo courtesy of Filmoteka Narodowa

made possible by the political situation – three years before, when Andrzej Wajda was making *Chronicle of Love Affairs*, he could not even dream of shooting in Vilnius). Even independently of his favorite poetics, even apart from his biography, thanks to the unique positioning of the director, the viewer feels constantly in touch with Konwicki the author. To latch onto the example of *Great Improvisation*, one can repeat the words of Zbigniew Majchrowski: *Holoubek is interpreting the monologue, Konwicki is putting together a film essay* ⁶⁸. Indeed, one gets that double feeling as one watches the *Great Improvisation* in *Lava*: one listens to the text and thus gets in touch with the Author-Actor, who by means of perfect delivery introduces all the meanings discussed before, naturally interposed onto the creative potential of the man who is the subject to Mickiewicz’s poem; but one also looks at the image and thinks of the commentary that is being added by means of twenty five intercuts, all placed by the Artist-Author, who directs our reading towards images emerging from the collective memory. To quote Majchrowski once more: *The Improvisation, as seen by Konwicki, is (...) torn between an idyll and an apocalypse, between the love meeting of Gustav and Maryla and the Warsaw Uprising, between Tuhanowicze [in Kresy] and Katyń* ⁶⁹.

But, as I already mentioned apart from those two interposed narrative perspectives, originating – to put it briefly – from Mickiewicz and from Konwicki respectively, there is a third perspective, as well. It is triggered by the human crowd, the true “lava” that the title stresses, by alluding to the famous speech of Wysocki at

the end of the Warsaw Salon scene and speaking of the social “depth”; the true nature of Poles that is impossible to cool down. In the framing device of the film the crowd is contemporary – anonymous in the street scene, partly recognizable in the scenes of the crew leaving the film studio, or in the triumphant images of the papal mass. This human crowd turns out to be a logical and chronological continuation of other crowds depicted repeatedly in various parts of the film. It is not only the specific communities that we see – that of students’ rebels or salon-dwelling conformists – in the course of the aforementioned double narration. It is the anonymous crowd, appearing in the images of the film as if by accident, independently of the author’s intention, as in the mock-TV reportage scene of Sobolewski’s Tale (acted out by Piotr Fronczewski), or in the recurring images of people imprisoned for unspoken trespasses, dragged down the street, as well as those of passive bystanders – both independent of the Poet’s tale (since they are not to be found in the play) and external to the director’s narrative (even though – in global view – they do come from Konwicki, of course).

In the light of the entire film the community we speak of is that of victors – captured in this brief moment when two centuries worth of enslavement finally found a palpable finish. This is, after all, the meaning of Poet-Holoubek’s gesture, who by his own volition joins his former self – Konrad – when the latter is sent to Siberia. It was worth to rebel! The choice, made in hindsight, would have been the same. That is why the eagle flying up in the end is finally the herald of freedom.

Those images are not there to tickle the community’s pride, though. The images of Polish crowd in *Lava* are the film’s reflections of the same community of which one researcher of the rituals of Polish Romantic theater writes as the true hero of Forefathers. This crowd – says Michał Masłowski – is a *synecdoche of a cultural community*⁷⁰, designed to *inject into the collective memory the wisdom, which is no longer merely sentientious*⁷¹. The meaning of the ritual, serving the memory of the political martyrdom of Poles, lies in understanding the deep meaning of contemporary era itself. *It is no longer only about the community accepting the past individual fates according to external criteria, but about the communal incorporation of contemporary events, which is usually guaranteed by authoritarian institutions – the government, the parties, the church. It is all about making the society ideologically autonomous from the existing institutions. It is about creating a social bond outside of political or religious establishments – not against them, but in a sense by a movement parallel to them, overtaking their competences and realizing their missions through the mechanisms of life of culture itself*⁷².

Here, the community is of course understood in broader terms than the Kresovian “little motherland”, which Konwicki saw himself as the spokesman for when he took on the two film adaptations we discussed. It is the community of Polish people, understood as a representation – at the risk of pathos – mankind itself. Starting out by telling the story of the first, Konwicki addresses the second, in order to speak in fact of the third.

TADEUSZ LUBELSKI

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- ¹ *Trzy glosy o problemach adaptacji filmowej. Wypowiedź Tadeusza Konwickiego*, "Kwartalnik Filmowy" 1960, no. 4, pp. 24-28.
- ² Ibidem.
- ³ Ibidem.
- ⁴ Ibidem.
- ⁵ S. Nowicki (S. Beres), *Pół wieku czyścica. Rozmowy z Tadeuszem Konwickim*, London 1986, p. 110.
- ⁶ Ibidem.
- ⁷ See: ibidem, pp. 90-91.
- ⁸ See: ibidem, pp. 103-104; T. Konwicki, *Pamiętam, że było gorąco*, interviewed by Katarzyna Bielas and Jacek Szczerba, Kraków 2001, p. 142.
- ⁹ T. Konwicki, *Wschody i zachody księżycy*, Warszawa 1982, p. 17. Compare English edition: idem, *Moonrise, Moonset*, transl. R. Lourie, New York 1987.
- ¹⁰ T. Konwicki, *Jak kręciłem "Lawę"?*, in: *Magia kina*, ed. J. Wróblewski, Warszawa 1995, p. 17.
- ¹¹ A. Helman, *Adaptacje filmowe dzieł literackich jako świadectwa lektury tekstu*, "Kino" 1985, no. 4; see: A. Helman, *Twórcza zdrada. Filmowe adaptacje literatury*, Poznań 1998, p. 12.
- ¹² T. Konwicki, *Mickiewiczowie młodzi*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 26-27.11.2005, p. 15.
- ¹³ E. Czarnecka (R. Gorczyńska), *Podróżny świata. Rozmowy z Czesławem Miłoszem*, Warszawa 1984, p. 106.
- ¹⁴ *Zacząć na nowo. Z Tadeuszem Konwickim rozmawia T. Lubelski*, in: *Debiuty polskiego kina*, ed. M. Hendrykowski, Konin 1998, p. 88.
- ¹⁵ T. Konwicki, *Pamiętam, że było gorąco*, op. cit., p. 167.
- ¹⁶ M. Janion, *Tam gdzie rojsty*, "Twórczość" 1983, no. 4, pp. 93-110; quotation from p. 99.
- ¹⁷ T. Konwicki, *KOMPLEKS POLSKI*, second (official) edition, Warszawa 1990, p. 79. (The writer himself suggested an upper-case spelling of the title, thus freeing himself from the dilemma if the word "POLSKI" should serve as a noun or an adjective). Compare English edition: idem, *The Polish Complex*, transl. R. Lourie, Normal 1998.
- ¹⁸ Cz. Miłosz, *Szukanie ojczyzny*, Kraków 1992, p. 183.
- ¹⁹ See: J. Kolbuszewski, *Kresy*, Wrocław 2002, p. 49, 54.
- ²⁰ Ibidem.
- ²¹ T. Chrzanowski, *Kresy czyli obszary tęsknot*, Kraków 2001.
- ²² Cz. Miłosz, op. cit., p. 30. In the same book (p. 44) Miłosz cautiously proposes that the mythologizing of the pagan Lithuania by the Poles is a sign of our (i.e. Polish) dislike of the clergy.
- ²³ Quoted in: J. Kolbuszewski, op. cit. p. 208.
- ²⁴ M. Janion, *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna. Fantazmaty literatury*, Kraków 2006, pp. 170-171.
- ²⁵ D. Beauvois, *Trójkąt ukraiński. Szlachta, carat i lud na Wołyniu, Podolu i Kijowszczyźnie 1793-1914*, transl. K. Rutkowski, Lublin 2005.
- ²⁶ B. Bakuła, *Kolonialne i postkolonialne aspekty polskiego dyskursu kresoznawczego (zarys problematyki)*, "Teksty Drugie" 2006, no. 6, pp. 11-33. Quotation from p. 13.
- ²⁷ T. Konwicki, *KOMPLEKS POLSKI*, op. cit., p. 80.
- ²⁸ See endnote 2.
- ²⁹ T. Konwicki, *Wschody i zachody księżycy*, op. cit., p. 52. In the unofficial edition by Wydawnictwo Krąg press, passages on making of the film are also to be found on pages 17-18, 50-52, 77-78, 101, 116-117, 174.
- ³⁰ Miłosz himself, in a series of interviews conducted by Renata Gorczyńska in late 1970s and early 1980s, denied the autobiographical character of *The Issa Valley*, classifying it as a fairy tale of sorts; see: E. Czarnecka, *Podróżny świata*, op. cit., pp. 109-110. Several years later it was in a different sense that he mentioned the fairy tale status – this time pointing to the book's denial of harsh realities: *When I think about the typhus epidemic in our district and the funerals throughout that winter of 1919 (if I remember correctly)*, "The Issa Valley" – even though it is a novel and not a documentary – acquires the coloration of a fairy tale. And I am ready to put all literature on trial for inaccuracy. Cz. Miłosz, *A Year of the Hunter*, transl. M. G. Levine, New York 1994, p. 256 (compare Polish edition: idem, *Rok myśliwego*, Paris 1990, p. 261).
- ³¹ Cz. Miłosz, *The Issa Valley: A Novel*, transl. L. Iribarne, New York 2000, pp. 37, 110 (compare Polish edition: idem, *Dolina Issy*, Kraków 1981, p. 35, 109).
- ³² See endnote 3.
- ³³ Cz. Miłosz, *W mojej ojczyźnie*, in: idem, *Wiersze*, vol. 1, Kraków 2001, p. 142.
- ³⁴ Konwicki himself spoke ironically on the subject: *Miłosz reveals a complex every time someone calls the book autobiographical. He denies it everywhere. There are simply authors who are ashamed that they are writing "from life", as it were*. S. Nowicki, op. cit., p. 105.
- ³⁵ Ibidem.
- ³⁶ Similar conclusions were reached by other authors, who in recent years analyzed his films

- as his personal statements. Barbara Głębička-Giza proved that the idea behind the adaptation is not a portrait of the Issa Valley itself, but that of an artist who comes from over there. The film is an impression of sorts, dictated by the memory of the place; an impression that kept the perceptions and emotions caused by the particular nature of the place, but also by the longing one feels to come back to it. B. Głębička-Giza, "Dolina Issy", "Lawa" i "Kronika wypadków miłosnych". *O autorskiej twórczości Tadeusza Konwickiego*, "Kwartalnik Filmowy" 2003, no. 44, p. 199. Natasza Korczarowska, on the other hand, maintains that Konwicki's film bears a striking formal resemblance to an essay. *The supreme agent, who organizes the structure of the film text has to be sought outside of its diegetic plane*. N. Korczarowska, *Ojczyzny prywatne. Mitologia przestrzeni prywatności w filmach Tadeusza Konwickiego, Jana Jakuba Koloskiego, Andrzeja Kondratiuka*, Kraków 2007, p. 129.
- ³⁷ It was a conscious move on part of the director; see: S. Nowicki, op. cit., p.108.
- ³⁸ I wrote more extensively on the motif of a journey as a metaphor for creative work in Konwicki's oeuvre in my book: T. Lubelski, *Poetyka twórczości i filmów Tadeusza Konwickiego (na podstawie analiz utworów z lat 1947-1965)*, Wrocław 1984.
- ³⁹ T. Konwicki, *Wschody i zachody księżycy*, op. cit., p. 52; see the entire passage on pages 50-52.
- ⁴⁰ Cz. Miłosz, *The Issa Valley: A Novel*, op. cit., p. 154 (compare Polish edition: idem, *Dolina Issy*, op. cit., p. 154-155).
- ⁴¹ See: T. Konwicki, *Pamiętam, że było gorąco*, op. cit., pp. 143-144.
- ⁴² It is worth mentioning that the sentence on Balthazar's life is spoken in the film in the voice of Włodzimierz Boruński and acquires additional meaning in the light of the materials recently discovered by the authors of the book on life choices of Polish intellectuals after the war. Boruński was one of the people interrogating Konwicki at the gathering of the Association of Polish Writers, where he was accepted to the Communist Party. It was the same gathering that reappears later as a recurring nightmare of the main character of *A Dreambook for Our Time*. It was Boruński who asked the question about Konwicki's participation in anti-Soviet partisans troops: *Did you participate in the assault and did you shoot yourself?* A. Bikont, J. zczęsna, *Lawina i kamienie. Pisarze wobec komunizmu*, Warszawa 2006, p. 88.
- ⁴³ Konwicki himself said that the contemporary layer of the film can be also read as an extension of sorts to the novel itself; its epilog, in which we see the children and grandchildren of the Issa Valley natives. See: *Wileńszczyzna moich snów. Z T. Konwickim o ekranizacji "Doliny Issy"* rozm. B. Zagroba, "Film" 1981, no. 39.
- ⁴⁴ The fragments of Czesław Miłosz's poems the translator was able to locate in English translation are quoted from: Cz. Miłosz, *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001*, New York 2003.
- ⁴⁵ T. Lubelski, *Trzy rzeki. O filmie "Dolina Issy"*, "Film" 1981, no. 48.
- ⁴⁶ The conflict between literary historians and theatre studies academics in how to properly understand Mickiewicz's drama is thoroughly accounted for by Leszek Kolankiewicz in his fundamental anthropological study: *Dziady. Teatr święta zmarłych*, Gdańsk 1999, especially pp. 229-250.
- ⁴⁷ A. Mickiewicz, *O poemacie "Dziady"*, in: idem, *Dziela, Tom. V: Pisma prozą. Część I*, Warszawa 1952, pp. 276-277.
- ⁴⁸ Cz. Miłosz, *The Land of Ulro*, transl. L. Iribarne, New York 2000, p. 118 (compare Polish edition: idem, *Ziemia Ulro*, Kraków 2000, p. 147).
- ⁴⁹ *W szponach romantyzmu*, Tadeusz Konwicki interviewed by Elżbieta Sawicka, "Odra" 1988, no. 1, p. 27.
- ⁵⁰ *To my jesteśmy "Czterdzieści i cztery"*. Z Tadeuszem Konwickim rozmawia Tadeusz Lubelski, "Kino" 1999, no. 4, p. 10.
- ⁵¹ T. Konwicki, *Jak kręciłem "Lawę"*, op. cit., p.19.
- ⁵² *Using the famous, "open" structure of "Forefathers' Eve", Konwicki has weaved his own story: as non-linear, simultaneous, multi-layered as life and memory themselves. In this way he avoided the old literary dilemma of how to connect Part IV of the poem to its Part III. (...) The whole is shaped by the unity of a single life*. M. Janion, *Krwotok lawy*, in: eadem, *Projekt krytyki fantazmatycznej*, Warszawa 1991, pp. 172-173.
- ⁵³ *Lawa. Fragmenty "Dziadów" Adama Mickiewicza*. A screenplay by Tadeusz Konwicki, May 1987, p. 1, Polish Film Archive.
- ⁵⁴ A. Mickiewicz, *Dziady. Poema*, in: idem, *Dziela, Tom III: Utwory dramatyczne*, Warszawa 1949, p. 121. The same text is repeated on the film's soundtrack. Compare English edition: idem, *Dziady (Forefathers' Eve): Dresden text*, transl. C. S. Kraszewski, Lehman 2000.
- ⁵⁵ The operation of ridding the power that be of its symbol, performed by Konwicki upon the

- icon of the Palace of Culture* in Warsaw, was described by Tadeusz Sobolewski in his essay *Balkon Konwickiego*, in: idem, *Dziecko Peereleu*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 28-29.
- ⁵⁶ A. Mickiewicz, *Dziady. Poema*, op. cit., p. 261; also quoted on the film's soundtrack.
- ⁵⁷ The formulation is by Tadeusz Konwicki, who commented upon his film as of a story of Mickiewicz: *He comes there* [to the still-Soviet Vilnius of 1988 – T. L.] and *recreates what is so characteristic of our art: a Polish night of wonders. He prepares this little, innocuous episode of a student's pact, which will later grow throughout the 19th century, until the very hecatomb of the Warsaw Uprising*. See: *Zacząć na nowo. Z Tadeuszem Konwickim rozmawia T. Lubelski*, op. cit., p. 90.
- ⁵⁸ Michał Masłowski went as far as remarking that one of customary answers to the question of who is the main character of *Forefathers' Eve* – no matter how insufficient – is: *The main character is the poet himself, struggling with growing up in matters of love, patriotism and religion...* See: M. Masłowski, *Kto jest bohaterem "Dziadów"?* in: *"Dziady" Adama Mickiewicza. Poemat, adaptacje, tradycje*, ed. B. Dopart, Kraków 1999, p. 59. The possibility of a similar reading of Konwicki's film was discussed by Przemysław Kaniecki in his article *"Lawa" Tadeusza Konwickiego jako film o Mickiewiczu na podstawie "Dziadów"*, included in: *Biografistyka filmowa. Ekranowe interpretacje losów i faktów*, ed. T. Szczepański, S. Kołos, Toruń 2007.
- ⁵⁹ A. Mickiewicz, *Dziady. Poema*, op. cit., p. 7.
- ⁶⁰ Ibidem, p. 133; also on the film's soundtrack.
- ⁶¹ Ibidem, p. 130.
- ⁶² *Lawa*, Screenplay by Tadeusz Konwicki, op. cit., p. 68.
- ⁶³ See endnote 49.
- ⁶⁴ A. Werner, *Dzieje ognia*, "Kino" 1989, no. 12, p. 4.
- ⁶⁵ Zbigniew Majchrowski, in his excellent book on the theatrical history of the Great Improvisation, reminded that Konrad wore his black cloak as early as in the 1901 production of *Forefathers' Eve*, directed by Stanisław Wyspiański. See: Z. Majchrowski, *Cela Konrada. Powracając do Mickiewicza*, Gdańsk 1999, p. 193.
- ⁶⁶ *The finished work is something unique in the history of Polish culture; something one could listen to day in and day out*, wrote Maria Janion, *Krwotok lawy*, op. cit., p. 173.
- ⁶⁷ Incidentally, Holoubek's version of Improvisation was shot not only in a single continuous shot, but also required no repeated takes. See: T. Konwicki, *Pamiętam, że było gorąco*, op. cit., p. 170.
- ⁶⁸ Z. Majchrowski, *Cela Konrada*, op. cit., p. 198.
- ⁶⁹ Ibidem, p. 200.
- ⁷⁰ M. Masłowski, *Gest, symbol i rytuały polskiego teatru romantycznego*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 79, 81.
- ⁷¹ Ibidem.
- ⁷² Ibidem.