

“A New Wave Film”. Cinema’s Role in the Poetry of Generation ’68

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White spots, empty frames

This text, devoted to the role of film in the poetry of Generation ’68, came about for three reasons. The first one is the scarcity of available materials, although admittedly, there is some interest in the relationships between film and literature: in recent years there have been at least three issues of well-established journals devoted strictly to such relationships¹. At the same time, the large number of topics discussed in literary studies monographs further highlights the scarcity of studies into film’s influence on poetry. Hence we have several-year-old cross-sectional overviews by Rafał Koschany: *Pograniczność sztuki i filmoznawstwo interdyscyplinarne. Przykład poezji “filmowej”* [The borderline character of art and interdisciplinary film

¹ See “Przestrzenie Teorii” 32, 2019: *Literatura w medium filmu* [Literature in the medium of film], “Tekstualia” 2020, No 1: *Literatura a sztuka filmowa* [Literature vs. the art of film], “Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich” 2020, No 2: *Film – Media – Literatura* [Film – Media – Literature].

studies. The example of "film" poetry] and *Literackie filmy urojone*² [Literary films imagined], both of which stem from his 1999 M.A. thesis: "*Filmowość" poezji polskiej XX wieku (po 1945 roku)* [The "film-like" character of 20th-century Polish poetry (after 1945)], as well as *Poezja filmowa – film poetycki* [Film poetry – poetic film] by Przemysław Kantyka. However, this is not much given the significance and scope of the topic, even if one was to search for insights into Polish poetry and film in publications on specific authors and analyses of the presence of a given actor in literature³.

The second reason is the insufficient amount of attention given to poetry from the period between World War Two and the 1989 transformation. If there are any studies focused on this topic, they are mostly devoted to the interwar period⁴, or the generation of the 1960s (and younger poets)⁵. *Zawrót głowy. Antologia wierszy filmowych*⁶ [Dizziness. An anthology of film poems] by Darek Foks provides a impetus for change in this area. However, individual papers and a fresh anthology awaiting interpreters of its contents is still not enough.

The third and final reason is related to the deficit in functionalizations of film elements in poetry that is not limited to individual works. Although he looks at post-1945 works, Koschany explains that "[...] in the proposed text I focus strictly on the theoretical level: how possible is an interdisciplinary reflection on the presence of film in poetry?"⁷. He is mostly interested in the type of film presence rather than in the role of cinema as it can be "interpreted" on the basis of poems. Foks writes a separate chapter on metaphorical meanings – *Film jako metafora, język poezji i język filmu* [Film as a metaphor, the language of poetry, and the language of film] – similarly to the authors of the English anthology he refers to, *The Faber Book of Movie Verse*. However, unlike Philip French, he does not highlight the fact that most poems could actually

² See Rafał Koschany, "Pograniczność sztuki i filmoznawstwo interdyscyplinarne. Przykład poezji 'filmowej'" [Borders of art and interdisciplinary film studies. An example of 'film' poetry], *Człowiek i Społeczeństwo* 34 (2012): 79–91; Rafał Koschany, "Literackie filmy urojone", in: *Kino, którego nie ma* [Cinema that does not exist], edited by Piotr Zwierzchowski and Adam Wierski (Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego, 2014), 54–71; Przemysław Kantyka, "Poezja filmowa – film poetycki" [Film poetry – poetic film], *Media – Kultura – Komunikacja Społeczna* 7 (2011): 153–166.

³ See Rafał Koschany, "Chaplin jako Charlie. Od figury kina do figury poetyckiej" [Chaplin as Charlie. From a cinematic to a poetic figure], *Kwartalnik Filmowy* 37–38 (2002): 82–90; Aleksander Wójtowicz, "Charlie w Inkipo. Chaplin według Pierwszej Awangardy" [Charlie in Inkipo. Chaplin according to the First Avant-garde], *Kwartalnik Filmowy* 70 (2010): 6–14; Robert Birkholc, "Charlie Chaplin w modernizmie wernakularnym polskiego dwudziestolecia międzywojennego" [Charlie Chain in the Polish vernacular modernism of the interwar period], *Tekstualia* 57, No 2 (2019): 19–35; Kamila Czaja, "Widmo bogartowskie. Literackie nawiedzenia" [The spectre of Bogart. Literary hauntings], *FA-art* 90, No 4 (2012): 37–51; Kamila Czaja, "Być 'Bogie'em'? O cytowaniu Bogarta i *Casablanki* w literaturze" [Being 'Bogie'? On quoting Bogart and *Casablanca* in literature], in: *Opus citatum. O cytacie w kulturze* [On quoting in literature], edited by Anna Jarmuszkiewicz and Justyna Tabaszewska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2014), 109–120.

⁴ For an extensive list of references see Koschany, "Literackie filmy urojone".

⁵ See Krzysztof Jaworski, "Zabawy medialne w poezji polskiej po roku 1989 (kilka uwag z perspektywy uczestnika i obserwatora)" [Media games in the post-1989 Polish poetry (some insights from the perspective of a participant and an observer)], in: *Literatura w mediach. Media w literaturze. Doświadczenia odbioru* [Literature in media. Media in literature. Experiences of reception], Katarzyna Taborska and Wojciech Kuska [eds.] (Gorzów Wielkopolski: Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa w Gorzowie Wielkopolskim, 2010), 97–106.

⁶ See *Zawrót głowy. Antologia polskich wierszy filmowych* [Dizziness. An anthology of film poems], Darek Foks (ed.) (Łódź: Narodowe Centrum Kultury Filmowej, 2018). Foks significantly extended the time scope of his earlier interests (see *Niewinni kaznodzieje. Filmowy zestaw wierszy poetów polskich urodzonych w latach 1958–1985* [Innocent preachers. A film anthology of poetry by Polish poets born in 1958–1985], Darek Foks (ed.) (Warszawa–Skierniewice: Polska Federacja Dyskusyjnych Klubów Filmowych, 2001).

⁷ Koschany, "Pograniczność sztuki i filmoznawstwo interdyscyplinarne", 83.

be placed in the chapter *Movie as Metaphor*⁸. Meanwhile, what is most interesting is looking at film in poetry as a “tool” that allows us to say something that would be difficult to express using more abstract methods.

It is even possible to think of film in poetry as one big metaphor, and of film motifs as means of expression which have a more general sense, or a sense referring to a different area of reality than the one to which a given work is directly devoted⁹ – beyond its openly communicated meaning. The conclusions of scholars of conceptual metaphors are also inspiring, especially in terms of structural metaphors. As explained by Olaf Jäkel, more *abstract* and complex target domains (X) are typically conceptualized through *more concrete*, simply structured and easily cognizable source domains (Y)¹⁰. An interpretative approach in the spirit of LIFE IS FILM¹¹ would allow one to read the “sensually cognizable” elements of film art as a means of verbalizing existential experiences and dilemmas in poetry.

In the introduction to *Zawrót głowy* Foks quotes an essay by Kacper Bartczak about *Paterson*. Among others, the following passage stands out: “The aesthetics of Jarmusch’s films and the poetry in its service carries beauty and light with it”¹². The present paper would be about the opposite direction: about film in the service of poetry, and more specifically – of the poetry of selected representatives of the poetic New Wave. As observed by Adam Poprawa, “New Wave was the first generation that treated popular culture seriously. Out of New Wave’s representatives, Barańczak treated it the most conscientiously”¹³. Foks also lists Barańczak (alongside Antoni Słonimski)¹⁴ and many poems by other New Wave poets¹⁵ in his anthology. In the present paper, Barańczak’s works also chart the way, but his texts will enter into dialogue with poems by Adam Zagajewski, Ewa Lipska and Julian Kornhauser¹⁶.

⁸ See Philip French, “Introduction: A Poet and Pedant Overture”, in: *The Faber Book of Movie Verse*, Philip French and Ken Wlaschin (ed.) (Londyn–Boston: Faber and Faber, 1993), 24.

⁹ Janusz Sławiński, “Wielka metafora” [Grand metaphor], in: *Słownik terminów literackich* [A dictionary of literary terms], Janusz Sławiński (ed.) (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Ossolineum, 2008), 612.

¹⁰ Olaf Jäkel, *Metaphors in Abstract Domains of Discourse, Polish translation by Monika Banaś and Bronisław Drąg* (Kraków: Universitas, 2003), 28. *Zob. See* George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors we live by*, Polish translation by Tomasz P. Krzeszowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Aletheia, 2010).

¹¹ Although this phrase does not appear in *Metaphors we live by*, but LIFE IS A PLAY can be found in *More than Cool Reason. A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago–London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 20–23 by Lakoff and Turner. This idea was later developed into LIFE AS A SHOW (Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture. Universality and Variation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 184–189) and LIFE IS A MOVIE (see Carina Rasse, Alexander Onysko and Francesca Citron, “Conceptual metaphors in poetry interpretation: a psycholinguistic approach”, *Language and Cognition* 12, No 2 (2020): 329).

¹² Kacper Bartczak, “Ciemna materia i błona wiersza” [Dark matter and the membrane of a poem], <https://www.biurroliterackie.pl/biblioteka/recenzje/ciemna-materia-blona-wiersza/> (date of access: 7.01.2021).

¹³ Adam Poprawa, “Poślowie” [Afterword], in: Stanisław Barańczak, *Odbiorca ubezwłasnowolniony. Teksty o kulturze masowej i popularnej* [Incapacitated recipient. Texts on mass and popular culture], Adam Poprawa (ed.) (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Ossolineum, 2017), 493.

¹⁴ See Darek Foks, “Wstęp” [Introduction], in: *Zawrót głowy*, 7.

¹⁵ Poems quoted in this paper, which also appear in Foks’s anthology, are described with ZG with a page number (following a comma) apart from a regular reference. Some of them are mentioned by Kantyka in the appendix to his paper (see Kantyka, “Poezja filmowa – film poetycki” [Film poetry – poetic film], 164).

¹⁶ Ryszard Krynicki will not be discussed here. Compared to his New Wave peers, he does not use as many film means. In *Zawrót głowy* Foks only includes one poem of his, *Bezpłatne* [Free of charge] (ZG, 101), about commercials; *Ktoś, Kaspar Hauser* [Someone, Kaspar Hauser] could also be mentioned, but here the film interpretation is only apparent in Krynicki’s footnote.

Ethics and (film) poetics

In the ninth part of *Przywracanie porządku*¹⁷ [Restoring order] (WZSB, 281–282; ZG,165), Barańczak juxtaposes two attitudes from the Polish martial law period. A film-derived metaphor was already used for the addressee of those verses, an internee called "W". (Wojciech Wołyński¹⁸):

[...] the same style,
the same moustache *à la* Jack Nicholson in *The Last Detail*¹⁹

This is followed by the ethical approaches of dissidents and officials who were part of the system, defined by means of a comparison to the process of selecting a film from a repertoire²⁰:

But they went to see different films. For them
being a man meant carrying a gun,
driving a fast car, wheels screeching on turns,
and shooting professionally, from a half knee bend, holding the gun in both hands.
For us adulthood was more like the crooked smile of
Humphrey Bogart, ironic bitterness,
which needs to be swallowed, for it is rude to spit it out in company.²¹

Poprawa stresses that what is interesting about this poem is that "the difference here does not separate films by someone like Antonioni from commercial films, but Humphrey Bogart from action films"²². However, there are more surprising examples, as well – in a poem by Julian Kornhauser, *Spacer z Holubem w maju 1996 roku*²³ [A walk with Holub in May 1996] (WZJK, 523; ZG, 239) a cartoon character breaks the gloomy mood of writings on walls:

¹⁷Barańczak's poems are from: Stanisław Barańczak, *Wiersze zebrane* [Collected poems] (Kraków: a5, 2007), henceforth WZSB, with a page number following a comma.

¹⁸See Adam Poprawa, "Krytyka filmowa Barańczaka" [Barańczak's film criticism], in: *Literatura polska w świecie. Tom VI. Barańczak. Postscriptum* [Polish literature in the world. Vol. VI. Barańczak. Postscriptum], Romuald Cudak and Karolina Pospiszil (eds.) (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Gnome, 2016), 107.

¹⁹[...] ten sam fason,
ten sam wąs *à la* Jack Nicholson w *Ostatnim zadaniu*

²⁰To refer to the ending of the poem 14.12.79: *Wieczór autorski* [Reading] (WZSB, 235), about a scene of a Security Service revision: "They did not work long, for there was a film on TV and a man is just a man", which highlights another clash of attitudes: "Tautological saying – a man is just a man – is typically used to make excuses for some weakness. Here, combined with a plan to turn on the TV in the evening, it looks like an anthropological self-creation of the Security Service agents" (Poprawa, "Krytyka filmowa Barańczaka", 107). The agents are going to see a film, and in the meantime: "An actress was waisting her talent on collecting signatures and contributions" (*Dyletanci* [Dilletantes], WZSB, 289–290).

²¹Tyle że oni chodzili na inne filmy. Dla nich
być mężczyzną oznaczało nosić kaburę pod pachą,
jeździć szybkim samochodem, z piskiem opon na zakrętach,
i strzelać fachowo, z półprzysiadu, trzymając pistolet oburącz.
Dla nas dorosłość była raczej jak skrzywienie ust
Humphreya Bogarta, ironiczna gorycz,
którą trzeba przełknąć, bo wypluć w towarzystwie nie wypada.

²²Adam Poprawa, "Barańczak. 14 akapitów" [Barańczak. 14 paragraphs], *Czas Kultury* 184, No 1 (2015): 120.

²³Kornhauser's poems are taken from: Julian Kornhauser, *Wiersze zebrane* [Collected poems] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo WBPiCAK, 2016), henceforth WZJK, with a page number following a comma.

“*Jude raus! Tu rządzi Wisła*” [Wisła rules here], “*Jude gang. Cracovia pany!*” [Cracovia masters], “*Polska dla Polaków*” [Poland for Poles]. The last one is annotated: “*Kaczor Donald też był Polakiem*” [Donald Duck was Polish too].

Poprawa’s proposal to read a passage from *Przywracanie porządku*, submerged in popculture, in a perverse dialogue with Herbert’s *Potęga smaku*²⁴ [A matter of taste], is inspiring. This reference seems to be meaningful beyond pure polemics, for: “In *Przywracanie porządku* from *Atlantyda* [Atlantis] the choice of genre is of ethical, political and social significance – all of this stems from “They went to see different films”²⁵ – a laconic phrase explaining a moral abyss. But why Bogart?

Marek Hłasko²⁶ and Marek Bieńczyk recall an anecdote about the actor’s facial expression; the latter devotes significant attention to Bogart’s face in his essay *O trzy drinki do tyłu*²⁷ [Three drinks behind]. His main focus is on the “ironic bitterness” hiding behind the “crooked smile”²⁸ accentuated in Barańczak’s poem. This topic requires longer treatment²⁹, but it should suffice here to recall that Bogart “created the first genuine ‘loser’ in the history of American cinema, a man doomed to constant failure, and because he was aware of his imminent doom”³⁰, his face “expressed a conviction that life is deprived of meaning, and yet we are still obliged to live it with dignity, live up to our own idea of ourselves, that it is fighting with our own weaknesses matters – rather than victories”³¹. Aleksander Jackiewicz writes: “Perhaps he is the last Conrad-style character [...]. He knows that the world is badly organized, and that one no longer needs to pretend to be a saint. One only has to stick to their own moral principles – not for others, but for oneself”³², and Stefan Kanfer, author of Bogart’s biography, diagnoses: “It was not a proud, confident gate that testified to his masculinity, but the opposite – calm, bitter cognition of reality and the way in which it should be accepted, how it should be approached, and – sometimes – how it should be opposed”³³. Indeed, those characteristics do not sound like an adequate description of the attitude chosen by the oppressed yet unyielding positive characters of *Przywracanie porządku*, and they coordinate with the fatalism of the final words addressed at W.:

²⁴See Adam Poprawa, “Nieufność i afirmacja. O kulturze masowej w twórczości Stanisława Barańczaka” [Distrust and affirmation. On mass culture in Barańczak’s work], *Literatura i Kultura Popularna* 3 (1992): 96; Poprawa, “Posłowie”, 493.

²⁵Poprawa, “Barańczak. 14 akapitów”, 120.

²⁶See Marek Hłasko, *Piękni, dwudziestolenni* [Beautiful twentysomethings] (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1989), 121–122.

²⁷See Marek Bieńczyk, “O trzy drinki do tyłu” [By three drinks behind], in: Marek Bieńczyk, *Książka twarzy* [Book of face] (Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2011), 78–80.

²⁸Poetry in English also provides some examples, such as “lip curled so nasty” highlighted by Lee L. Berkson in *Bogey* (*The Faber Book of Movie Verse*, 199). “It’s all in the corner of his mouth” in *Nobody Dies Like Humphrey Bogart* (*The Faber Book of Movie Verse*, 198–199) by Norman Rosten.

²⁹See Czaja, “Widmo bogartowskie. Literackie nawiedzenia”; Czaja, “Być ‘Bogie’em? O cytowaniu Bogarta i *Casablanki* w literaturze”.

³⁰Grażyna Stachówna, “Pięćdziesiąt cztery lata oglądania *Casablanki*” [54 years of watching *Casablanca*], *Dialog* 476, No 7 (1996): 141.

³¹Jacek Tabęcki, “Humphrey Bogart: W czasie i poza czasem” [Humphrey Bogart. In and beyond time], *Iluzjon* 18, No 2 (1985): 14.

³²Aleksander Jackiewicz, “Zapiski krytyczne. Bogart” [Critical notes. Bogart], *Film* 909, No 19 (1966): 14.

³³Stefan Kanfer, *Tough Without a Gun: The Life and Extraordinary Afterlife of Humphrey Bogart*, Polish translation by Bożena Markiewicz (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2012), 255.

That picture of yours: prince Poniatowski
 jumping towards Estera, with sideboards, of course,
 when a horse comments: "I knew this is what it would end like".
 Take care, W. Say something like that.³⁴

A film antinomy arises from a clash of attitudes in the self-deprecating *Drobnomieszczańskie cnoty* [Petit bourgeois virtues] (WZSB, 354–355), which is on the list of differences between B. and J. In the context of his insufferably non-scandalous biography, the "incurable top of the class" admits that:

I know, this is no material for a myth, cult, legend,
 A De Niro film, braking glass and scenes.³⁵

Lech Giemza sees in those lines an accumulation of revealing rituality, a repetitiveness of gestures by a tragic artist³⁶. Of course with time the poem reveals its gloomy depth, there is "a suggestion that a truly dark darkness may lurk in the apparent petit bourgeois, that a correctly tied tie may be the last thing that stands between it and complete disintegration"³⁷.

Drobnomieszczańskie cnoty received a poetic answer. Jacek Bierezin, claiming that he is the "J. artist", wrote *Wielomiesięczne kryzysy* [Months-long crises], at the same time specifying the film contexts of the attitude which he was defending:

I know, this is material for myth, cult, legend,
 De Niro, Micky Rourke film, marines, ring
 and breaking glass. [...] ³⁸

In the New Wave's use of film, extreme attitudes – political (*Przywracanie porządku*) and artistic-existential (*Drobnomieszczańskie cnoty* vs *Wielomiesięczne kryzysy*) – are accompanied by a criticized attitude reflecting withdrawal, escapism, and an indifference to reality. *Łzy w kinie* [Tears in the cinema] by Barańczak (WZSB, 435–436; ZG, 135–136) is the most common example. The poem exposes the hypocrisy of cinema emotions and spiritual pauperization

³⁴ Ten twój obrazek: księżę Poniatowski
 skaczący do Elstery, z baczkami, a jakże,
 gdy koń wygłasza komentarz: "Wiedziałem, że tak się to skończy".
 Trzymaj się, W. Machnij znowu coś w tym stylu.

³⁵ Ja wiem, to nie materiał na mit, kult, legendę,
 film z Robertem De Niro, tłuczeniem szkła i scenami.

³⁶ See Lech Giemza, "Ironiczny autoportret Stanisława Barańczaka" [Barańczak's ironic self-portrait], *Napis* 14 (2008): 429.

³⁷ Michał Okoński, Adam Szostkiewicz, "Poeta w krawacie" [an interview with Stanisław Barańczak] [A tie-wearing poet], *Tygodnik Powszechny* No 51–52 (1994): 13.

³⁸ Ja wiem, to jest materiał na mit, kult, legendę,
 film z Robertem De Niro, Micky'm Rourke, *marines*, ringiem
 i tłuczeniem szkła. [...]

Jacek Bierezin, "Wielomiesięczne kryzysy" [Months-long crises], in: *Określona epoka. Nowa Fala 1968–1993. Wiersze i komentarze* [A defined epoch. New Wave 1968–1993. Poems and comments], edited by Tadeusz Nyczek (Kraków: Oficyna Literacka, 1994), 45–46; the previous version does not contain the phrase "Micky'm Rourke" (see. *Na Głos* 29, No 4 (1991): 65–66). See also: Tomasz Mizerkiewicz, "Potępięcze swary? O sporze Bierezina z Barańczakiem" [Hellish conflicts? On the conflict between Bierezin and Barańczak], *Polonistyka* 384, No 4 (2001): 220–224.

which makes visits to the cinema “the modern equivalent of the penance and reconciliation sacrament”³⁹. The “repentance” expressed by a viewer:

[...] since the last screening once again I have been unable to live in beauty, in the land of Sense and Glaze, in such a lively, human, full, genuine, indisputable way as actors in a film,⁴⁰

is a dream about life which, despite all of these emotions, would be apparent, inhuman – although probably simpler, in line with some imposed screenplay, deprived of doubts, insecurity, aporia (“indisputable”). Poprawa highlights the relationship between this poem and *Jak słodko płakać na Love Story* [How sweet it is to cry on *Love Story*] by Barańczak⁴¹, adding that “this is what cultural criticism is for, so that facilitations – aesthetic and existential – can be avoided. Hence maximalism”⁴². Agnieszka Czyżak writes about “the ultimate victory of external illusions of human success as their conclusive measure (both of man and success)”⁴³. Similar film illusions (which, however, can be explained with youthful naivety) appear in a poem by Ewa Lipska *O czym myśli dziewczyna na lekcji gramatyki języka polskiego*⁴⁴ [What a girl dreams about on a lesson on Polish grammar]:

He will step down from a photograph from an illustrated magazine, in tight shorts which he will be recommending for the summer. Or from the screen. With Godard’s twilight and a wild rose he will replace dubbing for us.⁴⁵

Escapes – apart from internal pauperization – can lead to indifference towards real wrongs. Barańczak’s poem, *Kasety* [Tapes] (WZSB, 437; ZG, 320) is a vision in which rented disaster films overshadow real events:

[...] Shadows of news, relegated to the background,
were hiding in the CRT – their genuine
newsreel? – for him it was no longer certain, for the abundance
of crimes getting wilder by the day would be deemed
even by the most unrefined screenwriter as

³⁹Piotr Bogalecki, “Niepodjęta terapia Stanisława Barańczaka. Próba diagnozy postsekularnej” [Stanisław Barańczak’s therapy which never began. An attempt at a post-secular diagnosis], in: Piotr Bogalecki, *Szczęśliwe winy teolingwizmu. Polska poezja po roku 1968 w perspektywie postsekularnej* [Fortunate faults of teolinguistics. Post-1968 Polish poetry from the post-secular perspective] (Kraków: Universitas, 2016), 212.

⁴⁰[...] od ostatniego seansu znów nie zdołałem żyć w pięknie, w krainie Sensu i Glansu, w sposób tak żywy, człowieczy, pełny, prawdziwy, bezsprzeczny jak żyją aktorzy w filmie”

⁴¹Adam Poprawa, “Mitologie Barańczaka. Wypisy porównawcze” [Barańczak’s mythologies. Comparative notes], in: “Obchodzę urodziny z daleka...” *Szkice o Stanisławie Barańczaku* [“I am celebrating my birthday from afar...” Sketches on Stanisław Barańczak], Joanna Dembińska-Pawelec and Dariusz Pawelec (eds.) (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2007), 36.

⁴²Poprawa, “Krytyka filmowa Barańczaka”, 103.

⁴³Agnieszka Czyżak, “Kwestia wyboru” [A matter of choice], in: *Poeta i duch wolności. Szkice o twórczości Stanisława Barańczaka* [Poet and the spirit of freedom. Sketches on Barańczak’s works], edited by Piotr Śliwiński (Poznań: Wydawnictwo WBPiCAK, 2016), 208.

⁴⁴Ewa Lipska, “O czym myśli dziewczyna na lekcji gramatyki języka polskiego” [What a girl dreams about on a lesson on Polish grammar], in: Ewa Lipska, *Dom Spokojnej Młodości. Wiersze wybrane* [Young people’s home. Selected poems] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1979), 69.

⁴⁵Zejdzie z fotografii pisma ilustrowanego w obcisłych szortach które poleca na lato. Albo z ekranu. Ze zmierzchem Godarda i z dziką różą która zastąpi nam dubbing.

the exaggerated pessimism of Truth, whose disdain for humanity
is such that even he himself rarely uses its materials⁴⁶

Giving in to the catastrophism of film productions "can be a form of escapism",⁴⁷ as Poprawa observes, recalling Jerzy Kandziora's interpretation, that "a greatly mysterious [...] person-viewer of catastrophic films, who simultaneously loses sight of everyday crimes and dramas that take place on that planet"⁴⁸ is presented here.

These universal escapes from responsibility can be supplemented by criticism of political indifference or simply being used to the state of affairs in the People's Poland's. One example is *Tak naprawdę* [Actually] by Kornhauser (WZJK, 329; ZG, 167) – a poem in which a reversal of ethical order: "a boy reading 'Ekran' [Screen]", admiring the body of an actress on a magazine cover, who himself starts to display characteristics of a colorful illusion:

motionless
clinging to the surface of the street
cut out from colorful paper⁴⁹

Due to the advantage of this form of entertainment, among noisy tram bells ("rolling stock staff always with the party") what should inspire resistance – loses significance:

more important [...]
[...]
from a group of attackers
twisting the arms of the man they caught
and the scream
they are taking daddy away!⁵⁰

In *Za nas, z nami* [For us, with us] (WZJK, 321), "we go to the cinema every day" is one of the signs of indifference to the fact that "they" are actually "fighting with us", and not "for us". In an ironic "essay" about the countryside (*Wolny temat* [Free topic], WZJK, 276; ZG, 166) "the

⁴⁶ [...]. W kineskopie kryły się cienie
zepchniętych kasetą na dalszy plan wydarzeń dnia – rzeczywista
ich kronika? – dla niego nie było to już pewne, bo zatrząsienie
codziennie dzikszych zbrodni niewybredny nawet scenarzysta
uznałby za przesadny pesymizm Prawdy, której pogarda
dla ludzi jest taka, że on sam z materiałów jej rzadko korzysta

⁴⁷Poprawa, "Krytyka filmowa Barańczaka", 104.

⁴⁸Jerzy Kandziora, *Ocalony w gmachu wiersza. O poezji Stanisława Barańczaka* [Rescued in the edifice of a poem. On Barańczak's poetry] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL, 2007), 288.

⁴⁹nieruchomy
przylegający do powierzchni ulicy
wycięty z kolorowego papieru

⁵⁰ważniejszy [...]
[...]
od grupy napastników
wykręcających ręce złapanemu mężczyźnie
i okrzyku
zabierają tatusia!

cinema often arrives to the community hall”⁵¹. In Barańczak’s poem *N.N. staje przed oknem* [John Doe (WZSB, 152) the following line expresses the suffocating invariability of an oppressive situation: [...] as if at any moment that crowd was leaving the “Tęcza” cinema [...].⁵²

The “lullaby of a high-class TV film”⁵³ – part of Barańczak’s list in *Co jest grane* [What’s on] (WZSB, 164) – is one well-known example of a perfidious “anesthetic” to reality, in which “the problem of make-believe existence, among red herrings”⁵⁴, when “the truth is concealed and curbed by various, ritualistic shows, which dramatize reality and reach their objective [...]”⁵⁵. And although due to the fact that the material is diametrically different (a moving documentary), and the complexity of the problem of representing Shoah, Zagajewski’s poem *Oglądając “Shoah” w pokoju hotelowym, w Ameryce*⁵⁶ [Watching “Shoah” in a hotel room, in America] (WWAZ, 134) would require a longer interpretation, it is hard to resist a similar association – for interruptions in the reception of the terror of the film result not only from the ongoing hotel party, the geographical and temporal distance, the fact that the viewer himself is not the victim, but also from the screen mediation “and the one-eyed TV set indifferently shuffles pictures”, “and they were greeting me coldly from the screen”,

The TV set reassured me: both of us
are beyond any suspicion⁵⁷

Reaching for film in New Wave poetry is thus related to choosing an ethical attitude and attempts at influencing individuals, in order to dull vigilance and detach from reality. The negative role dominates – although in *Przywracanie porządku* both attitudes are presented with the use of film elements, and *Drobnomieszczańskie cnoty* as well as *Wielomiesięczne kryzysy* are different evaluations of the same onscreen model, in these poems, film enslaves, simplifies, desensitizes. But what about situations when it is not about the choice of an ethical attitude, but about the somewhat imposed existential condition and the elements of the world which one tries to “domesticate” with the use of film?

⁵¹Kornhauser’s prose offers a more nuanced picture of cinema’s influence: propaganda films with those shaping ethics coexist here: “I am watching with shining eyes how Native American heroes and those from Podhale were yelling slogans about freedom (perhaps not very understandable for a young boy), as well as easily understood phrases, wise phrases about friendship and betrayal” (Julian Kornhauser, *Dom, sen i gry dziecięce* [House, dream, and children’s games] (Kraków: Znak, 1995), 30). Quoted from: Ryszard Waksmund, “Historia dzieciństwa – historia kina” [History of childhood – history of cinema], *Studia Filmoznawcze* 33 (2012), 181.

⁵²[...] jakby w każdej chwili
wychodził z kina Tęcza” ten tłum [...].

⁵³Poprawa suspects that it was *The Forsythe Saga* (see *Poprawa* “Posłowie”, 490). There are more examples of Barańczak’s critical view on television, although they tend to refer to news, for instance *To, co jest wierszem nie do pomyslenia* [What is an unthinkable poem] (WZSB, 208–209): “in the sleepy roar of the screen, in front of which / we spend / (arm by arm) / every evening”, or a later poem from *Podróż zimowa – IX [Wylączany telewizor...]* (WZSB, 398): [A winter trip – IX, We are turning the TV off...]: “We are turning the TV off / into the black tunnel of the CRT / all reality is sucked, / so that we can sleep better”.

⁵⁴Dariusz Pawelec, *Czytając Barańczaka* [Reading Barańczak] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Gnome, 1995), 81.

⁵⁵Danuta Opacka-Walasek, “...ta próba jest grana tak, że się na raz dzieją wszystkie sceny”. Teatralizacje Stanisława Barańczaka”, [...this rehearsal is played in such a way that all the scenes are taking place simultaneously] in: *Literatura polska w świecie. Tom VI. Barańczak. Postscriptum*, 32.

⁵⁶Unless a different reference is provided, Zagajewski’s poems are taken from: Adam Zagajewski, *Wiersze wybrane* [Selected poems] (Kraków: a5, 2017), henceforth WWAZ, with page number following a comma.

⁵⁷Telewizor zapewniał mnie: my obaj
jesteśmy poza wszelkim podejrzeniem

To be like... Laurel and Hardy?

In Barańczak's poem *Ziemia usuwała się spod nóg* [The ground slips away from under one's feet] (WZSB, 304), among the many variants of the titular situation, there is also the following one:

and the ground was slipping away from under feet, a carpet
secretly snatched away in a silent comedy; no worse than Laurel or Hardy
you lost balance and, to avoid a fall,
you stretched your arms awkwardly, in an imitation, quite successful by the way,
of a newcomer, who is already welcoming a new land; and you would continue playing that role,
but the voice appointed accurate and celestial controls for you⁵⁸

In the simplest conceptualization this is a vision of an emigrant's feelings – which, by the way, is not the only ones expressed via film-related symbols. For in the essay *E.E., przybysz z innego świata* [E.E., a newcomer from a different world], Barańczak writes: "[...] a typical Eastern European (let's use the abbreviation E.E., which additionally has the advantage of resembling the initials E.T., the alien from the popular film) [...]"⁵⁹. Poprawa observes that: "The self-mockery is further reinforced by the reference to the movie *E.T.*, and Steven Spielberg, who as one may suppose, did not belong to directors especially appreciated by Barańczak"⁶⁰. We should also notice the simplest self-mockery: the juxtaposition of the protagonist with the adorable, yet not very beautiful alien. In the poem, the "newcomer" is compared to Laurel or Hardy, who are better known in Poland as the duo Flip and Flap. Krzysztof Biedrzycki interprets this poem through the sacral key⁶¹. Katarzyna Mulet argues with this line of interpretation, highlighting the existential motifs⁶². But what about the film comparison, how does it work here? According to Beata Przymuszała, this time the film frame of "a carpet / secretly snatched away in a silent comedy" is introduced. The jocular gesture of depriving someone of a stable footing not only attracts attention to the question of the possible perpetrator of the situation, but first and foremost, it takes away the seriousness of the situation – it is a comic relief [...]. Interestingly, the film-like "slipping away of the ground" is shown as an opportunity for "entering the role": the poem's protagonist talks about imitating "the role of a newcomer, who is already welcoming a new land" [...]. And though it would seem that this is more of a scene being played out for people who came to the airport to bid farewell than an

⁵⁸ a ziemia usuwała się spod nóg, wyszarpięty ukradkiem
dywanik w niemej komedii; nie gorzej niż Hardy czy Laurel
traciłeś równowagę i, ratując się przed upadkiem,
machałeś niezgrabnie rękami, w imitacji, dość nawet udatnej,
przybysza, który już wita nowy ląd; i grałbyś jeszcze tę rolę,
lecz głos wyznaczał ci celne i celestialne kontrole

⁵⁹Stanisław Barańczak, "E.E., przybysz z innego świata" [E.E., a newcomer from a different world], in: Stanisław Barańczak, *Tablica z Macondo. Osiemnaście prób wytłumaczenia, po co i dlaczego się pisze* [Macondo board. 18 attempts at explaining why and what for we write] (London: Wydawnictwo "Aneks", 1990), 191.

⁶⁰Poprawa, "Krytyka filmowa Barańczaka", 109.

⁶¹See Krzysztof Biedrzycki, *Świat poezji Stanisława Barańczaka* [The world of Barańczak's poetry] (Kraków: Universitas, 1995), 255–256.

⁶²See Katarzyna Mulet, "Trauma wyobcowania w *Atlantydzie i innych wierszach* Stanisława Barańczaka" [The trauma of alienation in *Atlantida* and other Barańczak's poems], in: *Literatura polska obu Ameryk. Studia i szkice. Seria pierwsza* [Polish literature of both Americas. Studies and sketches. First series], edited by Beata Nowacka and Bożena Szalasta-Rogowska (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2014), 369.

attempt at shortening the distance between people by reducing one's own fears of experiencing the protagonists of a bad film gag, it does not seem that the surroundings were significant for the narrator⁶³.

In spite of the accuracy of many of the above-mentioned comments, it seems a good idea to highlight the ambiguity of the reference to Laurel and Hardy. Indeed, the lack of seriousness may concern the audience's reaction, but it comes at a high price. For the man functioning here "no worse than Laurel or Hardy" – and both the choice of one of the co-appearing "elements", and reversing the typical order of names (even if this is to maintain rhyme) increase anxiety – such a diagnosis seems to be rather tragic, and in the best case: tragicomic. The gag character is doomed to fall to make others laugh – and moreover, he is mute. This vision is even more cruel than the one observed by Marcin Jaworski – that on the basis of the American poems by Barańczak, a self-definition of the poet emerges "as the one whose voice is insecure and barely audible, to say the least"⁶⁴ – cited by Przymuszała, although in a different context. And yet, as Barańczak comforts himself in the essay *O pisaniu wierszy* [On writing poems], comparing writing poetry to playing "the role of a simple partner in a cabaret sketch, in which the world is the main comedian – delivering a monologue without a moment of rest, allowing no interruptions, unapologetically shouting over us"⁶⁵, hope lies in the voice: "The simple partner of the comedian will eventually turn out to be the victim of his joke – the ultimate punch line belongs to the world, not to the poet. And although the poet in this role does not have the final word – at least he has a chance to say something. It is always better than being just a mute extra"⁶⁶. The state of the man from the poem, the "role" of the victim in the silent gag, seems to be especially poignant.

Zagajewski refers to the same duo of comedians, this time together (without "or") in *Europa w zimie* [Europe in winter] (WWAZ, 254), dedicated to Anders Bodegård:

to enter the underground of your metro, there,
 where Persephone died, and to
 the slums, where virtue and vice
 are walking proudly like Laurel and Hardy,
 I am trying to find the addresses of execution and ecstasy⁶⁷

⁶³Beata Przymuszała, "Usuwanie się ziemi – Ameryka Barańczaka" [Landslide – Barańczak's America], in: *Ameryka Barańczaka* [Barańczak's America], edited by Sylwia Karolak and Ewa Rajewska (Kraków: Universitas, 2018), 122–123.

⁶⁴Marcin Jaworski, "Implozja wiersza. O amerykańskiej poezji Stanisława Barańczaka" [Implosion of a poem. On American poetry by Barańczak], in: *Poeta i duch wolności*, 152.

⁶⁵Stanisław Barańczak, "O pisaniu wierszy" [On writing poems], in: Barańczak, *Tablica z Macondo*, 237.

⁶⁶Barańczak, 240. In Barańczak's essays on poetry the subject of taking inspiration from mass culture, including film, is common. For example: "Człowiek, Który Za Dużo Wie" [Man who knows too much] and "Knebel i słowo. O literaturze krajowej w latach siedemdziesiątych" [Gag and word. On Polish literature in 1970s] (see for example Poprawa, "Posłowie", 486–489).

⁶⁷wejść do podziemi twojego metra, tam,
 gdzie z tęsknoty umarła Persefona, i do
 biednych dzielnic, gdzie cnota i występki
 przechadzają się uroczyście jak Laurel i Hardy,
 spróbuję znaleźć adresy kaźni i ekstazy

It is not hard to arrive at a conclusion that virtue and vice appearing together, inseparable, like in the case of Laurel and Hardy⁶⁸, does not characterize just the "slums" – it is an existential certainty. "Characters from silent films" can thus be a metaphor of the truth of life – whereas in another poem by Zagajewski, *Uniwersytet*⁶⁹ [University], they are a symbol of unnecessary, useless knowledge:

Your professors talked
like characters from silent films.⁷⁰

In the context of looking for "a different university" we should also mention the metaphor from *Zwyczajne życie* [Normal life] (WWAZ, 235): "Black cinemas crave light" – like in the mysterious, elliptical final verse of the poem: "Normal life craves".

Zagajewski presented a combination of emotions, seemingly incomprehensible, violating the decorum, and at the same time typical for a man thrown in an extreme situation, in a scene of watching a comedy film while travelling to the mother's funeral in *O mojej matce* [About my mother] (WWAZ, 314) [emphasis mine]:

and as I was flying from Houston
to attend her funeral and *on the plane they played*
a comedy, and I was crying with laughter
and with sorrow, and I could not say anything, and I still can't^{71, 72}

Film can also be helpful in a clash with finiteness – or the opposite: in an attempt at highlighting eternity. Hence in Lipska's *Sen*⁷³ [Dream] "a film about the end of the world", but also in *Moi ulubieni poeci* [My favorite poets] by Zagajewski (WWAZ, 324), "a film which was about to end" was aired above the titular characters while they were watching clouds.

In Barańczak, Laurel and Hardy (which perhaps sounds more dignified than the Polish Flip and Flap) are not the only film creations complicating an interpretation. In the poem *Za*

⁶⁸Tadeusz Sławek wrote: "The saddest sight in the world / Laurel walking alone a country road / after Hardy's death / ("Flying Deuces", 1939)" (Tadeusz Sławek, "**** [Najsmutniejszy widok...]", [The saddest sight] in: Tadeusz Sławek, *Rozmowa* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo "Śląsk", 1985), 44).

⁶⁹Adam Zagajewski, "Uniwersytet" [University], in: Adam Zagajewski, *Plótno* (Paryż: "Zeszyty Literackie", 1990), 61.

⁷⁰Twoi profesorowie przemawiali
jak bohaterowie niemych filmów.

⁷¹Interestingly, the "film-like" expression of two different reasons for crying – laughter and grief – was added later. As a result, Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel does not analyse this part, only taking note of the fact that there are two versions of the poem (see Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel, "Ogień życia. Cykl wierszy Adama Zagajewskiego o matce" [Fire of life. A cycle of Zagajewski's poems about his mother], in: Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel, *Utopia powtórzenia. Powtórzenie, podmiotowość, pamięć w literaturze modernizmu* [Utopia of repetition. Repetition, subjectivity, memory in the modernist literature] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2019), 257.

⁷²i jak leciałem z Houston
na jej pogrzeb i w samolocie wyświetlano
komedie i jak płakałem ze śmiechu
i z żalu, i jak nic nie umiałem powiedzieć,
i wciąż nie umiem.

⁷³Ewa Lipska, "Sen" [Dream], in: Ewa Lipska, *Dom Spokojnej Młodości*, 47.

szkłem [Behind a glass] (WZSB, 467–468; ZG, 137–138), which opens with a reference to both western films and home: “At high noon. Kitchen”, a film by Fred Zinnemann returns in the finale of that story, which only seems to be about cucumbers:

[...] Do not hide, what changes her into green, what else hides in you: for I know her, not the one of salt, not from the too lead-role born bile, this inborn resistance and stubbornness of yours, like two lines on a face – a face like the one of Gary Cooper in the famous frame, by the way also behind glass, behind a glass broken into ray-like splinters. A face with molds and everything, a trickle of sweat, folds of skin; but so brightly back then, about thirty years ago, in the screening room at the “Muza” cinema, on the walls, its plaster and paneling its screen reflection wrote: you, unfaithful Tomek, are allowed to, at noon, i.e. any time, you are allowed to check this mist on the glass of the jar, the bleeding of that glass, the pulse of a star, to check life, your own, by placing half-blind fingers on the world’s wrists⁷⁴.

Poprawa points to Barańczak’s essay on the western as proof that this “performance” of Cooper’s cannot be treated fully seriously. “Although *High Noon* should be seen as a classic, it is only a western”⁷⁵. However, at the same time the case of *Behind Glass* is ambiguous: “In Zinnemann’s film the character created by that actor solved a problem, and at the end of the poem he appears as another element of the sense-making indecisiveness”⁷⁶. Interpreters also point out to “highlighting the situation of a life and death struggle, which takes place according to the accepted rhythm of a clock measuring the time to subsequent duels” (Iwona Misiak⁷⁷), “a Christological figure” (Poprawa⁷⁸) and the “illumination of memory”, which connects the poem with the biography, and moves towards “an independent life, testing everything, rebellion, distrust, freedom” (Kandziora⁷⁹). However, in the context of the sheriff played by Cooper, the associations of a cinema image, remembered after many decades, with “resistance and stubbornness” should be stressed; even the original poster for *High Noon* says it is “the story of a man who was too proud to run”⁸⁰. The man (or the anthropomorphized cucumber), even with all the distance imposed by the genre (western) and the jar context, would still impress with its steadfastness. And while we are on the topic of posters, numerous Polish motifs in *Za szkłem* seem to be enough to justify associations with the 1989 poster by Tomasz Sarnecki, designed for “Solidarność” (Solidarity).

⁷⁴[...] Nie kryjcie, co ją zmienia w zielen, co jeszcze w was siedzi: znam ją przecież, tę nie z soli, nie z roli nazbyt pierwszoplanowej zrodzoną żółć, ten wrodzony wasz opór i upór jak dwie bruzdy na twarzy – takiej, jaką miał Gary Cooper w słynnym kadrze, też za szkłem zresztą, za strzaskaną w promienne drzazgi szybą. Twarz z brodawkami i wszystkim, strużką potu, fałdami skóry; ale tak jasno wtedy, ze trzydzieści lat temu, w salce kina “Muza”, na ścianach, na ich tynku i boazerii jej ekranowy odbłask wypisywał: wolno-ć, niewierny Tomku, w samo południe, czyli w każdej chwili, wolno ci sprawdzić tę mgiełkę na szkle słoja, krwotok tej szyby, puls gwiazdy, sprawdzać życie, własne, na przegubach świata kładąc półślepe palce.

⁷⁵Adam Poprawa, “Ogórki małosolne antropomorfizowane. Próby o wierszu *Za szkłem*” [Anthropomorphised fresh pickled cucumbers. Sketches on the poem *Za szkłem*], *Przestrzenie Teorii* 26 (2016): 187.

⁷⁶Adam Poprawa, “Ogórki małosolne antropomorfizowane. Próby o wierszu *Za szkłem*” [Anthropomorphised fresh pickled cucumbers. Sketches on the poem *Za szkłem*], *Przestrzenie Teorii* 26 (2016): 187.

⁷⁷Iwona Misiak, “Stanisława Barańczaka dialog chirurga i demiurga” [Barańczak’s dialogue of a surgeon and demiurge], *Teksty Drugie* 105, No 3 (2007): 88.

⁷⁸Poprawa, “Ogórki małosolne antropomorfizowane”, 193.

⁷⁹Kandziora, *Ocalony w gmachu wiersza*, 276.

⁸⁰See for example *High Noon* (1952), <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0044706/mediaviewer/rm365116416/> (date of access: 7.01.2021).

Attempts at stopping the tape

Among existential cinema figures in poetry those numerous ones related to evanescence and memory are worth distinguishing. We can start with another "troublesome" actor from Barańczak's poem. In *Płynąc na Sutton Island* [Swimming to Sutton Island] (WZSB, 487–488), a film element which precedes the grand finale about the chances that love has in saving one from change, appears among what is, "what it was like":

the same dappled
pair of Dalmatians is being brought onboard
(or rather dragged) by an oldish brunette
similar to Ali MacGraw; wet breeze hits with
the same power, and the fact that everyone is wrong: that it is possible
to stop something from changing with the force of pure love,
like an island from the sea.⁸¹

The colon inspires the greatest interpretative doubts. Is everyone wrong, because they think *that* it is possible, or is everybody wrong *because it actually* is possible? "Is it possible or not to save something from changing with the force of pure love? And what is this 'something'?"⁸² – asks Ewa Rajewska. Joanna Dembińska-Pawelec lists several interpretations, including Barańczak's conclusion:

[...] the protagonist is "surprised that everyone is wrong (and) that (in spite of the popular opinion) *it is possible* to save something from changing with the force of pure love". The final verses of the poem (and, simultaneously, the book) is a paean of praise for Enduring (or at least for its manifestation – constantly "loving" someone or something); even more so in the light of the fact that it rebels against the potency of Passing brought by experiencing⁸³.

But if everything here is so simple, what about Ali MacGraw? Dembińska-Pawelec includes this film allusion in a list of measures thanks to which "[...] Barańczak introduces irony in order to conceal or hide the lofty character of the poem [...]"⁸⁴. Rajewska also notices here a moment of hesitation – after all, MacGraw "is best known from her role in *Love Story* [...]" – a film about a great, mutual love against social conventions which requires major sacrifices,

⁸¹ tę samą nakrapianą
parę dalmatyńczyków wprowadza na pokład
(lub jest przez nie wciągana) podobna do Ali
McGraw starszawa brunetka; z tą samą
mocą uderza mokra bryza i to, że wszyscy się myślą: że można
samą siłą kochania, jak wyspę wśród morza,
uchować coś przed zmianą.

⁸²Ewa Rajewska, "Pauza Barańczaka" [Barańczak's pause], in: *Poeta i duch wolności*, 181.

⁸³"Pesymista, który nie podnosi głosu. Ze Stanisławem Barańczakiem e-mailem rozmawia Michał Cichy" [A pessimist who never raises his voice. An e-mail interview with Barańczak by Michał Cichy], *Magazyn Gazety Wyborczej* 349, No 35 (1999): 21; quoted after Joanna Dembińska-Pawelec, "Wyspa wśród morza. Na marginesie wiersza Stanisława Barańczaka *Płynąc na Sutton Island*" [An island in the sea. On the margin of Barańczak's poem *Płynąc na Sutton Island*], in: *Ameryka Barańczaka*, 114.

⁸⁴Dembińska-Pawelec, 115.

which still does not save the female protagonist from death”⁸⁵. Despite the author’s certainty regarding what he “wanted” to write, it is difficult to ignore doubts while reading the poem; if those doubts do not stem from the punctuation of the final diagnosis, they stem from the actress’s “ghost”. Moreover, the footnote in Misiak’s text, which omits *Love Story* and instead characterizes MacGraw with her role “in a disaster film *Survive the Savage Sea* (directed by K.J. Dobson), does not clarify the situation”⁸⁶.

Similar insights can accompany the poem *Poranek w Vicenzy* [Morning in Vicenza] by Zagajewski⁸⁷ (WWAZ, 191–192; ZG 68). The poem *In memoriam Josifowi Brodskiemu, Krzysztofowi Kieślowskiemu*, which is about the loss of two important people, concludes with the following verses:

You are no longer here, and now we’ll lead double lives, simultaneously in light and in darkness, in the bright sun of the day and in the coolness of stone corridors, in mourning and in joy.⁸⁸

Considering the question of time in this poem, Danuta Opacka-Walasek explains that:

Also in *Poranek w Vicenzy*, a poem [...] whose chronotype is constructed on the experience of “now”, in that “now” retention, i.e. primary memory, constitutes the presence of the past. It is directly connected to the present moment, with the present observation [...]. The present tense leaning towards the future, saturated with the past, is captured here – like in Hussler – as a “vanishing observation”, staying behind the newly coming experience through time. In retention the past is conceptualized as something which on the one hand vanishes, and on the other – never stops existing⁸⁹.

It should be highlighted that the “duality” required in the face of a loss is expressed in the phrase “we’ll lead double lives”. In this poem the “double live”, commonly associated with deceit, refers to Kieślowski’s film *The Double Life of Véronique* (which, notably, was considered kitsch by Barańczak)⁹⁰.

⁸⁵Rajewska, “Pauza Barańczaka”, 180. At the same time, after Poprawa’s suggestion, the scholar also highlights the ambiguity of the reference to this particular film, since Barańczak did not appreciate *Love Story* (see Rajewska, 181).

⁸⁶Misiak, “Stanisława Barańczaka dialog chirurga i demiurga”, 88.

⁸⁷In the case of Vicenza, the attempt at capturing time dominates. However, the New Wave poetry also offers spatial metaphors: the characterization of the titular Rue Armand Silvestre – “deprived of a good ending, / like some films” (Adam Zagajewski, “Rue Armand Silvestre”, in: Adam Zagajewski, *Asymetria* [Assymetry] (Kraków: a5, 2014), 73–74), a reference to Robert Rossellini’s film in the title of the poem *Rzym, miasto otwarte* [Rome, an open city] (Adam Zagajewski, “Rzym, miasto otwarte”, in: Adam Zagajewski, *Anteny* [Antenna] (Kraków: a5, 2005), 9–10; ZG, 329), or a reference to this production in the title of Lipska’s poem *Nowy Jork miasto porwane* [New York, a city abducted] (Ewa Lipska: “Nowy Jork miasto porwane”, in: Ewa Lipska, *Nie o śmierć tutaj chodzi, lecz o biały kordonek* [It is not about death, it is about white filoselle] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1982), 7–13).

⁸⁸Nie ma was i dlatego będziemy teraz wiedli podwójne życie, jednocześnie w świetle i w cieniu, w jaskrawym słońcu dnia i w chłodzie kamiennych korytarzy, w żałobie i w radości.

⁸⁹Danuta Opacka-Walasek, *Chwile i eony. Obrazy czasu w polskiej poezji drugiej połowy XX wieku* [Moments and eons. Depictions of time in the Polish poetry of the second half of the 20th century] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2006), 35, 36.

⁹⁰[...] I do not accept the division into high and low culture. The only division I accept is into valuable culture (which, to my mind, includes Bach, Shakespeare, as well as Charlie Parker and Monty Python), and culture of no value, i.e. the culture of kitsch (in which I include: Madonna, *Rambo*, as well as Tchaikovsky’s piano concert and *The Double life of Veronique*) (Stanisław Barańczak, *Odbiorca ubezwłasnowolniony*, 447).

Film elements also constitute parts of memories. Bourvil in *** [*Przyjaciele, rynek, miasto...*] [Friends, market, city...] by Kornhauser (WZJK, 159), the cinema from Zagajewski's poem *Kino "Potęga"* ["Potęga" cinema] dedicated to Barbara and Wojciech Pszoniak (WZAG, 221; ZG, 142), or screenings remembered as almost religious⁹¹ experiences, even if the repertoire was a compromise:

The screen at the "Potęga" cinema could take any film and any picture – Indians felt at home there, and the Soviet characters had nothing to complain about either.

[...]

It seems that on some Sundays

God was close.⁹²

A memory of music proves to be translatable into film in *Dżungla* [Jungle] by Zagajewski (WWAZ, 325):

music alien and beautiful since the very beginning, like Greta Garbo
in a spy film, among ordinary figures⁹³

In another poem by the same author, *Anteny w deszczu* [Antennas in the rain], a perverse evaluation of a film's greatness (treated literally) appears: "Kino było tak małe, że film Bergmana z trudem się w nim mieścił" [The cinema was so small that Bergman's film could hardly fit] (WWAZ, 259–263), in *Serenada, szeptana do ucha przy wtórze szmeru klimatyzatora* [A serenade whispered in the ear to the tune of air conditioner's humming] by Barańczak (WZSB, 485–486; ZG 272–273) "w kinie / obejrzeni *Wałkonie*" [*I vitelloni* seen / at the cinema] are among discoveries which – as opposed to living with the beloved woman – one can get used to, and in *Podczas świąt*⁹⁴ [During Christmas] by Lipska (ZG, 140) a Christmas dinner involves not even Bergman or Fellini, but a classic melodrama by Michael Curtiz: I am watching *Casablanca* with my usual appetite for digression.⁹⁵

⁹¹Dariusz Pawelec writes about Zagajewski and Kornhauser: The "Potęga" [Might] cinema was the common "happy place" of both poets, where "in spite of its name, the screening room was tight and narrow like an intestine, but the boys saw it as a space made of dream and imagination" (Dariusz Pawelec, "W poszukiwaniu świata nieogarnionych rzeczy" ["In the search of "the world of unimaginable things świata", *Fabryka Silesia* 10, No 3 (2015): 103).

⁹²Ekran w kinie "Potęga" gotów był przyjąć każdy film i każdy obraz – Indianie czuli się tu jak u siebie w domu, lecz sowieccy bohaterowie także nie mogli narzekać.

[...]

Wydaje się, że w niektóre niedziele

Bóg był blisko.

⁹³Poprawa writes about Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* in the context of Barańczak (see Poprawa, "Mitologie Barańczaka" [Barańczak's mythologies]), however, also in the case of Zagajewski it is tempting to remind that Barthes (among other things) Barthes states that Garbo's face is an idea (Roland Barthes, "Garbo's face", in: Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Polish translation by Adam Dziadek (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Aletheia, 2008), 99). muzyka od początku obca i piękna jak Greta Garbo w szpiegowskim filmie, wśród pospolitych figur.

⁹⁴Ewa Lipska, "Podczas świąt" [During holidays], in: Ewa Lipska, *Sklepy zoologiczne* [Pet shops] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001), 15.

⁹⁵Oglądam *Casablankę* z takim samym jak zawsze apetytem na dygresję.

Capturing this moment is bitter-sweet since the viewer admits that she is “playing with loneliness”⁹⁶. In *Pamięciarnia* [Memory place] by Kornhauser (WZJK, 84), whose motto is “*I already don’t like you, for you are different*”, a love disappointment is presented as follows:

Heart, which I am holding on suspenders,
indeed resembles a photograph
of Doris Day, taking a bath
in “Ixi” bath powder [...]

Laurel and Hardy are also back – accompanied by two other silent cinema stars: Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton. In *Tablice rejestracyjne* [License plates] by Lipska⁹⁷, an account of an imagined trip further and further into the past, seemingly carefree, but with a sense of threat, also contains the following vision:

We are feeling great. We can see the storm
but we cannot hear it. Like in a silent film.

Chaplin. Laurel and Hardy. Keaton.
We burst out laughing. Lucky beggars
in between wars. [...] ⁹⁸

In the poetry of Generation ’68, film is also used to show the impossibility of preserving what belongs to the past. Chaplin appears in *Dom* [Home] by Kornhauser (WZJK, 31; ZG, 162) as “Charlie Chaplin with a knife in his chest”, which hyperbolizes a vision of a home which is “not what it used to be”⁹⁹. As a “tragic comedian, comic tragedian”¹⁰⁰, Chaplin fits such pictures – not only because the knife in his chest can be seen as an ultimate negation of the old, lost world. The “funniness” of references to Laurel and Hardy seems to be similarly ambiguous. However, in this case the tension from Chaplin’s films should be mentioned, when “he shows

⁹⁶Lipska also refers to this film in an interview – as a metaphor of past loves one is over with: “Everyone has their own private *Casablanca*. Sometimes it is worth rewatching” (Ewa Lipska: “Nie ma we mnie rozpacz. Nigdy jej nie było. Łzy zostawiam sobie do podlewania kwiatów” [There is no despair in me. Never has been. I leave my tears for watering plants] [an interview by Dorota Wodecka], <https://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/7,152731,25052455,ewa-lipska-lzy-zostawiam-sobie-do-podlewania-kwiatow.html> (date of access: 7.01.2021)). Lipska also refers to the same film in her novel: “Here’s just ‘looking at you, kid’, do you remember, from *Casablanca*?” (Ewa Lipska, *Sefer* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2009), 102).

⁹⁷Ewa Lipska, “Tablice rejestracyjne”, [Registration plates] in: Ewa Lipska, *Czytnik linii papilarnych* [Fingerprints reader] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2015), 37.

⁹⁸Czujemy się świetnie. Widzimy burzę
ale jej nie słyszymy. Jak w niemych filmach.
Chaplin. Laurel i Hardy. Keaton.
Wybuchamy śmiechem. Szczęściarze
pomiędzy wojnami. [...]

⁹⁹This vision resembles a “performance” by Chaplin in an Anatol Stern’s poem quoted by Koschany, *Charlie Chaplin*, “And a bloodied knife falls down with a clink, / When he, a harbor in a storm, / Fights – for the right to dream” (quoted after Koschany, “Chaplin jako Charlie” [Chaplin as Charlie], 87). Here the surprising resemblance of depiction also with subsequent lines of Kornhauser’s text manifests itself: “Let’s sail, friends, the earth is reversed, / let’s sail towards something, always towards something”.

¹⁰⁰Paweł Mościcki, *Chaplin. Przewidywanie teraźniejszości* [Chaplin. Predicting the present] (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2017), 83.

this kind of fundamental disorganization of the world not only on the level of elementary physics, but also from the perspective of historical experience"¹⁰¹.

In the poem *Grażyna* by Zagajewski¹⁰², the name of a cinema in Gliwice is a symptom of a doomed-to-fail attempt at regaining Lviv, "changing / this city into that city"¹⁰³. And in *Bełzec*¹⁰⁴ a film comparison:

What a beautiful day, surely berries in the wood
are already as black as the lips of a *femme fatale* from a silent film¹⁰⁵

is used to signal the pre-war past and to clash it with the cruelty committed later in Bełzec:

Berries are blacker and blacker.
Shadows are black, hollowed.
Burnt love is black.¹⁰⁶

The subject of memories expressed through film does not have to lead to pleasant emotions, as shown by some of the above-mentioned examples, as well as the poem *Kino i coś jeszcze* [Cinema and something else] by Lipska¹⁰⁷ (ZG, 110). The title of the precursory debut by Luis Buñuel is used here metaphorically:

The beast of memories
is jerking us
like *An Andalusian Dog*
in a New York movie house
for one dollar¹⁰⁸

This "beast" can be associated with wolves which "approached the house". Another element of horror can be associated with silent film: "a silent shadow was cast". This poem is about a constant threat, about the "decay of time", which "crushed history with a plot". As a side note,

¹⁰¹Mościcki, 143.

¹⁰²Zagajewski, *Asymetria*, 23.

¹⁰³See Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel, "Oddajcie mi moje dzieciństwo...". Pamięć i zapomnienie w twórczości Adama Zagajewskiego" ["Give me my childhood back...". Memory and oblivion in Zagajewski's works], in: Czabanowska-Wróbel, *Utopia powtórzenia* [Utopia of repetition], 278, 279.

¹⁰⁴Adam Zagajewski, "Bełzec", in: Adam Zagajewski, *Prawdziwe życie* [Real life] (Kraków: a5, 2019), 63.

¹⁰⁵Jaki piękny dzień, z pewnością jeżyny w lesie
są już czarne jak usta amantek w niemym filmie

¹⁰⁶Jeżyny są coraz czarniejsze.
Czarne są cienie, wydrążone.
Czarna jest miłość spalona.

¹⁰⁷Ewa Lipska, "Kino i coś jeszcze" [Cinema and something more], in: Ewa Lipska, *Pamięć operacyjna* [Operational memory] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2017), 33–34.

¹⁰⁸Bestia wspomnień
wciąż szarpie nami
jak *Pies andaluzyjski*
w nowojorskim Iluzjonie
za jednego dolara.

it should be observed that the forthcoming transformations are expressed in a form which sounds like an ironic epilogue added by the poet to *Za szkłem* by Barańczak:

In a jar of cucumbers
a cineplex was maturing¹⁰⁹

The not-last screening

The New Wave's reflection on popular culture is (rightly so) mostly associated with Barańczak, but Zagajewski also approaches this topic in his latest collection of essays:

And there is one more rich source of references which is crucial in poetry – mass culture. I think that the noble theologians do not have a big problem with that, as they can simply ignore it – or study it wearing gloves, so to say. Meanwhile, reading hundreds of poems printed in dozens of magazines makes us realize that John Lennon, Robert De Niro, Andy Warhol, Greta Garbo, and Marilyn Monroe appear there more often than Dante, Milton, Goethe or Mickiewicz [...] ¹¹⁰.

The poetry of the Generation '68 is another proof that there is no point in distancing oneself from such references. And despite the rather impressive volume of the present text, it is merely a reconnaissance. Film-related poetry requires more attention and detailed analyses of its stylistic tropes. A more extensive list of poems and poets is needed, contexts – from prose ¹¹¹, essay writing, film studies – should be developed, and “New Wave film” should be compared to films of both older and newer poems, as well as those which escaped the generational poetics of contemporaries, such as Bohdan Zadura's poetry...

There is still much to do in terms of literary studies (theory, history of literature, interpretation). However, even the necessarily short review presented here shows the significance of the role sometimes played by film in New Wave poetry. Poetic cinema is not always associated with clearly stated attitudes, it sometimes complicates interpretations of poetic situations, but then it supplies pictures, scenes, figures, which all allow us to realize and sensualize issues related to politics, culture, love, existential anxiety, and (un)successful attempts at stopping disintegration. And to show a person in a slightly different way; a bit of Bogart and Cooper – and a bit of Laurel and Hardy.

translated by Paulina Zagórska

¹⁰⁹W słoikach z ogórkami
dojrzewało Multikino.

¹¹⁰Adam Zagajewski, “Odeszli wielcy poeci” [Great poets are gone], in: Adam Zagajewski, *Substancja nieuporządkowana* [Unstructured substance] (Kraków: Znak, 2019), 116–117.

¹¹¹For example, Koschany notices the cinemacity of a part of *Żywa śmierć* (*Scenariusz z mojej wczesnej młodości. Wakacje*) [Living death. A scenario from my early youth] by Lipska (see Koschany, “Literackie filmy urojone”, 66).

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT:

The paper presents the role of film in the poetry of Generation '68 – mostly by Stanisław Barańczak, but also Julian Kornhauser, Ewa Lipska, and Adam Zagajewski. The New Wave poets referred to actors (such as Humphrey Bogart, Gary Cooper, the duo Laurel and Hardy, Charlie Chaplin, Ali McGraw), characters, titles, scenes, as well as experiences and conclusions related to film genres from cinema and (less commonly) TV productions. It allowed to verbalize or even “translate” issues regarding ethical choices, the condition of a man lost in a clash with the world, (and often doomed to fail in that clash), evanescence, and attempts at escaping from its ruthless rules into sensual categories.

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Stanisław Barańczak

NEW WAVE

Ewa Lipska

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