EASTERN EUROPEAN SCREEN CULTURES

Henri de Corinth

Andrzej Żuławski

Abject Cinema

Amsterdam
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"W tym sensie wszelka sztuka jest życiorysem."
["In this sense, all art is biography."]
– *Jako nic*, 2002

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Part I

Landscapes of Affect

1 Kristeva and Żuławski

Abstract
Provides the reader with an introduction to the concepts put forth by Julia Kristeva's *Pouvoirs de l'Horreur* and *Revolution de la langage poetique* and their application to interpreting Andrzej Żuławski's cinema, an overview of Żuławski's filmography, a historiography of previous applications of Kristeva to film studies, and the origins of Kristeva's thinking in both psychoanalysis and semiotics.

Keywords: Kristeva, Żuławski, psychoanalysis, semiotic, symbolic, abject

The cinema of Andrzej Żuławski constitutes an experience of the abject, both in its depiction of its subjects and in the embodiment of its own form. Żuławski depicted subjects that on the surface appear to exist in states of abjection, be they estranged from some kind of norm or stasis—social, political, spiritual, geographic, or otherwise—or a state of regression or extreme emotional duress—often manifesting itself in corporeal gesture, collapse of language, or other complication of performative behavior. At the same time, his cinema, received either as a single film or collectively as a corpus of works, registers as a cinema that *in itself* exists in a state of abjection, given the sociopolitical and intellectual circumstances under which Żuławski worked, specifically the national film industries that existed under an ideologically divided Europe in the middle twentieth century, and the dynamic that existed between the director's personal life and his cinema.

The means of understanding Żuławski's cinema in these terms have diffuse origins in the semiotic literary theory of Mikhail Bakhtin, psychoanalytic theories developed by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, and—arguably most relevant to a filmmaker such as Żuławski—in writings of Bulgarian-French philosopher Julia Kristeva. Kristeva belongs to a relatively short list of practitioners of film theory distilled from semiotic theory—or "semiosis"—established piecemeal by Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure, which includes Gilles Deleuze, Teresa de Lauretis, Kaja Silverman, and Peter Wollen. The concern in the case of these theorists

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has to do with three components of a film: its textuality, or immediate matter onscreen; its narrativity, or matter acting on other matter; and its exo-referentiality, or mediating elements from which one derives meaning. Żuławski's films, while at first immediately concerned with filmic affectation taking place onscreen—and less so with narrativity, given how they routinely draw one's attention to the arbitrariness of narrative structures at large—are in the end more concerned with how one would or would not attribute "meaning" to onscreen events. The objective with this study is not so much the attribution of meaning but the *process* through which one does so. Kristeva's theory is distinguished in that it exists at a crossroads between semiotics and psychoanalysis. By "abject" we mean the mental state described in Kristeva's 1980 essay *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* ("Powers of Horror"), which describes a "pre-linguistic terror" experienced when one is presented with an unpleasant event, that terror itself originating in a subject's ambivalent relationship with his or her mother. This book interprets Żuławski's entire filmic oeuvre through a methodological lens distilled in part from Kristeva's works, arguing that not only are his subjects—being their narratives, characters, events, and so on—abject (in that they all contain moments that approach something like the abject) but that his cinema as a whole—his mise-en-scène, cinematography, and so on—is abject in its presentation and form, hence the term "abject cinema."

According to Kristeva, the abject as a noun (*l'abjet*, "the abject") is not a physical object, but has one quality of the object, which is the object's opposition to the *I*, the I being one's sense of subjecthood vis-a-vis the objects found in the world. Abject as a verb (*abjecter*, "to abject [something]") is to expel something and be repulsed by it. The I as a subject does not want to assimilate the repulsive. I expel and abject it, however, because certain objects in the world do not constitute an "other" since they are essentially a part of "me"—such as food, blood, organic waste, offspring, and so on—I paradoxically expel and abject "myself." The abject, then, remains elusive, or in Kristeva's words, remains "quite close, but it cannot be assimilated," or as one of Żuławski's subjects states: "a reflection of ourselves called out from the dark."[1]

One finds aspects of *l'abject* and *abjecter* throughout Żuławski's filmography—be it Michal's visions of immobilized bodies in *The Third Part of the*

1 Julia Kristeva, *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: Essai sur l'Abjection* (Paris: Seuil, 1980), 9. From the opening paragraph: "C'est là, tout près mais inassimilable." The dialogue from Żuławski's *On the Silver Globe* (1977) arrives at a scene where the priest Roda suggests that the film's alien race, the Szern, are not so different from human beings.

Night, the food fight in *L'Amour braque*, or the filming of pornography in *L'Important c'est d'aimer*—and embedded in the director's filmmaking as a whole as the viewer experiences it. By that reckoning, we are interested in Żuławski's cinema not merely as a literal portrayal of the abject in its subjects, but also as a corpus of film objects that are abject unto themselves, to quote Tarja Laine, "in their affective orientation, both toward the cinematic world and toward the spectator," and how the abject is "embodied in and experienced through the film itself."[2] The objective is to bring abjection into relation with "filmic narratives in which disgust is not only a theme, but where the narrative position itself is also structured so as to traverse a trajectory of abjection, a process that registers as pain to the inside and terror to the outside."[3] Żuławski, who long thought that for a viewer to "enjoy" a film was largely a bourgeois activity, implying that the film should do something else, believed that the extreme states portrayed in his films could have a therapeutic effect on the viewer through a kind of exhaustion.[4] This is not so removed from the idea of a narrative film traversing the trajectory of abjection—dispersing its effect "outside" of itself.

An aspect of Kristeva's seminal work—and the one that is arguably the most relevant to approaching Żuławski's cinema—is the binary between language and abject experience. The ego and superego, both of which are predicated on language, routinely drive the abject away through the mind's utilization of language, language functioning as a device to parse and reduce the world into easily understandable components. By contrast, the abject is something that "draws me close to a place where meaning collapses."[5] Żuławski's films distinguished themselves in moments where both the film's landscape and the filmmaking itself descend into that "place." Regarding the latter specifically, this is not dissimilar to the notion put forth by Gottlob Frege arguing that thought alone produces an intuitive

2 Tarja Laine, "Traumatic Horror Beyond the Edge: *It Follows* and *Get Out*," *Film Philosophy* 23, no. 3 (2019): 283, and "Imprisoned in Disgust: Roman Polanski's *Repulsion*," *Film Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (2011): 37.

3 Crista Blümlinger, "Figures of Disgust," in *A Companion to Michael Haneke*, ed. Roy Grundmann (West Sussex: Wiley, 2010), 155.

4 Daniel Bird and Stephen Thrower, "Cinema Superactivity," *Eyeball* (1998), 62, 69.

5 Kristeva, *Pouvoirs*, 9: "Mais si l'object [...] m'équilibre dans la trame fragile d'un désir de sens qui, en fait, m'homologue indéfiniment, infiniment à lui, au contraire, l'abject, objet chu, est radicalement un exclu et me tire vers là où le sens s'effondre." In her eulogistic essay of Żuławski, Alexandria Heller-Nicholas described the director's cinema as a "wordless" one, using Isabelle Adjani's performance in *Possession* as an exemplar in "Andrzej Żuławski and the Powerlessness of Language," *Overland* (February 25, 2016), https://overland.org.au/2016/02/andrzej-zulawski-and-the-powerlessness-of-language. Accessed August 9, 2023.

structure independent of language, and, likewise, Károly Kerényi's writings regarding the imperfect nature of language as a means of understanding the world in that with each individual language comes a set of pre-linguistic experiences that shapes one's thinking.[6] This study will use many of the same terminologies used by Kristeva in her texts—which in turn used much of the terminology of the Russian semiologies of Bakhtin and Valentin Voloshinov, and of Lacanian psychology—and a few of my own coinage as they may pertain to Żuławski's cinema, specifically the *landscape of affect* produced by his mise-en-scène.

The subject's movement away from language and toward the collapse of meaning—the abject—is conducive to an interpretation of Żuławski's cinema, the subject being simultaneously the characters in the film, the viewer, and an exchange between the two. Even at first glance, two major elements emerge in nearly all of his films: the mise-en-scène's emphasis on kinesis of the camera and of bodies—subjects writhe, convulse, dance, and so on—and the denuded state of dialogue—subjects stumble over words, stammer, and engage in wordplay and non-sequiturs. These elements indicate a movement away from the sign—a sign being an instance of semiotic signification—and toward a collapse of meaning. Without such signification, the films themselves and their subjects "beseech[es] a discharge, a convulsion, a crying out."[7] Żuławski's direction takes this collapse of meaning literally, from the spasms in *Possession* and the feral dancing in *La Femme publique* to the metafictional games of *Boris Godunov* and *Cosmos*.

One associates a movement away from language and toward a collapse of meaning with what Kristeva calls the semiotic *chora*—a term borrowed from Plato meaning "enclosure" or "receptacle"—described in her work *La Révolution du langage poétique* (*Revolution in Poetic Language*, 1974) as a space of semiotic intervention. The chora is the articulation of primary processes and drives—connected to and oriented toward the mother by the subject, who is in turn not yet distinguished entirely from her. More specifically, the chora is the "material" from which language emerges, with all discourse moving with and against its grain. An aspect of the chora is that it is *modal*—specifically a modality of significance and the signifying process, where the "linguistic sign is not yet articulated [...] as

6 Gottlob Frege, "Der Gedanke. Eine logische Untersuchung," *Beiträge zur Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus* I (1918–19), 58–77, and Károly Kerényi, *Dionysus. Urbild des unzerstörbaren Lebens* (München and Wien: Langen-Müller, 1976).

7 Kristeva, *Pouvoirs*, 10: "Sans (lui) faire signe, il sollicite une décharge, une convulsion, un cri."

the distinction between real and symbolic." Energy "not yet constituted as such" moves through the body, where the linguistic sign has not yet been articulated, and is arranged according to restraints placed upon it by various structures—familial, social, and so on.[8] Esther's dancing in *La Femme publique* or Frederic's piano playing in *La Note bleue*, then, indicate two subjects' entering a state of semiotic intervention by casting off the symbolic while at once imbedding themselves in the symbolic structures with which each is presented—the *mannequin de charm* photography and its implicit power structure in the former and the nineteenth-century artistic milieu of composers and authors in the latter.

What is also relevant to Żuławski's cinema is the notion that the symbolic has no actual power to communicate, the semiotic being the only means of doing so. Kristeva writes in her 1987 study of melancholy and depression *Soleil noir* (*Black Sun*) that the monotonous speech of the depressed subject indicates that that subject's—and all subjects'—relationship to language is a purely symbolic construct, comparing it to the animated speech of a subject who is not depressed. A speaking body must necessarily invest itself in the symbolic, while depression hampers the returns on that investment. The relevance of the depressive/melancholic state lies in Kristeva's idea that such a state indicates an ambivalence toward a lost object that is at the same time always imbedded in oneself.[9] Żuławski's cinema depicts such an ambivalence in its subjects, which often registers onscreen as infantilism, as with Marie in *L'Amour braque* or Solange in *La Note bleue*.

While Żuławski wrote twice as many novels as he directed films—all of the former, in his words, more obtuse than the latter[10]—this book focuses primarily on Żuławski's filmography, being that the filmic properties of cinematography and montage, which do not inform literary or stage texts by necessity, are fundamental components of the overarching abject experience that Żuławski presents. What distinguishes the films from the novels, naturally, is the viewer's act of seeing onscreen gesture and hearing sound in a visual-aural text rather than gesture and sound described in printed text, leaving the "formation" of the visual and aural to the reader's imagination. This binary between texts begets the argument that printed text is insufficient for the embodied experience with the abject that Żuławski

8 Julia Kristeva, *La Révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Seuil, 1974), 22–25: "… nous sommes ici dans une modalité de la signifiante où le signe linguistique n'est pas encore articulé comme absence d'objet et comme distinction entre réel et symbolique."

9 Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989 [1987]), 11, 33–34.

10 Andrzej Żuławski, *Un Testament écrit en français* (Lyon: Filigranowa, 2017), 137.

portrays throughout his oeuvre. Żuławski himself stated that not every narrative is conducive to literature and vice versa, as literature is bound by language systems which represent self-imposed limits on ultimately wordless experience, as the body and embodied experience in lieu of an exchange with a descriptive "text" is a key component to cinema. The two will often conflate in Żuławski's cinema, however, as his in particular reveals a fluidity regarding the filmic and literary text in the knowledge that film cannot meet literature as an adaptation or otherwise.[11]

On the subject of analog in Żuławski's cinema (insofar as narrative events in that cinema mirror actual experience from the director's life) and of the use of the director's lived experience as "supporting material" for interpreting narrative events in his films, much of this book will allude to and directly quote interviews with and writings by the director, though not necessarily as evidence to support its argument. An analogy would be the difference between the facts/evidence of a case and a lawyer's *argument concerning* the facts/evidence of a case in legal procedure, in that anything a lawyer *says* is not admissible as evidence. Żuławski was known to be a somewhat unreliable narrator in interviews and writings; however, for the sake of such an argument emerging from the lineages established by Freud, Lacan, Bakhtin, et al. —wherein one must concede that the human mind is highly associative, its contents therefore "admissible" as a kind of evidence—we are interested in that very unreliability because it can indirectly reveal something else about Żuławski's psyche as it registers in his films. Rhetoric, or even speech at all, on the director's part—the symbolic—provides a glimpse at psychological fact—the semiotic real. The notion of Żuławski doing this in itself will function as a kind of evidence in that regard.

There is at once an almost fundamental conflict between explorations of the semiotic and interpretations of cinema in that the two together by default tend to alienate audiences, given that film language is predicated largely on the symbolic,[12] and the psychoanalytic-semiotic approach to the film subject is also not without its own critics. For the most, foils to psychoanalytic-semiotic theory as they pertain to cinema argue that it places too great an emphasis on evaluating cinema on ideological grounds—citing the Greek *theorin* ("to look at/contemplate"), which instigates an extension

11 Regarding the adaptation of literature to film, see Dorota Hartwich's interview with Żuławski in "Cinema Must Be as a Peacock's Tail" *Cineuropa* (October 6, 2005), https://cineuropa.org/en/interview/52233. Accessed August 9, 2023. Daniel Bird and Andrzej Żuławski, audio commentary for *La Femme publique* DVD (Irvine, CA: Mondo Vision, 2008 [1984]).

12 Hey Seung Chung, *Kim Ki-duk* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 73.

"beyond subjective perception and into the public realm"—rather than on aesthetic—from *aesthesis* "subjective aspect of perception." The magazine *Screen* came to be known for its emphasis on psychoanalysis in film criticism—peaking in the mid 1970s, the eponymous "Screen theory" in general defined as "the holy trinity of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Saussurean linguistics and Althusserian marxism."[13] Nevertheless, the so-called "Screen theory" throughout the 1970s addressed the limitations of the structuralist semiotics of Saussure and Jakobson, resolving them ostensibly by integrating historical materialism with psychoanalysis. This was merely a reformulating of semiotics in psychoanalytic terms, and not a "suspicion of the visual," as critics would have it.[14] Narrative cinema as a whole contains traces of the "literary" in its presentiment in any case, and in the end all one may speak of is a heuristic application of literary and psychological theory to a certain medium. This is a singular appraisal of sorts of Żuławski's works, suggesting a template through which one may interpret them.

For the sake of argument, this book will address the protagonists of Żuławski's films as *subjects*, and the protagonists' foils, companions, supporting characters, and the like as *objects*. The use the terms "subject" and "object" exists at once in multiple senses. It will refer to the subject and object in a linguistic sense in the same way film studies at large have adopted semiotic theories and applied them to cinema, treating cinema as a text, with a particular emphasis here on narrative exchanges as sentences (subject–verb–object). It will refer to the subject and object in a psychoanalytic sense, with the subject being one that has come into his or her own subjecthood or selfhood, and the object being target of some kind of libidinal desire or purpose that the object can only satisfy. This book aims, then, to address the complications that emerge in Żuławski's (most often grammatically incorrect) "sentences" in their confounding of narrative form and collapse of the divide between subject and object, and in Żuławski's portrayal of liberal desire for film objects, given that the archetypal example of this desire in the film subject is for the maternal—a mother or early caretaker.

Żuławski directed sixteen films in his lifetime: one short film while a student at L'Institut de hautes études cinématographiques (IDHEC, reorganized and renamed in the late 1960s La Fémis), two short subjects for Polish television, twelve features, and a fragment. In his student film *La Sorcière* (*The Witch*, 1958), the protagonist Savely begins to suspect that

13 Paula Quigley, "Undoing the Image: Film Theory and Psychoanalysis," *Film-Philosophy* 15, no. 1 (2011): 13, 14.

14 Quigley, "Undoing the Image," 15.

his wife Raisa is a witch who summons storms in order to lure men to their house. We see the inverse in the short film *Pieśń triumfujacej miłosci* (*The Story of Triumphant Love*, 1967), made for Polish television, where a married couple Fabiusz and Waleria are visited by the mysterious Mucjusz, who intends to seduce Waleria. In the short film *Pavoncello* (1968), also made for television, a concert violinist Fosca becomes enamored with an aristocratic woman Zinayda. Żuławski's feature debut *Trzecia część nocy* (*The Third Part of the Night*, 1971), co-written by his father Mirosław and based in part on his father's experience in World War II, follows widower Michal through a phantasmagory of Nazi-occupied Lwów. *Diabeł* (*The Devil*, 1972), set in eighteenth-century Poland during the Russian partitions, follows a political prisoner, Jakub, through a similar phantasmagory of religious zealotry and political intrigue. In *L'Important c'est d'aimer* (*That Most Important Thing: Love* or *The Most Important Thing is to Love*, 1975), his first feature made in France after Romy Schneider had seen and was impressed by *The Third Part of the Night*, spouses Nadine and Jacques come to an impasse in their marriage when Nadine meets photographer Servais. The unfinished *Na srebrnym globie* (*On the Silver Globe*, 1977/1988) spans several generations of humans who colonize a distant planet in a science fiction allegory of the Old and New Testaments. In *Possession* (1981), spouses Anna and Mark living in Cold War-era Berlin become estranged after Anna admits to having an affair. *La Femme publique* (*The Public Woman*, 1984) follows aspiring actress Ethel who lands a lead role in a historical film whose director Lucas may be involved in a political assassination. In *L'Amour braque* (*Mad Love*, 1985), a Hungarian immigrant Léon befriends French gangster Mickey and becomes enamored with his girlfriend Marie. *Boris Godunov* (1989) depicts the conflict between the armies of a Russian tsar and a Polish noblewoman during the famine of 1601–1603. In *Mes nuits sont plus belles que vos jours* (*My Nights Are More Beautiful Than Your Days*, 1989), the structure of language gradually disintegrates for Lucas after he develops a terminal brain disease. *La Note bleue* (*The Blue Note*, 1991) is an imagined portrait of historical figures including Frédéric Chopin, George Sand, and Eugène Delacroix. In *Szamanka* (*She-Shaman*, 1996), the first film Żuławski made in Poland since 1977 and his last to be made there, a woman known only as "Wloszka" ("the Italian") begins an affair with an anthropologist Michal, who has unearthed the mummified body of what he believes to be a shaman. *La Fidélité* (*Fidelity*, 2000), while ostensibly based on a seventeenth-century text, follows a plotline similar to that of *L'Important c'est d'aimer* in that the marriage between publishing executive Clève and photographer Clélia is complicated when

she meets photographer Némo. In Żuławski's final film, *Cosmos* (2015), aspiring novelist Witold attempts to solve the mystery of a dead bird in what is ultimately a work metafiction and intertextuality that calls back upon itself.

Outside of France, the reception of Żuławski in Western film writing has historically been hyperbolic, from the beginning of his career in Western Europe in the mid-1970s through the present day.[15] *L'Important* was described upon its release as "a succession of slaps to the spectator" with "an almost obscene passionate fury,"[16] *Possession* was described at initial festival screenings as "a constant assault" with "paroxysms of violent outburst,"[17] and *Mes nuits* "transformed Raphaële Billetdoux's novel into a ruthless descent into hell."[18] In the last fifteen years, "no one's cinematic voice is as divisive, as ludicrously anarchic, as viciously overwrought," "a filmgoer either has the flesh-in-the-teeth lust for his emotional, visual, and narrative pandemonium—or they do not,"[19] to admire Żuławski requires a "postmodern fondness for the absurd, ambivalent, phantasmagorical, ambiguous, intricate,"[20] his films being "an orgy of irrationality,"[21] where "jealousy becomes a nightmarish inferno of delirious, whirling images,

15 French film periodicals such as *Cahiers du Cinema* and *Positif* had historically provided serious critiques of Żuławski's oeuvre. Some other early exceptions generally include a passage on *The Third Part of the Night* and *The Devil* in Mira Liehm and Antonin J. Liehm. *The Most Important Art: Soviet and Eastern European Film After 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 378; and Ryszard W. Kluszczyński, "Narracja pozornie subiektywna w filmie Andrzeja Żuławskiego Trzecia część nocy," in *Analizy i interpretacje: film polski*, ed. Alicja Helman and Tadeusz Miczka (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1984), 29–41; however, these are writings devoted primarily to Polish filmmakers and not necessarily meant for popular readership.

16 Juan E. Lahosa, "Fabrica de sueños," *El Ciervo* 25, no. 278 (February 1976): 31.

17 Annette Insdorf, "French Selections at the 1981 Cannes Film Festival," *The French Review* 55, no. 3 (February 1982): 423.

18 Patrick Brion, "Roselyne, Blanche, Cora …," *Revue des Deux Mondes* (June 1989), 231.

19 Michael Atkinson, "Trouble Every Day: From Amour Fou to Primal Scream: Inside the Movie Madhouse of Andrzej Zulawski," *Film Comment* 39, no. 1 (2003): 39. The same article was later rewritten as "Blunt Force Trauma: Andrzej Zulawski," in *Exile Cinema: Filmmakers at Work Beyond Hollywood*, ed. Michael Atkinson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 79–85.

20 Margarete Wach, "Cineastischer Ost-West-Divan Kinder von Marx und Coca-Cola, coincidentia oppositorum, poètes maudits oder dreimal Nouvelle Vague Polonaise," in *Nouvelle Vague Polonaise? Auf der Suche nach einem flüchtigen Phänomen der Filmgeschichte*, ed. Margarete Wach (Marburg: Schüren, 2013), 31.

21 Patrick Holzapfel, "Unfinished Dances: On the Silver Globe von Andrzej Żuławski," *Jugend ohne Film* (August 9, 2014), https://jugendohnefilm.com/unfinished-dances-on-the-silver-globe-von-andrzej-zulawski. Accessed August 9, 2023.

canted shots and dissonant sounds,"[22] and so on. The director's artistic intention has been characterized as being ultimately more relevant than the actual resultant footage, calling the result a "disorderly, provocative, a zebra of fury," with Żuławski's talent, though acknowledged, being "lost" somehow in filmmaking process.[23] It is, however, in critics' hyperbolic language one finds a glimpse at how the iconography of so many of Żuławski's films, while merely sitting on the filmic surface, would be conducive to a semiotic study of what rests beneath the surface, predicated on an exploration of the Kristevan abject and pre-linguistic chora and the Lacanian *réel*. The film elements in the director's oeuvre that the Western critical establishment have routinely described using hyperbole, positive or negative—"a series of emotional shocks, hence the recourse to vomiting, bloody wounds, screams, bruises, inaudible or weak dialogues"[24]—suggest a corpus of films that are aware of their own artifice, and thus allude to something more elemental behind their artifice. One of the objectives of this study is to subject Żuławski's "overwrought" sensibilities to a reasonable interpretative template. In order to do so, it is necessary to trace how a template such as the abject is understood as it pertains to film criticism.

Applications of psychoanalysis to the interpretation of fiction are often largely heuristic—that is, those applications extrapolate certain concepts proffered by psychoanalysis and tend not to address the historical setting from which they emerged.[25] Countless applications of Kristeva's notion of the abject to cinema take place through the prism of a pivotal 1993 work by Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine*, which through an interpretation of *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* develops a singular conception of the horror film that appeared as early as 1986—in an article by Creed which applied the concept of monstrous mothering to Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979).[26] Creed defines horror as a depiction of images of the abject. Such images include the maternal figure, who represents a threat to the stability of the Kristevan

22 Marcus Stiglegger, "Außer Atem: Nachruf auf Andrzej Zulawski (am 17.2.2016)," in *Grenzkontakte: Exkursionen ins Abseits der Filmgeschichte*, ed. Marcus Stiglegger (Berlin: Martin Schmidt, 2016), 200.

23 Freddy Bauche, *Vingt-cinq ans de cinéma français: parcours croisés 1979–2003* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 2005), 91–92.

24 Bauche, *Vingt-cinq ans de cinéma français*, 92.

25 Introduction to *Keyframes: Popular Cinema and Cultural Studies*, ed. Matthew Tinkcom and Amy Vallarejo (London: Routledge, 2001), 10. The authors describe the tendency among theorists "to seize upon one or two suggestive concepts of formulation (the idea of the fetish, for example) without situating them within a broader historical or theoretical context."

26 Barbara Creed, "Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection," *Screen* 27, no. 1 (1986): 44–70.

symbolic order. Narrative conflict emerges from the threat of an "archaic mother" or "monstrous womb," a maternal authority whose threat suggests the "obliteration of the self" using the maternal and vaginal imagery in such films as *Alien* and David Cronenberg's *The Brood* (1979).[27] All of these narrative conflicts center around femininity in that they are based in the separation of the child from the mother. Abjection is thus a desire to fulfill lack by returning to a pre-subjective state and become one with the mother. Creed drew parallels between the features of horror films and patriarchal mental imagery that had developed out of Freudian ideas of castration anxiety, dubbing this the *femme castratrice*. These parallels address women not just as mere victims but as a monstrous threat to men rooted in their fear of castration, using the appendectomy revenge act in Meir Zarchi's *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978) as an example.

The book was highly influential, so much so that in the last quarter century it has been canonized among film critics and scholars to the point where it is routinely cited in compendia and surveys of film theory.[28] Creed's adaptation of Kristeva provided an alternative to criticism that focused on the scopophilic aspects of horror and other genre cinema, derived in part from Laura Mulvey's "male gaze" theorized in the 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."[29] As Carrie Tarr stated in 2010: "These films [...] require a different kind of analysis than that posited by classic feminist gaze theory, one based on embodied spectatorship and the masochistic pleasures of self-abnegation and abjection."[30]

Creed explores how Kristeva's notion of the abject pertains specifically to the horror film, however, and not to other genres by necessity. Part of Creed's project was to dismantle the binary between the (male) "monster" and the (female) "victim"—and by extension, the notions of heroes versus villains and of good versus evil. Such binaries are not always conducive to films that exist outside of the horror genre. Further, Creed looks specifically at North

27 Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

28 These include and are certainly not limited to Guy Austin, "Contemporary French Horror Cinema: From Absence to Embodied Presence" in *A Companion to Contemporary French Cinema*, ed. Alistair Fox et al. (West Sussex: Wiley, 2015), 279–80; Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 629–31; Brigid Cherry, *Horror* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 115–18; Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener. *Film Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 121–22; Janet McCabe, *Feminist Film Studies* (London: Wallflower, 2004), 98–99.

29 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 6–18.

30 Carrie Tarr, "Mutilated and Mutilated Bodies: Women's Takes on 'Extreme' French Cinema," in *Visions of Struggle in Women's Filmmaking in the Mediterranean*, ed. Flavia Laviosa (New York: Palgrave, 2010), 64.

American horror films, while the corpus of Żuławski's cinema—though not without its moments that might typify agreed-upon notions of "horror" in the Western tradition—are not what audiences would generally agree are horror films in the same vein as *Alien*, *The Brood*, or *I Spit on Your Grave*. Likewise, Creed's work is not always conducive to the study of horror films themselves. Consider Pamela Craig and Martin Fradley's article on American horror cinema and Stephen Mulhall's writing on *Alien* vis-à-vis the arguments put forth in Creed's 1986 article. By her own admission, Creed states that hers is not a comprehensive examination of Kristeva's abjection, and limited her discussion to how the film subject relates to borders, the mother-child relationship, the feminine body, and to an extent constructions of the abject according to ancient religions.[31] Might we then expand this theoretical application of Kristeva and suggest that a cornerstone of all narrative cinema—not just horror cinema—originates in the subject's ambivalence toward his or her mother? Do representations of the abominable "castrated body" and the threat of castration not transcend genre?

The ideas put forth in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*, outside of any notion of the "monstrous feminine," have been applied heuristically in cinema since it was published in 1980. Writing in 1988 and drawing as much upon theorist Mary Douglas, Tania Modleski applied the notion of the abject to Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and *Frenzy* (1976), arguing that corpses threaten the male order established in those narratives with contamination, Norman's meticulous cleaning after Marion's murder in the former and the corpse appearing in the river in the latter.[32] James Riley's interpretation of the ending of *Carnival of Souls* (1962), where Mary sees her own corpse, uses Kristeva's establishment of selfhood to interpret how the film collapses the boundaries necessary to establish Mary's own subjecthood.[33]

Applications of Kristeva's notion of the abject to cinema from the last quarter century outside of the template provided by Creed as they pertain to horror films are at once versatile and relatively few. Scholars have related

31 Pamela Craig and Martin Fradley, "Youth, Affective Politics, and the American Horror Film," in *American Horror Film: Genre at the Turn of the Millennium*, ed. Steffen Hantke (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 79–80. Stephen Mulhall, *On Film* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 15–16. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine*, 8–9.

32 Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1988), 104–7.

33 James Riley, "Have You No Respect? Do You Feel No Relevance? Narrative and Critical Subversion in C*arnival of Souls*," in *Crash Cinema: Representation in Film*, ed. Mark Goodall et al. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 22.

the notion of the abject to the disruption of national borders,[34] the breaking of taboo among film subjects,[35] the liminal state of the filmic body,[36] and the director's plotting of various abject events and simultaneous compulsion and repulsion to his or her subjects.[37] Fewer still are any studies of Żuławski's cinema through the template established by Kristeva. Helena Duffy's 2009 study of *La Fidélité* characterized the dynamic between Clélia and her mother in terms of the former's attempt to move away from the semiotic space engendered by a child's union with its mother, yet still remaining suspended in a pre-symbolic state. Fabio Vighi's study, also from 2009, remarked how the female subjects in *L'Important c'est d'aimer* and *La Fidélité*, caught between the Lacanian *réel* and marital security, opt for the former as the more extreme measure in lieu of their occupying symbolic spaces prepared to exploit them.[38]

Other studies are relevant to Żuławski's cinema in particular in that such an abject emotional or psychic state is irrevocably bound with the experience of exile. "Europe cannot be defined by either faith or ethnicity," according to Thomas Elsaesser, who draws a parallel in 2005 between

34 Ina Bertrand, "Borders and Boundaries: History and Television in a Postmodern World," in *Screening the Past: Film and the Representation of History*, ed. Tony Barta (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 199–200. Stephen Crofts, "Gender and Nationality in Four Countries' Reception of *The Piano*," in *Jane Campion's* The Piano, ed. Harriet Margolis (Cambridge: University Press, 2000), 141.

35 Hamid Dabashi, *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future* (London: Verso, 2001), 236–38.

36 Asbjørn Grønstad, "Abject Desire: *Anatomie d'enfer* and the Unwatchable," *Studies in French Cinema* 6, no. 3 (2006): 168. Tarja Laine, *Shame and Desire: Emotion, Intersubjectivity, Cinema* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2007), 95. Christina Lee, *Screening Generation X: The Politics and Popular Memory of Youth in Contemporary Cinema* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 36–38. Victor Fan, "Redressing the Inaccessible through the Re-Inscribed Body: *In a Year with 13 Moons* and Almodóvar's *Bad Education*," in *A Companion to Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, ed. Brigitte Peucker (West Sussex: Wiley, 2012), 129–30. Domenica Vilhotti, "The Aesthetics of Ethnic Cleansing: A Historiographic and Filmic Analysis of Andres Veiel's *Balagan*," in *A Companion to German Cinema*, ed. Terri Ginsberg and Andrea Mensch (West Sussex: Wiley, 2012), 425–26.

37 Paul Coates, *The Gorgon's Gaze: German Cinema, Expressionism, and the Image of Horror* (Cambridge: University Press, 1991), 212–13. Chris Berry, "Scream and Scream Again: Korean Modernity as a House of Horrors in the Films of Kim Ki-Young," in *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema,* ed. Frances Gateward (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 104.

38 Helena Duffy, "L'(In)fidelité? A Kristevan Reading of Andrzej Żuławski's Cinematic Adaptation of *La Princesse de Clèves*," in *French Seventeenth-Century Literature: Influences and Transformations*, ed. Jane Southwood and Bernard Bourque (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), 103–4. Fabio Vighi, *Sexual Difference in European Cinema: The Curse of Enjoyment* (London: Palgrave, 2009), 66.

Kristeva's abject state and the plight of the protagonists of certain European films—characters who have dropped out of or removed themselves from the world: identifying the protagonist in Agnes Varda's *Sans toit ni loi* (*Vagabond*, 1985) and many characters in the films of Catherine Breillat and Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Consider also Isabel Santaolalla's 2010 work on the divide between the semiotic "inside" and performative symbolic "outside" as it pertains to ethnicity in cinema.[39] These studies necessitate looking back to one of Creed's foundations in Kristeva, and in turn to Kristeva's foundations and thus re-situating the abject as part of a larger landscape of phenomena. Such phenomena for Żuławski specifically includes but is not limited to his relationship with Polish *romantzym* and experience with exile across Eastern and Western Europe.

Kristeva's notion of the abject contains vestigial traces of arguments put forth in psychoanalyst Sabina Spielrein's research into childhood development, psychologist Melanie Klein's theory of the infant, Douglas's writing on taboo, and Lacan's theory of the ego—which in turn can widen the field of interpretation for varieties of abject experience in cinema outside of any one particular genre, the notion of genre being somewhat anathema to the dialogic-intertextual nature of the film text in the first place. Abjection is the foundation of objectification (objectification defined as the need to expel something inside us, turning it into an "other" and thus an object), a "foundational fantasy" according to Teresa Brennan's *History After Lacan*, and a desire for object-oriented thinking—in this case, on the parts of both the viewer and the subjects viewed.[40] This goes hand in hand with an ambivalent relationship between the subject/I and the maternal, that relationship originating with Spielrein, a former patient of Carl Jung who eventually became a psychoanalyst, publishing numerous articles, among them one on child language development that presaged Klein.[41]

While Freudian consciousness was structured largely by desire and repression, in Klein's view the unconscious was structured rather around the newborn's psychic pain. The Freudian drive has no aim or target, while Klein's drive is directed toward on object. In her 1957 essay "Envy

39 Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 124–25. Isabel Santaolalla, "Body Matters: Immigrants in Recent Spanish, Italian and Greek Cinemas," in *European Cinema in Motion: Migrant and Diaspora Film in Contemporary Europe*, ed. Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg (London: Palgrave, 2010), 155–56.

40 Teresa Brennan, *History After Lacan* (London: Routledge, 1993), 100–101.

41 Teresa de Lauretis, *Freud's Drive: Psychoanalysis, Literature, and Film* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 93–94.

and Gratitude," Klein suggested that the first "object" to be envied is the feeding breast: the infant possesses everything it desires in the breast, wants to devour it and make it a part of itself, and as time goes on this gratification adds to a feeling of grievance toward it. For the subject, the breast comes to be an ambivalent object, ultimately resulting in the subject's disturbed relation to the mother.[42] While Freud's theory was based on castration and the role of the father, Klein developed the maternal function—matricide, envy, and gratitude constituting the origin of one's capacity to think. Klein's analog to the Lacanian *réel* is what she called *phantasy* (distinct from a "fantasy," meaning a caprice, whim, etc.), which manifests itself in play between children who have yet to acquire language.[43]

Klein's thinking regarding infant psychology has some bearing on understanding the plight of Żuławski's subjects. One way is in how those subjects' actions exhibit their phantasies. Prior to the Oedipal phase and as early as a few months old,[44] the child transfers emotion onto the parent, re-internalizes the emotions in phantasy and projects them outward. Żuławski's subjects will routinely regress into this state, responding to stimuli with phantasy, as with Ethel's weeping with her mother in *La Femme publique*, or Mickey's gibberish in *L'Amour braque*. Another way is in how a subject's "private psychosis" indirectly reveals economic and ideological mechanisms in place in the first half of the twentieth century, the time when Klein conducted her research.

Kristeva's emphasis on the body as the point at which taboo is negotiated has a palimpsest in Douglas's 1966 work *Purity and Danger*. Douglas examines the correlation between what exists inside and outside the body and what cultures—based primarily on masculine notions of identity and order—deem to be taboo, specifically the transfer of fluids such as spit, menses, feces, blood, semen, etc.[45] The act of abjection or disgust runs deeper than an evolutionary trait of avoiding disease or contamination, however. Kristeva related taboo to semiotics in both *Révolution* and *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*. In the latter, the movement of organic matter—that which is at once a part of you and also cast off—is an essential component of abjection. With the

42 Melanie Klein, "Envy and Gratitude," in *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946–1963* (New York: Free Press, 1975 [1957]), 179–80.

43 Julia Kristeva, *Melanie Klein* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 7, 9, 12–13.

44 Melanie Klein, "Weaning," in *Love, Guilt and Reparation & Other Works 1921–1945* (New York: Delta, 1975 [1936]), 290–91.

45 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1969 [1966]), 121: "The mistake is to treat bodily origins in isolation from all other margins."

exchanges of saliva between characters in *L'Amour braqu*e and *Szamanka*, for instance, the taboo act becomes one of intimacy and repulsion, the characters' desire to expel and admit what is a both part of them and not.

The Devil, *Possession*, and *La Note bleue* are the only produced screenplays by Żuławski not based on already existing material, and *The Devil* and *La Note bleue* are the only original screenplays written by Żuławski alone. There is otherwise a literary component running throughout the director's filmography. Żuławski's cinema has a strong relationship to the Romantic tradition in Eastern Europe, specifically the literary and artistic tradition that emerged in nineteenth-century Poland that has come to be known as *romantyzm*, or Polish Romanticism. Polish Romanticism has roots in poets from as early as the 1770s but came to prominence sometime in the 1820s and 1830s with Poland's so-called Trzej Wieszcze ("Three Bards"): Adam Mickiewicz, Julius Słowacki, and Zygmunt Krasiński. The Romantic movement in Poland was distinguished from those elsewhere in Europe in that it was politically motivated—a response to the subjugation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the Hapsburg Empire, Prussia, and the Russian Empire in the late eighteenth century.[46]

Over time, the tradition was gradually transmuted to Polish cinema as early as the 1950s, specifically with the works Wojciech Has and Andzrej Wajda, and is often referred to still today as "Polish grotesque."[47] The terms "grotesque" and "Romantic" are more closely related in the Polish tradition relative to popular notions of either term elsewhere, and Żuławski's productions from the late 1960s to at least the early 1970s were made partially in a Polish Romantic register, his cinema once described as a "creative renewal of the baroque imagination."[48] One can find vestigial traces of Polish Romanticism in *The Story of Triumphant Love*, *The Third Part of the Night*,

46 On the political roots of the Romantic movement in Poland, see Adam Zamoyski, *The Polish Way: A Thousand Year History* (London: John Murray, 1987), 295; and Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983 [1969]) 201: "If the term Romanticism is treacherous, denoting as it does different phenomena in each country, it would be doubly dangerous to apply its most widely accepted meaning to Polish literature. The struggle against the classical rules of good taste, which began in Poland (as in France) around 1820, concealed, from its inception, political undertones. Contrary to the brand of Romanticism which in many countries was identified with a withdrawal of the individual into his own interior world, Romanticism in Poland acquired an extremely activist character and was clearly a consequence of many ideas of the Enlightenment."

47 Marcin Wrona in his verbal introduction to *Demon* at the Toronto International Film Festival, September 11, 2015.

48 Aleksandra Szarłat, *Żuławski Szaman* (Warsaw: Agora, 2019), 515. Antoni Czyż, "Bestie i ból (Wyobraźnia barokowa a filmy Andrzeja Żuławskiego)," *Ogród* 2 (1991), 80.

The Devil, and *La Note bleue*. For Żuławski, Romanticism was synonymous with surrealism, as he considered James Joyce and Samuel Beckett to be surrealist authors.[49] Unlike the terms Romantic and grotesque, the viewer must beware, however, of collapsing either in this sense with the Western notion of "surrealism" in the literary and artistic traditions in places such as France or the United States, given that surrealism as contemporary audiences understand it is largely the result of a deliberate misunderstanding of Freudian psychoanalysis by interwar period artists in Western Europe. Rather, the sensibilities present in the Polish productions have origins in the literary, and neither the artistic nor the (misunderstood) psychoanalytic, and Żuławski believed that cinematic allusions to literature were preferable to allusions to other films or to the theater.[50]

The director's first exposure to the Romantic tradition as it pertains to cinema began perhaps with his assistantships under Andrzej Wajda. Żuławski wrote *The Devil*, which contains arguably his most Romantic of protagonists, after reading Mickiewicz's works and about the Russian partitions of Poland while a production assistant on Wajda's *Popioły* (*Ashes*, 1965). These Romantic references are often explicit. The closing scenes of Słowacki's *Kordian*, where the protagonist attempts to kill the Tsar of Russia, functions as a preamble or precursor to the opening scenes of *The Devil*, where the protagonist has been imprisoned for an attempted political assassination. For Polish audiences, the identification of Jakub with Kordian would be immediate.[51] Jakub in *The Devil* appears in the land of his childhood, that land of childhood being an analog for both Jakub's familial "past" and a political one as well, one that existed prior to what Marcin Maron described in the film as "collapse of republican tradition and noble ethos"—political partitions, occupation, and exile—while Jakub's brother Ezekiel is thought to be representative of the extreme revolutionary ideas in Poland at that time.[52] Like Mickiewicz's *Dziady* ("Forefathers' Eve") or

49 Bird and Żuławski, audio commentary for *La Femme publique*.

50 Ibid.

51 Maria Olszewska-Jończyk, "Witalność kina przebiega przez jego złe, a nie dobre gusty 'Diabeł' Andrzeja Żuławskiego," *Kwartalnik filmowy* 66 (2009), 83. Jakub Rawski further explores the parallels between Jakub and Kordian in "Pomiędzy gatunkami i formami artystycznymi. Reminiscencje 'Kordiana' Juliusza Słowackiego w filmie 'Diabeł' Andrzeja Żuławskiego," *Pleograf* 1/2022 (April 1, 2022), https://pleograf.pl/index.php/pomiedzy-gatunkami-i-formami-artystycznymi-reminiscencje-kordiana-juliusza-slowackiego-w-filmie-diabel-andrzeja-zulawskiego. Accessed August 9, 2023.

52 Marcin Maron provides sociopolitical context for *The Devil* in light of Romantic ideas in *Romantyzm i kino: Idee i wyobrażenia romantyczne w filmach poliskich reżyserów z lat 1947–1990* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2019), 152–61.

Pan Tadeusz, *The Devil* is politically charged, equating its depiction of the partitions of Poland in the 1790s with the policies of Władysław Gomulka in the late 1960s, which resulted in the expulsion of thousands of Jews from the country. Further, it was the Polish government's suspension of a production of *Dziady* at the National Theatre in Warsaw in January 1968 that sparked the student demonstrations the following February and March.[53] Other Romantic literary references are peripheral, as when Blanche in *Mes nuits* speaks in rhyming verse during a trance performance, or a scene late in *La Note bleue* where Chopin and Solange recite the opening stanza of *Pan Tadeusz* together.[54]

More generally (and this is also perhaps a reason for its synonymous status with surrealism in Poland), Romanticism's privileging of the idealistic and fantastic—and rejection of the plausible and realistic—will often register narratively in Żuławski's landscapes. Regarding the larger Romantic tradition in Europe, Jerzy Borkowski wrote in 1981: "Żuławski knows this tradition very well, but does not give in to its charms …." If Romanticism in Europe emerged from "a revolt against the cruelty of history,"[55] the director is "Romantic" in his analysis of the lived facts or what he has known and experienced. Żuławski's life experience in Warsaw in the late 1950s and early 1960s is one he not only reflected on nostalgically but one that had a significant effect on his psyche. The relatively short-lived artistic and literary scene in Warsaw at that time, coined the "Duchy of Warsaw" by Zbigniew Cybulski, is described by Żuławski in *O niej* (2003), for instance. This time also saw the first publication of any creative work by the director at all: a poem, titled *Nad morzem*, in the periodical *Współczesności*, in 1961.[56] The director would compare his status as a writer to those from the early Romantic period: "For a writer, filming is a field of gaining dream information, experiences in the field of sinful nightmare, an adventure," wrote Żuławski in the 1997 novel *Kikimora*. "Almost, actually, the same as eighteenth-century intellectuals."[57] Żuławski allegedly claimed to have

53 Marcin Zaremba, "1968 in Poland: The Rebellion on the Other Side of the Looking Glass," *American Historical Review* 123, no. 3 (2018): 771.

54 A script written by Żuławski, later turned into a novel, takes its title *Był sad* from a line from *Pan Tadeusz*: "Był sad—Drzewa owocne zasadzone w rzędy / Ocieniały szerokie pole; spodem grzędy."

55 Jerzy Borkowski, "Poser à Dieu des questions sourdes et muettes," *L'avant scene du cinema* (1981), 5–6.

56 Artur Ziontek, "Andrzeja Żuławskiego literackie dopowiedzi do filmów," *Do źródeł* 6/11 (2014), 143.

57 Andrzej Żuławski, *Kikimora* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Książkowe Twój Styl, 1997), 275.

wanted thirteen children "like Tolstoy," and the source novels for *On the Silver Globe*, written by his great-uncle Jerzy Żuławski, contain noticeable stylistic vestiges of *Młoda Polska* ("Young Poland"), a neo-Romantic movement of modernist artists and authors that included Karol Szymanowski and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz.[58] He also described life in Warsaw at that time as "surreal," or more specifically: "absurd, and often very bloody," and felt that his fiction owed something to Catholicism in Poland—a staple of Polish Romanticism—in that it was fundamental to combatting Communism.[59] The political strain in Polish Romantic sensibility appears indirectly in the reception of *Boris Godunov* among Russian audiences upon its release in 1989, specifically with conductor Mstislav Rostropovich, whose WSO recording of the opera Żuławski used as the soundtrack. Rostropovich sued the production, objecting to its portrayal of Russians by a "Polish thug director."[60]

Consider the culture Jerzy Żuławski depicts in his so-called "moon trilogy" or "lunar trilogy," who use ancient military technology such as arrows, rocks, and slings, and live in castles illuminated by oil lamps and adorned with mechanical clocks.[61] The novels' vision of the future is in this sense retrofitted in a way comparable to the civilization of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth established in 1569 and dissolved throughout the 1790s, and for over two centuries the largest nation state in Europe. The society in the novels—where subjects wear inherited jewelry made of amber,[62] which contemporary readers would have recognized as a patriotic stone in Lithuania—represented to some degree the kind emulated in Polish Romantic literature. The protagonist Marek, successful once as a military leader and perceived by portions of the population as supernatural, largely fails as a politician. He had hoped to introduce to the lunar people what today would be considered a quasi-socialist government of economic equality and human rights. Because of this, a reactive propaganda machine develops and spreads misinformation about him among the population. In the end, the lunar population wants a capitalist society unbound by government regulations. At the time of publication, this may have been read as an indictment against the Russian occupation of Poland, while a

58 Żuławski, *Testament*, 83. Szarłat, *Żuławski Szaman*, 232.

59 Jean-François Robin, *Varsovie, la forêt forteresse* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008).

60 Letters from Fromont, November 18, 1989, and December 31, 1989, in Andrzej Żuławski, *Listy do domu* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Książkowe Twój Styl, 1996), 103, 110.

61 Jerzy Żuławski, *The Lunar Trilogy*, trans. Elżbieta Morgan (Point Pleasant, NJ: Zmok, 2020 [1903–11]), 220, 223–24.

62 Żuławski, *Lunar Trilogy*, 212.

modern Western reading reveals an inherently conservative society fearful of change.[63]

With the 1977 film, Żuławski the younger parlays these dramatic arcs into the psyches of the film's subjects themselves—that is, why are the lunar people compelled toward religion in the first place, and to what extent does that ecstatic compulsion affect social policy? The first humans on the moon hoped to escape a social death—in the aesthetic boundaries of the film itself, the communist proxy regime in Poland, verbalized by the graffito *śmierć*, the Polish noun for "death," on the spaceship's cabin wall—and organically established a religious construct largely absent of verbalizable policy. Again, Żuławski's astronauts in the film aim to cast off the paternal structure of human civilization, where the condensation between the word/sound presentation and visual/physical presentation of a "regime" or "government" collapses. On the moon, among Ada and her followers, there is no structure, only non-structure untainted by institutional determination. As a Romantic aside, Żuławski allegedly modeled Ada's countenance in the film on Polish painter Jacek Malczewski's late 1890s portrait of his daughter Julia Malczewska.[64]

This is a thematic concern of both Polish Romanticism and Żuławski's cinema, with the Romantic sensibility intersects with the psychoanalytic in this case. Predating Kristeva's conception of the I is Henri Lefebvre's notion of the Romantic-ironic from 1962, which states that Romantic irony represents the self as nature, which has some bearing on the surface appearance of objects in the world, with irony then always aspiring "to the perfect 'I', the possible, impossible 'I': creative activity in the abstract."[65] In this sense, the I represents something that always seems within reach but is never attainable, not an exact point in an objective space but a diffuse process posited inside a world that manifests itself as an array of affectations. Given the distinctly Polish conception of Romanticism, defined in part by a bittersweet longing for the ostensibly "ideal" culture that existed before the 1790s, one then may interpret the abjection of the self to establish the I in Żuławski's cinema in an additional, deliberately political way, in his dealings with Romanticism onscreen.

The Devil and *La Note bleue* are as much pastorals—defined as works that abide by an idealized vision of rural life, often with moral and religious

63 Ibid., 397–99, 410.

64 Daniel Bird, audio commentary for *On the Silver Globe* Blu-Ray (London: Eureka, 2023 [1977])

65 Henri Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity*, trans. John Moore (New York: Verso, 1995 [1962]), 17–18.

connotations—as they are works of Polish Romanticism. The countryside as Żuławski depicts it is something of a liminal space, and while it appears on film in a Romantic register, it contains elements of magic as it was understood by rural Polish from the time of the partitions and of Chopin, throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Up until the middle twentieth century, for the Polish peasant there is no clear distinction between the magical and the religious, nor are either divorced from the workings of the natural world. At the same time, they tended to view the Biblical Devil as Scandinavians had: as a kind of buffoon, and by that rationale there is also no one single Devil, but several lesser Devils of varying power and shrewdness, who may appear in many forms but never as a member of the peasantry.[66] The appearance of the film's titular Devil in the form of a clergyman, then, abides in several ways by the traditional conception of the Devil among the early modern Polish peasantry. Wojciech Poszniak had made something of a career out of portraying highly animated subjects that bordered on caricature, and his portrayal of the Devil as a kind of street hustler or fly-by-night salesman follows suit.

One arguably sees vestiges of Polish pastoral myth elsewhere in Żuławski's filmography, though its clearest instance is arguably in the scene in *Possession* where Mark drops off Bob at his school. It is here where he first meets Bob's teacher, Helen. She is literally his wife's double save her piercing green eyes (Isabelle Adjani's eyes are naturally blue), and is only ever seen wearing a white dress throughout the rest of the film. Consider then how such an image might be construed according to Polish arcana: The Polish noun for death, *śmierć*, is feminine, and often personified in folklore as a tall, thin woman draped in white. The same folklore holds that unusual characteristics in a person's eyes, colloquially called the "evil eye," would be considered evidence of witchcraft. Further, it was believed that children were the most vulnerable to the evil eye.[67] Thus, the appearance of this strange woman with uncanny green eyes—who looks exactly like the subject's wife, but isn't, and who wrangles small children into a schoolhouse and seems oblivious to Mark's surprise—registers to both the film's subject and the viewer as a descent from the symbolic narrative that has been heretofore accepted by both subject and viewer (up until this point in the film, nothing "supernatural" has taken place), but does this using the memory fragments of a national folklore.

How is the investigation of Slavic literary tradition and folklore relevant to the premise of Żuławski's cinema as an instance of semiotic experience? The

66 Sula Benet, *Song, Dance and Customs of Peasant Poland* (London: Dobson, 1951), 41, 42.

67 Benet, *Song, Dance and Customs of Peasant Poland*, 41, 235.

interweaving of literary references through his oeuvre suggests a past—being a shared sociocultural past that is the product of national identity established through language and print literature—that never goes away. Despite how symbolic language is the only means of articulating or approximating the past, what the past "represents" intellectually or emotionally for the director is also at once inarticulable. The settings of *Forefathers' Eve* or Stanisław Wyspiański's play *Wesele* (*The Wedding*, 1901) are landscapes of affectations, of *regres*, providing a wordless state (conscious or sociopolitical) for the subject that his current one cannot satisfy, or in Romantic terms, the subject is "haunted by his past."

The Romantic strain in the Polish canon is not only politically charged but insular. Wyspiański's play, the contents of which had some bearing on Żuławski's "Romanticist" sensibilities in *The Third Part of the Night*, *The Devil* and *La Note bleue*, was as much a product of the fin-de-siècle as Żuławski's *The Lunar Trilogy*, and thus had a reputation for being incomprehensible outside of Poland, for instance.[68] A shared sensibility between Żuławski and the Romantic and late-Romantic/Young Poland movements is not just political awareness—Wyspiański was the first dramatist to stage Mickiewicz's *Dziady* in October 1901,[69] for example—but also an insularity when it came to conventional narrative "storytelling": the works were more affective landscapes than "stories." It is this sensibility that, when present in Żuławski's cinema, has caused some misunderstanding in modern critical writing about that cinema, which approaches seemingly bizarre events in films such as *The Third Part of the Night* or *The Devil* as parts of intriguing narrative puzzle to be solved, and not the residue of literary traditions. In their subject matter and portrayal, several films by Żuławski's hand descend from the lineage of the "political supernaturalism" ushered in by Mickiewicz and continued by Wyspiański. Like *The Wedding*, both *The Third Part of the Night* and *Boris Godunov* feature a blind seer, which is a staple of the Polish Romantic tradition who functions as a speaker of sorts for a nation.[70] One might compare them to scenes in *The Wedding* featuring Wernyhora, the Ukrainian seer who appears to the wedding host late in the play. The subjects of Wsypiański's play

68 The relatively limited success and cultural reach of the play, even after Poland's induction to NATO and the European Union, is explored in Ann Komaromi, "Wyspiański's *Wesele*: Poised on the Border," *Theatre Journal* 54, no. 2 (2002): 192, 193–97. Paul Coates addresses how much of the play's content would be lost on non-Poles in "Revolutionary Spirits: The Wedding of Wajda and Wyspianski," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (1992): 127.

69 Komaromi, "Wyspiański's *Wesele*," 192.

70 Coates, "Revolutionary Spirits," 127, 128.

also have various visions: Tetmajer sees a "black knight" from one of his poems, while a journalist sees a court jester from a painting by Jan Matejko. These apparitions are comparable to those of George Sand's fictional Demogorgon and Corambé in the film landscape of *La Note bleue* (as to any doubt regarding Sand's awareness of the Romantic movement in Poland, she herself referred to Mickiewicz as the "cousin of Byron and Goethe").[71] The final act of *La Note bleue* features the cast performing a play recalling a *szopka*, a traditional play performed at Christmas with puppets that had become a common folk custom by Chopin's time.[72] This particular residue of the Romantic age is found elsewhere with Żuławski's Polish contemporaries, as puppeteering appears a year before Żuławski's film in another canonical Polish–French production, Krzysztof Kieślowski's *La Double vie de Véronique* (1991).

The literary roots of Żuławski's sensibility also go hand in hand with his films' depiction of and allusions to religion as both an institution and experience—or at least the kind of liminal experience often described has having its origins in as much. This has often led to film writing that places Żuławski's cinema in the reductive contexts of "shamanistic" or "ecstatic" filmmaking, or of the director making actors enter a "trance," a "holy frenzy," or the like.[73] Likewise, the physical acting in Żuławski's cinema has been compared to bouts of religious ecstasy experienced by medieval monks and nuns, and this comparison emerged perhaps out of the occasional instance of Christian iconography in Żuławski's films—namely the monastic life in *The Devil*, images of the crucifixion in *On the Silver Globe*, *Possession*, and *Szamanka*, and the Eye of Providence in *The Third Part of the Night* and *Cosmos*.[74] Yet these images only seem to register linguistically as "religion," "religion" being a means of parsing the world into easily-understandable signifiers that can explain behavior. As well, Żuławski's relationship to religion goes hand in hand with his cinema from the beginning. Żuławski was first introduced to filmgoing by his maternal grandmother, who would allow him to attend the cinema on the condition that he attend church. Church therefore became for the director an obligation rather than an earnest practice, which may also coincide with Żuławski's general skepticism

71 Zamoyski, *The Polish Way*, 295.

72 L. R. Lewitter, "The Polish *Szopka*," *Slavonic and East European Review* 29, no. 72 (1950): 83.

73 Alexander Schmidt, *Kino der Ekstase: Formen der Selbstüberschreitung in den Filmen Andrzej Żuławskis* (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2018), 13. The author notes that the central aspect of Żuławski's cinema is self-transgression, or ecstasy as excess and moral transgression—concepts having their origins in religion and philosophy.

74 Schmidt, *Kino der Ekstase*, 25.

of the church as an organization.[75] The director tended to view the Church, or at least the Catholic Church in Poland, in largely concrete terms as a social structure rather than as an abstract spiritual experience, as he once defined something as "religious" if it bound several disparate things together, and for him all cinema was "religious" in that regard.[76] "Art is artifice," Żuławski once said. "What could be more artificial than religion."[77] A hallmark of Polish Romanticism being the conflation of nationalist and religious sentiments, it is also accepted that Jerzy Żuławski's works addressed the reality of how there was arguably no geographical Polish state by necessity, as there is an implicit connection throughout his oeuvre between notions of "patriotism" in the author's time (that "time" being in and around the First World War) and religious mysticism, a connection which in turn dates back to the canonical Romanticism of Mickiewicz and Słowacki.[78]

Due in part to that sentiment, religious institutions, most noticeably the Catholic Church, will appear on the periphery of Żuławski's films, and might be taken as symbolic structures meant to provide sociopolitical shape to the formless semiotic landscapes in which his subjects often find themselves. While adapting Garnier's novel, Żuławski suggested that Kessling's narrative arc include a particular subplot. Says Żuławski: "I asked her to add a subplot, which was political, to say something about the time in which we were shooting … it was important to me to have that."[79] This subplot concerns a fictional Lithuanian Archbishop, Schlapas, who visits France and is eventually assassinated there. This is seen entirely through new media footage that reports how the Catholic Church in Lithuania had gained more political clout in the early 1980s due to the archbishop having spent several years in a Siberian prison camps. Given the reference to a quasi-fictional Lithuanian Catholic Church (in the absence of a *sui iuris* Eastern Catholic Church in that country, unlike Romania or Ukraine) it is meant arguably that the viewer take that church as a stand-in for the Eastern Catholic Church as a whole.[80] This in turn indirectly alludes to

75 Żuławski, *Testament*, 47, 51.

76 Daniel Bird and Andrzej Żuławski, audio commentary for *L'Amour braque* DVD (Irvine, CA: Mondo Vision, 2009 [1985]).

77 Żuławski, *Testament*, 137.

78 Katarzyna Stokłosa, "Catholicism and Patriotism in Poland during the First World War," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 31, no. 1 (2018): 190.

79 Interview with Andrzej Żuławski, *La Femme publique* DVD (Irvine, CA: Mondo Vision, 2008 [1984]).

80 Dominique Garnier and Andrzej Żuławski, script for *La Femme publique* (ca. 1983), 4/seq. 9, 31–2/seq. 43: "Comme d'habitude, Monseigneur Schlapas a refusé de répondre aux questions des journalistes et donc évidement, et surtout, à celles concernant son élévation à la dignité de

perseverance of the Catholic Church throughout the Eastern Bloc while under Soviet rule by proxy.

Both *Night* and *Szamanka* refer to the notion of *tajemnica*, the Polish word meaning "secret" or "mystery." This appears symbolically in a religious register, specifically the portrayal of Catholicism in *Night* and of prehistoric magic in *Szamanka*, yet semiotically refers to something that is at once outside and unknowable to the subject and also intuited by the subject.[81] As well, the mummified body of the shaman in the latter film exists as something outside of the imaginary and language. Żuławski suggests as much by often accompanying the image of the mummy with the appearance of a bright light. In the Western Judeo-Christian tradition, the passage into the afterlife is often described as seeing a distant bright light. Film language often uses this image to suggest a subject's encounter with a supernatural force, such as the appearance of Satan to Mary Magdalene in Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), or a modern variation on the annunciation in Srdjan Dragojević's *Mi nismo andjeli* (*We Are Not Angels*, 1992). While these images predate that in *Szamanka*, and while the blinding light in that film suggests the abstracted appearance of the supernatural, for Żuławski the image can function as an elemental, mysterious force unbound by linguistic or narrative structure. A similar light appears at the end of *Possession*, with both films ending in the implied destruction of a city. Yet film language necessitates associating an apocalyptic event when seen through a religious register. *Night* of course refers to the Biblical apocalypse several times, and ends not dissimilarly from *Possession* or *Szamanka* with an image from Revelation: the four horsemen of the apocalypse appear in front of Michal's house, marking an end to all things.

Religion proffers a template of sorts for the divide between what Kristeva referred to as the semiotic (the inarticulable, that not yet shaped by language) and the symbolic (the articulable, that shaped by language). As Kristeva discusses in her work, the notion of the abject or disgust originates in part in notions of Biblical impurity internal to Judeo-Christian monotheism. Impurity has to do with a tradition of defilement that distinguishes mortals from the divine, and is thus a neutralization of taboos since it is subordinate

Cardinal 'in petore', c'est-à-dire dans le cœur du Pape." While neither the script nor the film makes it entirely clear, it is presumed that Schlapas is a metropolitan archbishop from a Lithuanian municipality and not a Major Archbishop of a *sui iuris* Eastern Catholic Church—comparable to those in Romania or Ukraine—and thus would rank below a cardinal.

81 Jan Jagodzinski refers to the *tajemnica* of the shaman figure in "The Inverted Drive in Andrzej Żuławski's Szamanka: A Lacanian Reading of the Post Femme-Fatale," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* (September 2007), 317.

to the divine. The same condition also at once indicates a demonic or otherwise antagonistic force. Further, impurity in this sense points to a kind of autonomous force that is rooted in maternal function, and subordinates maternal power to the symbolic order. What's paramount to this argument is that the notion of impurity is always already a logicizing process to classify what departs from the symbolic.[82] One can presume then that the depiction of "religion"—as an institution, belief system, practice, etc.—remains firmly in the symbolic for Żuławski, and, aside perhaps from the depiction of the Catholic Church as a narrative foil for the communist regime in Eastern Europe, arguably serves as a register for something that is not definitively belief, but the inarticulable semiotic, among subjects in his cinema. One finds that the presence of religion in Żuławski's cinema is often a superficial one. The fight between Mark and Heinrich in *Possession*, for instance, was to end originally with Mark falling down a flight of stairs. The fight seen in the film ends with Heinrich picking up a defeated Mark and propping him over his shoulders, in an image that recalls the "calf-bearer" image of pagan antiquity (later appropriated by Christians). No such image is described in the script, yet each version of the script follows Anna into the U-Bahn tunnel where her palms split open and emit slime, suggesting a Catholic stigmata. This scene takes place immediately after one where Anna visits the church, further suggesting that despite religion having failed her as an institution, it still imposes itself on her as an unseen supernatural force.[83] Catholic imagery is merely a part of the landscape, an affectation, and the director himself alluded to the appearance of Catholic symbols in his cinema as merely a consequence of the European episteme: "If I had hailed from East Asia, I'd had likely filmed images of the Buddha, or if from India, images of the Hindu gods," the director once stated.[84] More concrete examples of this would be the film adaptation of *On the Silver Globe*, which supplants the spiritual guru Nyanatiloka in *Stara ziemia* with a group of humanoids who provide the subjects with psychotropic drugs,[85] or the case of *The Devil*,

82 Kristeva, *Pouvoirs*, 90–91.

83 Andrzej Żuławski and Frederic Tuten, annotated script for *Possession* (April 1978), Frederic Tuten Papers, SPEC.RARE.CMS.0178, Box 38, Folder 2, Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Ohio State University.

84 Piotr Kletowski and Piotr Marecki, *Żuławski: przewodnik krytyki politycznej* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2008), 103.

85 On some of the major differences between the novels and the film, see Michał Dominik, "Andrzeja Żuławskiego dialog z przodkiem Na srebrnym globie. O feralnym filmie i femmes fatales," *Pleograf* 1/2022 (April 1, 2022), https://pleograf.pl/index.php/andrzeja-zulawskiego-dialog-z-przodkiem-na-srebrnym-globie-o-feralnym-filmie-i-femmes-fatales. Accessed August 9, 2023.

which was unreleased in Poland until 1987 due to supposed "subversive" content (that content being its analogical references to events of 1968), though ostensibly the country's Catholic population would have found it offensive.[86] All of these are merely descriptors that fall under the realm of the symbolic, whereas the behavior one sees in Żuławski's subjects, I argue, emerges from the semiotic, outside of language, where meaning collapses and reconstitutes itself.

Viewed in light of Kristeva's thinking, religion as the director depicts it takes on a new dimension. For Kristeva, pre-oedipal semiotic functions connect the subject's body to his or her mother, with the various drives (oral, anal, etc.) being structured around the mother's body, which dominates these functions. This is the ordering principle of the semiotic chora, the mother's body being "what mediates the symbolic law organizing social relations."[87] One might parlay this idea to Żuławski's depiction of religion as a social entity, specifically religious structures and symbols as they appear to the film subject. Helena in *Night*, Anna in *Possession*, and the Italian in *Szamanka* all at one point come into contact with a church structure, and all regard a crucifix. Western architectural tradition maintains that the physical structure of a Catholic church symbolizes the body of the Virgin Mary, epitomized by the rose window at the entrance (the light of God being able to "penetrate" the window and occupy the body without "shattering" the window's glass, as it were). One can interpret the appearance of the church structure and its symbols, then, as the subjects' longing to return to the maternal pre-symbolic state, which can at once police symbolic behavior upon exiting it.

The literary traditions of both Russia and Poland—literature in general being what Żuławski called the "scaffold" in the making of a film[88]—are present throughout Żuławski's career. *La Sorcière* was adapted from Anton Chekhov's short story "Vedma" ("The Witch," 1886). His short film *The Story*

86 Mike White's interview with Daniel Bird in Mike White, "On the Silver Globe (1988)," June 27, 2017, in *The Projection Booth*, produced by Mike White, podcast, 2:15:36, https://www.projectionboothpodcast.com/2017/06/episode-329-on-the-silver-globe-1988.html. Accessed August 9, 2023.

87 Kristeva, *Révolution*, 27–28: "Il s'agit donc de fonctions sémiotiques pré-œdipiennes, de décharges d'énergie qui lient et orientent le corps par rapport à la mère. […] Les pulsions orales er anales, dirigées et structurées toutes deux par rapport au corps de la mère, dominent cette organisation sensori-motrice. On dira donc c'est ce corps maternel qui médiatise la loi symbolique organisatrice des rapports sociaux, et qui devient le principe d'ordonnancement de la *chora* sémiotique …" Kristeva also cites these ideas' origins in Jean Piaget, Melanie Klein, and Jacques Lacan.

88 Żuławski, *Testament*, 109.

of Triumphant Love was co-adapted with his father from Ivan Turgenev's "Pesn torzhestvuyushchey lyubvi" ("The Song of Triumphant Love," 1881). *Pavoncello*, also co-adapted with his father, is based on a short story by Stefan Zeromski. *On the Silver Globe* is an adaptation of his great-uncle's novel cycle: *Na srebrnym globie: Rękopis z księżyca* (*On the Silver Globe: Manuscript from the Moon*, 1903), *Zwycięzca* (*The Conqueror*, 1910), and a portion of *Stara ziemia* (*The Old Earth*, 1911). The novels' style is partially the product of a larger literary tradition specific to a time and place, namely the *belle époque* and *fin-de-siècle* of late nineteenth-century France.[89] It occupies the same "scientific romance" genre as Jules Verne's *Voyages extraordinaires*, a sequence of novels published between 1865 and 1905 that includes *From the Earth to the Moon* and *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. By contrast, the film emerges in part out of a larger tradition of midcentury science fiction produced in the Eastern Bloc—or so-called "Soviet Sci-Fi"—the best-known of which being Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972). Anna in *Possession* is named for the eponymous subject of Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1878), about a society woman whose life disintegrates after an extramarital affair, as the subject of Abe—Anna's ex-husband in the original script, whose scenes were never filmed—alludes to both the novel and to Tolstoy's motivation for writing it via dialogue.[90] Director Lucas in *La Femme publique* seeks to film an adaptation of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Bésy* (*Demons* or *The Devils* or *The Possessed*, 1872) and together with other Czech immigrants in Paris shares the same revolutionary sensibilities as Stavrogin in *The Possessed*. Lucas's description of Dostoevsky's novel is of characters that seek to "change the world through violence," stating that the book was banned because of this, and that a specter of the author exists today. *L'Amour braque* is a loose adaptation of Dostoevsky's *Idiót* (*The Idiot*, 1869), while the characters perform in a production of Chekhov's *Chayka* (*The Seagull*, 1895). *Boris Godunov* is a filmed version of the 1873 opera by Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky, in turn based on the 1831 novel of the same name by Alexander Pushkin. *Szamanka* is based on an original screenplay by Polish writer Manuela Gretowska. *Cosmos* was adapted from a novel by the same name by

89 Stanisław Lem acknowledges this in his introduction to a 1956 edition of *On the Silver Globe*, reproduced in Stanisław Lem, "Zulawski's Silver Globe," trans. Elisabeth Kwasniewski, *Science Fiction Studies* 12, no. 1 (March 1985): 4. *Zwycięzca* features a winged attack from the Szern, who throw projectiles at the moon's inhabitants. The aerial warfare in the novel (published in 1910) not only suggests the winged monkeys in L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) but predates the earliest aerial warfare in World War I (1914). Żuławski, *Lunar Trilogy*, 251.

90 Daniel Bird, *The Other Side of the Wall: The Making of Possession*, Blu-Ray (Irvine, CA: Mondo Vision, 2014 [2009]).

celebrated Polish author Witold Gombrowicz, who for Żuławski's generation represented "a savage provocation in front of the communist concrete."[91]

At the same time, the influence of the French literary and cinematic traditions in Żuławski's cinema cannot be overstated, particularly in the latter half of his career. The first film the director recalled seeing was a Fernandel film, *Francois Ier* (1937), in 1949, while a student at the lycée at Batignolles, describing it as "a world of the living dead more alive than the living I know," in reference to the communist period in Poland. Between 1954 and 1955, the young Żuławski saw Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet* (1948) and Wajda's *Pokolenie* (*A Generation*, 1955), which inspired him to attend the cinema in Paris after his father was appointed to the Polish Embassy there in 1956.[92] The pacing of Żuławski's films emerges in part out of his comparative experience between shooting a film in Poland and shooting in France. The pace of shooting in Poland was slow relative to that in France and elsewhere: When the titular subject in *The Devil* says "I cannot say it, I must dance it," this is almost an address to the French experience of shooting student films at IDHEC.[93] *La Fidélité* is a modernized adaptation of Madame de La Fayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678), which originated with actress Sophie Marceau, who prior to the film had hoped to produce a stage version of the novel.[94] *L'Important c'est d'aimer* is based on a novel by English-born Francophone author Christopher Frank, the pornography in which appears due to Żuławski's first arrival in France, which he saw as an index of the poor and desperate in that country.[95] *La Femme publique* is a liberal adaptation by Dominique Garnier and Żuławski of Garnier's novel of the same name. *My Nights Are More Beautiful Than Your Days* is an adaptation of a novel by French author Raphaële Billetdoux, also of the same name. Beginning in 1975, Żuławski's films were shot by several of France's canonized cinematographers, including Argentina-born Ricardo Aronovich, Bruno Nuytten, and Sacha Vierny.[96]

While this study addresses Żuławski's cinema, it does not completely neglect his various *projets inaboutis* and attempts to adapt certain literary

91 Nick Pinkerton, "Locarno Interview: Andrzej Żuławski" *Film Comment* (August 14, 2015), https://filmcomment.com/blog/locarno-interview-andrzej-zulawski. Accessed August 9, 2023.

92 Żuławski, *Testament*, 67–68, 115.

93 Kletowski and Marecki, *Żuławski: przewodnik krytyki politycznej*, 166.

94 Żuławski, *Testament*, 110.

95 Margaret Barton-Fumo, "Interview: Andrzej Żuławski" *Film Comment* (March 6, 2012), https://www.filmcomment.com/blog/film-comment-interview-andrzej-zulawski. Accessed August 9, 2023.

96 One should note that Żuławski did not actively chose French or Francophone cinematographers, but was appointed them as this was a stipulation of the industry in France at the time.

works to film, since from these one can also glean certain recurring aspects of an artist's psyche as it might pertain to cinema specifically. Among these are *The Invisibles* co-written with Frederic Tuten ca. 1981; *The Tiger*, set in 1950s Indochina; *The Archer*, a variation of *Death Wish* set in contemporary Philadelphia written ca. 1981; *Celle qui danse*, based on the lives of Joan of Arc and Gilles de Rais; an adaptation of Zeromski's *Dzienniki* (*Diaries*, 1953–56) from as early as the 1960s, an adaptation of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) co-written with Wajda from ca. 1969–70, and an adaptation of Rachilde's *Monsieur Vénus* (1884) co-written with Dominique Garnier in the mid-1980s.[97] Despite his reputation among Anglophone literary audiences, Conrad was Polish by birth, and thus between the Wajda-Żuławski adaptation and *The Tiger*, which was based in part on Andrzej's father's diplomatic experience in Vietnam in the 1950s and follows suit narratively with Conrad's novel, one sees what would have been something of a reclamation of Polish identity—and figurative search for national identity—as it pertained to Conrad's story in the wake of political demonstrations throughout Poland in 1968. In Rachilde's novel, Parisian florist Raoule enters into a dominant-submissive relationship with artist Jacques, she making him her "wife" to the chagrin of Raoule's would-be suitor. Here again, the viewer would have been confronted with narrative themes with which Żuławski became preoccupied since arriving in Paris after 1972: an unorthodox relationship between lovers or spouses that seems to exist outside of the accepted norms of Western society, a "love triangle" that upends that relationship—as seen before in the dynamic of subjects in *L'Important c'est d'aimer* and *La Femme publique*—and the degree of performativity involved in each. Further, Rachilde's story would have placed Żuławski in a unique position to address the fin-de-siècle setting—and by extension, ideological environment—of the "decadent" novel in light of his status as an emigre director in France, given the different definition of "decadence" provided by the Marxist-Leninist ideological environment in which he was reared, though one must always bear in mind that Żuławski's were fundamentally "loose" adaptations.

97 Daniel Bird, "Żuławski's *The Tiger*: The Art House Action-Adventure Film That Never Was" *Polish Culture* (February 15, 2018), https://culture.pl/en/article/zulawskis-tiger-the-art-house-action-adventure-that-never-was/. Accessed August 9, 2023. Letters dated February 20 and March 24, 1975, in Żuławski, *Listy do domu*, 11, 13. "Conrad Bibliography: A Continuing Checklist," *Conradiana* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1969–70): 148. *Histoire orale d'Andrzej Żuławski*, ed. François Cau and Matthieu Cau (Paris: Sarl Le Chat Que Fume, 2020), 74–78, 116–19, 204–7. Daniel Bird, personal communication, April 15, 2022: *The Archer* was written sometime in 1981 and was commissioned by producer Dino de Laurentiis. Though never filmed, given the Philadelphia location the script was arguably later reworked into Lewis Teague's *Fighting Back* (1982) as a vehicle for Tom Skerritt.

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