

PERSONAL SUMMARY

Name and surname: Krzysztof Kopczynski

Education, Diplomas

1983 – M.A. in Polish Philology, Department of Polish Language Studies, University of Warsaw. With Distinction.

1993 - Ph.D. in Polish Literature. The thesis: 'Reception of Adam Mickiewicz's work in the Russian-occupied territories between 1831 and 1855'. Department of Polish Language Studies. Supervised by Professor Maria Janion, Ph.D.

Employment history

1983 – 2007: Apprentice, Assistant Lecturer, Assistant Professor, The Institute of Polish Literature, University of Warsaw

2007 – present: Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, The Institute of Applied Polish Studies, University of Warsaw

Disclosure of achievements as stipulated in the article 16 in the statute number 2 from March 14, 2003, about science degrees and academic titles in science and about degrees and academic titles in art (Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland, 2016, Items 882 and 1131)

Title:

'The Dybbuk. A Tale of Wandering Souls'. Documentary film, 86 mins, colour (2015).
Director, Screenwriter, Producer, additional cinematography.

Discussion of artistic goals and the achievements

'The Dybbuk. A Tale of Wandering Souls' is a documentary film about the events in the Ukraine that take place during the run-up to the Euromaidan. Thirty thousand Hassidic Jews journey to Uman in the Ukraine to celebrate the Jewish New Year at the gravesite of Rebbe Nachmann. At the same time a Ukrainian far-right group erects a cross at the Hassidic prayer site and builds a monument to Cossacks who slaughtered thousands of Jews and Poles in 1768.

The film was in production between 2008 and 2015. A Polish-Swedish-Ukrainian co-production, the film's producers included the Media Programme of the European Union, the Polish Film Institute, The Swedish Film Institute, the Ukraine State Cinema Agency and the Society for the Arts (Chicago). The screenplay was co-financed by a stipend from the Promotion Fund of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland.

7 for Arts (Los Angeles), a distribution company, are in charge of distribution in North America, and Journeyman Pictures (UK) in all the other territories. The Cracow Film Foundation subsidizes festival screenings.

Screenings and Q&As since the premiere on May 31, 2015

Preview screening during a press conference at the Cracow Film Festival, Cinema Rejs, Warsaw (with the director in attendance)

World premiere – The Official Opening Ceremony of the Cracow Film Festival (Q&A hosted by Anna Bielak)

Exhibition opening, Witold Krassowski, ('The Dybbuk. A Tale of Wandering Souls' at the Malopolski Art Garden (Q&A with the exhibition curator and the director)

Cracow Film Festival (a Q&A with the director hosted by Joanna Szymanska)

Cracow Film Festival (the screening and a Q&A with the director, Jacek Petrycki (DoP), Giennadij Kofman (Co-producer), Awiszaj Hadari (AD and an interpreter), Witold Krassowski (stills photographer), Pawel Reszka and Malgorzata Nocun)

Cinema Kultura, Warsaw (a special screening of the awarded films at the Cracow Film Festival for the members of the Polish Filmmakers Association)

The European Centre of Theatre Practices in Gardzienice (a screening during Jacek Petrycki's workshop)

The International Odessa Film Festival (a Q&A with the director, Giennadij Kofman (co-producer), Anna Sajewicz (AD and interpreter), Alik Szpiluk (the host))

Press conference during the International Odessa Film Festival with the director, Giennadij Kofman (co-producer), Anna Sajewicz (AD and interpreter)

Summer Film Academy in Zwierzyniec (a Q&A with the director; hosted by Konrad J. Zarebski)

Inskie Film Summer (a Q&A with the director)

Bluebox Festival, Olsztyn, Poland

Gdynia Film Festival (a Q&A with the director, hosted by Ola Salwa)

Baghdad International Film Festival

Opolskie Lamy Film Festival (a Q&A with the director)

Documentary Cinema, Ursynow, Warsaw (a discussion with the director and Jacek Petrycki; hosted by Andrzej Bukowiecki and Piotr Sliwinski)

Bajit Chadasz, Cracow (screening as part of the Meetings with The Jewish Culture, a Q&A with the director and Awiszaj Hadari, hosted by Joachim S. Russek, Ph.D.)

DOK Leipzig (three screenings, one of them hosted by Barbara Wurm)

Polish Film Festival in America, Chicago (a Q&A with the director)

International Human Rights Festival VERZIO, Budapest (2 Q&As with the director)

Goteborg Film Festival (3 screenings)

IDFA Amsterdam (4 screenings, 2 of them attended by the director, an additional screening as part of Professor Benjamin Barber's programme Jihad vs McWorld)

Media Festival 'Man in Danger', Lodz

International Film Festival WATCH DOCS, Warsaw (debate on 'Stories That Cannot Hear Each Other' attended by the director, Professor Joanna Tokirska-Bakir, Piotr Tyma and Giennadij Kofman, hosted by Jolanta Steciuk)

DKF 'Mosaic', Bydgoszcz (a debate hosted by Tomasz Kawski, Ph.D.)

Jerusalem Jewish Festival (a debate with the director and Awiszaj Hadari)

Artdocfest, Moscow (2 discussions attended by the director)

Washington Jewish Film Festival (2 screenings)

Dada Saheb Phalke Film Festival, India

Carnegie Mellon International Film Festival „Faces of Conflict”, Pittsburgh (a debate attended by the director; the director participated in Michal Friedman’s, Ph.D. seminar in the Institute of Eastern European History)

Mediawave International Film and Music Gathering, Hungary (2 screenings attended by the music consultant, Pawel Juzwuk.)

Cinema at the Border, Cieszyn (a Q&A with the director)

Nice International Film Festival South of France

Nysa Film Festival (2 debates attended by the director)

Wales International Documentary Festival (a discussion attended by Jacek Petrycki)

International Film Festival ‘Jewish Motifs’, Warsaw (a debate attended by the director)

Near Nazareth Festival

Jehlum Short & Long Film Festival, India

Moscow Jewish Film Festival (a debate attended by the director and Uri Gershovich, Ph.D.)

International Film Festival dedicated to Andrey Tarkovsky ‘Mirror’, Plios, Russia (Q&A with the director hosted by Witalij Manski)

Gdańsk DocFilm Festival

Solanin Film Festiwal, Nowa Sól

Hommage à Kieślowski Film Festival, Sokołowsko (a discussion hosted by Professor Mikolaj Jazdon and Rafal Koschany, Ph.D. ‘The Art of Documentary Cinema – Film As a Tool and An Instrument in The Fight with Intolerance, War and Violence’. Attended by Beata Dzianowicz, Jacek Petrycki and the director)

Saratov Sufferings Film Festival

Zaworonki, Russia (a screening for the students and staff of the Russian State University of Cinematography n.a. S.A. Gerasimov (VGIK) and other Moscow-based film schools followed by a discussion with the director, hosted by Dmitri Kabakov

Kino Fakel, Moscow (a screening as part of the Polish Cinema Club attended by the director and hosted by Dariusz Kleczewski)

Flahertiana International Film Festival, Perm (Flahertiana International Film Festival, Perm (a Q&A with the director)

Batumi International Art House Film Festival (a Q&A with the director)

SOSE International Film Festival, Yerevan (a screening attended by the director)

Polish Film Day in the Ukraine (screenings in Kiev and Kharkov attended by the director and Giennadj Kofman)

Inconvenient Films Human Rights Film Festival, Vilnius (2 Q&As with the director, one of them hosted by Gediminas Andriukaitis)

Astra International Film Festival, Sibiu, Romania (2 Q&As with the director)

Ekaterinburg Jewish Film Festival

Selected articles and interviews

Tadeusz Szyma, The Soul of the Righteous and the Dybbuks of the Sinful, Kino 3 (2015)

Between Two Worlds, Krzysztof Gierat interviews Krzysztof Kopczynski, 'Focus on Poland' 1(2015)

When You Dream of Angels, an interview with Krzysztof Kopczynski by Pawel Jaskulski and Mariusz Korycinski, Nowy Folder 3 (2015)

Cracow Film Festival - Dybbuk, A Tale of Wandering Souls. nlovewithmovie.blogspot.com, 16.05.2015

'Dybbuk' – An Attempt to Understand Contemporary Ukraine, an interview with Krzysztof Kopczynski by Joanna Slawinska, Radio Programme 'Culture', First Polish Radio Channel, 25.05.2015

Malgorzata Piwowar, The Hassidic and Ukrainian Soul, rp.pl, 29.05.2015

Agnieszka Mlynarczyk, An Encounter with the Other – film review of 'Dybbuk. A Tale of Wandering Souls' by Krzysztof Kopczynski, polishdocs.pl, 29.05.2015

Max Cegielski Talks to Krzysztof Kopczynski, an interview by TVP Culture at the International Cracow Film Festival, 05.06.2015.

Patrycja Wanat talks to Krzysztof Kopczynski, a radio programme 'Good bye', Radio TOK FM, 06.06.2015

'Dybbuk... is a metaphor'. An interview with Krzysztof Kopczynski by Jolanta Druzynska, radio programme 'The Wheel of Culture', Radio Cracow, 07.06.2015.

Grazyna Bochenek talks to Krzysztof Kopczynski, a radio programme 'A Radio Cinematograph' Radio Rzeszow, 10.06.2015

I Love Cinema, 12.06.2015, TVP 2

A Clash of Cultures, an interview with Krzysztof Kopczynski by Andrzej Bukowiecki, "FilmPRO" 3 (2015)

Wladimir Gromov, Overcoming Fear: About Dybbuk. A Tale of Wandering Souls by Krzysztof Kopczynski, culture.pl, 19.06.2015

I find the Ukraine More Interesting Than New York, an interview with Krzysztof Kopczynski by Wladimir Gromov, culture.pl, 24.06.2015

Не без политики: итоги VI Одесского международного кинофестиваля, Arsenij Kniazkow, Julia Kuprina, forbes.ua, 21.07.2015

Создатели документальной истории о хасидах «Диббук»: «Для нас очень важно, чтобы фильм послужил началом для диалога», www.telekritika.ua, 04.08.2015

Ukraine In a Nutshell, an interview with Krzysztof Kopczynski by Pawel Reszka, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 22/2015

Sometimes It All Starts with A Place, an interview with Krzysztof Kopczynski by Kuba Armata, Film Magazine 8 (2015)

Benjamin Barber, Extended Q&A The Dybbuk – A Tale of Wandering Souls, <https://www.idfa.nl/industry/idfa-tv/reports/extended-q-a-s/2015-extended-q-a-the-dybbuk.aspx>

An Encounter On a Narrow Bridge, an interview with Krzysztof Kopczynski by Pawel Jaskulski and Mariusz Korycinski. Odra, 4 (2016)

Kopczynski: Through My Film I Want to Foster an Inter-Cultural Dialogue, „Znad Wilii”, zw.lt, 15.10.2016

‘Dybbuk. A Tale of Wandering Souls’ was screened during the 11th edition of Polish Days in the Ukraine, www.onet.pl, 26.10.2016

Awards

Silver Hobbyhorse for the Director of the Best Documentary Film, Cracow Film Festival 2015

Recommendation to the European Film Award, Cracow Film Festival

Prize of the International Federation of Film Critics FIPRESCI, International Film Festival in Odessa 2015

Nomination for the Leipziger Ring Award, DOK Leipzig 2015

Special Jury Mention for Feature Documentary, Dada Saheb Phalke Film Festival 2016

Nomination for the Best Editing of the Documentary Film for Michal Leszczyłowski, Nice International Film Festival South of France 2016

Nomination for the Best Directing of the International Documentary Film, Nice International Film Festival South of France 2016

The Warsaw Phoenix – Special Award for the Best Polish Film, International Film Festival ‘Jewish Motifs’ 2016

Prize in the Category: Full-feature Documentary Films, Near Nazareth Festival 2016

Prize in the Section ‘Conflict’, Moscow Jewish Film Festival 2016

'The Dybbuk. A Tale of Wandering Souls' – the Film's Genesis and the Director's Statement

At the beginning of 2008 some editors from the channel TVP Culture asked me if I would be interested in directing a documentary film about Michal Waszynski. To give them an answer I watched a few films, including 'The Dybbuk' (1937), whose screenplay was an adaptation of a play by Szymon Anski (in Yiddish 1919). In the end I did not make the commitment, but I thought of a few sequences in the film, including the fascinating scene of the Hassidic Death Dance.

In March of the same year I was invited to DocuDays Human Rights Festival in Kiev to show my previous documentary film 'Stone Silence'. It is there that I found out that thousands of Hassidic Jews from around the world were arriving at Uman, some 200 kilometres away, in order to celebrate Rosh Hashanah at the gravestone of Rebbe Nachman.

I went there and happened to arrive in the middle of the jolly celebration of Purim, which was organised by the local Jews. Purim is the jolliest Jewish holiday, so we quickly became friendly. I also visited the grave of Rebbe Nachman situated on the edge of the defunct Jewish cemetery with graves of the Jews murdered by the Cossacks in 1768. It is there that I learnt a lot about the Hassidic Jews and their conflicts with the local population. I felt that Uman was the place where important things were happening, but I had no idea how to tell about it.

Sometimes it is the place that can provide a starting point for a documentary in the absence of a story or a lead character. Karabasz, Kieslowski and Lozinski worked on some of their documentaries that way. Werner Herzog works on his documentaries in a similar way as well as Frederick Wiseman, the author of 'The Crazy Horse' (2011). And many other documentary filmmakers.

In contrast to 'Stone Silence', which was a rather spontaneous documentary, I wanted the concept for 'The Dybbuk' to be carefully conceived. Early on I decided that the film would

be a paragon of international co-production. Shortly thereafter I went to Uman and Breslov, where Rebbe Nachman lived before he moved to Uman.

I took advantage of a trip to Jerusalem, where I introduced 'Stone Silence', to visit the Jerusalem Cinemateque in order to see what other films had already been shot in Uman. The director of the Cinemateque pointed out to 'Yippee' (2006) by Paul Mazursky and a few television films. At the same time he reassured me that the theme was attractive. Seven years later the same Cinemateque hosted the Israeli premiere of 'The Dybbuk'.

While developing the film, my background in history and literature was of great assistance. I was already rather well familiar with the themes of the Uman carnage from the Romantic literature, especially from the writings of Taras Szewczenko, Goszczynski and Slowacki, who ascribed to it an important role in the mystical conception of history. Besides, my previous knowledge made me it easier for me to follow the teaching of Rebbe Nachman. It also greatly facilitated my conversation with the Hassidic Jews and – most importantly, it helped me understand their worldview.

Rebbe Nachman's teachings are seemingly simple, which explains the high number of his disciples, not only among the Hassidic Jews. The teachings promise that each religious Jew (Hassidic means 'devout') who sings ten carefully selected psalms at Rebbe's gravestone to celebrate Rosh Hashanah will be saved.

The most important question that I keep asking myself at the beginning was to what extent religion can help a contemporary man to deal with the concept of death? I posed the question given my experience with 'Stone Silence'. The lead character in the documentary, Amina, was murdered in the mountains of Afghanistan on the religious grounds: she was accused of fornication. Her murderers in their own way acted in accordance with the Sixth Commandment. Hassidic Jews maintain that this world is merely 'a narrow bridge'.

As we were filming the Ukrainians started the construction of the monument to Gonta and Zalizniak, who were the Cossacks responsible for the murder of both Jews and Poles some 250 years before. They also erected a cross next to a lake, which served as the Hassidic prayer site. The Hassidic-Ukrainian conflict in Uman seemingly took on a religious

undertone, although in reality it was all about the money: it well known that corruption and extortion are Ukraine's biggest problems and the Ukrainians knew how to exploit it.

We filmed the first sequences in October 2008 during Rosh Hashanah, which attracted almost thirty thousands of Hassidic Jews. The local Jews, many of them were well-respected war veterans, helped us secure all necessary permissions. We filmed both the large praying congregations as well as small gatherings of local Jews during the celebrations of Rosh Hashanah. At the time I favoured the idea that the lead protagonist should be a Hassidic Jew or a Ukrainian patriot working for one of the local private organisations. I also played with the idea of finding a young Ukrainian Jew, who was determined to emigrate to Israel.

And then I met Volodya, a retired mayor in the Red Army, who lived off a modest pension, a small plot of land and off taking care of the Jewish cemetery in Breslov. A prison cell, where Rebbe Nachman, used to dictate stories to his favourite pupil, was located under his house. The old underground network used to reach into the most remote areas of Breslov, including the old tsarist and later Communist prison, which after Stalin's death was turned into a lunatic asylum. Securing filming permissions in the old prison took us five years.

The first trailer, presented at documentary pitches merely two months later, covered only two places: Uman and Breslov. From the point of view of 'creative production', presenting a project at such an early stage is a mistake.

However, the presentation helped me secure development funding from the Media Programme of the European Union. Complemented by the grants from the Polish Film Institute and a screenwriting stipend from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the money allowed me to prep for four years. Over the course of those four years I travelled on a few reces to the Ukraine, a single recce to Israel, and I was able to identify the international partners.

Giennadij Kofman, a Ukrainian producer and a programming director of the Human Rights Festival DocuDays, was the first one. He grew to believe that a non-Ukrainian director could tell something about the Ukraine that the Ukrainians did not see or did not want to

talk about. Our discussions heavily featured Hannah Arendt's concept of the banality of evil, which we applied to the Ukrainian context.

After some additional filming, I decided that the film would feature Volodya's point of view: he was a man of the middle, who lived at the confluence of a few worlds. As a potential lead character Volodya presented a number of advantages. He was not afraid of the camera, he actually looked good on it. He personally knew a few Hassidic Jews. He was critical of all authority. He had a sense of humour. Poverty did not curtail his hunger for knowledge, maybe because as a Soviet officer he had visited Potsdam and Cuba. As a younger man he was an athlete and travelled across the Soviet Union. He was also deeply in love with his wife, Grandma Zenia, and it was a pleasure to see that their fifty-year old marriage still blossomed.

A few tragedies scarred his life. One of them – his daughter's death – brought him closer to Rebbe Nachman, whose daughter died as well. The disadvantage was that Volodya lived in Breslov, some one hundred kilometres from the main Hassidic celebrations and from the scene of the biggest Hassidic – Ukrainian conflicts.

Principal photography was scheduled for August and September (in 2013 Rosh Hashanah was on September 4th). We decided to start filming on August 24th on the Ukrainian Independence Day. We filmed a swearing-in ceremony of young Cossacks at the foundation stone of the monument to Gonta and Zalizniak. In the middle of July we conducted the final recces in Breslov and Uman. Then we drafted both the shooting screenplay and a production schedule for five weeks of shooting. The scheduled assumed Volodya's participation in numerous celebrations. However, Volodya suddenly died on August 10th and he was quickly buried at the local Russian Orthodox cemetery. We had already managed to become good friends: to our crew his death was a very difficult experience.

I drafted a new shooting screenplay, the production schedule had to be amended as well. It was important to me that Volodya should remain the film's lead protagonist. The footage showing him was very scant. We decided to film the 'pominki' – the prayer in the house of the deceased, which, according to the Russian Orthodox tradition, happens forty

days after death. It is only after the 'pominkis' that the soul of the deceased travels to the other world. Before it does so, however, the soul visits the places that it knows on Earth. The travel has nothing to do, unlike in Dybbuk's case, with suffering. Each soul simply must travel for forty days.

It was us who informed the Hassidic Jews about Volodya's death. One of them, once an employee of the Israeli television, and presently a singer and a guitar player of some growing reputation, liked Volodya and brought a group of Hassidic Jews to Volodya's front yard, where they prayed for him and recollected him in the presence of Volodya's wife. They also became interested in the underground caverns. They visited the ruins of the synagogue, the only place where the underground caverns still survived. The Hassidic Jews also prayed in the lunatic asylum, where we had earlier filmed a recitation of a simple poem about God by one of the patients.

During the development stages of a documentary film the authors are required to present a so-called background. The project's adversaries always maintained that the film would never be shot simply because the Hassidic Jews would never allow any filming. It is true that the process of securing a filming permission was difficult and lasted a few years till we gained their trust. It was our Hebrew interpreter Awiszaj Hadari, a theatre director by profession, whose assistance turned inestimable: he was behind the translation of 'Dybbuk' by Anski, which was published in 2007 with illustrations by Andrzej Wajda.¹ Awiszaj Hadari knew a lot about Jewish mysticism and understood the concept of the film. Thanks to him the Hassidic Jews ceased to be afraid of being a subject of some covert mockery and cooperated with us in a rather open way.

Although my primary interest still lies in the eschatological side of the film, it is the different conflicts that take up most of the film's running time: on one hand it is the Hassidic Jews and the city government and the local organisations on the other. The construction of the monument to Gonta and Zalizniak was greatly helped by the Cossacks. In a conversation that is rather critical of the Ukrainians, a Hassidic Rebbe says that Putin

¹ Szlojme Zajnwil Rapoport (An-ski), *At the Border of Two Worlds. Dybbuk. A Dramatic Tale in Four Acts* After the Hebrew Version by Chaim Nachman Bialik. Translation and adaptation Awiszaj Hadari. Andrzej Wajda, *From the Director's Notebook*. Cracow 2007.

is a friend of the Jews and that eventually he will restore order in the Ukraine. I made a decision to leave his words in the film, although they were part of an interview filmed a few months before the Maidan.

The edit lasted ten months: the first assembly was ready in September in 2014. A card with the information about the timing of the principal photography fronted the finished film.

A scene of the lesson in a primary school dedicated to Gonta and Zalizniak is an element of the Ukrainian history, the Ukrainian identity, and the Uman carnage. In a statement by the Jury, which awarded the film the International Critics' Prize FIPRESCI at the Odessa festival, Alexander Gusiev, a Ukrainian film critic from Kiev, noted that he watched that scene 'with a feeling of great shame.'

Contrary to the appearances, the scene was not manipulated: the edit included time cuts rather than any attempt at manipulating the footage in any way. Directing is not necessary during such scenes. In this particular case it was enough to ask the teacher to conduct a lesson in the same way as always. It goes without saying that even such a request would have been out of place had we chosen to film the film according with the principles of 'the direct cinema.' Luckily, it is not necessary to adhere to those principles anymore. In other words, the debates about the narrative intervention in documentary films that raged at the beginning of the twentieth century are over.

Today, there is no doubt that 'creative' intervention is admissible and that any restrictions can only be motivated on the ethical grounds. During the principal photography I kept stressing to the Hassidic Jews, as well as to the Ukrainians and the local Jews that I was not going to present any 'truth', but my point of view. I was not going to be a point of view corresponding to any of the sides of the conflict.

During the main celebrations of Rosh Hashanah there was so much going on that we filmed with two units. Serhiy 'Stefan' Stetsenko was in charge of the second unit and he worked with Jacek Petrycki well. We also used drones, which made it possible to show the scope of the Hassidic prayers and to show a top-down perspective on Volodya's cemetery and the Boh estuary in Breslov. Naturally I was well aware that using the drone

footage, as well as some amateur materials, was a stylistic experiment. I was of the opinion that the experiment was warranted by my desire to express a few thoughts. This reasoning is not popular among documentary filmmakers these days. Many of them operate according to the narrative principles, where actors who act out certain roles in a story. In the process they use fully professional cameras of the highest standard.

I edited the film with Michal Leszczykowski, who edited 'Sacrifice' (1986), Andrey Tarkovsky's last film. He is also the author of the making-off documentary. We worked with fifty eight hours of footage of varying quality, including some amateur footage. We executed on my shooting screenplay with the conviction that the exposition should introduce not only the locations and characters, but also the historical context for the conflict in Uman.

The eschatological story strand starts at the first turning point, in which a local Jew, a WW2 veteran, dies and the Hassidic Jews pray at his gravesite. Then we are thrown into the middle of the conflict, which is presented from a few different perspectives. While analysing the film after the screening at the IDFA in Amsterdam in November 2015, Professor Benjamin Barber, a social historian and an author of the prophetic book 'Jihad vs. McWorld' (1996, published in Poland in 1997) as well as the creator of a eponymous festival programme, stated that he saw in the film two completely disparate, simultaneous narrations, each of them representing the world of Jihad, assuming the metaphorical connotation of the term.

The complete separation between the two worlds is signalled by the use of sound, especially of music. Hassidic Jews express themselves by dancing and singing; the film includes some Cossack songs as well as the Ukrainian national anthem with the phrase 'we will show, brothers, that we stem from the Cossacks'. There was no need to commission any original music. Instead, illustrative music was added, the music of 'the middle'. The film's sound got the film invited to a few music film festivals.

The use of colour was also instrumental in defining the two separate worlds. The Hassidic world is pasty, because of its affinity with death. The Ukrainian world is sunny, full of joy, which over time becomes rather misleading. Pasty is also the world of the lunatic asylum.

Volodya could have bound those two worlds together, but he passed away. We do not know if he would have had enough strength to reconcile those two worlds.

Uri Gershovich, a professor of religious studies at the Tel Aviv University, conducted an enlightening analysis of the film after the screening in Moscow. To him the prayer scene set in the lunatic asylum was the most important, because it was extremely pessimistic: it depicts a world with no hope, in which prayers cannot help anyone anymore. The scene serves as a metaphor for the world that we live in, the world where we are unable to communicate with one another. If Gershovich is right, then that would mean that we elliptically managed to tell something about the entire world by showing only a sliver of it. This method is clear in the production stills by Witold Krassowski. An exhibition of the stills accompanied the film's premiere at the opening ceremony of the Cracow Film Festival.

'The Dybbuk' has so far been distributed exclusively on the festival circuit. Based on my experience of discussing the film after numerous screenings, I can say that the reception has been very emotional and rather pessimistic in terms of the prospect of understanding and respecting of other people's rights.

In the Ukraine the film has stirred up extreme emotions. In the aftermath of the Maidan I thought the film's message lost its relevance due to the changed political situation. But it was not to be the case. On the contrary, the members of the audience well familiar with the Ukrainian context stress that the film's relevance – which does not really touch on the contemporary issues – has become even clearer. Some of them have expressed an opinion that some hope can be discerned in the fact that both the Ukrainians and the Hassidic Jews pray for Volodya: his wife bows to the latter in a gesture of gratitude. Maybe this moment gives some grounds for hope, but one must be a person of great faith to make that assumption.

Toward the end of an hour-long discussion, which took place after the Ukrainian premiere in Odessa, a young local Jew said that following the screening he apologised to his neighbour, a Ukrainian, for the Jews, while she apologised to him for the Ukrainians. If

that was to be Aristotle's catharsis, then it should repeat itself during the imminent screenings in Uman and Breslov. But that experience is still ahead of me.

Discussion of other artistic and scientific achievements

Two difficult questions

As one of the protagonists in a documentary 'Talking Heads' by Krzysztof Kieslowski, I struggle to answer the question who I am, but I know well what I want. I would like all documentary films that I co-author – I say co-author as each of them is a group effort – to conduct a dialogue with the audience. By provoking emotions I would like them to foster knowledge, thus giving rise to the hope for reconciliation and understanding even on the most contentious issues.

In other words, I believe that the language of cinema – defined today as the spectrum of filmmakers skills – can be used as a means of communication although first and foremost it belongs to the realm of art. It might sound didactic, but that is precisely the conclusion that I have reached after years of observing both sages and artists as well as of listening to the cinema and literary audiences.

Regardless of the roles that I have assumed (be it that of a producer, a director, a scriptwriter, a lecturer, a reviewer) over twenty two years of my work in cinema I have always tried to find a compromise between the art of cinema, the craft of cinema, creative producing, the audience and the knowledge. Today, it does not seem necessary to develop the argument that film – a medium exceptionally open to market forces, a medium of village fair and plebeian traditions – can benefit from that approach. It is enough to reference the classic book by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson 'Film Art. Introduction (seventh edition 2008, third Polish edition 2014), whose first part concerns film art and production, and whose first chapter carries the title: 'Film as an art.

Creativity, technology and business'.² Needless to say, the relationship between the different disciplines can be very complex and sometimes it is not creative at all.

Below I describe my most important experiences, mostly from the time before I started working on 'The Dybbuk'.

Poetry and the circle of the Parisian 'Culture'

My first encounter with a large and demanding audience took place in 1981, when I, still a student, together with Piotr Bratkowski hosted a poetry reading by Nobel laureate poet Czeslaw Milosz, who returned to Poland after a thirty-year long absence. Polish Television showed a censored broadcast from the event, which excluded, among others, all my statements, but included a biased and stupid commentary.

In 1985 I prepared for the underground publishing house CDN a selection of press articles by Czeslaw Milosz, which had already received a special critical mention by the Solidarity of Publishers. The editor-in-chief of the Parisian 'Culture' Jerzy Giedroyc helped with the publishing and distribution of the book in Western Europe.

As I was working on the book, I conducted long interviews with Jerzy Giedroyc and his colleagues, which later I used in the writing of a screenplay titled 'The Cat. Memories of Konstanty Jelenski (1992). The screenplay's protagonist, Konstanty Jelenski (his alias was 'The Cat') died four years before. I chose him to be the protagonist because I wanted to tell a story not only about the circle around 'Culture', but also about a man from the middle ground.

Although he was a pillar of the immigrant circles, in every day life Jelenski lived in a completely different world. In a relationship with Leonor Fini, he lived surrounded by her friends, her cats and her surrealist paintings. Leonor Fini was then considered to be one of the most significant painters in the world. Her solo exhibition was being prepared in the setting of the Grand Palais, an honour granted to very few living artists. I participated in all the filming sessions, conducting interviews with Leonor Fini, Rita Gombrowicz, Zofia

² David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, Film Art. Introduction. Warszawa 2014, s. 1-58.

Hertz, Jerzy Giedroyc, Jozef Czapski and Gustaw Herling Grudzinski. I was credited in the end credits as assistant producer as well as the 1st assistant director.

'Your Decalogue'

In 1995 I focused on film production and documentary films. I started travelling to film festivals and film workshops. I was spending a lot of time both on sets and in the editing room. I was also interested in different television formats. In 1996 I co-wrote the screenplay and produced a series of television programmes under the umbrella 'Your Decalogue'. Once a month, at 10.58 pm on a Friday the First Channel of the Polish Television broadcast an episode of 'Decalogue' by Krzysztof Kieslowski, followed by a two-hour long discussion about the contemporary understanding of the featured commandment.

Our programme had the best rating during the slot. During that period I collaborated with the people who had worked with Krzysztof Kieslowski on his 'Decalogue' and I came to know his work well. I also learnt what it means to 'creatively produce' such a series and how important it is to have a screenplay, which should precisely describe the roles without depriving them of spontaneity. The screenplay for each episode included three treatments of short documentaries, which served as a roadmap for the consecutive stages in the discussion.

Filming the programme with five cameras in a studio and watching the emotions of the participants who shared their stories after watching an episode was an extraordinary experience. It proved to me – this time in television – that it is not necessary to think up stories; it is enough to film the ones that have really happened.

Film biographies

In 1996 I started as a producer developing a documentary about Jerzy Grotowski. The author of 'Apocalypsis cum figuris' for many years resisted appearing before cameras, but he responded to my letter with interest. Grotowski had a consummate feeling for cinema

and knew well why and how he wanted to appear in a documentary film, which he considered as his will, as a message to the learned, who understood not only the abstruse language that he used but also his work (the chain of performing arts). It was the time when he restricted his contacts with the world, allowing his works to be presented only on the condition that either he or Thomas Richards, whom he considered to be his most important heir, is present at the presentation. A documentary film had the potential of changing the status quo by expanding the group of the initiates.

Grotowski liked discussing ghosts the most. I remember a long, nighttime discussion with him about Adam Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve* in Pontedera. Two years before I defended my doctoral thesis about the reception of Mickiewicz's works, and Jerzy Grotowski was the second Pole after Adam Mickiewicz to become a professor of The College de France: he flew to Paris once a month in spite of a heavy illness to deliver a lecture at the overcrowded Odeon Theatre. Immediately after each arrival he would lie down motionless for many hours, only to get up for the lecture. He would have to lie down after the lecture again.

This documentary film was never finished due to Grotowski's death, but while developing the project I understood how important it was to be concentrated, which Grotowski and his disciples achieved, among others, through meditation. Watching rehearsals of 'Action', which ultimately was to be the last effort by the troupe from Pontedera, I could see how the actors transgressed the borders between life and theatre, between their own personalities and the world's nature.

This experience helped me convince the commissioners to make a different, post-mortem documentary titled 'Jerzy Grotowski – An Attempt at a Portrait' (dir. Maria Zmarz-Koczanowicz, 1999), which theatre schools around the world show to this day. It was the third, after the documentaries about Tadeusz Wybult and Andrzej Seweryn, biographical documentary that I produced.

Then more documentaries followed. Their protagonists included Zbigniew Rybczyński, Witold Gombrowicz, Kazimierz Deyna, Albert Maysles, Krystian Lupa, Jerzy Mierzejewski. The documentaries about Seweryn, Grotowski and Gombrowicz were co-productions

between Polish Television and Television ARTE, which one hand guaranteed better working conditions, but forced us to accept the European market reality on the other. The experience taught me about the pros and cons of international co-productions, and how difficult it is to satisfy international audiences and how often one must fight for their vision with the commissioners, for whom guidelines laid out by the marketing managers are the most important references.

Warsaw – a City on the Road

As ARTE was very satisfied with our collaboration, in anticipation of Poland's joining the European Union I received a commission to produce two documentaries, which – along with a reportage suggested by a German director – were to become part of an entire evening dedicated to Warsaw. I was given a lot of freedom in terms of choosing a subject and the directors. Maria Zmarz-Koczanowicz directed one of the films. I wrote the first draft of the screenplay for the second documentary – 'Warsaw. The View from the East' - myself, but then I invited Dmitri Kabakov to direct it. His previous film 'Alone' (1999), set in Moscow and the vicinity, had made a big impression on me.

We found a few young Russians, who had never been abroad, and sent them on a trip to Warsaw. The trip gave rise to a spontaneous observational documentary with elements of ethnographic cinema. Spontaneity with which young people cross borders, when external circumstances force them to do so, was the main theme of the film. Love was another one. Love can be a hidden goal of such trips; love does not know any borders. The final screenplay was written, as if often happens, only in the edit. Only then did we decide who was going to be the main protagonist. A lack of focus on a single character in the production stages, however, undoubtedly made the process rather difficult.

On the other hand, editing footage from a few simultaneous trips resulted in a broader canvass, which was to be more attractive for the ARTE viewers – the Western European intelligentsia – who, as I believe in those days, were more interested in the way Russian viewed Poland than in the way that Poles viewed themselves. Working on a documentary series 'Farewell Comrades' (2011) for ARTE as a Polish co-producer confirmed my views.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union was the theme of the film. Only after watching the first cut did I manage to convince Andrej Niekrasov, the director, to account for the Polish position in the portrayal of those highly complex events.

Albert Maysles' es Dream

Hanna Polak, then a student of the Cinematography Faculty at the Russian State University of Cinematography n.a. S.A. Gerasimov (VGIK), was Dmitri Kabakov's assistant. At the time together with Andrzej Celinski she was finishing 'The Children of Leningradsky' (2004). She met the editor of the film, Ewa Romanowska-Rozewicz, while working on the film by Kabakov. Hanna Polak neglected her studies and received the graduation diploma only four years later for her cinematography in 'Stone Silence'. But 'The Children of Leningradsky' received an Oscar nomination. She also directed a twelve-minute film about Albert Maysles, which was based on my screenplay.

The documentary was to be commissioned for the Opening of the Cracow Film Festival (2004), where the co-inventor of 'director cinema' was to receive the Dragon of the Dragons. The screenplay foresaw a parallel edit of three story strands: 1) Maysles' es life, which included a memory of his deceased brother David, 2) a story of a new project, a documentary road movie, in which Albert wanted to describe the people that he accidentally encountered on a train, and 3) Albert's journey to Cracow.

According to our agreement, we showed Albert a cut of our film. He liked it, apart from the scene, in which he tells of a dream of his deceased brother. He said it was not realistic, which was a flaw. I, in contrast, believed it was the most important scene in the film. After a long discussion we managed to convince him and the scene stayed in the film.

Russia – Poland. New Gaze

Both films about Warsaw were presented to a few experts who promoted Polish culture in the world and after the screening The Adam Mickiewicz Institute made me an offer to

co-organise a project called 'Russia – Poland. New Gaze'. The concept behind the project was very simple: Polish film school students were to shoot documentary footage in Russia, and Russian students in Poland. The edited footage was to comprise a single full-length documentary.

The Adam Mickiewicz Institute and the Andrzej Wajda Master School of Film Directing had already successfully attempted a similar exercise with Germany. Although the final full-length film was interesting, I suggested that the students should work on their own shorter films.

Three workshops, whose agenda I co-created, facilitated the development work. I also accepted the role of a lecturer and a producer with a stake in the success of the project. The Adam Mickiewicz Institute played the pivotal role in the development stages. Polish and Russian films schools, The Polish Ministry of Culture, the newly created Polish Film Institute, Polish Television, and numerous documentary filmmakers from both countries (directors, DoPs, sound recordists, editors) also helped greatly.

The project involved breaking down barriers – mostly bureaucratic, especially in Russia. But there were other barriers, professional and related to communication: Polish students could not speak Russian, while Russian students could not speak Polish, and neither could really speak English. The process of breaking down those barriers released in the project participants and other staff layers of creative energy, which gave rise to the films.

'The Seeds' (2005) by Wojciech Kasperski, with cinematography by Szymon Lenkowski is an example of a spontaneous documentary shot without any previous planning. The director and the operator travelled to Altai to make a film about shamans. But it quickly turned that the shamans did not wish to be filmed. Besides, they were drunk most of the time. Wojciech Kasperski called me asking if he could instead make a documentary about a poor Russian family, who lived in a remote village far from civilisation.

It did not sound particularly attractive, but I agreed. The principal photography took three weeks and resulted in a 26-minut long documentary, which ended up travelling to many countries, winning many awards. The audiences often suspect it is actually a feature film

and ask the director, where he found such good actors. But the film's strength comes not from staging and acting out certain situations, but from the image aesthetic derived from Tarkovsky. The long takes with a camera pointed at situations that were not entirely clear to the filmmakers who did not know Russian – as well as the long-lasting edit – have given the film a strong shape.

The success of 'The Seeds' and of some other films (most importantly, the success of 'Suburban Train' by Maciej Cuske with cinematography by Marcin Sauter, shot in a commuter train travelling from The Byelorussian Train Station in Moscow to Zaworonki, the hometown of Dmitri Kabakov; some other films included 'My Kieslowski' by Irina Wolkova, '7xMoscow' by Piotr Stasik with cinematography by Piotr Rosolowski) allowed us to start the second edition almost immediately. It was easier the second time round as many institutions wanted to help us, but at the same time it was more difficult as each film required its own development process, which involved the preparation and filing of applications, participation in pitching events and looking for sponsors.

The students, who applied to the programme, were not ready for the challenge in the slightest degree. The workshops – this time with the participation of Western European lecturers – included sessions on creative production and marketing. Fewer films emerged from the process, especially the Russian ones, but four of them ('52 Per cent' by Rafal Skalski (2007) with cinematography by Jakub Giza, 'First Day' by Marcin Sauter (2007), 'The Unemployed' by Nastia Tarasova (2009) with cinematography by Irina Szatalova and 'The Planet Kirsan' (2010) ended up winning international awards.

The programme 'Russia – Poland. New Gaze' continued for six years and became a subject of a few dissertations.³ A few additional films came out of it, and the relationships

³ i.e. Mirosław Przyłipiak, A Review of the Film Project 'Russia – Poland. New Gaze'. In: Poles – Russians: mutual relations. Gdansk 2007; Mikołaj Jazdon, Russia – Poland. A New Gaze? Young Documentary Filmmakers And the Tradition of the Polish Documentary School. In: Polish Documentary Film in the 21st Century. Edited by Tadeusz Szczepanski and Małgorzata Kozubek. Lodz 2016. The project was also mentioned by Tadeusz Lubelski (History of Polish Cinema 1895 – 2014, Cracow 2015, p. 683 – 684), Krzysztof Kozłowski calls the projects as being 'famous' (History of the Polish Documentary Film 1945 – 2014. Edited by Małgorzata Hendrykowska. Poznan 2015. P. 672).

between the participants, lecturers and the audience turned out to be long lasting. I lead workshops in Russia, and my students often ask me about the next edition.

The Afghan Triptych

In 2002 Beata Dzianowicz directed a tv reportage about a newly re-opened Art and Music School in Kabul. The Polish Humanitarian Action had contributed to the re-opening of the school after the war with the Taleban. At the time Beata Dzianowicz and myself worked on another documentary about Kazimierz Deyna. She commented that the students were absolutely fascinated by film cameras, whose use was illegal under the Taleban rule. She suggested that we should organise a documentary workshop in the school and made a film about it.

We wanted to create a film that would have been attractive to the international market. In order to do so, we signed up for a documentary workshop 'Ex Oriente Film' organised by the Czech Film School FAMU, where we acquired the requisite skills to later successfully apply for development funds from the Media Programme of the European Union.

For the first time we travelled to Kabul for ten days in 2004. We secured permission to organise the workshop and to film, which, as it later turned out, did not mean much as eventually we had to secure all permits again. We drafted the course curriculum and called it 'Kabul – My City'. Then we long-listed a number of candidates. The target was to enrol twelve participants. One hundred seven boys and two girls of varying ages, as it is often the case after war, studied at the school. They all wanted to enrol in the workshop, although they had no idea of what the making of a documentary film entailed. They rejoiced in the prospect of casting actors and building sets. So, I felt compelled to give a lecture about documentary filmmaking, which I started off by saying that documentary filmmaking tries to 'portray the reality'. No sooner had I said those words than I realised the shortcomings of this definition.

We had to overcome a number of logistical and organisational issues. The concept of the film remained the most burning issue, though. The director decided that the protagonist, a teacher, should be a young Polish filmmaker. His task was to manage the filming of the exercises. But in reality the lists of his tasks was much longer – the programme was not only about shooting the footage but also about teaching the students how to make documentaries. A few of the participants showed genuine talent. We screened the finished films to the protagonists and their families. Siddiq Barmak, the recent Golden Globe winner for 'Osama' and the best-known Afghan filmmaker, attended the screening. His comments and the support offered to the students proved a very fitting culmination of the course.

During the principal photography we decided not to use security guards (apart from having someone to protect our base) arguing that it would make it impossible for us to interact with real characters. The foreigners working in Kabul considered our decision as particularly imprudent. We avoided any contact with them, as well as with the army. The city was becoming increasingly dangerous. One day while filming on top of a mountain we noticed a plume of smoke: it was the car bomb that exploded near the American Embassy. Two of our students later made a film about it.

After returning from the recce in 2004 we edited up the first trailer and started – without any success – to look for international funds. Behind the scenes we were being told that our trailer was not strong enough. So we decided to return to Kabul for two weeks and invited the DoP Jacek Petrycki to join us for one week. We planned to leave for Kabul in May 2005. I was then leading a workshop 'Russia – Poland. New Gaze'.

Each Monday there was a direct flight from Moscow to Kabul. Once on the plane I went through all information about the recent events in Afghanistan. The first news item was about a stoning of a young girl in the high mountains in the north of the country. She was accused of fornication. Immediately I decided to make a film about it. As we learned later, to reach the village in the valley of Spin Gul, where the girl was murdered, one had to fly an hour to Faizabad, from where the valley could be reached after an almost hour-long drive. From there one had to walk for three hours to the village. Another possible location

was the prison, where the alleged murderers were kept. To reach the prison one had to travel for two hours across the mountains in the direction away from Spin Gul.

My directorial preparation process had to be very limited. We knew very little about the events, although we had contacted the Afghan Organisation of Human Rights, which made some – and only some – of the case documents available to us. In Faizabad we did manage to find a local fixer, who committed himself to hiring a car and picking us up on Wednesday noon at the airport, only to take us to the prison, then to a hotel, and on Thursday we were supposed to travel to Spin Gul. On Friday morning we were to fly back. On Saturday and Sunday we intended to continue our recce in Kabul, where we wanted to shoot some more footage about the documentary course. On Monday we planned to return through Moscow to Poland. The five of us – the three of us, plus an Afghan sound recordist and a translator, an English Philology student in Kabul – took off as scheduled toward our destination.

When we finally arrived at the prison we found out that both the father of the murdered girl and the father of her alleged lover were waiting for an interrogation in the same cell. I asked the judge to interrogate both of them at the same time. Even the way in which that sat down made it clear what they thought of each other. The tight interior of the prison cell called for close-ups, even extreme close-ups. We had no lights. We remained faithful to this aesthetic approach throughout filming: we juxtaposed the tight shots with the epic mountain landscapes, where the mountains restricted rather than expanded the space of the deep valley. It was interesting that none of our subjects was afraid of the camera, although all of them had never seen a camera before.

The next day we left Faizabad before sunrise and without any adventures we reached the village, where, to our great surprise, mountain people from the entire valley were already waiting for us. Spin Gul was the site of heavy fighting during the war against the Soviet Union (1979 – 1989). I had to explain to the mujahedin who we were and what we wanted to do. If I had not been able to explain it to them, they would not have allowed us to film. Maybe we would not have been able to get out of there alive. I told them we came from Poland. But they had never heard of Poland, so my statement drew no

reaction. 'We are from Europe!' drew no reaction either. 'We aren't American'. This statement seemed to produce a shadow of some sort of understanding. When I added that our country fought the Russians for one hundred twenty three years, we became friends.

I am not sure to what extent they understood our statement that we wanted to show the entire world the truth about what had really happened in the Spin Gul Valley. In any case, we were allowed to film without any obstacles. Beata Działowicz conducted the most important interview with the mother of the murdered Amina. A male stranger could not talk to a woman, so my role was to make sure that the male villagers did not enter the clay house, where we were filming. Having a male camera operator or a sound recordist did not create any problems. The interview took place in the part of the house, which was not accessible to men. During the conversation Amina's mother unexpectedly took off her burka, exposing her face. The shot ended up in the finished film. I am often asked why she did it but I do not know the reason.

Our return journey to Kabul was difficult. A downpour had destroyed the airport and we drove two days through areas, where our presence would stir up a lot of surprise. At last we brought the footage to Poland and started editing the trailers for both films. I pitched 'Stone Silence' at the festival in Jihlava. I am well familiar with the European process of marketing and developing documentary films and I hold certain reservations towards it. During the pitch the commissioners would quip that 'we need strong stories, and your story is not strong enough'. When my turn came, the room fell silent.

Then one of the commissioners responded: 'We are looking for strong stories, but your story is too strong.' Naturally, I left empty-handed. Luckily, the project encountered positive reactions in Poland. I also received an award 'work-in-progress' at a festival in Chicago. The film about the documentary workshop at the school in Kabul – which was to be of full length – received a large subsidy from the Agency of Film Production and Television. Six months after the recce we started principal photography in Afghanistan.

A thorough analysis of the filmed footage was part of the prep. It became clear to us that we would not have much time in Spin Gul and we would need two cameras, and a female

camera operator. Only a female camera operator could talk to women without any obstructions and only she could enter the parts of the house that were off-limits to men. As a result, I invited Hanna Polak to join us. She is the author of thirty per cent of all footage in the film. Jacek Petrycki is responsible for the rest.

We also hired Nuria Habibi, an Afghan with residence in Poland. She flew with us to Afghanistan and accompanied us to Spin Gul, which was an act of bravery. She, as well as another Kabul-based interpreter, really pulled their weight. Once a documentary conversation starts going, there is no time to interpret it. A well-initiated interpreter can take over the interview with a considerable benefit for the film. A conversation between the female interpreter and the younger sister of the murdered girl was filmed in the part of the house that was off-limits to men and is the last scene in the film.

As we were filming, the mujahideen could not understand, why we were harkening back to events that took place a year and a half before, and which were long forgotten. We managed to spend one night in the village taking advantage of the sharia law, which spells that it is a duty to give a shelter even to an enemy for one night only. We were the first non-Afghans, who stayed in the valley for the night. Some of the local population did not like it at all and we received death threats. The following morning we were chased out of the valley. So, we ended up having only one full shooting day and a half – including one day with two cameras – at the key location for the film.

Translating the recorded interviews from 2005 turned out to be a problem. Up until the edit we were using a reference translation from the set. As we watched all the footage we discovered that the interpreter did not fully understand the dialect of the Spin Gul mountain people, and he was probably too afraid to admit it. Only in the edit did we really find out what the mother of the murdered girl say during the interview shortly after her daughter's death.

There is a scene in the film, in which the mother of Amina's alleged lover, who along with the entire family had been banished from the village, talks in her son's presence about how her son was beat up. We might as well admit that it was filmed without her permission. The camera is pointed at the floor and records only the sound. We used the

recording only after securing permission after the end of the principal photography. Not everyone believes us. Some, who consider the film to be a successful attempt at showing the world of Islam without passing any judgements rooted in the European axiology, sometimes come up with expectations that a documentary filmmaker cannot readily satisfy.

A professor from the Helsinki University wrote me a letter after a screening at the IDFA in Amsterdam. She suggested that I should bring Amina's younger sister to Europe and secure for her a European upbringing. She was ready to raise tens of thousands of Euros to fund it. I also participated in a very interesting discussion on ethics in documentary filmmaking after a screening at the Oslo University. The participants included immigrants from Central Asia. The crucial question was about to what extent documentary cinema should and could change the world, or at least to what extent it should interfere with it. I hold such prospects for exaggerated, but I do believe that filmmaking can be a tool that complements communications about the people of differing, or even opposite convictions.

Our travels to Afghanistan ended up – at least from my point of view – in a cognitive defeat. We were not able to break down the cultural and religious barriers. 'Kites' (2008) and 'Stone Silence' conclude in a way that it is impossible to do so. At the same time, our attempt found recognition in the world. Both films premiered and were awarded at important festivals. I participated in after-screening discussions in many countries. 'Stone Silence' received numerous reviews, including the review in „Film Quarterly.”⁴ A film critic Tadeusz Sobolewski labelled the film as an investigative document and placed it among the best in this genre in the world.⁵

Thanks to my own personal involvement I have understood the make-up of my audience. I have distanced myself from television because – as one of the well-respected television editors wrote to me after a screening – 'I allowed too much time for thinking.' I have also looked at documentary cinema against the backdrop of its inter-textual relationship with

⁴ Sławomir Sikora, Watched Against the Sun. Blurry Things, „Kwartalnik Filmowy” 2008 nr 61.

⁵ Tadeusz Sobolewski, World In a Straitjacket, www.wyborcza.pl, 06.12.2007 and „Gazeta Wyborcza” from 07.12.2007.

another art discipline – photography. In Afghanistan we were accompanied by Witold Krassowski, who later published an album of black and white photographs (it formed the backbone of his successful dissertation at the Silesian University). His pictures depict things, which I never noticed. Or I simply could not see with the eye of my camera.

Knowledge and Imagination

I like exchanges of opinions. If I have something to say, I happily participate not only in after-screening debates, but I also lecture, lead workshops and seminars, take part in discussion panels and science conferences. If someone counted, approximately twenty texts about cinemas that originated that way have been published or sent to print. Most recently, I have applied myself to Romantic imagination and Romantic tradition in cinema, literary adaptation, documentary narration and documentary cinema in the age of convergence.

I have also delivered a few lectures and seminars about creative production and distribution of documentary films. The Lodz Film School has organised two of them, and later published them in their collections of writing. I have structured the lecture as a response to the concept of documentary cinema, which is increasingly being subordinated to marketing concepts. I have also organised two large conferences dedicated to film education. I have also co-authored an online course ‘How to prepare a concept for a documentary film’, whose presentation was enthusiastically received during the Forum of the Polish Filmmakers’ Association during the Cracow Film Festival in June 2016.

My reviews of the following films also constitute an important part of my work: ‘Sir Thaddeus’ (reconstructed copy, 1928), ‘89 MM Away from Europe’, ‘Red’, ‘Ashes and Diamonds’, ‘We Are All Christs’, ‘Bad Luck’, ‘Kafka’ by Zbigniew Rybczynski and ‘Franz Kafka’ by Piotr Dumala; war documentaries ‘The General’s Honour’ by Joanna Pieciukiewicz and ‘About My Father’ by Bozena Garus-Hockuba. I chose these films for some of their technical aspects. Writing about them has expanded my own knowledge about the craft of filmmaking.

‘Directing the Documentary’ (2004) by Michael Rabiger, a long-time dean of the Film Faculty at Columbia College in Chicago, whose comments shaped the final version of ‘Stone Silence’, includes an injunction that a documentary filmmaker must define its artistic identity as well as their goals. The resulting clarity to a great extent drives the success of the production process. ‘Your life experience has taught you your own way of understanding the powers that rule the world – he writes – and this knowledge obligates you to show it in your and to express your associated feelings’.⁶

When Aristotle in the first chapter of ‘Metaphysics’ describes the genesis of cognitive understanding, he takes sensual impression as a starting point, which is followed by memory, imagination and experience. All of them limit themselves, however, to detail. Knowledge and the ability to understand are the territory of sages rather than of empiricists. It is the sages, rather than the empiricists, who know the cause, while the empiricists only the effect.⁷ Documentary film is a domain of memory and experience rather than imagination and knowledge, which may suggest that – though it may have contrary ambitions – its role in naming the laws that rule the world is limited. In other words, a documentary filmmaker stops at the border, which they can reach only thanks to experience – their own or the others’. I forgot about it for a beat when I was working on ‘The Dybbuk’, when I steered toward knowledge.

After a screening in Budapest, someone from the audience asked me why the world was so evil: in films, people fail to communicate, then they kill one another, and ultimately they erect monuments to the murderers. He was very disappointed when I told him that I didn’t know without even trying to take up the subject. Later on I reflected that either I had not managed to get close enough to the crux of the matter or the answer did not belong to the realm of knowledge.

If that’s the case, I can only trust that the era of imagination draws near.

Krzysztof Uspenski

⁶ Michael Rabiger, *Directing the Documentary*. Amsterdam 2004, p. 119-127.

⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. Warsaw 1983, p. XV.