

## MASTER'S THESIS

### DUALITY AS A CREATIVE PRINCIPLE IN THE FILMS OF A. ŻUŁAWSKI

By

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Report by Ronald Bergan

Andrzej Zulawski was one of the rare breed of film directors who refused to compromise his singular vision for either commercial or ideological reasons. 'As far as I'm concerned, I don't make a concession to viewers, these victims of life, who think that a film is made only for their enjoyment, and who know nothing about their own existence.'

The thesis attempts successfully to come to terms with the controversial and enigmatic Polish director. By concentrating on 'the duality as a creative principle' of two seemingly contrasting films by Zulawski, the writer has managed to reveal much about his whole oeuvre. By confronting some of the pejorative adjectives often attached to his works such as 'excessive', 'extreme' and 'psychotic', the writer has managed to delve much deeper beneath the surface of Zulawski's films.

The writer makes a convincing case for the subject of the thesis in *The Third Part of the Night* and *Possession*, although they are stylistically dissimilar and set in different eras. Much of the approach is seen from a Freudian perspective. This fits easily into the theme of duality – especially *Love and Death*, as expounded by Freud. This sheds new light on Zulawski whose characters are often

dismissed as psychotic without any probing into the reasons behind their behaviour.

The writer also deals with the storylines, editing and acting, and any autobiographical elements in the films. Nor have the political elements been ignored. The thesis has come at an opportune time as it follows the recent death of Zulawski aged 75, because his career can now be seen as a complete whole.

Particularly interesting are the influences on Zulawski such as Dostoevsky, two of his films are adaptations of the Russian novelist, and the sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, who was an advocate of sexual minorities. This helps to understand the character's actions, especially Isabel Adjani's ravings in *Possession*. The writer cleverly links these psychological musings with the impact of the theories of theatre director Jerzy Grotowski had on Zulawski's directing of actors. This helps to explain the stylised acting of many of the actors, which is, in a way, the antithesis of Brechtian alienation methods.

All of this is argued in a lucid manner, illustrated with a few choice stills, clarifying what is obscure for many in Zulawski's work. As the writer herself modestly explains "His films have still never been fully grasped, his metaphors never fully revealed, his secret messages never fully unveiled. With this thesis I make my own modest contribution to shedding some light on the universe of a filmmaker I deeply respect."

I do recommend this work to be admitted for defence before a FAMU state exam examination panel

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. S. Payne'.