

Seweryn Kuśmierczyk

Lost Travellers. *Mother Joan of the Angels* by Jerzy Kawalerowicz

In 1960, when Jerzy Kawalerowicz¹ started working on the film *Mother Joan of the Angels* (*Matka Joanna od Aniołów*), the theme of “the devils of Loudun” was already grounded in a rich literary tradition. The stories of the collective possession of the Ursuline sisters at the convent in Loudun in seventeenth-century France were related to the burning at the stake of the local parish priest Urbain Grandier, the arrival of the Jesuit Father Surin, and the exorcisms conducted on the abbess Jeanne des Agnes, which resulted in the possession of the exorcist. These stories were well known due to extant historical sources and private documents, as well as secondary studies interpreting the events in terms of the issues of historical truth, theology, mysticism and psychopathology.

The early 1960s saw a surge of renewed interest in these historical events, which was subsequently reflected in literary and artistic productions. Kawalerowicz’s film, awarded the Silver Palm in 1961 at the Cannes Film Festival, was associated with John Whiting’s play *The Devils*,² which was based on Aldous Huxley’s 1952 novel *The Devils of Loudun* and staged by Andrzej Wajda at the Ateneum

1 Jerzy Kawalerowicz (1922–2007) was one of the greatest Polish film directors. Among other films, he created *Night Train* (*Pociąg*, 1959), *Pharaoh* (*Faraon*, 1965), *Death of a President* (*Śmierć prezydenta*, 1977) and *The Inn* (*Austeria*, 1982). For many years, he served as the artistic director of the Kadr Film Group, which produced the most important films of the Polish Film School.

2 The play premiered on 20 February 1961 at the Aldwych Theatre in London.

Theatre in Warsaw.³ It also referred to the Polish edition of Jules Michelet's *La Sorcière: The Witch of the Middle Ages*.⁴

The Drama of Human Nature

Jerzy Kawalerowicz and Tadeusz Konwicki⁵ adapted the film screenplay from a 1942 short story by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Mother Joan of the Angels* (Iwaszkiewicz 1975), in which the author presented his own embellished version of the Loudun events, moving the action to the Smolensk region in the seventeenth century. The scriptwriters remained faithful to the literary model in terms of plot and choice of characters. In the script, we find the same themes and narrative threads, as well as selected dialogues from the original story. Kawalerowicz and Konwicki did not refer to historical materials related to the events in Loudun (Kawalerowicz, Konwicki 1960), as explained by Bolesław Michałek:

When I make an adaption, Konwicki said, my goal is to force the viewer to see the great beauty that lies in the work... The story of *Mother Joan* is very similar to the mood of the landscape in which I was born and grew up. I liked the melancholy view of human fate very much, and in *Mother Joan*, I played the role of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's ambassador. (Michałek 1967: 6)

Kawalerowicz declared that he wanted to make a discursive film, bringing to the fore a materialistic understanding of human psychology and exposing false truths about human fate. He sought to speak “about human nature and its self-defence against imposed restrictions and dogmas” (Janicki 1962: 35). In another statement, he added: “The main characters are people in habits who, in the name of the ‘great love’ proclaimed by religion, kill human love. Mother Joan and Father Suryn surrender to love, they are too weak” (Kawalerowicz 1960: 10).

The work of Kawalerowicz and Konwicki was greatly lauded at a meeting of the Screenplay Evaluation Committee⁶ on 26 January 1960. The Committee praised the script for its brevity, suggestiveness, mood and consistency in presenting key issues. It is worth quoting some of the statements by the members of the Committee in this regard.

3 The premiere took place on 2 March 1963.

4 J. Michelet, *Czarownica*, trans. M. Kaliska, preface L. Kołakowski, Warsaw 1961. Chapter VII in Book Two is devoted to ‘the possessed of Loudun’. The premiere of the opera *The Devils of Loudun* by Krzysztof Penderecki, which took place in Hamburg on 20 June 1969 (Polish premiere in 1975), and Ken Russell's film *The Devils* from 1971 should also be mentioned here.

5 Tadeusz Konwicki (1926–2015) was a Polish writer, screenwriter and film director.

6 The Committee assessed and approved film scripts for production. It included directors of film teams, screenwriters, film critics and party activists.

Writer Stanisław Dygat⁷ noted:

I found the script excellent. The impression was as evocative as if I had seen the movie. It has everything I would like to see in a screenplay. I consider the script to be so great that it surpasses the original. It is extremely concise, yet extremely clear and simple; the problems are consistently presented and simply executed. Furthermore, I am struck by something that happens very rarely when reading a script: the matter of the colours black and white. (*Matka Joanna od Aniołów* 1993: 66)

Writer and party activist Jerzy Putrament⁸ wrote:

This is an incredibly suggestive script. It is better than the novel because some sections have been removed from it. It has become an evocative picture, full of mood, a two-colour painting. [...] we rarely deal with an artistic work of such high quality. (*Matka Joanna od Aniołów* 1993: 66)

The film went into production in February 1960. The outdoor shots for *Mother Joan of the Angels* were shot in the summer of 1960 at a garbage dump in Józefów near Łódź (Wertenstein 1974: 12). Adopting the main narrative events from the literary original, the screenwriters moved their location to a different space and landscape.

In one of the interviews given during the final phase of work on the film, Konwicki remarked:

We introduced the unity of place by eliminating the travels of Father Suryn so as not to fall into a moral anecdote; we reduced the background, abandoning many elements of the reality. A costume film is positioned in advance in historical terms. We wanted to emphasise the contemporary psychological layer of Iwaszkiewicz[’s novel]. (Konwicki 1960: 8)

Years later, Kawalerowicz added:

Instead of copying the past – which cannot be truly recreated, even with the most scientific and museum-like fidelity to the reality – it is better to make it unreal to some extent, to suggest something that is different from the present, something that allows one to imagine what it might have been like in the times when the action of the movie takes place. (Wertenstein 1974: 12)

Although Iwaszkiewicz located his adaptation in the seventeenth-century Smolensk region, only the stylised costumes and the scenery of the monastery and the inn drew from the historical context. *Mother Joan of the Angels* was character-

7 Stanisław Dygat (1914–1978) was a Polish prose writer, playwright and screenwriter.

8 Jerzy Putrament (1910–1986) was a Polish writer and publicist.

raised by an ascetic aesthetics, which the cinematographers conceived of as creating an appropriate artistic climate for depicting the main concept of the work: “the drama of human nature” (Konwicki 1960: 8), according to the scriptwriters.

When *Mother Joan of the Angels* premiered on 9 February 1961, viewers were struck by the film’s clear and sublime form. Not a trace remained of the Baroque character of Iwaszkiewicz’s story. The visual evocativeness of the film conveys its depth of meanings. For example, numerous commentators wrote about tasting things pictured on the screen (Braun 1961: 7); they regarded the cinematography as visually suggestive and stylistically sophisticated and viewed the film as an exceptional work of beauty (Bukowiecki 1966: 123), a symphony of white and black (Lessman 1961: 8), and even an excess of plastic refinement (Grodzicki 1961: 10).

Referring to the film’s plot, critics noted above all the emotional relationship between the two main characters. A review by Zygmunt Kałużyński,⁹ for instance, characterised *Mother Joan of the Angels* as “a rationalist appeal for the right to indulge natural instinct” (Kałużyński 1961: 16). Many years after the premiere, Andrzej Werner expressed a similar opinion, recognising that the conflict experienced by Father Suryn “has been simplified to a sexual or, at best, erotic basis” (Werner 1987: 14). For Alicja Helman, who sought to analyse the film within the framework of Kawalerowicz’s cinematic oeuvre:

Joan’s game is a sublimation of the desire for love and the inability to fulfil a woman’s destiny. The feeling that will connect her with her confessor, Father Suryn, will remain unconscious at first; then it will be unspeakable, and finally, it will find its paradoxical fulfilment in the complete spiritual breakdown and madness of the priest, who kills to free Mother Joan from demons. (Helman 1996: 49)

The contemporary reception of *Mother Joan of the Angels* by students at the theological seminary is also of interest:

The film is perceived as a religious image. I showed it to my seminarians. The silence was absolute, and anyone who knows the reality of the seminary knows that it is not easy to achieve such a state of concentration on a daily basis. After the screening, one of the seminarians commented that this film would be enough for several ascetic conferences. I thought he was exaggerating and asked what interested him the most about Kawalerowicz’s film. “It is simply a beautiful metaphysical film”, he replied, “black, white and grey... enhance the otherworldly mood. Christianity, the religion of Absolute Love, cannot kill human love. But

⁹ Zygmunt Kałużyński (1918–2004) was a Polish film critic known for his incisive and uncompromising reviews.

a Christian in his poverty... may". One has to agree with the opinion that this film does not appeal to easy emotions; it requires reflection and forces one to participate in a spiritual exam that has been going on for centuries, an exam that humans are unable to pass with flying colours. (Luter 2001: 20)

A Film by Jerzy Kawalerowicz and Jerzy Wójcik

The film owed its final form and composition to the collaboration between Kawalerowicz and cinematographer Jerzy Wójcik,¹⁰ who shared an understanding of authorship in cinema. According to Kawalerowicz:

I am an emotional, intuitive creator, an 'impressionist'. My compass is my imagination. I never think about individual scenes; instead, I rather feel the shape that they should take. Scenes 'are formed' during production. [...] When working on a film, I can't stand aside and observe or think objectively about the scene being realised; I have to experience it, to be somehow inside the things being shown, to be the camera and the actor. [...] In order to develop their own style, the director must constantly interfere in all elements of making the film. If they do not control them – if, for example, the imagination of the cameraman or the actors begins to dominate the director's imagination – there can be no uniformity of the film image, and therefore of style. Uniformity, stylistic homogeneity, will only occur when the director's individuality – due to constant interference – is visible in every component of the film work.

I am the co-writer of almost all my films. This is the first stage of my interference in the film material, and it is a very fundamental stage. [...] I work on the script myself and do not allow anyone else's interference. The screenplay is the most important moment of my work on the film. The script is an artistic plan in which I note down what I will implement in the future film and how I will go about it; it is a recorded emotional and artistic vision of the future film. At the same time, the script describes exactly the tasks of all my associates. (Janicki 1962: 36–38)

Kawalerowicz's directorial approach is characterised by deep reflection on the film medium and the possibilities for reshaping its boundaries. In particular, he sought ways for his films to provide meaningful psychological insights, as well as to show the depth of the human psyche and the complexity of human nature (Helman 1996: 45–54).

10 Jerzy Wójcik (1930–2019) was a cinematographer, screenwriter, film director and educator. He was one of the greatest Polish filmmakers and a famous cinematographer of the Polish Film School, co-producing some of the most outstanding Polish films of the 1950s and 1960s, such as *Eroica* (1957), *Ashes and Diamonds* (*Popiół i diament*, 1958), *Nobody is Calling* (*Nikt nie woła*, 1960), *Pharaoh* (*Faraon*, 1965) and *The Deluge* (*Potop*, 1974). He was also the director of the films *The Complaint* (*Skarga*, 1991) and *The Gateway of Europe* (*Wrota Europy*, 1999).

When Wójcik signed on as cinematographer for the film *Mother Joan of the Angels*, he had already worked with Kawalerowicz, having served as the second cinematographer during the filming of *The Real End of the Great War* (*Prawdziwy koniec wielkiej wojny*, 1957), a role he had previously performed during the production of Andrzej Wajda's *Sewer* (*Kanał*, 1956). For his first independent¹¹ achievements in cinematography, in Andrzej Munk's *Eroica* (1957) and Wajda's *Ashes and Diamonds* (*Popiół i diament*, 1958), he gained a reputation for his skills in the art of cinematography. His credo was further developed in his statements from the early 1960s about the craft. Regarding "the effect of time on matter" (Wójcik 1961: 11), he said:

The basic elements [...] are the elements of time (rhythm) and space (composition), as well as the element of existing in space, which I would call material. These are the elements that all operators use, whether they are aware of it or not. For me, the most important thing is to observe the changes in matter over time. People and objects are subject to the effects of time. It is important how these changes proceed, how a person changes their character or their attitude towards various matters. My job is to observe these processes. I don't care what an actor thinks; I have to see the materiality of what they demonstrate in order to reflect the changes that occur in a particular time and in a particular space. (Janicki 1962: 108)

Wójcik's approach, rooted in a refined philosophy of the cinematic image and a broader attitude towards the world, allowed him to maintain his creative individuality while working with different directors. In his opinion, the cinematographer, as the author of images, should adapt their way of shooting to the director's storytelling and style. Commenting on auteur cinema, he stated:

The film belongs solely to the director. This doesn't mean that there's no room for me here; on the contrary, that's why I have the role. I consider it natural for the cinematographer to adapt to the director's style. The decisive factor in the film is the direction, and for this, the most important thing for the cinematographer is to search for elements appropriate to the director's personality. The selection must be followed by a personal interpretation of these elements. Then I have to objectively photograph the selected elements. (Janicki 1962: 106)

The fact that Wójcik's images retained their individuality, regardless of the film or director, is best evidenced by the opinion expressed by Andrei Tarkovsky in his essay *Sculpting in Time*, published in the second half of the 1960s, which later became his creative manifesto and the main chapter of his book under the same title (Tarkovsky 1986).

11 Wójcik's first independent work was co-directing, with colleagues from the state film school in Łódź, the cinematography for the film *The End of Night* (*Koniec nocy*, 1956).

The Polish cinematographer Jerzy Wójcik says that time in the film is related to the “temperature of the story”, that the sense of rhythm is of utmost importance, and the textures “have an organic relationship with the rhythm, with time, with the observation”. [...] It should be stated that the ability to convey the ‘patina’ of time undergoing changes is one of the most interesting aspects of Wójcik’s work. (Tarkovsky 1967: 72)

Years later, Wójcik, who had become the most prominent cinematographer of the Polish Film School¹² and was fascinated by the reception of his first works, clarified his earlier precepts:

I understand composition as something that organises the entirety of the on-screen expression. Reality must also be understood as a whole. That’s why, for example, thought cannot be contrasted with matter; one cannot say that something is internal or external. [...] The most fantastic thing about cinema is that you can photograph transformation. This is the very essence of cinema. This applies to both transformation in the spiritual world and transformation in nature. Talking about these matters, I have the feeling that they are still poorly verbalised, that I may be using the wrong terms because one does not photograph separately the states of the human spirit and the states of nature that reflect them. (Wójcik 1994: 26)

Wójcik later developed these considerations in the book *The Labyrinth of Light* (*Labirynt światła*, Wójcik 2006).

The Closed Space of the Action Space

“A desert, lunar landscape” was how critics described the film’s setting (Segiet 1961: 7; Eberhardt 1966: 10). It is a sandy, empty, uneven space; its circular form is slightly recessed in relation to the surrounding terrain, surrounded by a slope and rising upwards as it approaches the horizon. In some places, snow persists in the crevices of the escarpment (Image 1). Nature is depicted in a state of suspension, in anticipation of spring. The strong rays of the sun contrast with the coldness of the earth. The film’s spatial and temporal setting reflects natural cycles, heightening the contrasts that pervade *Mother Joan of the Angels*.

The scenery, which is gradually revealed to the viewer, includes four buildings. The eminent Polish set designers Roman Mann¹³ and Tadeusz Wybult¹⁴ were responsible for the spatial design of *Mother Joan of the Angels*.

12 The Polish Film School, which includes films made between 1956 and 1963, was the most outstanding artistic current in the history of Polish cinema.

13 Roman Mann (1911–1960) was a Polish set designer and architect.

14 Tadeusz Wybult (1921–2004) was one of the most outstanding Polish film set designers.

An inn is located on the lowest level of the landscape, a vantage point from which the entire space can be seen. Standing on the slope of a recessed terrain, the inn gives the impression of being sunk into the ground. At the opposite end of the sandy chasm, on a slight rise, a monastery is situated, in contrast to the inn. A recurring shot in the film, showing the view from the inn's windows to the monastery, allows the viewer to visualise the contrast between the two buildings within the spatial landscape.

From the location of Father Suryn and Wołodkowicz in one of the scenes, the viewer can glean that the rabbi's house is located halfway between the inn and the monastery, on the right side of the inn. By showing children finishing a game, the film provides a glimpse of Father Brym's rectory to the left of the inn. The town present in Iwaszkiewicz's story does not appear in the film, although its trace remains in the script: "Behind the glass, below, you could see a fragment of the town and the entrance to the parish church, from which now spilt two thin rows of nuns led by exorcist priests" (Kawalerowicz, Konwicki 1960: 55).

The graphic representation of the film's setting is a square inscribed in a circle, a geometric figure that symbolically represents the duality of human life and the co-existence of the spiritual and material worlds, denoted by the circle and the square, respectively. The action of *Mother Joan of the Angels* takes place between the inn and the monastery, which, through their respective locations at the bottom and top of the field, determine the internal spatial structure of the narrative.

Limiting the narrative space is a characteristic feature of Kawalerowicz's auteur cinema, which enables him to deepen the psychological portraits of the characters. In the film *The Real End of the Great War* (1957), this limited space is a house, while it is a transatlantic ship in *Chance Meeting on the Atlantic* (*Spotkanie na Atlantyku*, 1980), an inn in *The Inn* (*Austeria*, 1982), and the island to which Napoleon was exiled in *The Hostage of Europe* (*Jeniec Europy*, 1989).

The Opposition of the Inn and the Monastery

Looking at the inn and the monastery, the viewer can observe additional bottom-top oppositions beyond their locations in the terrain. For example, the inn is dark, built of darkened wood and with small windows (Image 2). Father Suryn has to bend down to walk through the door. Although the interior of the main room is quite spacious, it seems cramped to the viewer due to the panning of the camera around the interior and its occupants. The predominance of middle plans and close-ups emphasises the physical, embodied understanding of the

space. The viewer perceives the movement of Awdosia walking alongside the table, approaching the camera; there is the unexpected appearance of the enormous Odryn in the frame and of a crowd of men gathered at the table, discussing the events at the monastery after the priest's departure. Pigs roam around the yard of the inn. These are symbols of sinful behaviour in Christian art, especially the sins of impurity and intemperance (Kopaliński 1990: 99–100).

The inn is contrasted with the monastery, with its bright, high walls and white surrounding wall, large courtyard and orderly interior that give an overall impression of peace, spirituality and isolation from the outside world. In Iwaszkiewicz's story, the walls of the convent were dark, as were the habits of the Ursuline nuns. Despite their small Romanesque windows, the monastic rooms in the film are bright and full of light. The scenography, specially prepared for the needs of the film, features no ceilings (Image 3). The bright interior is occupied by nuns dressed in white gowns. Doves fly in the attic, which is a symbolic reference to goodness, purity and innocence (Kopaliński 1990: 419–420).

The blackness and darkness that characterise the inn and the whiteness and light that define the monastery visually mark the symbolic nature of these places. The former is a mysterious, evil and sinful space, as opposed to one where a close relationship with heaven and God is cultivated. This contrast is also reflected in the two main characters: the mother superior and Father Józef Suryń. They are both members of the clergy, leading a lifestyle that involves renouncing the goods of 'this' world and sacrificing one's life for the love of God. This is a decision related to the desire to resist evil and overcome Satan's influence. The space in which these two characters meet should thus also reflect their internal, spiritual differences. The space created in the film seems to adapt the description of Father Suryń's experiences in Iwaszkiewicz's story: "And the whole world split in front of him into light and dark, into brightness and darkness..." (Iwaszkiewicz 1975: 23).

Let us now consider how the acoustics enhance the characterisation of the inn, the monastery and the middle ground between the two. A cheerful melody played by Awdosia on the lute rings through the scenes at the inn. It frequently returns like a chorus, enriched with the words of a song about a young woman who is getting married but prefers to become a nun. The song is sung by Sister Małgorzata a Cruce, who comes to the inn. The monastery interior, on the other hand, resounds with a Latin chant sung by the praying sisters.

Between the inn and the monastery, between the rabbi's house and the rectory, a central space exists. It is a visually dominant, sandy, desert-like terrain full of hollows, where not even the smallest plant grows (Image 4). The black, charred

pyre on which Priest Garniec was burned stands in the middle of this zone and is visible from a distance. This pyre acts as a focal point, a symbolic axis of the represented world. The sound of a bell is associated with this central space.

“They’re Ringing. Why Are They Ringing?”

In the film, a conversation between the farmhands Kaziuk and Juraj, repeated twice, concerns the topic of the ringing bells:

- They’re ringing. Why are they ringing?
- It’s a custom here. For lost travellers.
- Oh...
- So the bishop ordered. For the lost, in the forest.

The sound of the bell recurs frequently in *Mother Joan of the Angels*, appearing in clearly defined, specific situations. The ringing accompanies the arrival of Father Suryn, Sister Małgorzata a Cruce’s movements to and from the convent, the nuns as they go to the church for exorcisms and Suryn as he walks towards the convent. Thus, the bell sounds when the film’s protagonists appear for the first time or are in transit, traversing the central space located between the inn and the monastery.

Alicja Helman drew attention to how the filmmakers adapted and developed a playful scene about the children of Priest Garniec, who were brought up by the parish priest. This scene appeared only as a brief anecdote in Iwaskiewicz’s short story, but scenes of children playing appear three times in the film. Helman believes that “this juxtaposition of children’s play – the wolves are absent, but the children are frightened ‘as if’ they existed – with the exorcisms leads Suryn to doubt the point of expelling demons, and even to question their very existence. Like wolves, demons do not exist, and ‘scaring’ them is a spectacle that requires the audience’s consent to the rules of the game” (Helman 1986: 28).

The theme of scaring away the wolves may, however, carry deeper meanings. After all, the children play around the charred pyre and the sandy space associated with the sound of the ringing bell. They ‘scare away the wolves’ when Father Suryn goes to the monastery for the first time, when he goes to the rabbi and when he is already possessed. The ringing of the bell and the game of ‘scaring away the wolves’ are repeated frequently (Kuśmierczyk 1999: 24–25). The decision to highlight these recurring motifs may be explained by St Augustine’s comment on the Gospel According to St John: “Who is the wolf? Isn’t it the devil?” (Forstner 1990: 308–309).

The wolf symbolises the 'dark' side of life and is frequently associated with demons, often appearing in myths and fairy tales as a menacing omen. In the Middle Ages, it was believed that the devil could appear in the form of a wolf (Lurker 1989: 264–265). Could the wolves scared away by the children be the demons that possessed the souls of Mother Joan and the other nuns in the convent?

Principles of Frame Composition

In *Mother Joan of the Angels*, the classic principles of film image composition meet original aesthetic solutions devised by the film's creators. In the pictorial composition of the film, Wójcik refers to the golden ratio¹⁵ and takes into account the strong focal points of the frame, while also relying on a diagonal composition. These elements often appear together, enhancing the aesthetic impact of individual shots (Kuśmierczyk 1999: 15–17).

The arrangement of the figures and the slope of the escarpment in the background form an ascending diagonal in the scene when Father Brym blesses Father Suryń, who is on his way to the monastery for the first time. Father Brym's hand, drawn in a gesture of blessing, appears above Father Suryń's head, creating lines that conform to the golden ratio (Image 5). This formal element enhances the eloquence of the blessing. However, the descending diagonal focuses the eye on the close-up of the farmhands in the frame, introducing anxiety about the fate of both men through compositional elements (Image 6).

The original compositional organisation favoured by Wójcik in *Mother Joan of the Angels* strictly divides the frame into four parts, related to its vertical and horizontal axes. Importance is given to the vertical axis, as can be seen in the first shot of the film, which focuses on Father Suryń prostrating and then standing up and listening to the ringing bell. The frames of the window in the second shot follow the course of both axes. The window opens, and the camera focuses downward along a vertical line. A moment later, the symmetrical positioning of two horses and farmhands extends the horizontality of the frame, as the horses' and men's heads are aligned on the horizontal axis.

The dark, intersecting window frames mark the centre of the cinematic frame. At the beginning of the third shot, the priest's head appears in the window. The compositional method adopted in the film places the human face in the centre of the shot, a position naturally occurring in close-ups, in order to convey

15 Two quantities are in the golden ratio if their ratio is the same as the ratio of their sum to the larger of the two quantities.

a portrait of the character's inner world. In *Mother Joan of the Angels*, other important elements appear in the centre of the frame in addition to important people. This way of presentation gives the objects in the frame the status of *dramatis personae*. The discipline that Suryń hangs on the wall and the fire burning in the inn's fireplace are shown in the same way, as are the pyre on which Priest Garniec was burned, the axe left in the inn's entrance hall and the door that opens before the exorcist, leading him into the inn, the monastery and the parlour.

In the scene where Suryń is praying in the frame before eating a meal, the vertical axis divides the plane of the shot into two parts, as though they are two independent images that remain in balance. The priest stands on the right, while Wołodkowicz sits at the table on the left. In the centre of the frame, there is a jug standing in a recess in the wall. A vertical line that runs along the edge of the table also becomes visible. Later, the heads of the group in the room align along the horizontal axis of the frame, with individual actors placed centrally in the frame. Two people are usually presented symmetrically in the centre of the image, while larger groups are shown in spatial arrangements along the horizontal axis.

Some frames evoke these compositional principles more obviously and intentionally. The first appearance of Priest Garniec's site of execution is characterised by a perfectly balanced composition that conforms to the vertical and horizontal axes of the frame. A vertical, scorched pole cuts through the centre of the frame, lining up with the top of the pyre (Image 7). Inside the church, the line formed by the nuns walking in a row meets the dark plane of the pews in sharp horizontals.

In the shot preceding this scene, the sisters are shown leaving the convent for the exorcism. They pass the deeply shadowed threshold of the building and enter the illuminated courtyard. Lines of darkness and light run along the vertical axis of the frame. Similarly, the book later divides the image into two parts: the only witness to the conversation between Father Suryń and the rabbi.

Camera movements and alternating viewpoints also work to articulate verticality, horizontality, symmetry and centrality. Several panoramas in the film are oriented on the horizontal plane, such as the shots of the inn and the monastery. Vertical panoramas are limited but still present. At one point, following Father Suryń's gaze, the camera shows a cart in the yard of the inn and farmhands talking. In the scene of Suryń's conversation with the rabbi, the camera pans to show a book lying on the table. Since the presence of the vertical axis is clearly emphasised in the composition of the frames and shots, vertical panning of the camera would be an additional, unnecessary reinforcement of the meanings already present in the image. This is further underlined by the fact that the vertical

element in some scenes is also introduced by the camera's point of view. In the inn, Awdosia looks at the frightened monk 'from above' as she tells his fortune. Suryń, who is standing by the pyre, looks down on Wołodkowicz from a great height. In the parlour, Mother Joan, telling the exorcist about her desire for greatness, is shown from the perspective of a kneeling priest (Image 8). This 'exaltation' of sorts precedes the words she utters a moment later about her desire for holiness.

The director and cinematographer seem to have composed their shots with balance, calmness and clarity, thus framing their depiction of the inner world of human experience and the drive to find tranquillity, peace and spiritual balance.

The Presence of the Golden Ratio in the Temporal Structure of the Film

References to the golden ratio, which determine the duration and composition of individual shots and scenes, are another characteristic principle of Kawalero-wicz's films. In cinema, the golden ratio, also known as *divina proportione*, is used primarily for the composition of frames. In *Mother Joan of the Angels*, however, it also influences the sequence of shots, being evoked in shots, in the temporal relationships between adjacent shots and in individual scenes.¹⁶ As an organising principle of the film, the golden ratio is meant to enhance the aesthetic impressions perceived by the viewer and emphasise the film's significant narrative moments.

Let us take a closer look at certain scenes where the golden ratio occurs.¹⁷ During Father Suryń's prayer that opens *Mother Joan of the Angels*, which begins with prostration and ends with the exorcist entering the inn, the golden ratio structures the moment when the frame closes in on the window that opens in the priest's room.¹⁸ It is worth recalling the importance of intersecting window frames in the composition of the picture, which we will return to shortly.

16 The division of time related to the golden ratio in a film work is determined by stops associated with the ratios of 0.382 and 0.618 in a selected fragment of the film.

17 The presence of the golden ratio is only mentioned when it appears during the screening of the film with an accuracy of two seconds. When calculating the proportions between the shots, the length of individual shots expressed in terms of the length of the film strip is also referred to. The data on the length, numbering and description of the shots are given according to the assembly list of *Mother Joan of the Angels*. A tape speed of 25 frames per second is assumed, which means that one second of film corresponds to 0.475 metres of film strip.

18 The duration of the entire scene is 4 min 12 seconds. The ratio of 0.618 = 2 min 35 seconds.

The exorcist's stay at the inn brings about the culmination of growing tension, especially when Wołodkowicz, moving closer to Suryń, begins to talk about the 'doings' of the 'holy ladies' in the monastery. The scandalised monk stands up, sharply reprimanding Wołodkowicz. Suryń gets agitated at the moment determined by the golden ratio.¹⁹

In the scene showing Father Suryń's journey to the monastery, the Romanesque building is seen twice, appearing in the frame at moments determined by the golden ratio. The first moment occurs when Father Brym points to the monastery, which is revealed in all its glory a moment later, while the second moment corresponds to the subsequent appearance of the building in the frame.²⁰

The golden ratio is also present during the meeting between Father Suryń and the rabbi, at the moment when the exorcist asks the rabbi whether Satan can possess a human soul.²¹

Another noteworthy compositional element concerns the temporal relationship between shots in *Mother Joan of the Angels*: the duration of some adjacent shots is almost the same, reflecting purposeful editing. In the conversation between Father Suryń and the rabbi, pairs of shots of equal length appear three times.

Trying to penetrate the mystery of evil, Father Suryń sought the advice of a Jewish sage. However, this meeting resulted in Suryń having an encounter with himself, as the conversation with the rabbi became a self-reflective journey into the depths of his own soul. The cinematic presentation of the meeting allows the viewer to see the two men talking to each other (Image 9). They both have the same face, as Mieczysław Voit played both roles (Image 10). When one of the interlocutors closes his eyes, the other opens them a moment later in the next shot. When one looks down at the book lying on the table, his interlocutor looks up from the table. In this scene, the book is a symbol of the mystery of the world that the exorcist wants to penetrate:

Suryń: When can Satan possess a human soul?

Rabbi: When a human loves him a lot.

19 Father Suryń's stay inside the inn lasts 7 min 22 seconds. The monk standing up: 0.618 = 4 min 33 seconds.

20 This scene is included between the shot showing the pyre and the shot showing the opening of the monastery gate. Duration: 6 minutes. Father Brym pointing to the monastery: 0.382 = 2 min 17 seconds. Second shot showing the monastery: 0.618 = 3 min 42 seconds.

21 Father Suryń's conversation with the rabbi lasts 7 min 28 seconds. 0.618 = 4 min 37 seconds.

Suryn: What kind of love for Satan?

Rabbi: Love is at the bottom of everything...²²

The priest's journey into the depths of his inner self is made visible through set changes throughout the conversation. Semi-close-ups and close-ups expose the faces and sparkling eyes of the interlocutors, which are, in fact, the eyes of one person. The shots are arranged in pairs (reverse shots) and are of the same length, an editing approach that also emphasises the interlocutors' shared identity. The terrified priest steps back, and the rabbi, remaining behind the table, points his finger at him, as well as at himself:

Suryn: My demons are my business, and my soul is my soul.

Rabbi: I am you; you are me.²³

Suryn: God, what are you saying? I didn't know you didn't know anything.

Rabbi: (off-camera) You, priest, don't know anything. You walk in darkness, and your ignorance is like the black cloak of night. I will not teach you anything because you cannot learn anything, and my teaching is no longer your teaching.

Suryn: You are me...

Rabbi: Go away... go away... I don't know anything either... I don't know anything...²⁴

The priest abruptly exits the rabbi's house, which is reminiscent of fleeing after encountering one's inner self, something known in fairy tales and mythical stories as the 'quick return'.

The juxtaposition of shots of equal length also occurs in other scenes in *Mother Joan of the Angels*. In the film's opening, two shots show Father Suryn finding an axe in the entrance hall of the inn. The equal length of the shots makes it possible to understand the relationship between the exorcist and the tool

22 Shot 164. Suryn with downcast eyes. Length: 13.25 m. Shot 165. Close-up of the rabbi. Length: 13.23 m.

23 Shot 170. Terrified Suryn steps back. Length: 2 m. Shot 171. The rabbi is standing behind the table. He points his finger towards the camera and at himself. Length: 2.5 m.

24 Shot 172. Suryn steps back. Length: 10.28 m. Shot 173. The upset rabbi bangs a book on the table. Length: 11 m. The last words spoken by the rabbi are not in Iwaszkiewicz's story, nor are they in the script. During the meeting of the Screenplay Evaluation Committee, it was noted that in the plot of the future film, the demon-possessed nuns and a Catholic priest are contrasted with a wise rabbi. It was recognised that, in Poland, such a combination would create a very explosive mixture. In the script, Kawalerowicz and Konwicki made a correction by adding the last sentence spoken by the rabbi.

he picks up from the ground.²⁵ The same length of shot also characterises Father Suryn's final conversation with Mother Joan in the parlour, before his violent escape and fall down the stairs. This is the conversation that ends with the exorcist becoming possessed by demons.²⁶

On the Threshold of the Inner World

Wójcik once stated, "The cinematographer has certain special dispositions; first, acute attention. For me, this sharpening of attention is directed at the human face. My eye stops longer and more penetratingly on some faces; it records many details in my memory" (Wójcik 1984: 117). In *Mother Joan of the Angels*, the characters' faces appear at significant moments. Close-ups allow viewers to observe the final phase of the psychological process that drives the development of the narrative. The film's course of events is framed by inner human experiences.

After Father Suryn's departure, close-ups of the men in the inn talking about the exorcism and the burning of Priest Garniec are featured. Only then do the characters muster the courage to address the topic that affects everyone directly, to remove the proverbial masks worn during the conversation with the exorcist. The scene at the inn also features a close-up of Awdosia looking out of the window. In the stable, the viewer gets a glimpse into Kaziuk and Juraj's inner worlds as they fall asleep. Mother Joan's possession is dramatised with close-ups of her face, which is distorted during the conversation in the refectory and frozen during the exorcism in the church (Image 11). The audience also witnesses Father Suryn's madness by observing his face during his visit to Brym, the parish priest. The uncertainty and mystery that accompany his arrival at the rabbi's house and the subsequent sudden arrival of the exorcist at the monastery are registered by Wołodkowicz's curious face, which appears against the background of closed doors.

A special compositional technique was used to build tension: the rapid approach of the camera from the back of an actor to a half-zoom of their face. When this occurs, the actor tends to look back anxiously and notice someone looking at them. The invasiveness of the camera in the character's personal space works to evoke a feeling of anticipation, creating tension and allowing the viewer

25 Shot 74. Suryn is walking by the wall, followed by Kaziuk, who stumbles and falls. Suryn picks up the axe, watches, smiles and swings it. Length: 6.49 m. Shot 75. An axe blade falls on a tree trunk. Suryn walks away from the trunk with the axe. Length: 6.49 m.

26 Shot 189. Suryn's face leans over the camera. Length: 3.12 m. Shot 190. Joan's face. She closes her eyes. Length: 3.35 m.

to enter the world of the observed character, feel their fear and try to decipher the expression on their face. After one zooming shot, Suryń turns around, reacting to Awdosia's gaze (Image 12). A similar situation takes place in the refectory. The camera zooms in on Father Imber, who turns around during the exorcism and notices the eyes of the abbess on him. Similarly, later at the inn, Sister Małgorzata a Cruce turns around under the influence of Chrzyszczewski's gaze.

The film presents an additional way to enter the characters' inner worlds, one that emphasises the inner world of man and the physical world discussed by Wójcik. Upon arriving at the inn, Father Suryń unpacks his travel bag in his room. At one point, he takes out his discipline and makes the sign of the cross with it. Against what temptations of the earthly world is he defending himself? The answer is provided by the cheerful sounds of the lute, originating off-screen from the interior of the inn. While this may seem to be an insignificant event, it speaks deeply about Father Suryń: he must be weak in spirit if he has to defend himself against temptations with the help of the discipline that he hangs on the wall.

The film often pictures the hero crossing thresholds between spaces to express his inner world. Before Father Suryń enters the monastery for the first time, as Kaziuk and the exorcist are approaching the gate, the tension that has mounted over the course of their journey is visible on their faces (Image 13). Later, the frame is obscured by the dark, massive doors of the monastery. The gate opens, but Father Suryń is not seen passing through it. The subjective camera shows this moment from the character's point of view. The window that opens in the priest's room is shown in a similar way. When Suryń, entering the rabbi's house, has to pass through a low door, the subjective camera 'bends down' as a tall monk would do. However, his footsteps are not heard, alerting the viewer to a moment where they are privy to the character's inner world.

The action takes place in an almost theatrical setting, which is reflected in the closed, oval space of the terrain, the dark room of the inn, the monastery surrounded by a wall, the bright refectory, the parlour, the interior of the rabbi's house, and the stable. These spaces are isolated from concrete reality, in turn enabling a spotlight to be cast on the inner world of the protagonists.

The Audio Layer of the Film and the Meaning of the Music

Silence is the natural soundtrack for most of the film. The film's auditory character is reduced to its basic shape, corresponding to its raw visual composition.

Apart from short auditory details interspersed through the narrative – the sounds of lutes and songs in the inn, psalms sung by the nuns in the convent, the ringing of the bell – all that can be heard are voices, laughter, whispers, footsteps, the whistling of the wind, the crackling of firewood burning in the chimney, the barking of an agitated dog, the clatter of a bowl being placed on the table, the opening of a window, the creaking of the monastery gate and the sounds of doves in the attic.

Longer moments of silence accompany conversations and pierce individual statements, enhancing the meaning of words and suggesting a more significant intent. Sounds and silence contrast, drawing attention to each other. During the conversation between Father Suryn and the rabbi, one senses that the meeting is taking place in a room acoustically isolated from the outside world. The viewer perceives the changes in emotional tension and volume in both interlocutors. The silence also emphasises the significance of certain shots, such as the first shot showing the stake and the appearance of Mother Joan in the parlour. A very long silence, lasting almost two minutes, accompanies the arrival of the nuns at the church for the exorcism. The sisters and the religious fathers stand facing each other, motionless and silent, like two armies about to meet in battle (Kuśmierczyk 2014: 129–130).

Contrasts also delineate the way the action unfolds in the frame. Action shots are juxtaposed with less animated shots. In this way, the rhythm of the film is slowed down, becoming almost hieratic. However, a state of coldness runs through the film, containing the contrasting liveliness. This is reflected in the scene when Father Suryn enters the inn for the first time. Awdosia stops playing the lute and leaves. The silence, emptiness and stillness in the room contrast with the crackling fire in the chimney, its high flames shooting upwards.

Composer Adam Walaciński²⁷ created two musical ‘worlds’ in the film, related to the inn and the monastery. A frivolous song sung in the tavern to a lute is contrasted with psalms sung *a capella* by a female choir. In the inn, a simple melody composed by Walaciński to a Baroque poem provides the main soundtrack. The structure of the song is based on an alternation between sung couplets and an instrumental prelude. The melody has a dance-like character, referring to the rhythm of the *krakowiak* (Czachorowska-Zygor 2013: 151). The song emphasises the down-to-earth, secular nature of the inn, symbolising earthly love and the sensuality of the temporal world. The song’s lyrics gain significance as the film’s plot unfolds, foreshadowing Sister Małgorzata leaving the convent.

27 Adam Walaciński (1928–2015) was a composer who created the music for many Polish films.

The sacred space of the monastery is sonically expressed by three psalms composed for the film, in which the composer referred to the psalm and choral traditions in pre-modern music. The ascetic and austere nature of the melodic lines refer to medieval modes, while the simplicity of the psalms emphasises the closed and isolated space of the Romanesque monastery. Together, the musical modes symbolise the religious atmosphere of the world depicted in the film. The psalms were performed with authenticity and naturalness. Kawalerowicz used a rehearsal performance of the psalms by the Polish Radio Choir in Kraków in the film (Czachorowska-Zygor 2013: 151).

The Role of Spinning and Circular Motion

Visual evocations of whirling and circular motion have great dramatic significance in *Mother Joan of the Angels*. This movement first appears in the second scene of the film. The cool atmosphere inside the inn is interrupted by the return of Awdosia, who, after bringing the priest a meal, walks around the table, circling Suryn. Wołodkowicz urges her to tell the priest about his future:

Tell him everything... everything. For example, whether he will make the journey, who he will meet on his long journey, who he will see...

As Wołodkowicz is speaking, he stirs the soup in the bowl in front of him with a spoon. Or perhaps, in reference to divination, he is evoking the movement of stirring a sorcerer's cauldron.

Children run around Father Suryn when he stands next to the stake. The conversation with Mother Joan in the refectory ends with a nun who is, or pretends to be, possessed.

The circular motion appears in the film gradually, almost imperceptibly at first. It emerges as a significant cinematic element when the nuns, spinning on the spot, run into the monastery's courtyard. The whirling movement reflects their possession (Image 14). The spinning motif, initially limited to the nuns' possession by demons, moves beyond the monastery to encompass the surrounding terrain.

The vortex becomes visible as the events unfold, appearing in the frame according to the aforementioned compositional principles, that is, aligned with the vertical and horizontal axes and complying with the golden ratio. The whirling motion contrasts with the balance and clarity of the planes and the harmony provided by the golden ratio. It is invoked during the most important dramatic events in the narrative. The movement is introduced to capture the external setting, the circular movement of the camera panning around Father Suryn

celebrating, the axe stuck in the stump and the doves flying over the monastery. However, the scene with the spinning nuns transforms the vortex feature to highlight more ‘embodied’ scenarios, leading the viewer to associate the origin of its movement with the motions of human spirituality. In the central space, the whole world spins as seen through the eyes of Father Suryn after the possessed Mother Joan enters it. When the film’s action moves to the courtyard in front of the inn, where the nobleman Chrzęszczewski arrives to pick up Sister Małgorzata a Cruce, who has abandoned her habit for him, his grey horse rushes around the courtyard.²⁸

A moment later, the spinning motion moves to the interior of the inn, as Chrzęszczewski and Sister Małgorzata dance frantically around the table. The vortex reaches its greatest dynamic in the place where it was first introduced, during the event preceding the night when Father Suryn kills the farmhands sleeping in the stable with an axe.

The whirling motion, which signals to the viewers changes taking place in the character’s inner world, is a visual element that recurs many times in Kawalerowicz’s auteur cinema. It appears in the films *The Real End of the Great War*, *Pharaoh* and *Chance Meeting on the Atlantic*, as well as in the Hasidic dance in *The Inn*. It is a characteristic element of Kawalerowicz’s oeuvre, although the ‘spinning camera’ was also popular in films from the early 1960s, stemming from Sergej Urusevsky’s designs for the scene of Boris’s death in Mikhail Kalatozov’s film *The Cranes Are Flying* (*Letăt žuravli*, 1957). This type of camera movement, borrowed from Urusevsky, structures the ‘dance of birches’ in *Ivan’s Childhood* (*Ivanovo detstvo*, 1962) by Andrei Tarkovsky (Kuśmierczyk 2012: 97–98) and recurs in Konwicki’s film *All Souls’ Day* (*Zaduszki*, 1961).

White, Black and Liminal Grey

In one of the first shots of the film, Father Suryn takes a white cloth out of his grey travel bag, in which are wrapped bread and a black discipline, an instrument of spiritual penance. The film relies on a triadic colour system, capable of telling a comprehensive narrative of events and their unfolding in both the outer and the inner worlds of the characters.

Wójcik was the one who developed the colour concept for *Mother Joan of the Angels*. The heavy use of black and white was planned from the early inception

28 It is worth noting that, in this scene, the creators of *Mother Joan of the Angels* allude to the scene with the horse rushing around the courtyard in Akira Kurosawa’s *Throne of Blood*.

of the film and is clearly emphasised in the script. Wójcik introduced the importance of liminal grey as an intermediary between these two colours, separating them and at the same time connecting the visual world of the film.

The idea of such a greyscale solution was first raised during preparations for the making of the film:

I remember during my stay in Prague, in one of the Romanesque churches, the GREY²⁹ of the stone suddenly, in its extraordinary material beauty, became a real ILLUMINATION for me: a direct, pure understanding of UNITY and ALSO SEPARATION of the concept of GREY SPACE filling the church nave.

Something WHITE was obstructing my vision.

Perhaps it was a surplice or a white dress that revealed, for a moment, the GREY of the stone and the adjacent GREY of the spacious nave. And again the grey was covered, this time by the BLACK of the habit...

Then the key to the entire composition of the image of *MOTHER JOAN of the Angels* was revealed to me, for just a few seconds. (Wójcik 2006: 39)

In Wójcik's book *The Labyrinth of Light*, one also finds his justification for introducing grey as an intermediary tone between white and black:

If we look at the grey existing in the conceptual space as a system between WHITE and BLACK, the role of such grey can have different functions and contain different meanings.

In the first case, if I had BLACK behind me, I would have GREY in front of me, behind which there is WHITE and LIGHT. GREY is then a potential path to LIGHT.

The same grey would change its meaning if I stood in the light zone with my back to it. Then the grey in front of me would be my path to darkness and blackness.

Thus, grey in itself can have an infinite number of qualities; it can be non-uniform in its structure and operate both in a narrow, condensed zone with sharp edges of the sphere of its existence, as well as vast and almost imperceptible to the human eye in its spatial extent.

Such reasoning about white-grey and black – captured in screen energy fields of various sizes and with various saturations and contrasts – is the key to shaping the composition of the film work. (Wójcik 2006: 40)

29 Wójcik's emphasis.

However, it was not until many years later that Wójcik noticed a parallel between his compositional solution and the value assigned to grey in the culture and artistic production of the Far East:

GREY – as a veil of emptiness that intensifies towards BLACK as the light fades, and at the same time as an illuminated and illuminating BLACK in an intentional movement towards white. It is a sign not so much of a colour phenomenon as of a process taking place in the structure of a given whole. Grey, diagonal and curved lines demonstrate the element of becoming, the movement from one value to another. The essence of this movement is interpreted by Laozi as a path to achieving a non-extreme state:

Knowing (the nature of what is) white (so bright, active, masculine) sticking to (however, what is) black (so passive, dark, feminine), they become the measure (for the whole world) under the sky. When I am the measure (for the whole world) under heaven (the strength of my) immutable virtue (Te) is not in excess, and again I return to a state where there are no extremes. (Wójcik 2006: 40)

Telling the story in the film using white, black and grey required a departure from deep chiaroscuro. Special spotlights were constructed on the set of *Mother Joan of the Angels* to produce diffuse lighting conditions, which highlighted the architectural structure and sculpted the spatial environments in white, grey and black (Wójcik 2006: 145).

Grey also served as a symbolic indication of the liminal situation of the film's protagonists, who found themselves in a trying situation as they faced the necessity of crossing the threshold of light and darkness, good and evil (Wójcik 2004: 116).

Grey is often present in terms of a vast middle space between colours. At the same time, black and white are also frequently present in the middle spaces of the film. Black is represented most prominently throughout the film, such as in the charred pyre, while white appears in many places in the form of snow.

A similar distribution of colour accents is visible in the depiction of the monastery. When Father Suryn crosses the gate for the first time, there is a notable difference between the sun shining on the inner courtyard and the space extending beyond the wall. This tonal contrast highlights the boundary between the monastery and the world around it.

Many tones are present in this scene: the light grey of the monastery walls, the white of the surrounding wall, and the black of the window recesses and the monastery gate. Against the background of elegant grey walls inside the convent, the white habits of the nuns appear, which contrast with Father Suryn's black cassock (Image 15).

During the exorcist's first conversation with Mother Joan in the refectory, they are framed by black tables and benches, which always appear in the shots of this scene, even if only fragmentarily. The demons' final attack on the abbess is launched from the front door, as the black opening of the door through which Mother Joan exits and returns provides the frame for the scene.

Two doors lead to the secluded exorcism site in the attic of the convent. Mother Joan enters through the black door and Father Suryn through the white one. They speak, separated by white habits drying on poles. Mother Joan removes the habits, moving the poles in a gentle rhythm that becomes a counterpoint to the seriousness of the issues discussed and the relationship between Suryn and Mother Joan (Wójcik 2007: 30). The background features grey walls and grey floorboards, separated by white lines, the remnants of the flour once stored here.

The grey of the walls of the inn is heavier and has a different density than the grey of the walls of the monastery. It conceals a semi-darkness, almost as though anticipating the narrative development. Father Suryn enters this greyness in a black cassock and places bread wrapped in a white cloth on the table. Sister Małgorzata a Cruce, standing against a grey wall in a white robe, holds a black cup in her hand. The black and white of the nuns' habits contrast with the greyness of the clothes worn by the supporting characters in the inn. The attire of Kaziuk, who escorts Father Suryn to the monastery, is distinguished by his white, grey and black sheepskin coat.

The tonal values of individual colours change depending on the context in which they appear. When Father Brym and Father Suryn walk past the pyre, three different shades of black can be distinguished: the black of the priest's cassock, the black of the exorcist's cassock and the black of the pyre. As Wójcik describes:

When we see on the screen Father Suryn in a black cassock standing next to the pyre, the black of the costume and the deep black of the pyre are different. The costume had a different texture and a different shade of black, closer to brown, working in a different colour sensitivity range of the black and white negative, while the black of the pyre was the black of burnt wood. The sun was shining on the pyre, bringing out the depth of the texture, while the costume was flat, serving as an undefined texture spot in the scene. The specificity is on the side of what is burnt. (Wójcik 2006: 45)

During the exorcisms conducted in the church, the white of Mother Joan's habit is brighter than the subdued white of the other sisters' habits. Again, Wójcik outlines the tonal contrast in the scene:

The whiteness of the costumes consisted of three values. From full white, through a white that was somehow bathed in a delicate sepia, to a white that could rival a human face in close-ups. In terms of scenographic preparation, various greys, whites and blacks were needed to be able to precisely operate with what appears in the film as one white and one black. (Wójcik 2006: 71)

The tonal triad of white, grey and black appears in the film in a fragmented way. It is present in the general scenography as well as in individual details; it is present in scenes and shots, the composition of frames, and the colours of costumes and props (Image 16).

Wójcik also introduced other compositional solutions in which grey disappears so that a sharp border between white and black is emphasised instead. This occurs, for instance, at the beginning of the exorcism scene. The nuns enter the church against a non-contrasting background but emerge from the darkness into a very bright light. The focus of the shot comprises close-ups of their faces. Before the exorcism scene, however, the tonal contrast reveals the actual locus of the struggle: the internal, spiritual reality.

The silent bell shown tolling at the end of the film represents a synthesis of the constant tonal shifts in the film between white, grey and black. In this case, the role of sound is taken over by light (Wójcik 2006: 47).

“And I Became to Myself a Barren Land”

In the struggle that takes place in *Mother Joan of the Angels* between light and darkness, evil triumphs. Along with the deepening greyness, it gradually seeps into the world of the film. Father Suryń's successive visits to the monastery allow the viewer to see how the initially sunlit courtyard becomes increasingly enveloped in grey colours and deeper shadows.

Darkness also enters the inn, where Sister Małgorzata a Cruce dances with Chrzęszczewski in a dark dress after abandoning her habit. The blackness of the night, the howling wind and the reflection of a face engulfed by darkness in the windowpane frame Father Suryń's conversation with Satan, who orders him to kill the farmhands. In the morning, the deep shadow on the plane of the wall merges with the black of Father Suryń's cassock. The choice has been made.

Although the scene of the murder of the farmhands does not appear in the film, the viewer can easily imagine it. Earlier in the film, the road that Kaziuk and Juraj took from the stable door to the place where they slept was shown twice. An astute viewer might guess that Father Suryń must have approached them

on this road. The viewer may also remember the shot of the men already asleep, shown with their heads turned towards the bottom edge of the frame. Speaking about this scene, Kawalerowicz noted:

When, for example, in *Mother Joan*, I photographed the farmhands lying down, who, contrary to the other frames, were ‘upside down’, I sought to achieve not a plastic effect but a dramatic one. I wanted to achieve the alienation of these people from their surroundings, to convey their loneliness. In addition, I suggest to the viewer – to their imagination – how Father Suryn saw them, what the murder scene looked like, which I do not show. A composition cannot lack dramatic value. (Janicki 1962: 39)

The madness of the priest murdering at night is juxtaposed with the almost bright white of the horses straining at their mangers.

Why was Father Suryn’s mission unsuccessful? Can the answer to this question be found in the film? Does *Mother Joan of the Angels* make reference to the power of love between people or to those who have lost their faith in God and are unable to regain it? Let us return to the moment when, after leaving the parlour, Father Suryn goes to the centre of the film’s main setting. He stops by the pyre and kneels beside it, his head resting on his hand on the charred wood. The words spoken by the exorcist at this moment may provide an understanding of the mystery present in Kawalerowicz’s work, the drama that unites the place and the people who live in it.

An attentive viewer might say that this secret was known before the film, summarised by the legend of the Grail: Mother Joan is sick, and the earth is barren. Is this a correct intuition? Do any elements in the narrative structure of *Mother Joan of the Angels* parallel the legend of the Grail, which, when posed with a question, has the power to heal a place and its people? And who would ask that question? Is it uttered by Father Suryn when he falls by the pyre: “Lord, Lord, why have you forsaken me?”. The exorcist recalls the words spoken by Christ on the cross.³⁰

Does Father Suryn, kneeling by the pyre, see that this is where the cross should be?³¹ Could the cross that appears in the centre of the frame as the central axis

30 Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34.

31 The pole sticking out of the pyre in the film is a tree trunk with its branches cut off, resembling the letter ‘Y’. Perhaps this is an attempt at a pictorial reference to the way the cross was depicted in the Middle Ages. Acting as the axis of the world, a bridge, or a ladder to God, as well as linking opposites and the spiritual principle with the principle of the phenomenal world, it could be represented precisely in the shape of the letter ‘Y’ or as a growing tree with bark, knots and even branches (Kopaliński 1990: 175).

of the depicted world, organising both physical space and the world of human morals with its outstretched arms, restore the just relations between heaven and earth, light and darkness, good and evil, and give Mother Joan the strength to renounce herself, Father Suryn the power to cast out demons, and fertility to the earth?

The title of T. S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* is taken from the last sentence of the second book of the Grail legend: "et factus sum mihi regio egestatis" (Kubiak 1987: 401–402). These are the words that Father Suryn might have said at the foot of the cross: "I sank away from Thee, and I wandered, O my God, too much astray from Thee my stay, in these days of my youth, and I became to myself a barren land" (St Augustine 1996).

Father Suryn does not see the cross. A moment later, he jumps away from the pyre, startled by the words of Wołodkowicz, who is watching him from the side: "Father, please! Father is smearing his hands!".

Father Suryn's mission is unsuccessful. Perhaps he was not the person who was supposed to ask the healing question after all. Perhaps the viewer should be the one to ask this question, while at the same time accepting the answer that the film provides and treating Kawalerowicz's piece as a work with more serious overtones than a simple story of a priest's love for a nun.

Let us return to the beginning of the movie. The long prologue features captions with the names of the producers superimposed on the background image of Father Suryn praying in a prostrate position. The credits end, but the camera's point of view does not change. The priest gets up and moves straight towards the camera. The camera's point of view coincides with the direction of the priest's head during the prayer. An assembly cut is made, with a cross formed by the window frame visible in the reverse shot. Father Suryn was praying in front of this cross. The camera zooms in, and the window opens, the cross disappears, and the viewer sees the vast space where the action of the film will take place. Here is a window to understanding the drama depicted in the film *Mother Joan of the Angels*. This window is a cross.

Images from the Film

Image 1



Image 2



Image 3



Image 4



Image 5



Image 6



Image 7



Image 8



Image 9



Image 10



Image 11



Image 12



Image 13



Image 14



Image 15



Image 16



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Zabłąkani podróżni. *Matka Joanna od Aniołów* Jerzego Kawalerowicza

STRESZCZENIE

Rozdział zawiera szczegółową analizę i interpretację zrealizowanego w 1960 r. filmu *Matka Joanna od Aniołów* w reżyserii Jerzego Kawalerowicza, ze zdjęciami wybitnego operatora Jerzego Wójcika. Zastosowano w nim metodologię analizy antropologiczno-morfologicznej dzieła filmowego.

Po przedstawieniu założeń reżysera dotyczących filmowej adaptacji opowiadania Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza autor omawia ocenę filmu przez Komisję Ocen Scenariuszy oraz recenzje po premierze.

Rozdział zawiera analizę miejsca akcji z uwzględnieniem ukształtowania i wyglądu przestrzeni oraz roli karczmy i klasztoru wraz z charakteryzującą je symboliką mroku i światła. Przestrzeń środkowa pomiędzy karczmą a klasztorem zostaje zinterpretowana jako miejsce symbolicznego przenikania się dobra i zła, co pozwala postrzegać bohaterów filmu jako toczących wewnętrzną walkę „zabłąkanych podróżnych”.

Autor przedstawia zastosowane przez operatora zasady budowy kadru odwołujące się do przebiegu osi horyzontalnej i wertykalnej, obejmujące kompozycję diagonalną i wykorzystanie zasady „złotego podziału”.

W rozdziale omówiono także występowanie „złotego podziału” w strukturze czasowej wybranych scen i ujęć. Szczególna uwaga została poświęcona obecności w filmie bieli i czerni wraz z ich symboliką oraz szarości traktowanej przez Wójcika jako barwa pośrednia, łącząca biel i czern z ich znaczeniami symbolicznymi. Ponadto zwrócono uwagę na wykorzystanie ruchu wirowego jako sposobu wyrażenia motywu opętania siostr zakonnych.

Formę filmu, pozostającą w bardzo ścisłym związku z treścią, cechuje minimalizm. Jest to „tworzenie przez odejmowanie”. Twórcy zastosowali jedynie te środki wyrazu – elementy scenografii, kostiumy, rekwizyty – które były niezbędne do charakterystyki filmowych postaci i przedstawienia ich wewnętrznych zmagania.

Osobny podrozdział jest poświęcony analizie warstwy muzycznej i dźwiękowej: piosenki śpiewanej w karczmie, chóralnych psalmów w klasztorze oraz dźwięków istniejących w przestrzeni akcji ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem bicia dzwonu i jego niemej obecności w ostatniej scenie filmu.

Zablodeli potniki – *Mati Ivana Angelska* Jerzyja Kawalerowicza

POVZETEK

Poglavje predstavlja analizo in interpretacijo filma *Mati Ivana Angelska*, ki ga je leta 1960 režiral Jerzy Kawalerowicz, kot direktor fotografije pa je sodeloval Jerzy Wójcik. Pri obravnavi je bila uporabljena metoda antropološko-morfološke analize filmskega dela.

Po predstavitvi izhodišč režiserjeve filmske adaptacije novele Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza je v besedilu predstavljeno mnenje Komisije za oceno scenarijev ter recenzije po filmski premieri. V poglavju je analiziran dogajalni prostor, pri čemer analiza upošteva obliko in izgled prostora ter vlogo gostilne in samostana, skupaj z zanju značilno simboliko svetlobe in mraka. Vmesni prostor med krčmo in samostanom je interpretiran kot simbolni prostor prepletanja dobrega in zla, kar napeljuje na interpretacijo filmskih likov v smislu posameznikov, v katerih se odvija notranji boj »zablodelih popotnikov«. Analiza preučuje kompozicijo kadra, kot jo je zasnoval direktor fotografije in se nanašajo na horizontalno in vertikalno os ter vključujejo diagonalno kompozicijo in pravila »zlatega reza«. Slednji je obravnavan tudi v kontekstu časovne strukture izbranih prizorov. Posebna pozornost je namenjena prisotnosti bele in črne barve ter njunim simbolnim pomenom, ter sivini, ki jo Jerzy Wójcik obravnava kot vmesno barvo, ki povezuje belino in črnino. Predstavljena je uporaba vrtenja in krožnega gibanja kot načina izražanja motiva obsedenosti nun.

Filmska forma, ki je tesno povezana z vsebino, je minimalistična in jo lahko opišemo kot »ustvarjanje z odstranjevanjem«. Uporabljena so le tista izrazna sredstva – elementi scenografije, kostumi, rekviziti –, ki so bistvena za karakterizacijo filmskih likov in njihovih notranjih bojov. Ob tem je posebno podglavje posvečeno glasbeni in zvočni plasti filma: pesmi v gostilni, zborovskim psalmom v samostanu in zvokom iz okolja, zlasti zvonjenju zvona in njegovi nemi prisotnosti v zadnjem prizoru.