

INTRODUCTION

The monograph *Masterpieces of Polish Literature and Film* presents three selected works of the Polish literary canon and their film adaptations, all of which are distinguished by a high artistic level and belong to the classics of Polish cinema: the novel *Pharaoh* by Bolesław Prus (*Faraon*, 1895) and the film *Pharaoh* directed by Jerzy Kawalerowicz (*Faraon*, 1965); Stanisław Wyspiański's play *The Wedding* (*Wesele*, 1901) and the film *The Wedding* directed by Andrzej Wajda (*Wesele*, 1972); and Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's novella *Mother Joan of the Angels* (*Matka Joanna od Aniołów*, 1946) and the film *Mother Joan of the Angels* directed by Jerzy Kawalerowicz (*Matka Joanna od Aniołów*, 1960). The final chapter offers a more detailed presentation of the anthropological-morphological method of film analysis. This method, developed by Seweryn Kuśmierczyk, was employed in the present film analyses.

In addition to their aesthetic value and their representativeness of Polish literary and film production, the works treated in the monograph were selected due to the availability of translations of the literary texts and the possibility of analysing digitised film formats.

The order of the chapters in the monograph follows the chronology of the publication of the literary works. Consequently, the arrangement of the chapters on films does not follow the chronological sequence of their creation. Jerzy Kawalerowicz first directed the film *Mother Joan of the Angels* (1960, premiered 1961) and only four years later created the film *Pharaoh* (1965, premiered 1966), which is presented in the first part of the monograph, while Andrzej Wajda's film *The Wedding* (1972, premiered 1973) was the last of the three presented films to be produced. The chapters of the monograph are designed independently and can be read separately. However, reading the monograph as a whole, together with the analysed literary works, provides a broader picture of cultural and historical processes and trends in Polish literature, from the realist currents of the late nineteenth century (*Pharaoh*), through the period of so-called Young

Poland at the beginning of the twentieth century (*The Wedding*), to the unique literary response to the Second World War (*Mother Joan of the Angels*).

Referring to historical material, the novel *Pharaoh* deals with the universal issue of the mechanisms of government; the play *The Wedding* focuses on a specific issue of the Polish sphere, that is, the spiritual state of the Polish nation at the time of the country's division between neighbouring superpowers and its formal non-existence; while the novella *Mother Joan of the Angels* reflects on the universal issue of the birth of evil in man and society. In their own unique way, all three works address issues of social norms, moral values, human freedom and a person's functioning in society.

The analyses of the literary works focus on all three elements of a literary work's existence – production, text and reception – shedding light on those layers that have significantly marked each work. Consideration is given to the dynamism of each text, its placement in and interaction with the broader socio-historical and cultural system, as well as the uniqueness of its literary expression.

The treatments of the films are based on the anthropological-morphological method of film analysis. The holistic and in-depth analyses deal with the circumstances of the creation of each work, its unique features in terms of content and form, and its reception and wider impact. The discussions also include information obtained directly in conversations with the filmmakers.

The book is an English translation of the Slovenian-language monograph *Mejstrovine poljske književnosti in filma*, which was published in 2021 by the Ljubljana University Press of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. The translation omits certain sections of the originally published analyses dealing with the reception of the literary works in Slovenian translation and the screening of the films in Slovenian cinemas.

The monograph is the result of the Slovenian-Polish research cooperation between the two authors, but with valuable contributions by many other colleagues, to whom the authors are particularly grateful: Assoc. Prof. Zdzisław Darasz, PhD, and Assoc. Prof. Patrycjusz Pająk, PhD, from the University of Warsaw, and Assoc. Prof. Nikolaj Jež, PhD, from the University of Ljubljana for reviewing the book and providing support; and Tomasz Wójcik for designing the cover and title pages and especially for his careful selection of the film stills used as cover images, as the creator of the visual image of two of the three films analysed (*Pharaoh* and *Mother Joan of the Angels*) was his father, Jerzy Wójcik, the director of photography. Very warm thanks are extended to Małgorzata Matuszewska, Director of the National Film Archive – Audiovisual Institute

(FINA), for her help in publishing the book and to Marcin Ogiński, Head of the Department of Festivals, International Cooperation and Licensing of the Warsaw Documentary and Feature Films Studios (Dział Festiwalu, Współpracy z Zagranicą i Obrotu Licencjami Wytwórni Filmów Dokumentalnych i Fabularnych w Warszawie), for his assistance in obtaining permission to publish stills from the analysed films used on the cover. The publication of the monograph was made possible by the financial support of the Polish National Film Archive – Audiovisual Institute (FINA), the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS), the University of Warsaw and the Ljubljana University Press of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana.

Lidija Rezončnik and Seweryn Kuśmierczyk