

REALISM AND AUTHENTICITY IN POLISH DETECTIVE FILMS AND TV SERIES OF THE 1970S¹

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Abstract

This paper aims to provide characteristics of selected Polish detective films produced in the 1970s from the typological perspective. The author describes eight films and TV series of that time, i.e. "Trąd" (dir. A. Trzos-Rostawiecki, 1971), "To ja zabiłem" (dir. S. Lenartowicz, 1974), "Hazardziści" (dir. M. Waśkowski, 1975), „Wściekły” (dir. R. Załuski, 1979), „Anna i wampir” (dir. J. Kidawa, 1981) and "Złote Koło" (dir. S. Wohl, 1971), "S.O.S" (dir. J. Morgenstern, 1974), and "Gąszcz" (dir. A. Konic, 1974), pinpointing characteristic similarities in their contents and form. A common element of all these productions is a specific, realistic convention which is illustrated using four main techniques: 1) focusing on such crime categories which had not been presented in films so far 2) investigating the ethical and moral dimension of a crime 3) developing various contexts of a crime and incorporating in the film plot the theses and opinions derived from other discourses not dealing with the category of aesthetics, 4) various narrative and formal techniques, incorporating real-life elements into the feature film's plot. Beside the content and formal characteristics of this film genre, the paper provides also relevant information on institutional and cultural circumstances which determined the development of this cinematic form.

Keywords: Polish detective films, film genres, Polish People's Republic

Abstrakt

Realizm i autentyczność w polskich filmach i serialach kryminalnych lat 70. Artykuł stanowi próbę opisanego części polskich produkcji sensacyjno-kryminalnych lat 70. z perspektywy genologicznej. Autor poddaje analizie osiem filmów i seriali z tamtego okresu: *Trąd* (reż. A. Trzos-Rostawiecki, 1971), *To ja zabiłem* (reż. S. Lenartowicz, 1974), *Hazardziści* (reż. M. Waśkowski, 1975), *Wściekły* (reż. R. Załuski, 1979), „*Anna*” i *wampir* (reż. J. Kidawa, 1981) oraz *Złote Koło* (reż. S. Wohl, 1971), *S.O.S* (reż. J. Morgenstern, 1974) i *Gąszcz* (reż. A. Konic, 1974), wskazując na cechujące je podobieństwa treściowe i formalne. Wspólnym mianownikiem wszystkich tych produkcji jest specyficzna realistyczna konwencja, realizując się za pomocą czterech głównych chwytów: 1) skupienie się na tych rodzajach przestępstw, które do tej pory nie miały swojej ekranowej reprezentacji; 2) problematyzowanie etycznego i moralnego wymiaru zbrodni; 3) rozbudowywanie różnych kontekstów przestępstwa i inkorporowanie w obręb

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dyskursu filmowego tez i sądów przejętych z innych, pozaestetycznych dyskursów; 4) chwytów narracyjnych i formalnych, wprowadzających w tkankę fikcyjnej fabuły elementy rzeczywistości pozafilmowej. Artykuł nie tylko charakteryzuje treściowe i formalne cechy tej konwencji, lecz także stara się wskazać na instytucjonalne i kulturowe uwarunkowania, które umożliwiły jej wykształcenie się.

The main aim of this paper is to complete the typological map of popular movie productions made in the Polish People's Republic with the detective and action films² of the 1970s. When carefully analysed, a particular group of films may be distinguished, with a certain characteristic structural dominant and resorting to the same matrix of themes and narratives, feature and formal traits. This attempt of systemic description of all those traits and their function shall allow for the reconstruction of the overall perspective on the entire genre as a whole with its internal logics. The preliminary thesis of this analysis stipulates that the prevailing criterion for selection of productions described herein was a particular realism and authenticity demonstrated in those films.

There are eight movie productions and TV series analysed in this paper. The former group comprises "Trąd" [*Leprosy*] (dir. Andrzej Trzos-Rastawiecki, 1971), "To ja zabiłem" [*It's me who killed*] (dir. Stanisław Lenartowicz, 1974), "Hazardziści" [*Gamblers*] (dir. Mieczysław Waśkowski, 1975), "Wściekły" [*Furious*] (dir. Roman Załuski, 1979) and the film shot at the beginning of the next decade "Anna i »wampir«" [*Anna and "the Vampire"*] (dir. Janusz Kidawa, 1981). The latter group of productions includes "Złote Koło" [*A Gold Circle*] (dir. Stanisław Wohl, 1971), a series of seven episodes titled "S.O.S" (dir. Janusz Morgenstern, 1974), and one episode titled "Gąszcz" [*Tangle*] of a TV series "Najważniejszy dzień życia" [*The Most Important Day in the Lifetime*] (dir. Andrzej Konic, 1974). Certainly, this is not an exhaustive list of Polish detective films and series made in that period, however, as other films do not entirely match the type described herein, they will not be analysed in detail (although there may be some resemblance as it is the case with "Kocie ślady" [*Cat's trace*] directed by Paweł Komorowski, 1971).

Before I proceed with the description of common features of the productions listed above, I would like to outline the cultural context in which they were created. This seems to be a fundamental reference point for description, as it shall allow for better understanding of the origins of the trend described herein as well as to realize what constitutes the substantial qualitative change in the history of this genre in Poland. For this reason, first I would like to analyse in more detail the category of realism in the critical discourse on the

² In this article, the term detective and action films shall be referred to the films and TV series which are primarily aimed at serving a ludic role; in which the components of crime and violence related therewith are not fundamental and structuring the cinematic work or of decisive importance for their semantic as well as syntactic level. In addition, the paper provides an analysis of films and series which action is set in contemporary time (from the perspective of the production) and is set in the reality of the Polish People's Republic i.e. presents the real life which is familiar and mundane for the viewer.

detective films of that time. Next, I will briefly present the typical elements of realism in film productions of the 1960s serving as a reference for movies produced in the subsequent decade. I shall then proceed with the analysis of particular films listed above and their common features. Eventually, I will try to describe the context which enabled such an artistic form to appear in Polish cinema and TV production of that time.

Our criminals and our detective stories

The categories of realism and authenticity which are fundamental in this analysis were also of great importance for detective films produced in the Polish People's Republic. Movie critics would collate this genre closely with the context they existed in; detective films were perceived as mimetic reflection of a particular social reality. This assumption was often recurring in the journalistic discourse on movies with reference to Polish detective films and it was treated as undeniable fact. In many texts this assumption served as a foundation for a thesis in which it was claimed that the domestic production of detective films was a failure as no sufficiently spectacular crimes were being committed in the People's Republic of Poland. In 1969, such interpretation was pronounced by Danuta Karcz in "Kino" [*The Cinema*] magazine: "Attempts of polonization of the English model are by all means justified. Each detective story is ingrained in social, cultural tradition and customs of the country of its origin. In capitalist countries a crime is always a play for high stakes. These are big games carefully plotted to maximise gains and reduce risk. Such a model shall not be transferred automatically. We have no great capital, no organized criminal groups and notorious gangsters specializing in great robberies. We have no established organized crime environment whatsoever" (Karcz, 1969, 7–8).

Such statements demonstrate the significance of realism in shaping the public opinion on detective films. The notion of style or genre or conventionality with reference to such films is substituted with the presupposition that the Western productions are more appealing to critics and viewers because they faithfully reflect the specificity of those societies (which, on the other hand, could serve as a ready-made scenario). From this perspective, Polish producers were in a deadlock; neither could they apply foreign patterns as they did not fit Polish reality, nor could they set the scripts in a local context, as it was not spectacular enough, and consequently lacking the entertaining spirit appropriate for a feature movie. Such an approach created a particular framework determining the creative as well as receptive codes.

❖ The 1960s and the realism of details

In the detective films of 1960s which proved to provide a substantial context for productions of the subsequent decade, the authentic elements were rather inconsistent. On the one hand, producers paid great attention to the realism of details, which appeared to be directly adopted from the reality of common life. An extreme example of such a narrative may be a newly conceived genre – a film depicting militia procedures in which the main attraction were the actions of law enforcement portrayed in a detailed and realistic manner. The audience could watch professionals on duty; witness how particular units of the entire institution operate coordinated by the general command, appreciate

complex procedures and specialist equipment, or get familiar with secretive and specific jargon of orders and reports. All these features were intended to make an impression of watching authentic law enforcement proceedings. In the most radical form, the gist of militia procedures was more important and engaging than the very plot of a film (Dudziński, 2014).

On the other hand, however, the “ideological framework” (Skotarczak, 2011) (which did not allow any implication that a crime in Polish People’s Republic may constitute any moral or social issue) eradicated any real traits of the featured world, characters and the very crime itself from almost all cinema production. The crime depicted in a film had to be alienated and farthest from any viewer’s experience. Therefore, the officials placidly approved such detective and criminal plots as presented for instance in “Spotkanie ze szpiegiem” [*Meeting with the Spy*] (dir. Jan Batory, 1964) or “Hasło Korn” [*Password: Korn*] (dir. Waldemar Podgórski, 1968), in which the presented reality could not be more distant from any common experience.

If a script writer was resort to other themes than spy fiction, then the plot of the story had to be set in a specially arranged reality, possibly distant from everyday life to the greatest extent possible. The best example of such an invented setting would be “Gdzie jest trzeci król” [*Where is the Third King*] (dir. by Ryszard Ber, 1967), a production following a scheme of a classic detective film in which the action takes place in a castle museum which is completely isolated from the rest of the world, and where a curator is shot dead with a crossbow. This short description shows that this crime hardly resembles any known reality or allows for any other questions than “whodunit?” (Kowalski, 1985).

The 1970s and the new formula

As a matter of fact, it has been since the very beginning of Edward Gierek’s administration in Poland when substantial changes in national detective film production have become noticeable; more and more productions would shift towards realism (perceived differently than in the previous decade) and try to convince the viewers that the crimes and criminals they depict are more true to life. To this end, they applied a number of techniques previously absent or virtually non-existing in Polish mainstream films, and whose objective was to make the entire presented story more plausible and to emphasise a different dimension of a crime. The most typical techniques and gimmicks which I intend to present are as follows: 1) focusing on such crime categories which had not been presented in films so far 2) investigating the ethical and moral dimension of a crime 3) developing various contexts of a crime and incorporating in the plot the theses and opinions derived from different professional discourses, 4) various narrative and formal techniques, integrating real-life elements in a feature film plot. Obviously, some of these techniques had been applied in individual films before, however it was not until the 1970s when such means of expression created a discernible, internally linked structure, and they no longer appeared in isolation.

❖ Misrepresented crime

The most important qualitative change relative to the previous decade was a different status and expression of the crime in a film; the plots were more and more often based on crimes not presented in films so far. This change may be observed in three expressive examples. Firstly, the unspectacular and accidental common crime presented on cinema and TV screens which may seem usual and uninteresting from the perspective of dramatic expression. In *“Złote Koło”*, the investigation is concerned with a teenager murdered with a beer bottle in a dark alley by a common crook and boozier. In *“To ja zabiłem”*, the murder is committed somewhat by accident during a scuffle between two strangers, similarly to the case presented in *“Gąszcz”*. It is particularly emphasised that real crimes are stunningly typical, neither do they have extensive motives or a sophisticated plan, nor a spectacular course of events, they happen almost accidentally, due to some unfortunate coincidence. Secondly, some of the productions listed above break down the then strong taboo of sexual violence presented in the contemporary context. According to Arkadiusz Gajewski, this motif has been virtually absent from audio-visual culture (in feature and documentary films and the newsreels of the Polish Film Chronicle)³. Despite this subject being a genuine social problem⁴, it was not reflected in films. The first movie to break down this taboo was *“Trąd”* the storyline of which revolves around a confrontation of a main character and a gang of procurers who exploited a group of naive teenage girls and forced them into prostitution. Sexual crime is presented as commonplace – there are several persons involved in the activity of the group of procurers, while the group of clients is far more numerous and encompasses apparently decent citizens.

Another film made in the same year – *“Złote Koło”* – depicting a case of a gang rape of a 15-year-old girl emphasised the fact that the crime was committed by young men in broad daylight, actually witnessed by passers-by who prefer not to react and look away pretending that they saw nothing.

The issue of sexuality has been raised in an alarming context in the TV Series titled *“S.O.S.”* which plot included a motif of a gang soliciting young girls to engage in nude photo sessions. Such embarrassing pictures would then be used for blackmail with the intention to coerce the victims to prostitution. Ultimately the women are killed by a psychopathic chief of the gang.

A characteristic thread here was allegedly the western origin of depravation; for some time both the main character as well as the viewers are convinced that the gang produces porn photographs commissioned by someone from behind of the *“Iron Curtain”*. It takes

³ According to the collections referred to by Gajewski, this motif appeared in five documentary films in the 1960-1980 (although in some of them as one of several issues addressed), whereas in the resources of the Polish Film Chronicle there is only one untapped roll film in which this subject was expressly addressed (Gajewski, 2008, 75-76, 87).

⁴ The fact that sexual violence was a major social problem may be evidenced by official statistics of rapes. For instance, in 1967 militia recorded 2084 instances of rape, and 1133 persons were convicted for rape in the same year (Leszczyński, 1973, 190–191). At the same time, it was a common belief that the real scale of this problem was far broader, mostly on account of the so-called dark number. The victims would often refrain from reporting such crimes to militia (Leszczyński, 1973, 185–186).

time to debunk this hoax as a red herring. This makes the message clear – depravation and social problems arise in the society around us, and their source shall not be sought anywhere outside this community. All these film examples feature similar motifs – sexual offences are in no way uncommon, yet people choose not to notice or discuss this problem.

Thirdly, “S.O.S.” is worth mentioning also in the context of another common taboo in the Polish People’s Republic, that is serial killers. Like sex offences, the crime of this kind is difficult to justify; they also demonstrate such traits of human nature which are impossible to be changed or controlled, at least by socialist state authorities, which results in their being hushed up. Presenting a serial killer in the aforementioned TV discussed (and subsequently in “Wściekły” and “Anna i »wampir«”) marks first representations of such crime category in detective films. It shall be remembered though that all these three productions were concurrent with a notorious case of Zdzisław Marchwicki, aka Wampir z Zagłębia (a serial killer found guilty of several murders committed since 1964 until his arrest in 1972 and sentenced in the trial in 1974-1975). This case seems to have a profound impact on social consciousness of Polish citizens of that time and made serial killers notorious in collective memory for a long time (especially for the fact that Marchwicki was the best-known, though not the only case).

❖ **Axiology**

Another characteristic trait for the productions in question is the absence of so typical of the 1960s Manichaeic division of the world into good and evil; a black-and-white picture is replaced with all shades of grey, in which no final judgment may be formulated once and for all.

In a more straightforward manner, it is demonstrated by making criminals the protagonists of a good case. In “Trąd” for instance, it is not a militia officer but a former convict (though successfully rehabilitated) who fights with a gang of procurers trying to redeem his brother (who is involved in the criminal activity) from prison sentence. The main character not only refuses to cooperate with the Civic Militia officers but even avoids any collaboration, as he possibly believes they would be of no help whatsoever. The films “To ja zabiłem” and “Hazardziści” depict a crime entirely from the perspective of perpetrators. The former movie is particularly interesting for the mechanism of projection / identification focussed on a young and loving couple, who easily win the audience’s favour despite the fact that the man had committed a manslaughter and tries to avoid responsibility (later helped by his lover taking advantage of her working in a court). Main characters gradually aggravate their conflict with the system of justice (which process is depicted in a melodramatic gist), while visibly maintaining the approval and fondness of the viewers.

In a more complex alternative, the plots of the movies analysed demonstrate the futility of formulating clear-cut moral and ethical judgments. “Złote Koło” may serve as a good example, in which a victim of a murder – Janusz Kruk – turns out to be a rapist. However, the plot develops in such a way that the viewers learn about the crime in the middle of

the film; having seen the details of a difficult childhood of the victim and his conflict with relatives and peers. This arouses viewer's affection towards Kruk until the public learns that he committed rape. A well-developed motif of a raped girl and her emotional distress following the incident forces the audience to immediately redefine their initial opinions and attitudes.

However, this verified moral evaluation of Kruk's conduct is soon questioned again, as in the course of investigation it turns out that he had tried to redeem his crime and he suffered remorse, while he was eventually killed for money he wanted to give to his victim. This moral ambivalence is best expressed by the main character, capt. Budny who claimed that Kruk was "good and bad at the same time". Such a moral asymmetry between criminals and militia and the rest of the society, so characteristic of detective films in socialist era Poland, is challenged as it turns out that the problem of a crime is not single-valued, and real crimes are committed in our proximity, they are brutal and strikingly ordinary at the same time, as they are not always perpetrated by demoralized felons.

❖ **Crime context**

The black-and-white image of the world in those film productions is also blurred on account of the fact that the crime is no longer depicted as an alienated act, but it is shown in a broader context. Such movies often transform the theses and concepts of crimes and criminals derived from scientific and professional discourses of sociology, psychiatry, psychology or law. Therefore, the emphasis is also changed; the plot is no longer focused on the crime and investigation alone, but also depicts all the various circumstances and background.

Again, "Złote Koło" may serve as a good example of the way social class relations are depicted as present in Polish community (which evoke ever growing frustration of particular individuals). Notably, when Kruk – a juvenile high-school student – went missing for several months, neither his family nor school authorities seemed concerned (surprisingly this was a school janitor who was best-informed about Kruk's whereabouts). Moreover, in Budny's talks with witnesses it becomes clear that for the latter the financial and substantive aspect is not only a priority but the only matter of their interest. This attitude is best demonstrated by Kruk's schoolmate who said, "My father is an engineer in Elwro and has a kind of materials-scientific approach to people. According to him, Kruk was a third class material". Actually at all times when adults were questioned and tried to address the teenager's problems in interpersonal relations, one may easily notice a fundamental lack of understanding for victim's struggle. The perception of the world demonstrated by both generations is fundamentally diverse, particularly as far as affluence and decent life standards are concerned. It is particularly visible in the Budny's talk with the uncle whom Kruk lived with in Wrocław:

Uncle – I told him he would get in trouble, but I did not know it was that bad.

Budny – Why did you think so?

Uncle – You see, when you are sixteen [...] you can't have that all what others have gathered throughout their entire life. You won't believe me but he hated me for that I had a two bedroom flat with a kitchen, a TV set and a fridge. After twenty-five years of working. And he had, you know, school free of charge, he would sleep in my kitchen on a folding bed, he could eat all he wanted and when he needed new shoes, my wife would go with him [...] to buy the ones he chose. And still he was not satisfied.

This generation clash portrayed in the film was not just the scriptwriter's idea, as it referred to the contemporary social problem of particular relevance for sociological analysis of that time. In the second half of the 1960s it was the baby-boomers generation who attained adulthood, that is people already born in the Polish People's Republic, who could not remember the hardships and poverty the Poles had to endure in 1930s and 1940s. Those times were the reference for their parents' generation, but not for teenage youths anymore. Therefore, the period of the so-called "small stability" was perceived as a time of plenty for the parents, whereas the younger generation would experience that period rather as the time of plain stagnation and lack of perspectives (Słabek, 2009, 426).

This phenomenon was combined with the increasing social stratification; the percentage of working class and farmers in comprehensive high schools and at universities was decreasing, while the pay gap between manual and clerical workers was rising (Słabek, 2009, 426). These social processes were partly reflected in "Złote Koło", as Kruk did not perceive his free education and shabby accommodation in a kitchen as decent life standard when compared with wealthy peers' lifestyle. It was the problem of social stratification which was frequently indicated as a cause of intergenerational disintegration (and interpersonal in general); extreme materialism in which money is considered the only indicator of human value, the poverty boosting frustration and last but not least – the overwhelming callousness in the society.

Another characteristic trait of incorporating the subjects from professional discourse into a film plot is the aforementioned manner of depicting the motif of sexual violence. This issue did not appear in Polish cinema production by accident; on the contrary, the sixties and early seventies is the time when social conceptualisation of sexual violence (and a rape in particular) undergoes a profound change. Its notable evidence is law; as in the new Penal Code adopted in 1969 a rape was defined as an offence against freedom and liberty⁵ (contrary to "harlotry" as it was held in the previous version of the penal code of 1932⁶). At the same time, the respective penal practise undergoes profound change as courts more often ruled more severe sentences for rapists (Leszczyński, 1973, 283). Concurrently, numerous law books devoted entirely to this problem were published (Leszczyński, 1973; Filar 1974).

Meanwhile, the issue of rape becomes more apparent in sexology, as well as psychological and journalistic discourse. It was commonly held that this problem was on the rise and

⁵ Polish Journal of Laws of 1969 No. 13, item 94, clause 168.

⁶ Polish Journal of Laws of 1932 No. 60, item 571, clause 203-205.

such offences were more and more frequent⁷, furthermore, there were some attempts to determine the causes of this phenomenon and identify potential solutions (Perkowski, 2011; Kościańska, 2012)⁸.

Moreover, the discussed detective films derived from the aforementioned discourses not only demonstrate an interest in this problem, but also illustrate its conceptualisation. Sexual offences as reflected in films are in concordance with opinions expressed by lawyers, sexologists or journalists. In these theories, rape is expressly associated with juvenile community (in terms of victims and perpetrators alike), and it was argued that sexual offences were entailed in rapid cultural changes.

Piotr Perkowski refers to the contemporary argumentation in the following manner: "According to some specialists of that time, the rape was incited by the »cultural and social changes involving sexual morality« which resulted in »the creation of the culture of moral vanity«. Such statements are supported in the same breath by the following negative examples of extramarital relationships and separating procreation from sexual intercourse, increase in sexual activity of women, emancipation, or women's recklessness (probably understood as walking in the streets after dark, partying, dating and flirting), frivolous fashion and popularisation of pornography [...] development of youth subcultures and cult of power and domination in popular culture (thus some content presented in books, cinema and TV increasingly gaining popularity in the 1960s, in particular in foreign films, mostly of West European production)" (Perkowski, 2011, 291).

Meanwhile, according to Perkowski, many of such problems served as a justification of shifting the responsibility for rape on the victims who were partially blamed (allegedly exposing themselves to rape by irresponsible and emancipated conduct) (Perkowski, 2011, 294).

The films analysed in this paper often constitute an aesthetic representation of the aforementioned theses. A victim of sexual violence in "Trąd" is a young, naive school student dreaming about great love who decided to escape with her sweetheart unaware that he would sell her to a gang of procurers. In "S.O.S", only a little older were the victims who were equally easy to be taken in by a promise of fame and who believed that a session of nude photos will open the door to a career in modelling and who eventually became blackmail victims. In "Złote Koło", the leader of a gang of hooligans was visibly characterised as a hippie, emphasising his relations with a particular subculture (and more importantly – the Western one)⁹. Therefore, none of these characters is accidental; they illustrate the commonly accepted concept of rape in that period.

⁷ The increasing number of rapes has been addressed by Leszczyński, who emphasised the rise by as much as several dozen percent in the 1969s (see J. Leszczyński, op. cit. p. 190-191) It shall be noted though that it may have been not the sheer increase in the number of rapes committed but just reported.

⁸ An interesting perspective is also provided in the text by Barbara Klich-Kluczevska who analysed the journalist debate concerning the film titled "Seksolatki" (dir. Zygmunt Hübner, 1972) (Klich-Kluczevska, 2015).

⁹ More about the attitude of the contemporary government towards hippies (the subculture which appeared in Poland at that time) may be found in B. Tracz „Zdemoralizowane brudasy”. *Początki ruchu*

Another example of a relation between expert and film narration is demonstrated in “Wściekły” illustrating the psychological, or even psychiatric aspect of crime. In creation of the role of a murderer and the reaction of characters to the crime, Załuski was visibly inspired by psychiatric case studies by Antoni Kępiński (even directly referred to by some characters) which suggests an attempt to demonstrate the methods used by psychopaths’ and how difficult it is to understand their motifs. The killer’s method and the reaction of people who are in contact with a perpetrator constitute a straightforward illustration of Kępiński’s theses. Inspiration drawn from authentic psychiatric observations certainly increased authenticity and shifted the emphasis of the film from the investigation process (rather not spectacular) onto psychological context of crime (Dudziński, 2016). Therefore, detective films constitute an aesthetical illustration of theses which originate from completely different discourse realms.

❖ **Combining the film and the outside-film reality.**

Within the trend described in this paper, not only the contents of the detective films but also their form undergo transformation after 1970. Producers used various techniques to convince the viewers that what they watch is as close to reality as possible, and for this reason they frequently resorted to blurring the boundaries between the real and featured worlds. One of the most characteristic methods used in film making was the reference to authentic and notorious criminal stories, well known to the public. The films based on true stories include “Hazardziści” (hinting to a bank robbery in Wołów in 1962), “Wściekły” (based on a case of a serial killer – Władysław Baczyński, who acted in Wrocław in 1956–1957) and “Anna i »wampir«” (a story of the investigation of Zdzisław Marchwicki’s case). The degree of modification of the authentic story in those films is varied; in “Anna i »wampir«” the reality of the late 1960s and early 1970s and the complexity of the investigation proceedings are closely reflected, while in “Wściekły” the action is set almost twenty years later, i.e. in the late 1970s. However, in all these films the storyline follows the real sequence of events allowing for identification of the case and reflecting the memories and evoking associations rooted in public imagination.

On the contrary, the use of authentic places as setting for particular scenes and avoidance of mise-en-scene is a separate issue. The main characters are often presented in the streets full of passers-by (“To ja zabiłem”), in crowded pubs and offices (“Trąd”, “Złote Koło”), or travelling by means of public transport (“Trąd”, “To ja zabiłem”). Similarly, special cinematography or editing techniques are of particular importance; Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska described the “vouyeristic” style of “Trąd” in the following words: “These are the characters presented as a collective that seem more important than Czermień [main character – R.D.]. Individual strangers are often followed by a camera. When two men are talking at a bar over a beer, neither the background noises are silenced, nor their voices are louder. In this way the illusion is created as if the viewer was sitting at a table

hipisowskiego w Polsce oraz przeciwdziałania ze strony instytucji wychowawczych i represyjnych państwa, [Demoralised Slobs. The Rise of Hippie Movement in Poland and the its Counteracting by State Education and Repression Institutions] [in:] Od kontrkultury do New Age. Wybrane zjawiska społeczno-kulturowe schyłku PRL i ich korzenie [From Counter Culture to New Age. Selected Social and Cultural Phenomena of the Late PRL and their Origins], ed. E. Chabros, Wrocław 2014, pp. 225–250.

nearby and could overhear their discussion. The scenes in which the viewers may watch people talk in larger groups are set in a similarly natural manner. Individual characters happen to talk simultaneously or turn their back to the camera” (Saryusz-Wolska, 2008, 214).

Another interesting technique is applied in “Złote Koło” with reference to real places; in dialogues, the characters often refer to authentic names of streets and buildings in Wrocław, and the film scenes set in Złote Koło or in Powszechny Dom Towarowy were indeed shot in those locations. It makes the impression that the characters live and act in real and familiar area even more credible.

A similar technique of incorporating real components in the plot of a film was applied in “S.O.S.” in which young girls were cheated by a gang of criminals who promised that their nude photos would be shown at Venus ’73 exhibition. This name clearly refers to the widely known exhibitions of female nude photos – Venus ’70 and Venus ’71 organized by Krakowski Klub Fotograficzny. Both exhibitions were particularly enjoyed by the public (in the coverage by Polish Film Chronicle, the Venus ’71 is claimed to have attracted 200 thousand visitors)¹⁰, arousing extreme emotions and vivid discussions at the same time. A similar technique of incorporating a well-known element of non-film reality is present also in “Wściekły”, in which the name of a famous psychiatrist Antoni Kępiński is mentioned together with a quotation of a fragment of his book – “Psychopatie” [Psychopathies].

The origins of the new formula

In conclusion, two main questions shall be posed in this place. The first concerns the origin of the trend described above – what combination of factors resulted in those film productions assuming such a form? The second refers to the reason of the internal diversity of this phenomenon: it is particularly noteworthy that although this form would be present in movies for a decade, in TV series it vanished after several years only. The answer to both questions may be found in external – that is non-film factors.

The first issue regarding the source of realism presented in the productions described herein is a composite result of three distinctive processes. Firstly, in the 1970s, Polish books and films programmatically attributed absolute values to realism and authenticity, claiming categorically that the world experienced by Poles on a daily basis has no respective representation in arts (hence the title of the movement’s statutory text by Adam Zagajewski “Reality not presented in post war Polish literature”) (Jankun-Dopartowa, 1996, 89–121). Ruch Młodej Kultury [Young Culture Movement], and later Kino Moralnego Niepokoju [Cinema of Moral Anxiety] postulated expressly the return to reality of everyday life, determining the codes ingrained in arts of the day.

Secondly, in Polish cinematic discourse, the film genres including detective movies enjoy a particular status. As I have already mentioned at the beginning of this paper, irrespective

¹⁰ PKF [Polish Film Chronicles] 72/06B

whether these were the opinions of political decision-makers or critics, such films were referred to as quality entertainment and a 'committed art', set in real life background. Although each commentator would understand such postulates of "quality" and "commitment" differently, the idea that films of such a genre shall serve not only a ludic function, but also address the problems relevant from the perspective of a society, was very strong in the public discourse and often echoed. Since it was impossible to mirror the western cinematic style due to different social conditions, it was necessary to develop its local form. The shift towards authenticity described in this paper seems to be an attempt to develop our own formula of the "committed mass culture" serving the ludic and social functions alike. Consequently, it was on the endeavour aiming at fulfilment of the recurring dream of the Polish film community.

Thirdly, at the beginning of the 1970s, the political conditions became more favourable for such an artistic shift. Under Gierek's administration, it was not only the censorship that became looser, allowing film industry for more expression, but also the change in global narration which was imposed by the party. The negative rhetoric of confrontation was superseded by more positive message, emphasising the development, social progress and building the "Second Poland" (Sowa, 2011, 388). This trend was reflected within broader ideological frames, and consequently – assumed the form of particular cinema works. This process is best exemplified in "Gąszcz", which tells a story of a contemporary investigation of some events which took place in early post-war times. Although in the course of action some older wrongdoings of several villagers come to light, they are juxtaposed with the image of harmoniously developed and thriving land. Even the Constable questions the reasonability of disclosing the past crimes after so many years. This makes the message clear – the past shall be forgotten; it is only the present and future that matters. It may be built by anybody, irrespective of their past deeds. It is an interesting perspective, as it proves that particular films would often combine conflicting objectives – the negation of Manichaeian division of the world becomes compliant with the narration of the Party.

Gierek's administration brought another change to the cultural policy; the new political cabinet, contrary to the previous one, was well aware of the enormous propaganda potential cached in the latest mass media source – television. Therefore the party's scrutiny was gradually shifted towards this new medium (Pokorna-Ignatowicz, 2003, 107–113). This fact best answers the second question, that the genre of realist detective films vanished in the middle of 1970s from TV since the ruling party's strategy stipulated that the TV would constitute the most important (from the propaganda perspective) medium. Meanwhile, cinematography was left more freedom, particularly on account of the fact that film productions, even allowed for distribution, enabled easier control of the number of viewers (with "Trąd" being the best example, as it was distributed exclusively in arthouse cinemas due to the controversy it provoked) (Gajewski, 2008, 149). For this reason, the trend of realism in cinema films lasted over a decade, whereas it promptly vanished from TV production; it was replaced by productions directly emulating Western models – and in accordance with the doctrine of that time – translating the codes from foreign productions into well-known reality, such as the TV series based on cop cinema "07 zgłoś się" (dir. Krzysztof. Szmagier, Andrzej J. Piotrowski, Krzysztof Tarnas), odc. 1–21,

1976–1987 or “*Życie na gorąco*” (dir. Andrzej. Konic, 1978) shadowing a popular James Bond convention.

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