





STORY OF SIN

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STORY OF SIN (Dzieje grzechu) Poland 1975, 130 mins

CAST

GRAŻYNA DŁUGOŁĘCKA as Ewa Pobratyńska
JERZY ZELNIK as Łucasz Niepołomski
OLGIERD ŁUKASZEWICZ as Count Zygmunt Szczerbic
ROMAN WILHELMI as Antoni Pochron
MAREK WALCZEWSKI as Płaza-Spławski,
KAROLINA LUBIEŃSKA as Mrs Pobratyńska

CREW

Directed and Screenplay by
WALERIAN BOROWCZYK

Based on a Novel by
STEFAN ŻEROMSKI

Camera
ZYGMUNT SAMOSIUK

Edited by
LIDIA PACEWICZ

Music by
FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY

Produced by
HELENA NOWICKA

Production Company
PRZEDSIĘBIORSTWO REALIZACJI FILMÓW (PRF),
ZESPÓŁ FILMOWY TOR

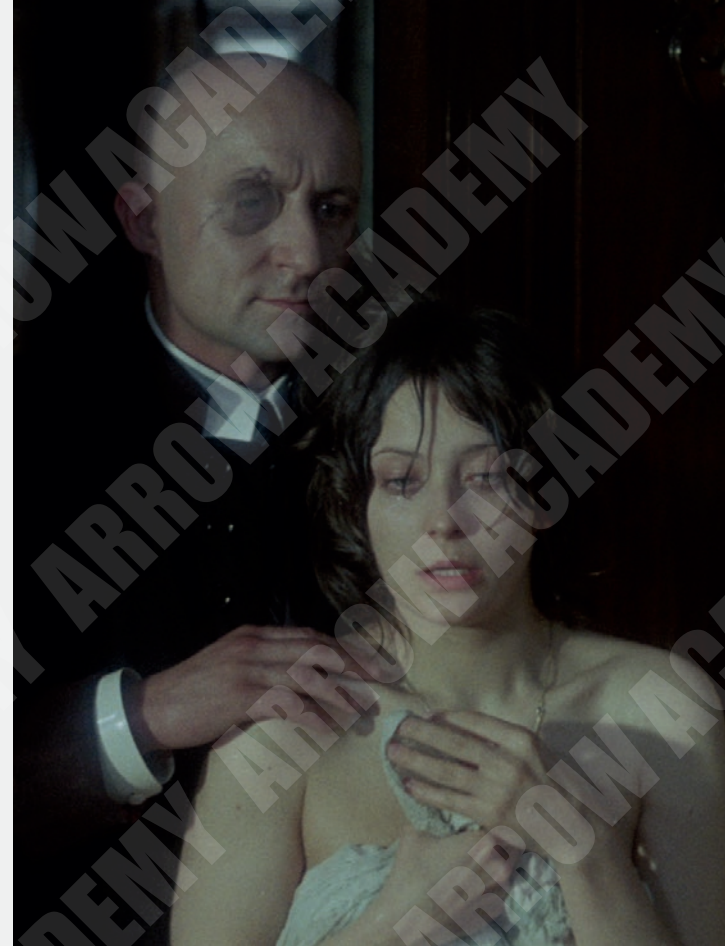


ANDRZEJ ŻUŁAWSKI ON STORY OF SIN

The following was originally published in the January 18th 2008 edition of the Polish national newspaper Dziennik Polska-Europa-Świat. Reprinted with permission from Xawery Żuławski.

...Then came the particularly fascinating moment when Borowczyk stopped fooling around in the West and returned to Poland in 1975 to make *Story of Sin*, all thanks to the Różewicz brothers, Stanisław and Tadeusz. He was allowed to come back and shoot in Poland because, while he was in the West, he had never spoken out against Communist Poland or the Communists¹. In the West, he had only ever made completely inoffensive films for permissive, decaying Western audiences, which only served to deepen their decay. To the Różewicz brothers, however, Borowczyk was not merely a second-rate director of pseudo-pornographic Western films, but the creator of several dozen outstanding shorts. I have no idea how they dragged him out of the Parisian mire onto such a dry, clean riverbank, or whether they truly believed he was the only one capable of making *Story of Sin*. They did not ask him to make a film about the Warsaw Uprising or the Holocaust, but one based on a book that had reeked of controversy from the very outset. They must have known that Borowczyk was an authority on sin, and that his camera would not be trained on himself, but would come straight from the heart. Whatever intuition drove them, I can only be grateful to them, for it is one of the best films in the history of Polish cinema. A highly intelligent and intimate film, made with a healthy dose of the Surrealism I am so fond of...

1. While Borowczyk had never spoken out against the Communist Party, Goto, *Isle of Love* (Goto, *l'île d'amour*, 1968) was banned in Poland.



BOROWCZYK: MOVIE MAGICIAN

by Szymon Bojko

In 2006, Adam Pugh invited Daniel Bird to programme a homage to Borowczyk at the Norwich International Animation Festival. In addition to film screenings of Borowczyk's animations, there were two panel discussions, the first featured Andrzej Klimowski and the Quay Brothers, while the second featured Polish animation expert Marcin Giżycki and Stefan and Franciszka Themerson specialist Małgorzata Sady. Szymon Bojko (1917-2014) had planned to take part in the second discussion, but had to decline on health grounds. Instead, he contributed this text, which was published in the festival catalogue.

Walerian Borowczyk (aka Boro) was a graphic artist and motion picture virtuoso who seduced audiences with webs of hidden meanings, spanning dreams, history, mythology and eroticism. But this story has two heroes.

The demonic and incorrigible Boro grabbed critical and media attention for many years. He left behind a huge filmography and gained legendary status on the day he died. He was a mysterious figure, never looking for publicity, rarely giving interviews and failing to promote himself among producers. Boro despised media buzz and the constant pursuit of fame in a market of vanity and rejected all superficial trends. He hated unjustified criticism and treated 'critics' with reserve. The latter, not without reason, often accused him of arrogance and intolerance. He deliberately created the portrait of a withdrawn artist with an imagination that surpassed reality, tradition and memory. He trusted his intuition, feelings and analytical sense. His great sensitivity opened door to the secrets of protohuman genetic instincts. Boro explored our animal nature like few others.

Był sobie raz... (Once Upon a Time, 1957), the young artist's co-debut with Jan Lenica (who later gained international fame), is the film which stands out in my memory. The short was immediately noticed by international audiences and made its way into the pantheon of animation. Collage, montage, naïve lines and strokes, newspaper cuttings, humorous narrative.

It stays fresh and compelling from the initial bouncy letters to the final stop-motion frame. Poetic and minimal, it appeals to viewers of all ages. Looking back at *Był sobie raz...*, one sees how the artist developed – from the bright and trustful to the darker sides of life. Both faces are his.



I met Walerian Borowczyk in the early fifties. When I remember him now, I realise I enter a realm clouded by a half-century of facts – akin to looking at worn and faded photos. Because of the gaps in Borowczyk's biography, it's worth reconstructing those memories, as each detail in his life is priceless and crucial to decrypting the various riddles, visions and imaginative heights.



Let me start with his physical description, which set him apart wherever he went. A stout, strong body, dense, woolly hair, a short neck and piercing eyes. It provoked anxiety and confusion. We met in Warsaw, and I was immediately puzzled by Borowczyk's expressive gestures and glances, which could replace standard verbal communication. In attire, he was neat to the point of asceticism and minimalist in speech. He represented an intriguing form of introversion, was absent in conversation and enclosed in his own thoughts.



Boro spoke rarely but reacted enthusiastically to external stimuli. He thus transformed into another man, with an amazing cognitive inquisitiveness laced with erudition. His interrupted monologues were intertwined with names of scientists and inventors, and I was both amazed and confounded by his knowledge. During our cooperation on the script of *Sztuka ulicy* (*Street Art*, 1957; directed by Konstanty Gordon), I got closer to his way of thinking and was presented with one of his best kept secrets. It concerned Ligia, a film actress, his wife-to-be and heroine of Boro's most erotic flicks. She was very young and extremely beautiful, with a tamed, quiet sensuality that indeed was hard to resist. Her sexual spirit was like that of de Sade's salons. Socially unavailable, she rarely appeared in public alone, staying at the side of her alert husband.



Ligia then moved to France, where she turned actress and became the star of Borowczyk's troupe. Even in their suburban Vésinet home and tabloid refuge, Ligia remained mysterious and ascetic, which so greatly contrasted her perverted on-screen roles, considered pornographic. The know-it-all film critics never even noticed Ligia - the very woman behind Borowczyk's sexual energy and vision. Without the intuition of this traditionally educated girl, the liberated, sexually explicit erotic films would not have been created.

Walerian Borowczyk's cinema of eroticism fell into conflict with the law and morality. Sex, however, was not the main motor of this art. Rather, it was driven by the 'bestiary' - the bestial essence of man. If he did violate morality, he did so on purpose. He trusted his senses, and his oeuvres uncovered beauty even in visions of the inappropriate.

WALERIAN BOROWCZYK: AN INTERVIEW

The following interview was originally published in the Film Polski press book for Story of Sin. Reprinted with permission.

Walerian Borowczyk: For me, bringing *Story of Sin* to the screen was the perfect pretext for making a popular film, a melodrama that would stir people as the novel once did. The book is sometimes spoken of as a 'disaster'... but disasters are indefinite and relative. It happens that a work dismissed as a failure can – with the help of time – mature, just like wine, and that a new generation can find that it has a distinctive flavour, or even that it's so bad that it's interesting. *Story of Sin* isn't a failure, but it is stylistically uneven. That doubtless springs from the fact that it was written in weekly instalments and serialised in a magazine.

It makes sense to film an old book only in so far as the subject has a continuing interest...

WB: Feelings like joy and sadness are always immediate. Love is part of human existence. *Story of Sin* is first and foremost a love story.

The film is distinguished by the richness of its design, and the wealth of detail...

WB: It was precisely the richness of observation in the book, the plastic qualities of its vision of the period and the people, that inspired me. Most of the action plays in natural settings. Of course, things like the buildings, the furniture and the costumes had to be reconstructed, but nothing was stylised. Everything is faithfully copied from the historical reality. Most of the paintings that you see in the film are originals, borrowed from museums. [Stefan] Żeromski is very meticulous in his description of the rooms his characters move through. I simply followed what he said. However, in reading *Story of Sin*, I thought more about the writer than about his characters, what his feelings were towards them... and I thought also thought about the reader, his reactions, his imagination. And it's in that more than anything that the faithfulness of my film to the book lies.

How did you work with your cameraman?

WB: Perfectly. I'm a cameraman myself¹, and I attach great importance to images. I consider Zygmunt Samosiuk, who is credited with the photography for *Story of Sin*, the best Polish cameraman². For me, a cameraman is good when he does exactly what I want. Samosiuk does exactly that. His understanding of the cameraman's role, his great adaptability, his ability to adjust to the wishes and temperament of the director, are exemplary.

*Your IMMORAL TALES have created something of a stir: how do you define the terms 'eroticism' and 'pornography'?*³

WB: Anything that's beautiful is definitely not pornography. The very term belongs to legislation, not to art. From the point of view of manners or morals, 'pornography' is something forbidden. The criteria for defining what's harmful and what isn't depends on the period, the society, the context. Almost no two countries agree on what to forbid. 'Pornography' is a word that basically says nothing, anything can constitute pornography. There was a time when pornography meant looking at a lady's rear... In a word, pornography is in the eye of the beholder. I consider that a morally normal man can look at everything without any of it harming him. And eroticism. That is simply love without the aim of procreation. That seems to me the best definition. Erotic films show the fascination that physical love exerts on us. Art has the right to engage itself with the most secret realms of our thoughts that's its privilege.

1 When working as a cameraman on his films, Borowczyk often used the pseudonym Michel Zolat. Zolat is credited as cinematographer on the 'Thérèse philosophe' episode of *Immoral Tales* (*Contes immoraux*, 1974), *Letter from Paris* (*Brief von Paris*, 1976), and an additional cinematographer on *Emmanuelle 5* (1987) and *Love Rites* (*Cérémonie d'amour*, 1998). In addition to filming the first 'panel' of *Diptych* (*Diptyque*, 1967), Borowczyk was the uncredited cinematographer on *A Private Collection* (*Une Collection particulière*, 1973) and *The Greatest Love of All Time* (*L'Amour monstre de tous les temps*, 1977).

2 Borowczyk and Samosiuk briefly appear together in an unscripted scene in *Story of Sin* set in the casino. In a 2000 pamphlet, *My Polish Years* (*Moje polskie lata: Dzieje grzechu 2000*), Borowczyk described this as a "symbol of their artistic collaboration". Samosiuk, who had a background in filming newsreels, was one of the cameramen on Lindsay Anderson's *The Singing Lesson* (1967). Anderson, who had met Borowczyk at the Experimental Film Competition, which was part of the 1958 Brussels Expo, kept in touch during the 1960s and 1970s, even recommending Malcolm McDowell play the lead in an unfiled project, *L'Amour imparfait* (*Imperfect Love*), which Borowczyk was considering during the mid-1970s.

3 *Immoral Tales* and *The Beast* (*La Bête*, 1975), which were not distributed in Poland under Communist rule, received their belated premieres in 1992.

AN INTERVIEW WITH STANISŁAW RÓŻEWICZ

by Daniel Bird

This interview was conducted in Warsaw in February 2002. It has been translated from Polish into English by Barbara Howard.

Daniel Bird: *I understand Borowczyk first attempted to film Mazepa in Poland.*

Stanisław Różewicz: Yes. Here is a question... Yes, he wanted to do an adaptation of [Juliusz] Słowacki's play *Mazepa* in Poland. It must have been 1967, I founded a film unit (zespół filmowy). I was its Artistic Director, my close friend Witold Załęski was its Literary Director - but it was a new unit, a feature film unit, and I was faced by the dilemma who to take in. The production resources weren't great - three films a year. It so happened that before I even embarked on the first production with directors based in the country, I had received a script. The script was *Mazepa*, the author Walerian Borowczyk. This script was passed on to me by the Minister for Cinematography. He asked me if I'd be interested in taking on this production. I was very happy, because Borowczyk's name was already known, the script was very good, so we agreed. But when it came to the stage of approving the film for production, some people from the political circles at the Ministry, as well as from the film community, started to manipulate the project. There were voices questioning why Borowczyk should make any films in Poland. He's a successful director abroad, successful in France, besides there are rumours that he makes soft-porn films.¹

We don't want to make or watch such films etc. Anyway, some bad forces came into play, both from the film industry possibly from some directors jealous of the name and position Borowczyk had already started to make

¹ There was no explicit sexual content in Borowczyk's films until 1974, so it seems likely that Różewicz is here thinking of his dealings concerning *Story of Sin*.

for himself, and from political circles - the director comes from the West, we can't predict what he's going to do, etc., so the whole idea was stalled. Unfortunately, I was unable to counter those forces, and Borowczyk's *Mazepa* did not materialise. Well, you know that Borowczyk later made *Mazepa* [as *Blanche*, 1971] in France. It was an excellent film but was never distributed in Poland. So Borowczyk's first attempt here was unsuccessful, but as I said, circumstances were to blame the times when it happened.

DB: *How did you persuade Borowczyk to return to Poland to make Story of Sin?*

SR: Borowczyk realised that the directors who worked or made their debuts for me were first-class. They knew what they wanted, film was art to them, and he came to the conclusion that if he were to make films in Poland, he could trust me as Artistic Director. He approached me, sending the script of *Story of Sin* directly to me. The script was very good. He came over, I told him what the practical limits were, what we could guarantee in terms of resources, but the main issue was the subject... Borowczyk knew I was open to cooperation, that I wasn't going to censor him, as an artistic director I wouldn't interfere with his work and so on. I told him straight away, "You are free to do whatever you want." I said the same thing to every director in my unit. I always said to them, "I can make comments if I like or dislike something. Some of them may be negative, I may disagree with something, but the decision is yours, because it's your film, you sign it, it's your work of art." So Borowczyk got *carte blanche* from me. He must do what he considers right, and I'm not going to stick my boot in. I trusted him as a creator, as a film artist. There was another problem. The same forces came into play as with *Mazepa*. There was a scene in a church, a scene of confession. The way it worked, the Church would give permission to shoot in a church if it had approved the script, if they knew the text and so on. Of course, in case of *Story of Sin* they said no. Because even the book was put on the Index, and I think it still is there, the book is banned. Anyway, Borowczyk had a meeting with the bishop who was in charge of authorising, and it was a difficult confrontation because the Church did not give its permission. I went with him to the Minister for Cinematography, and we started by saying, "The Church refuses to allow this film to shoot in a church." We hoped that if we said the Church refused, then the Minister for Cinematography, representing the Party would say, "Very well. In that case, we'll approve." But the Party, as well as the Church, was unsupportive

of the film. The Church said no to the filming in a church, while the Party said there wasn't enough money to make such a film. The planned cost was 12-15 million złotych, including some space for manoeuvre. We went through some difficult discussions, but in the end the Director of Cinematography approved the production. The resources were quite restricted, because you must know that the film had 70 "photography objects", that is 70 sets and locations to film in. It had 70 photography objects, but it had to be realised in 60 days. So, great discipline was required here, one had to be able to let go of certain things without letting go of searching for better solutions. That's the answer to your question why I chose Borowczyk to make *Story of Sin*. As I said, I didn't choose him. Borowczyk chose me and my unit, Tor, to make the film with. And I was convinced, we were convinced, that a very good film would come out of it.

DB: *How did Borowczyk adapt to shooting a feature film in a country under Communist rule?*

SR: Well, you know he came from the West, where the living conditions, the way of looking at various aspects of everyday life and philosophy were completely different. You must remember when it happened in 1975. He was very surprised at some things, both in terms of film production and of everyday life. In terms of the production he couldn't understand why the hell painting the set took such a long time. "Why, it can be done very quickly?" and so on. On the other hand, he was full of admiration for some professionals in the company who did their stuff spot on. For instance, he was very impressed with the design and the set makers. Teresa Barska made the set. Well, Borowczyk saw lots of absurdities in everyday life. You won't remember but I do remember those years. The everyday situations were sometimes totally bizarre. But you ask about his attitude. You know, he felt good in our circle, he felt good with me, with the editor, the designer, the carpenter and so on. But everyday situations often made him react with surprise or even outrage.

DB: *How did Grażyna Długołęcka come to be cast in the role of Ewa Pobratyńska?*

SR: Well, he was looking for an actress and he said it didn't have to be a professional actress. He wanted a young girl, she was at drama school. We told him, "First you have to look in drama schools." There was the Warsaw

school, the Łódź school and he must have found her in Łódź. We talked with him about the fact that she had no acting experience, that she was still 'raw', 'natural', but Borowczyk kept saying: "I will create her, I'll make her, I'll direct her, I'll lead her." And he decided. I don't know, they must have met at Film School, he decided overnight that she would play the main role. While as far as directing of her acting is concerned, it was a surprise to see how he directed, not only her but other actors as well. When the camera was running, Borowczyk directed a scene by talking through the action. "Go forward, stop here, look right, look in the mirror, look behind, go to the door..." It resembled [Federico] Fellini's method a bit, as you know he kept talking all the time during filming. Fellini paid no attention whatsoever to what actors were saying. He used to say, "It doesn't matter what you say, I'll post-synch it later on. You can say 'Our Father who art' and I'll add a speech to match the scene. Or you can count, one, two, three, four and so on." Borowczyk didn't go that far, but in the final result the fact that Długołęcka was so good was to a large extent thanks to Borowczyk and his vision of the character.

DB: *Was the sexual content of both the book and the film controversial?*

SR: You know, one of the subjects of *Story of Sin* is the social mores and eroticism, it's a film about love, a great film about sin, about love, about crime; it's very rich in its complexity. It was about eroticism. Borowczyk was always very open about such things and it so happened that on several occasions during the making of the film, I, as director of the unit, was approached by somebody from the production company, whose sub-body we were in a way, or from the Chief of Cinematography. The Minister would say, "Stanisław, I'd like to have a chat with you." I went to see the Minister, and he says to me, "What's going on? What kind of pornography is Borowczyk filming there?" I'd say, "Who provided this information?" "Well, we have it from the Voyevod [regional] Party Committee, from the cameramen, from somebody in the crew..." I had two such meetings during the production time. I, of course, answered that nothing terribly immoral was going on, because I watched the filmed materials and they didn't contain anything that could hurt anybody's morality or cause any doubts. That's the way it was, you know the boss of the production company also approached me: "Mr Różewicz, what is that Borowczyk up to? What about all these erotic acts, bare, naked." I said the reality was different from the gossip. And it came to the point that the Minister didn't particularly want

to get involved in terms of responsibility. When it came to the kolaudacja, i.e. the assessment by the film industry itself and the management at Cinematography, the Minister didn't turn up at all but he sent his deputy, [Jerzy] Bajdor. Bajdor saw it and said, "a very beautiful film," you know. He said it to the Minister, so he knew there wasn't anything terribly wrong with it, he could pass it and he did. And so much for the morality aspect that caused so many doubts during production.

DB: *How would you describe Borowczyk's collaboration with the cinematographer, Zygmunt Samosiuk?*

SR: I think it was an ideal relationship. Borowczyk simply decided beforehand that he really wanted to work with Samosiuk, because he saw a number of our films with different cinematographers. He liked Samosiuk's photography, framing, and style. And he asked for him. And during the filming he couldn't stop praising Samosiuk. Not just in terms of light, of colour, of what's important in a frame, on the set, but particularly when it came to framing, Samosiuk is very flexible and takes a very short time with lights. It's extremely important. I know operators who keep the lights blazing for an hour or more before they light the set properly. Samosiuk would be ready in a matter of minutes. He worked very quickly. There was no delay because of lighting. Unlike the case of Grabowski, who would say, "My turn now!" So, he was very skilful, fast, you know, they didn't waste time on communication, they knew exactly what it had to be rather than go into theoretical discussions.

DB: *Borowczyk placed considerable emphasis on objects in his films, and Story of Sin is no exception.*

SR: It was about talking through images that corresponded to the atmosphere of the time, the period, they're paintings from the period in which the film is set. They're part of the recreation of that time. Those paintings were on loan from the museum. Borowczyk wanted to be faithful to the era, to its reality. I can remember how he insisted on using some props. For instance, a cash register in a shop had to be from that time, that century I can't even remember if he didn't somehow fetch that cash register from France, you know. He knew it's an authentic film director when we watch a film and see that the film has its style. True directing starts with a style, if I watch a film and see a characteristic style. Like a signature. We

know we're watching a film by [Luis] Buñuel or [Akira] Kurosawa after the first few frames. And Borowczyk's signature has a very strong connection with the turn of the century visual art, the props of that time, the costumes of that time. He was very meticulous about the costumes, the make-up, a strong connection with the visual arts.

DB: *How did Borowczyk approach art direction and production design in Story of Sin?*

SR: Borowczyk knew - he had the experience from Western cinema - that one has to watch money. When it came to the set, one has to build only what will be photographed. He didn't ask for a whole interior with three or four walls and then only film in front of one wall, he had it all well thought out. He avoided squandering money. He knew the pan would be from left to right over, say, this wall and the right side of the entrance; he didn't do anything unnecessary. As for blocking the actors, he had thought out every scene beforehand, always came prepared. He would sometimes come to the set and improvise, but that improvisation was always well thought out. Sometimes there were other solutions but he had the capacity - if there were problems - to find another solution that would be beneficial and not second-best. He was a very disciplined professional, after all kinds of experiences in the West. You must be a very well established director to expect the producer to give you everything you want. He was very pleased with the design. He insisted on the right colours, the upholstery, the wallpaper, the colour of the costume, the costumes had to be coordinated with the walls - he brought all that in as a director and a plastic artist.

DB: *As you know, Borowczyk liked to do everything himself. Did this ever create any problems with the Polish crew?*

SR: You know, he surely was a plastic artist. I know some directors who haven't got a clue; they leave it. I know directors who leave the visual side to the designer and the cinematographer. Such films are confused, unfocused because the designer... What is directing all about? We agree with Borowczyk about this. The director gets a large team together, scores of people. Everybody wants to help but also wants to be the best: the designer wants to make the best design, the cinematographer wants to take the best pictures, the composer wants to create the best score, but each of them pulls in their own direction - the stage designer towards a

rich design, the cinematographer always thinks of himself, the composer wants to draw attention to himself as the composer whereas one of the most important functions of the director is to be able to pull it all together. The team are collaborators we agreed on this with Borowczyk - but they often act in the outward, not inward, direction. And the director has to find a rapport with the others, and it must be said Borowczyk had very good rapport with the craftsmen on the set, as I have already mentioned, with the painters, lighting operators, set-builders and so on, he had very good, direct contact with them. It had also something to do with his ability to open people up, which also happens in work with actors. It's one of the main qualities of a director, and Borowczyk had it for sure: the ability to open up people and actors; actors shouldn't see the director as someone on the other side.

DB: *What do you say to those who dismiss Borowczyk as the director of soft porn films?*

SR: Eroticism is a part of life that realises itself differently in the lives of different people and different artists. I'm sure that in Borowczyk's films it's a very important aspect, as it is in human life. I'm talking about his situation in our Polish context, in Polish cinema. In our Polish films you can see certain limitations in terms of morality and philosophy, which are very often very exaggerated. Seeing certain boundaries that our directors and cinematographers are afraid to cross, Borowczyk always remains faithful to himself. He tries to say what he thinks, to show what he thinks. And in *Story of Sin* you have to exercise a certain great discipline not to go too far, not to attack or offend some part of the audience. But Borowczyk appreciated eroticism and making films about this layer of life. I don't think he crosses the boundaries that are later classified as soft-porn. No, he encloses it within the boundaries of humanity. Some viewers may say he seems to be breaking taboos here, but we must remember that great artists, and great film artists also in the general reception seemed to cross some boundaries. For example, take Buñuel's films, which were always defined as scandalous, erotic films, from the very beginning of his career. So, when I talk about Borowczyk, about some aspects of his work, I'd say that Borowczyk in his productions, in his thinking and results - is the nearest to Buñuel amongst our directors.

POLAND'S IMMORAL SUBCONSCIOUS: BOROWCZYK'S POLISH YEARS

by Daniel Bird

There is no difference between an animated movie and a live-action film. It's just a difference of technique. The thought is the same.

Walerian Borowczyk, 2007

According to Stanisław Różewicz, Borowczyk considered the split in his life and work between Poland and France as "a splinter that hurt him all his life". Written at the end of his life, Borowczyk's memoirs, *What I Think When I See a Polish Woman Undressed (Co myślę patrząc na rozebraną Polkę, 2007)*, reveals an artist hurt by what he saw as the neglect of his work in his homeland. Not only were Polish audiences familiar with his work only through *Immoral Tales (Contes immoraux, 1974)* and *The Beast (La Bête, 1975)*, but his short films made in Poland during the 1950s had been forgotten:

"[Poles] don't know anything about my previous movies, like *Goto, Isle of Love [Goto, l'île d'amour, 1969]* or *Blanche [1971]* [...] They were made years before, and in Poland they were never screened in cinemas or on television. They are still banned under the PRL censorship ruling. I consider these movies my best films." (Borowczyk, 2007)

Like most memoirs, Borowczyk's is about settling of scores. Particular vehemence is reserved for his former classmate: Andrzej Wajda. Despite being acquainted during the late 1940s, Borowczyk and Wajda's paths quickly diverged, and both went on to pursue very different career paths. If Wajda was Poland's 'moral conscience', could Borowczyk be considered his antithesis? Is it not time to embrace both Wajda and Borowczyk as not opposing but rather complementary facets of Polish cinema? Might Borowczyk's 'devilish' cinema of sex, fantasy and spectacle resolve Wajda's 'angelic' cinema of death, realism and dialogue?

Education Days

Whereas Borowczyk completed his studies at Kraków, Wajda dropped out to enrol on the directing course at the newly founded film school in Łódź. It is, therefore, ironic that Wajda strove throughout his career to make 'painterly' cinema, while Borowczyk insisted that painting and cinema were two related but nevertheless distinct disciplines. In his memoirs, Borowczyk noted that, while attending either schools or academies, one emerges as a great student not because of but in spite of the teaching staff. Rather, he credited his father, Wawrzyniec, as his principal inspiration.



"My father was, for me, the perfect painter. I grew up surrounded by his colourful world. Now looking at his watercolours, we should place him amongst the great French impressionists of 19th century. But he worked in anonymity. He painted for himself, friends and his son. He never exhibited publicly. Landscapes, houses, trees, bridges, train stations, object filled interiors, mountains, rivers - for him they were not just colourful visions, but also a means of establishing formal constructs, the linear perspective of things, expressions of his sense of beauty." (Borowczyk, 2007)



Borowczyk was born in a village, Kwilcz, on October 21, 1923. During the 1930s he attended school in Poznan. Following the breakout of the war, he worked in forced labour or, according to his friends, on the railways with his father. He made his debut as a published artist in somewhat grisly circumstances:

"During the Nazi occupation, I lived in a small town, Luboń, which is close to Poznań. Close to Luboń, there was Zabikowo. There, the Germans built a concentration camp through which 40,000 Poles were interned and 20,000 of which were murdered. In April 1945, the Germans rapidly moved back from Western Poland under the pressure of the Polish and Soviet army. They were crazed with hatred and fear. The Nazis took their revenge on defenceless victims. About 150 Poles that were incapable of being deported were pushed into barns which were then set alight. Some of the prisoners were able to escape. They were burning in flames. They died in enormous pain, a dozen or so metres from the burning buildings. Charred. At the same time, many of the people who lived around Zabikowo came to the scene of the crime, but it was too late. All we found were ashes and smoking wood. Of course, nobody had a camera. To make a record of this tragic scene, I made a drawing because that was the only way to keep a record of this disaster for the future. I used my skills as a draftsman. And with a pencil and a scrap of paper, I draw this scene of bodies burnt like martyrs. A correspondent from *Głos Wielkopolski* arrived on the scene. The editor took my sketch, and printed it the next day. On the 8th April of 1945, there was now the proof of these Nazi crimes." (Borowczyk, 2007)

Having passed the entrance exam to the Academy of Fine Art in Kraków, Borowczyk began training as a painter. During his second year, he opted to study in the studio of Zbigniew Pronaszko. While he (like the rest of the professors at Kraków during the immediate post-war period) painted in a post-impressionist style, Borowczyk, along with his two closest friends, Jan Tarasin and Jerzy Tchórzewski, were intrigued by Pronaszko's avant-garde past. During the 1920s, Pronaszko was part of a group inspired by the French avant-garde. While Poland had its own avant-garde during the interwar period, throughout his life Borowczyk reserved a particular fascination for artists that worked in Paris during that period: Fernand Léger, Man Ray, Hans Richter. Besides Tarasin and Tchórzewski, Borowczyk made a number of lasting and 'interrupted' friendships during this period: the poet Tadeusz Różewicz and his brother, Stanisław; the art historian Mieczysław Porębski, the playwright Sławomir Mrożek and the painter Andrzej Wróblewski.



"Friendship does not mean being together all the time, or having the keys to my apartment, or the right to come around anytime, talking about every banal thing that happens. Almost always, friendship starts during youth, and continues, mostly, in memories. The telepathic connection you develop with the people who you paint alongside, in the same studio for over five years, never stops." (Borowczyk, 2007)

Borowczyk's most important relationship during this period was with the person who would become both his wife and artistic muse: Ligia Brokowska. According to both Tarasin and Tchórzewski, Borowczyk encountered Ligia when he, along with Tchórzewski, had been entrusted to guard student paintings on display at a venue that was hosting a school party. Almost a decade older than Ligia, Borowczyk lost contact with her after the dance, and it wasn't until months later when Tchórzewski spotted her in the street while he and Borowczyk were taking the tram that the pair was reunited.

The Plague from the East

During the five years Borowczyk was enrolled at the Academy of Fine Arts, an ideological shift had taken place in Poland. In 1949, the Polish Vice-Minister of Culture, Włodzimierz Sokorski, ushered in *socialist realism* (socialist realism) across the arts at the behest of the Polish Communist party ideologue, Jakub Berman. A teleological aesthetic, the goal of socialist realism was not art in itself but the deployment of art as a means of forwarding society to a utopian goal. For artists, this was not a follow, but mandatory. The post-impressionist professors were out, clearing the path for the young, the revolutionary and the opportunistic. Some artists played along in acts of bad faith, while others fell silent. Andrzej Wajda returned to Kraków, as the assistant to the great Andrzej Munk, to make a socialist realist documentary about the construction of the Nowa Huta district of Kraków: *Direction - Nowa Huta!* (*Kierunek - Nowa Huta!*, 1951). Now earning his keep as a print maker, Borowczyk rendered the construction of Nowa Huta in a cycle of bleak lithographs that would contribute to him being awarded the Polish national prize for lithography in 1953. However, Borowczyk's prints and drawings from the Stalin period are rarely included in retrospectives of socialist realism. In his memoirs, Borowczyk stood by his graphics from this period:

"Once I made a lithograph that depicted Papal Nuncio in Hitler's government. I presented him as a devil, because he was blessing with holy water newly built Nazi tanks that would soon destroy Poland. It was Pacelli, the cardinal, who later became a Pope Pius XII. This lithograph was reproduced in one of the Polish Cultural periodicals." (Borowczyk, 2007)

In his satirical drawings, Borowczyk had circumnavigated the conventions of socialist realist form by channelling an earlier, Western tradition of graphic satire: Honoré Daumier. Having been awarded the national prize, Borowczyk travelled to France for the first time where he made an amateur 16mm film of the Gif-sur-Yvette studio of one of his painter (and sometimes filmmaker) heroes, Fernand Léger. Upon his return, socialist realism as cultural policy was on the wane, and in the space of a year it was dispensed with completely. Now free from ideological shackles, the next chapter of Borowczyk's career was about to begin...

The Kino Group



In 1956, three years after Stalin's death, Nikita Khrushchev delivered his not-so-secret speech denouncing both Stalin's crimes and his cult of personality. At the same time, Bolesław Bierut, the First Secretary of the Polish Communist Party, was curiously found dead in Moscow. The hunt for his successor was now on. One Władysław Gomułka was elected, but not without the prior approval of Moscow. The same year, the Soviets crushed a revolt in Budapest. Eager not to suffer the same fate, Gomułka pledged

his allegiance to Khrushchev. What followed was a thaw in Polish cultural life that lasted until the end of the decade. Borowczyk moved to Warsaw to work as a film poster artist while his wife, Ligia, studied acting at theatre school. While working at the height of the so-called Polish school of posters, Borowczyk was neither the most prolific nor the most distinctive artist from that period. Nevertheless, the posters Borowczyk produced during a two-year period constituted a vital stepping stone between his career as a printmaker and his future career as a professional filmmaker. Since his student days at Kraków, Borowczyk had made amateur films using 8 and 16mm. However, filmmaking in Poland was a closed shop to non-film school graduates, and to get access to professional resources required a degree of political nous. Borowczyk teamed up with another poster artist, Jan Lenica, who not only had an interest in film, but who was the brother-in-law of the writer and filmmaker Tadeusz Konwicki. After preliminary experiments using the camera and rostrum stand of the photographer, graphic artist and filmmaker Wojciech Zamecznik, Lenica used his connections to get access to professional equipment via the KADR film unit, under the direction of Jerzy Kawalerowicz. What followed was a film which Marcin Giżycki, Poland's foremost animation specialist, saw as marking the moment cartoons came of age: "In the animated film, there are two eras: before and after Jan Lenica and Walerian Borowczyk."

At the time of its release, Polish critics were at first unsure of what or who Borowczyk and Lenica's first collaborative effort, *Once Upon a Time (Był sobie raz...*, 1957), was for: "Nine minutes for children and adults [...] The film can be watched by anyone from one to 100 years of age" (*Polska*); "The authors have called their work 'an animated joke'. [...] There is no literary theme in it, even if a lot happens [...] The multiplicity of events, the rhythm of the line, the shock invoked in the viewer by the use of colour or a sudden montage of Black jazz are the significant 'contents' of this interesting film." (Tadeusz Kowalski)

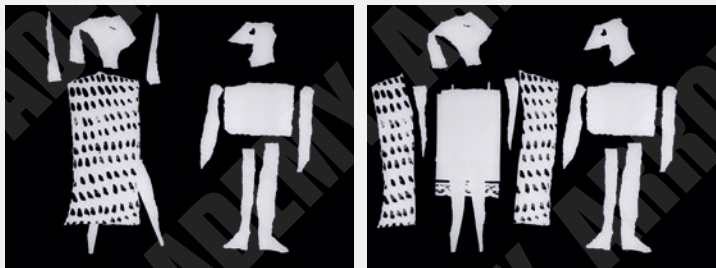
In 1973, Wojciech Makowiecki compared the structure of *Once Upon a Time* to music: "The formal structure [...] whose unity of the visual substance constitutes its integrating factor, provokes analogies with music, where integration is a work of sound structures. Affinity with music is additionally conspicuous in the rhythm of pictures similar to a musical one."



The following year, in 1958, Borowczyk, together with the art historian Szymon Bojko, wrote the script for an education documentary about posters directed by Konstanty Gordon, *Street Art (Sztuka ulicy)*. In their commentary, Bojko and Borowczyk liken the graphic language of the film poster to that of cinema. Posters, according to Bojko and Borowczyk, use a combination of image and text to convey not just meaning, but emotion too. In effect, Borowczyk and Lenica imported the language of the Polish poster into cinema. Borowczyk and Lenica made a handful of short films for Poland's documentary film studio, WFDiF (Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych i Fabularnych). What is remarkable about these three films is that while each one is executed using a radically different style, all of them share the same, playful and mischievous sensibility. *Banner of Youth (Sztandar młodych, 1957)*, a short film advertising a Polish youth journal, was a montage of newsreel footage featuring current affairs, sports and cultural events, interspersed with purely abstract elements.



The celluloid was scratched, paint was applied directly to the film and sometimes exposed directly without the use of a film camera. While not a direct continuation, Borowczyk and Lenica echoed the enthusiasm of Stefan and Franciszka Themerson for abstract, non-figurative cinema. *Banner of Youth* recalls, on the one hand, Man Ray's films of the 1920s (for example, *Le Retour à la raison, 1923*), and the films Len Lye and Norman McLaren made for the film unit of the General Post Office under the direction of John Grierson and Alberto Cavalcanti during the 1930s.



Strip-Tease (1957) was a short film used to promote *Dni oświaty* (Education Days), an incentive of the Polish Communist Party to celebrate books and print and encourage reading. Pre-empting *South Park* (1997-) by decades, Borowczyk and Lenica go out of their way to make the crudest animation to date, both in terms of technique and subject. It anticipated Lenica's posters for Roman Polanski's *Repulsion* (1965) and *Cul-de-Sac* (1966), and Borowczyk's conflation of the erotic with the abstract. Borowczyk and Lenica's next film, *Rewarded Feelings* (*Nagrodzone uczucie*, 1957), was singled out by a young Jean-Luc Godard in a review of the Tours International Short Film Festival. Ostensibly a documentary on a Sunday painter, Jan Płaskociński, Borowczyk and Lenica make fun of the conventions of silent cinema (intertitles and explore ways to make static images dynamic without resorting to frame by frame animation (i.e., montage, cross fades, camera pans, etc.). However, it was the duo's next film, *Dom* (*House*, 1958) that would mark their international breakthrough.



As part of the Brussels Expo in 1958, there was a festival of experimental film. Gevaert, a Belgian film stock manufacturer, put up a cash prize of \$10,000 for the best film. Filmmakers from around the world took their chances: Kenneth Anger, Stan Brakhage, Shirley Clarke and John Whitney from the US, Georges Franju, Henri Gruel, François Reichenbach and Agnès Varda from France – even an Italian entry co-directed by Tinto Brass. According to the festival catalogue, no films were submitted from either the Soviet Union or the Eastern Bloc, except for Poland and Yugoslavia. Of the four films submitted by Yugoslavia, one was selected. Poland submitted a dazzling total of nine films, seven of which were included. These films are a testament not just to what Borowczyk described as “freedom under surveillance” enjoyed by Polish artists during the second half of the 1950s, but also the range of interpretation of the experimental remit. In addition to documentary (Jerzy Bossak and Jarosław Brozowski's *Warszawa 1956*), there was pure abstraction (Andrzej Pawłowski's *Kineformy*, 1957) dada-esque tomfoolery (Polanski's *Two Men and a Wardrobe*, 1958 – itself a cheeky throwback to Stefan and Franciszka Themerson's *Adventures of a Good Citizen*, 1937), and Borowczyk and Lenica's *Dom*. Initially, Borowczyk and Lenica planned to make an adaptation of Kafka's short story 'In the Penal Colony' (as a co-production between the Kadr and Po Prostu film units. However, the project was deemed too expensive. Instead, Borowczyk and Lenica produced a smaller scale, but no less mysterious film. In the programme notes they supplied the festival the pair were at great pains not to clarify what their film was 'about'.

If the Polish authorities intended their seven-film assault on the Experimental Festival at Brussels as a message concerning how artistic freedom could not only exist but be supported by a communist state, then their strategy paid off in spades. Borowczyk and Lenica got the gold medal, while Polanski was awarded bronze (although his film was the favourite of Man Ray, one of the jury members). The cash prize had to be split with the Polish state and split further still between Borowczyk and Lenica.



While making *Dom*, Borowczyk and Lenica proposed their own 'group', of which they were the only two members. Their credo was all about returning to the roots of cinema, not just the trick films of Georges Méliès, but also 'pre-historic' cinema: Étienne-Jules Marey chronophotography, the Praxinoscope of Charles-Émile Reynaud and the pioneering animation of Émile Cohl. A world apart from the Polish School of Wajda, Munk, Wojciech Jerzy Has and Jerzy Kawalerowicz, Borowczyk and Lenica's Kino Group drew on the Polish avant-garde tradition of Karol Irzykowski, not to mention the French pioneers of fantastic film. Alas, the partnership broke

down, and both Borowczyk and Lenica would plough their own furrows. The prize money enabled both to relocate from Warsaw to Paris. Brussels also provided an invaluable networking opportunity. Both Borowczyk and Lenica were talent scouted by producer Anatole Dauman, who would produce their first French films independent of one another. Hy Hirsh helped Borowczyk and Ligia upon arrival in Paris and, when he died shortly after, Borowczyk acknowledged him with a dedication at the beginning of *Renaissance* (1963). Borowczyk also struck up a friendship with Lindsay Anderson, who, along with Karel Reisz, would programme both *Dom* and *Two Men and a Wardrobe* as part of their influential 'Free Cinema' programme at the National Film Theatre in London. In his review for *Sight & Sound*, Reisz described *Dom* as: "A tour-de-force of purely visual film-making, *Dom* makes a telling comparison with the American avant-garde films of similar aims. Its invention is fresh, its surface content continuously fascinating, its grasp of the medium firm; and it proceeds with the intensity and concentration of poetry."

Amos Vogel, founder of New York's Cinema 16, both programmed the winning films and kept in touch with Borowczyk. Among the responses to Vogel's screening of *Dom* in New York was Parker Tyler's, who wrote of the film, along with Stan Brakhage's *Loving* (1957) and Agnès Varda's *L'Opéra-mouffe* (1958) in an article entitled 'New Images':

Dom adheres with a truly classic purity to the postulates and precedents of the Dada-Surrealist school of [Luis] Buñuel, [Salvador] Dalí, Man Ray (incidentally one of the judges) and Marcel Duchamp; undoubtedly, this is the true avant-garde school that has been institutionalised, and which [Jean] Cocteau and his followers in the U.S. have systematically expanded and rationalized. It has one, vital governing premise: the mechanical recording of natural movement and the photographic surface of nature (as well as nature's colors) are out; movement in film is to be as varied and arbitrary as movement in music while the image itself can be transformed or distorted in any way suiting the purposes of the film artist.

However, while Borowczyk's star was in the ascent, trouble was brewing back home. A number of Polish critics set about re-evaluating Borowczyk's contribution to the films he made with Lenica, and thus spreading an idea that smacks as much of nationalist pride as it does jealousy: upon leaving Poland in 1958, Borowczyk lost himself in the West...

What follows is an extract from Paulina Kwas's 'A Story of Sin: The Controversy Surrounding Polish Reception of Walerian Borowczyk's Cinematic Works', concerning the reception of Borowczyk's works in Poland immediately prior to Story of Sin.¹

1967. It is ten years since the great success of the Borowczyk and Lenica duo. It has been almost a decade since Borowczyk started living and working abroad. So, what happened that overshadowed a large part of Borowczyk's audience, including critics, in terms of the reception of his work?

¹ The complete version of the text can be found in „Studia de Cultura”, 2012, nr. IV, s. 105-112. This excerpt has been translated by Daniel Bird and Aleksandra Wiśniewska.

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1969. Borowczyk's first feature length live-action movie is released: *Goto, Isle of Love*, a film that was greatly appreciated in the West. In Poland, the film was reviewed by Aleksander Jackiewicz for *Film Magazine*. The critic and film connoisseur posed Borowczyk a rhetorical question: "Why does a man want to be someone who he is not?" He couldn't understand the reasons why this outstanding creator of animated films, which was how he always perceived Borowczyk, suddenly wanted to waste his talent on live-action movies. His disappointment was even greater (regardless of this film winning the Prix Georges-Sadoul in France) because for Jackiewicz this film was a complete artistic disaster, a senseless conglomeration of *tableaux vivants*, without any plot. He wrote: "A feature film requires a writer, a storyteller. A feature expresses things through images. Borowczyk makes nice shots. Individually they make sense. But not the film as a whole."

That was the first clear signal of a rupture. It was a painful disappointment that was shared by many Polish film critics who, like Jackiewicz, expected Borowczyk to continue his animated film poetics but instead got a live-action feature which they tried to read in terms of exclusively narrative cinema, which was not the idea of the filmmaker. For Borowczyk, there was no categorical distinction. "There is no difference between animation and live-action feature movies. Two different techniques but the thought is the same." "Even making animations I never forget about live-action movies. For me they are the same. I always wonder about this kind of division. Although I have started to get used to it." The problem with the later part of Borowczyk's career, including his cursed films which brought him the infamy of being a pornographer in his homeland is the result of a misunderstanding between Polish viewer expectations and this filmmaker's ideas and temperament. This artistic temperament made him, in the public opinion of his homeland, an iconoclast and erotomaniac. At the time, Polish cinema had different concerns, other problems and different topics to be addressed: unconventional narrative, metaphor, fable, and the heritage of Polish romanticism. Conversely, Borowczyk was imbued with the spirit of French culture, and above all else he was faithful to his surrealist temperament. Therefore, it was impossible to find a meeting of minds between Borowczyk and his critics because they were on different wavelengths. Aleksander Jackiewicz's disappointment got deeper and deeper. The proof is a subsequent review in another film magazine in 1969. The critic referred to Borowczyk's interview in *Cahiers du cinéma*, in which the filmmaker renounced his affinity with the Polish School. He wrote: "Borowczyk, an unpleasant man but also a gifted artist [...], a little man, but distinct from his work." The same little man, to use Jackiewicz's words, was about to return to Poland to make one of the most successful films in Polish cinema...

Story of a Story of Sin

Story of Sin, a film I made in Poland in 1974, has, until this day, been condemned by priests from the pulpit.

Walerian Borowczyk, 2007

After an aborted attempt at filming Juliusz Słowacki's *Mazepa* in Poland in 1967, Borowczyk finally returned to Poland in 1975 to make what would be his only Polish feature film. Stanisław Różewicz, then the director of the Tor film unit, had engaged in discussions with Anatole Dauman about the possibility of a Franco-Polish co-production in 1973, a year before the release of *Immoral Tales*. However, ultimately *Story of Sin* was an exclusively Polish production. In his memoirs, Borowczyk quotes a letter sent to him by Różewicz, which suggests Borowczyk was not exactly welcomed by his peers:

"Along with [Włodzimierz] Śliwiński, we just made an effort to remove the obstacles those morons and jealous peers tried to put in front of you. We were aware that you were making a great movie, a very good one indeed. We loved and still love this movie. *Story of Sin* will go down in the history of cinema..." (Borowczyk, 2007)

Besides Różewicz, Borowczyk credited Śliwiński, the head of production at Tor, as playing a vital role in the making of *Story of Sin*. When the editing of *The Beast overran*, production on *Story of Sin* was very nearly postponed indefinitely:

"Śliwiński had to make some very complex changes in the schedules of theatres, which had strict terms in place regarding the release of actors. To be honest, he had to give the impression to the decision makers in film that the whole crew was working. It was an army made up of dozens of professionals." (Borowczyk, 2007)

In interviews, Borowczyk was keen to recognise crew members as artisans rather than artists. A rare exception, however, was the cinematographer on *Story of Sin*, Zygmunt Samosiuk:

"The greatest director of photography in Europe agreed instantaneously and with great happiness to cooperate with Borowczyk. He put aside all his other projects. He even refused to read the script or even a synopsis. 'Borowczyk is my Bible,' he said. Our acquaintance instantly turned into a lifelong friendship. In his straightforwardness, his thoughts and mine merged into one. A man with the heart of a dove, without anger but aware of his value, a loyal friend, a chaste participant in making of the *Story of Sin*. Our appearance in this Monte Carlo scene wasn't without meaning, it was our cinematic signature." (Borowczyk, 2007)



According to Różewicz, Borowczyk had to be talked out of casting Ligia as Ewa Pobratyńska a matter of days before shooting. While she might not have played a role in *Story of Sin*, Borowczyk nevertheless credits his wife as influencing the casting of the role of Antoni Pochron:

"Ligia, when she started acting school in Warsaw, met Roman Wilhelmi, who was one year above, in the second year. Ligia told me stories about Roman, a gentleman, who was complementing both her beauty and talent. He effortlessly proved many times over what a prodigious actor he was, showing his talent in school plays. Years later, when I started casting *Story of Sin* after I had finished writing the script, Ligia told me, 'Pochron should absolutely be played by Roman Wilhelmi. You haven't seen him yet, but right now in Warsaw there is this play, *The Kitchen*, by Arnold

Wesker, in which Roman Wilhelmi is playing.' As Ligia is never wrong, I took the next plane from Paris to Warsaw, and headed straight from the airport to the theatre, where I saw Roman Wilhelmi. Afterwards, I sent a telegram to Ligia in Paris. 'Dear Ligia, beloved Ligia, he's wonderful. Please, inform Tor that I would appreciate it if he would accept my offer to play the role of Pochron. If he does, ask them to sign his contract as soon as possible.'" (Borowczyk, 2007)

In an interesting twist of fate, while Borowczyk was filming *Story of Sin*, Wajda was busy making his epic adaptation of Władysław Reymont's *The Promised Land* (*Ziemia obiecana*, 1975). Like Żeromski, Reymont is primarily associated with the positivist movement in Polish culture. There are a number of points on which Wajda and Borowczyk's novels converge: both are set during roughly the same time frame, both are based on broadly 'social' novels, and both created a stir with the depiction of on-screen sex. Borowczyk's film was presented as the official Polish entry at the 1975 Cannes Film Festival, and while it did not win *Story of Sin* was sold to multiple territories around the world, including both France and Great Britain. It hit Polish screens the following month in June, and created a sensation. Arguably more popular with audiences than critics, *Story of Sin* nevertheless had its defenders in the Polish establishment, including Zygmunt Kałużyński and Bogusław Michałek. When *Story of Sin* opened in England, it was both well received by critics and rivalled *Blanche* in terms of audience success:

"Objects in Borowczyk's films, doubtless because of his experience in animation, tend to assume a peculiarly active character, not only as witnesses to human behaviour but as determining factors in that behaviour. We first see Ewa threatened by the cage of the confessional, then hustled away into the dank, cheerless protection of her home: a comfortable bourgeois interior literally stifled by the weight of *bric-à-brac* covering walls and furniture, with pictures, ornaments and heirlooms asserting a slightly crumbling tradition of honesty, prosperity and rectitude in which tiny, dissonant trifles - father's Victorian girlie postcards, the seedy lodger's sulky lechery, his large and lubricious dog - attest to the existence of another, repressed, tradition." (Tom Milne, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, April 1976)

The Cinema of Immoral Ecstasy

At the turn of the twentieth century, Borowczyk and Wajda's paths would cross again. Borowczyk came under attack from a Polish newspaper for allegedly molesting Grażyna Długołęcka, while Wajda set about re-cutting *The Promised Land*, to remove a sex scene. The irony was not lost on Borowczyk: Wajda, that most political of filmmakers, was cutting an erotic scene from one of his movies. Conversely, Borowczyk, who had been saddled with the mantle of being a maker of erotic movies, asked for a political scene cut from *Story of Sin* to be reinstated: a shot of Russian soldiers (Zeromski's novel is set during the time of the partitions, although in 1975 Poland's decision-makers were fully aware that such a scene would be interpreted by eagle eyed Polish viewers as meaning 'business as usual'). When asked about Borowczyk in 2010, Wajda reiterated the usual story of an amazing talent who lost himself upon leaving Poland at the end of the 1950s. However, an argument could be put forward that Wajda had lost himself too. Wajda's major contribution to cinema was utilising the medium for political ends. With films like *Man of Marble* (*Człowiek z marmuru*, 1977) and *Man of Iron* (*Człowiek z żelaza*, 1981), he established the blueprint for a type of cinema that acted as a catalyst for political change. According to Ketj Abuladze, her father Tengiz was partly inspired to make *Repentance* (*Pokajaniye*, 1984) by a meeting with Adam Michnik and Wajda. However, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Wajda found himself robbed of his traditional sparring partner: the communist authorities.

In the years that followed, Wajda made only one film that addressed Polish post-communist reality: *Miss Nobody* (*Panna nikt*, 1996). Instead, he sought refuge in the past. Wajda's sudden prudishness concerning on screen sexual matters, not to mention his recourse to the classics of Polish literature, reflected that the Catholic Church and nationalist sentiment had come to fill the void left by four decades of enforced communist rule. During the second half of the 1970s, together with Krzysztof Kiesłowski, Agnieszka Holland and Krzysztof Zanussi, Wajda pioneered what became known as the cinema of moral anxiety. As the economy floundered under the leadership of Edward Gierek during the 1970s, the then Minister of Culture, Józef Tejchma, allowing a degree of 'cinema self-criticism', effectively relieving pressure, much like Gorbachev did a decade later through the rehabilitation of shelved films by Abuladze and Aleksei German. This type of cinema, which is defiantly uncommercial,

fundamentally realistic and dialogue-driven in terms of narrative, has come to embody what both critics and audiences expect from Polish cinema. Nevertheless, by acknowledging Borowczyk's *Story of Sin* as what Andrzej Żuławski characterises as one of the masterpieces of Polish cinema, we in turn acknowledge an aspect of Polish cinema antithetical to this cinema of moral anxiety – a 'cinema of immoral ecstasy', if you will. In place of realism stands the fantastic, spectacle takes precedence over the verbal, and if not always entertaining – an adjective ill-suited for Żuławski's brain scrambling *The Devil* (*Diabeł*, 1972) and *On the Silver Globe* (*Na srebrnym globie*, 1977/1988) – then both compulsive and convulsive. The mad, delirious surrealism of *Story of Sin* is shared by two very different filmmakers working concurrently with Borowczyk in both Poland and France: Piotr Szulkin and Żuławski. Today, this tradition persists in two films which are as visually striking as they are tonally uneven: Marcin Wrona's *Demon* (2015) and Agnieszka Smoczyńska's *The Lure* (*Córki dancingu*, 2015). Unlike its Czechoslovak counterpart, Polish surrealism was never an official movement. For Żuławski, it was the distension of Polish romanticism. Besides filming Słowacki and featuring Frédéric Chopin on the soundtracks to *La Marge* (1976) and *L'Amoïre* (1979), Borowczyk too, while proud of his affinity with French surrealism (Andre Breton, Max Ernst, André Pieyre de Mandiargues), located the source of his filmmaking in Polish romanticism:

"At home, and at school, I got to know about Mieszko and [Adam] Mickiewicz. Every one of my projects is inspired by the Polish language [...] Since my youth, I memorized *Pan Tadeusz*. I memorised every note played by Jankiel, and, when I close my eyes, I see Jankiel." (Borowczyk, 2007)

Perhaps it is time to think of Polish cinema in terms of not just *The Promised Land* and *Pan Tadeusz* (1999), but also *Story of Sin* and *Blanche*?

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SHORT FILMS AND MISCELLANEOUS

Once Upon a Time (Był sobie raz...) Poland 1957, 9 mins

dir Walerian Borowczyk, Jan Lenica **sc** Walerian Borowczyk, Jan Lenica
cam Edward Bryła **mus** Andrzej Markowski **pc** Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych, Zespół Filmowy „Kadr”

This short film is included in full among the special features

Strip-Tease Poland 1957, 2 mins

dir Walerian Borowczyk, Jan Lenica **sc** Walerian Borowczyk, Jan Lenica **pc** Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych

Excerpts from this short film can be found in the Miscellaneous featurette among the special features

Banner of Youth (Sztandar młodych) Poland 1957, 2 mins

dir Walerian Borowczyk, Jan Lenica **sc** Walerian Borowczyk, Jan Lenica
cam Edward Bryła **pc** Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych

Excerpts from this short film can be found in the Miscellaneous featurette among the special features

Rewarded Feeling (Nagrodzone uczucie) Poland 1957, 8 mins

dir Walerian Borowczyk, Jan Lenica **sc** Walerian Borowczyk, Jan Lenica
cam Edward Bryła **ed** Krystyna Rutkowska **mus** Orkiestra Dęta Gazowni Miejskiej w Warszawie **sound** Halina Paszkowska **pc** Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych

Excerpts from this short film can be found in the Miscellaneous featurette among the special features

Dom (House) Poland 1958, 11 mins

dir Walerian Borowczyk, Jan Lenica **sc** Walerian Borowczyk, Jan Lenica
cam Antoni Nurzyński **ed** Krystyna Rutkowska **mus** Włodzimierz Kotoński
sound Halina Paszkowska **cast** Ligia Borowczyk **prod** Romuald Hajnberg
pc Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych, Zespół Filmowy „Kadr”

This short film is included in full among the special features

The School (Szkoła) Poland 1958, 7 mins

dir Walerian Borowczyk **sc** Walerian Borowczyk **cam** Walerian Borowczyk
mus Andrzej Markowski **cast** Bronisław Stefanik **prod** Walerian Wojtczak
pc Studio Miniatur Filmowych

This short film is included in full among the special features

Street Art (Sztuka ulicy) Poland 1957, 10 min

dir Konstanty Gordon **sc** Walerian Borowczyk, Szymon Bojko **cam** Mieczysław Vogt **mus** Józef Pawłowski **pc** Wytwórnia Filmów Oświatowych

This short film is included in full among the special features

ABOUT THE RESTORATIONS

Story of Sin was restored by Fixafilm for TOR Film Production. The film is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.66:1 with the original mono soundtrack. The original 35mm camera negative was scanned in 4K resolution on a pinless Lasergraphics Director using the 3-flash HDR mode.

The original mono soundtrack was transferred from the original re-recording 35mm magnetic tape.

Film grading and restoration was completed at Fixafilm, Warsaw at 2.5K resolution.

Flickering caused by chemical degradation of the negative was minimised. Thousands of instances of dirt, debris and scratches were removed through a combination of digital restoration tools.

The soundtrack was restored to minimise hiss and similar noise issues to produce the best quality results possible.

Restoration supervised by Wojtek Janio (Fixafilm) and (James White (Arrow) in co-operation with Daniel Bird (Friends of Walerian Borowczyk)

This restoration has been approved by Grzegorz Kędzierski, an associate of director of photography Zygmunt Samosiuk.

Research into the production history of *Story of Sin* reveal that a defective camera used for parts of filming resulted in a visible jitter during some parts of the film. This has been removed with the approval of Grzegorz Kędzierski and Daniel Bird.

The original materials were licensed and accessed through TOR Film Production, Poland.

Once Upon a Time, Dom and *The School* were restored on behalf of copyright owners - KADR Film Studio and Miniatur Film Studio - by Fixafilm.

The restorations were financed by Friends of Walerian Borowczyk and Fixafilm.

Once Upon a Time, Dom and *The School* were scanned at 4K resolution from the original camera negatives and digitally restored in 2K resolution.

The audio was sourced and restored from the optical negative by Dorota Nowocień of Ronin Group Studio, Poland.

Street Art has been remastered from an existing PAL telecine transfer of a positive print exclusively for this release by Friends of Walerian Borowczyk and Fixafilm.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Discs and Booklet Produced by: Daniel Bird
Co-Producers: Anthony Nield, Aleksandra Wiśniewska
Executive Producers: Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni
Production Assistant: Liane Cunje
Technical Producer: James White
QC Manager: Nora Mehenni
Blu-ray and DVD Mastering: David Mackenzie
Artist: Andrzej Klimowski
Design: Obviously Creative

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Barbara Baranowska, Mark Bence, Szymon Bojko, Ligia Borowczyk, Michael Brooke, Maciej Buszewicz, Teresa Byszewska, David Crowley, Grażyna Długogęcka, Raymond Durnat, Dominique Duvergé-Ségrétin, Marcin Giżycki, Michael Goddard, Tony Howard, Barbara Howard, Craigie Horsfield, Stanisław Jędryka, Irena Karel, Andrzej Klimowski, Włodzimierz Kotoński, Joanna Kordjak, Tadeusz Kowalski, Edyta Krajewska, Rafał Księżyk, Paulina Kwas, Kamila Kuc, Jerzy Kucia, Jan Lenica, Włodzimierz Matuszewski, Kuba Mikurda, Dariusz Misiuna, Ewa Mazierska, Marzena Moskal, Michael O'Pray, Michał Oleszczyk, Jonathan Owen, Agata Pyzik, Klaudia Podsiadło, Adam Pugh, AL Rees, Jasia Reichardt, Elżbieta Rojek, Stanisław Różewicz, Małgorzata Sady, Abel Ségrétin, Agata Semeniuk, Dariusz Sidor, Ula Śniegowska, Franciszek Starowieyski, Daniel Szczuchura, Jan Tarasin, David Thompson, Andrzej Wajda, Stanisław Webel, Kamila Wielebska, Bogdan Wiśniewski, Juliusz Zamecznik, Bogusław Zmudziński, Andrzej Zuławski and Xawery Zuławski





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