

TRANSLATION

From Russian language

STAIRS

Everybody is rushing to the commerce now. Such is the time: money is being made out of everything. Even in art. Artisans appear in the cinema more often than artists. Perhaps commercial American films are good enough. As for me they are boring, because there is neither personality of the author, nor his soul in the professionally made films. That's why I liked the film "Wooden Staircase" by Vidas Rasinskas so much. There is author's special tragical tension.

The events of the film are not sufficient they only give some reasons for thinking. The situation is both simple one and complicated at the same time. A young man takes his girlfriend to Nida late in autumn so that to show her his favourite places, to be in the solitude and to say "Farewell" to his Motherland before going abroad. But he fails to do so. The burden of the past like a heavy cargo hinders him to go forward. The whole day and a sleepless night are filled with memories, torment, meeting and conversation between the image of his previous beloved girl and analysis of himself. It came out that his real love remained in the past. And pretty, a little bit spoilt and pragmatic girl who is with him now is a stranger. But she is already pregnant. What is to be done?

Behind the still the voice of yet unborn baby is heard, his helpless call is strengthened by later heard music by Gustav Maller "Songs about dead children".

The acting of young actresses (E.Jaras, G.Odinis, V.Kelmelyte) is psychologically exact and not forced. Not polysyllable dialogues and as always a very successful music by F.Latenas help the director to create a poetic world out of a concrete vital story with certain mood atmosphere in which every thing and sound are placed in the certain places.

Nida in the dead season looks like a special space. Not in vain so long and in detail the arrival of the heroes is shown: the entrance to the ferry-boat, the policeman's pace along the shore of a "Big Land", the seagulls above the water and quick departure of the ferry-boat.

As soon as the heroes enter the "zone" the reality changes. The bag falls down the stairs all by itself, the bottle breaks. The landlady advises the girl not to drink the champagne without knowing that the girl is pregnant and Thom leads them to the room they have refused before - one can't escape from oneself. But they are lucky enough to spend some time in the cosy snack-bar "Perch" which reminds us of the underwater kingdom, and the next day they come to know that the same snack-bar has been closed for three months because of the undergoing repair.

The place of the action corresponds the unreal occurrence. The heroes get into an amazing world. There is no hurly-burly. One's ear can catch only the murmur of the sea, the sounds of the lighthouse or maybe the halloo of an owl, measuring the passing Time. The sight together with the camera of J.Tamosevicius looks up as if trying to enjoy endless clouds where one can come in touch with Eternity and the time is good for thinking about eternal questions: Who am I? What am I? Why do I live? Where am I going?

One can feel the relation between the past and the future very sharply. The character of Thomas (V.Bledis) is very interesting. He represents national wisdom and spiritual culture. We get to know about Thom Man's house his relation to him and that shows the man's spiritual potential. The presence of Thomas in the snack-bar divides the customers into two parts. They all look up to him with respect trying to catch every word uttered. Others try not to notice him, making noise and when they get bored with him and with his fatal story they simply say: "Go away..."

Everything leads to the appearance of the image of another world. The mirror - the entrance to another world. The owl and the lighthouse are the images of another world that observes the men's confused world by its eternal "eye". The Landlady and Thom are sanctified. The "Wooden Staircase" filmed by the cameraman from the lower side of it reminds us of the stairs leading to the Heaven as the pollymeaning symbol. It may mean not only the connection between the real and unreal things the way from Ignorance to Wisdom, from the Earth to the Heaven, from Presence to Absence. It is also the way of life which every man has to go through with the burden of the past.

I remember in Kaunas during the first night some expert noticed in arrogance that the film seemed to him recurring the influence of Andrei Tarkovsky "Mirror" was felt.

The expert hasn't explained his "feelings" so it is difficult to argue against his uncertain presumption. But it would be interesting to argue against his arrogance.

If he sees the recurrence in the usage of the well known images used in A.Tarkovsky film (a house, a horse, a staircase, a mirror, a dog) so my answer is; the wonder of art is in that that the things we once knew so well may every time become quite unknown sighns with a new meaning.

If he sees the "recurrence" in the common motives and the way so I may say that no form of art appears in an empty space (in such a meaning it can't be "original") it is always volitionally or not being made on the foundation of the forerunner in spite of the author's will. And if the director A.Tarkovsky made an influence on V.Rasinskas so not the least influence was left on him by Oscar V. de L. Milosz's poetry with his beloved twilights, with his endless returning to the past, with his cold mirrors. In the relation between the hero and his previous beloved girl one can feel visual incarnation of O. V. de L. Milosz "A Farewell Song by the Sea":

"... So we are by the sea

which never dies...

Your image is the last dream of an ill man,

Whom I don't know and the grave of which I'll never see

The lonely day, the sleepless night...

The sailing grave of my unfulfilled dreams...

At nights she's being called by unseen lighthouses..."

So I am happy that the film is recurring. And yet it's not similar to any other. The more interesting the director is and the luggage acquired by him from the forerunners the more premises to argue with him as his outlook is rich and the story he creates is interesting. It's especially valuable when the director himself confirms that relation, underlines his own contribution to the traditions which show the author's respect to his forerunners and the perception of his own place on the staircase of the culture.

That's why the main hero is the author himself. The artist, climbing upstairs of art with his cultural inheritance.

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