

JOANNA SOSNOWSKA

SILENCE AS A CINEMATIC EXPRESSION IN THE WORK OF PAWEŁ PAWLIKOWSKI

1. THE ARTISTIC SILHOUETTE OF PAWEŁ PAWLIKOWSKI

Paweł Pawlikowski is the director of the personal and auteur cinema. His movies are not only authentic but frequently refer to biographical threads of the director, at the same time, they express a personal attitude towards the cinema. Pawlikowski builds the imaginary world. Furthermore, despite realistic as well as historical references, he creates morality plays, universal stories and film-poems. He shaped his sensitivity through making non-fiction documentaries. The specific combination of the real world and fictional reality allowed the director to elaborate on a unique style of a visionary story writing.¹ Pawlikowski stated: “As I was working on those documentaries, it was highlighted that my works are specially created; while working on stories I can hear: he is clearly a documentary filmmaker. I do not fit any category.”² While working for BBC he made numerous documentaries in which he experimented a lot and mixed various genres. Nowadays, critics are not unanimous in terms of Pawlikowski's style. In his documentaries he frequently overused poetic means of expression as well as ambiguous contrast. Instead, a metaphysical and transcendent story *Summer of Love* was qualified as harsh realism. Though Pawlikowski created it out of sheer subtlety, understatements and uncertainties. Creating this substandard cinema allowed creative freedom, ambiguity, complexity, symbolism, and, at the same time, aesthetic experiences. “In his view, art should reveal complexity of

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¹ D. OSTROWSKA, “Podróże Pawła Pawlikowskiego: telewizja, kino i kinestetyka,” *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, no 53 (2006): 158–71.

² Cyt. za: M. SADOWSKA, “Paweł Pawlikowski. Reżyser, który z bycia emigrantem uczynił sztukę,” *Newsweek*, February 23, 2015.

problems, break the habits, retrieve or find what is irrational, unpredictable, and, at the same time, decide to go against the grain, remain a clearly personal voice.”³

Critics maintain that Pawlikowski’s heroes—both in documentaries and feature films—have one common denominator, “they are severely experienced by the sense of alienation in a foreign country, in a different sexual norm or in a different social class.”⁴ He creates movies in a specific rhythm of a story, visible not only on the screen, but also in a relationship between an actor and a hero. Multiple takes and replays cause “peculiar states of meditation which, paradoxically, allow actors to present the desired emotions.”⁵ The main determinants of his work are improvisation and experiment. Working on a living organism, sensing emotions and mood, emotionality of a certain scene provide an opportunity for creating and using non-obvious means of expression including silence. Pawlikowski uses the elimination method which means that the entire form of the film is shaped during its creation and it is the effect of removing unnecessary elements. He underlines the fact of “finding joy in using abbreviations, telling stories in a synthetic manner, avoiding storytelling.”⁶ He makes movies meaningful in their form. In the works of Pawlikowski, film experts notice inspiration and aesthetic similarities to films by Yasujiro Ozu,⁷ Lindsay Anderson and Francois Truffaut. Polish critics and film experts can discern certain references to Andrzej Wajda’s and Krzysztof Kieślowski’s movies.⁸ Furthermore, they clearly indicate a common area of film sensitivity, but also reveal the significance of artistic and universal dimension of a historical novel.⁹

Pawlikowski’s movies are so different from the aesthetics of Hollywood cinematography; it is definitely a commercial and artistic success. Undoubtedly, it became an inspiration for a poetic Oscar winner of *Roma*. The positive publicity and the worldwide phenomenon of his recent films showed how important for the modern film industry are silent films created with impressions and emotions. Two popular and Oscar-nominated movies will be analyzed: *Ida* (2013) and *Cold War*

³ J. WRÓBLEWSKI, “Paweł Pawlikowski: odmieniec, poeta kina,” *Polityka*, January 22, 2019.

⁴ M. TALARCZYK, “Słowiańskie epepeje. O filmowej twórczości Pawła Pawlikowskiego,” *Dialog* no 11: 61–9.

⁵ J. BRYCZKOWSKA, “Paweł Pawlikowski. Co wiemy o twórcy oscarowej ‘Idy’ i głośniejszej ‘Zimnej wojny’?”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 22, 2019.

⁶ B. HOLENDER, Interview by Paweł Pawlikowski. “Jeśli ‘Zimna wojna’ spodobała się Nuriemu, rzeczywistość musi być spoko,” *Rzeczpospolita*, January 22, 2019.

⁷ Por. S. SKAFF, “‘Ida’ w Ameryce. Estetyka, tożsamość i artyzm w antyfilmie,” *Kwartalnik filmowy*, no 95 (2016): 213–18.

⁸ “Paweł Pawlikowski,” accessed April 20, 2020, <https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/pawel-pawlikowski>.

⁹ A. MORSTIN, “Kieślowski versus Pawlikowski. ‘Podwójne życie weroniki’ i ‘Zimna wojna’ jako opowieści o świecie dwudzielnym,” *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, no 103 (2018): 79–90.

(2018). *Ida* may appear anti-modernist, symbolic, aesthetic and spiritual.¹⁰ It tells a story of a young girl Anna, an orphan raised since infancy in a convent, who finds out from her aunt that she is Jewish and sets off on a trip to dig into the secrets of the past. *Cold War* is also based in the historical reality, but the major subject matter is a tragic love story of Zula and Wiktor who are modelled on the director's parents. Both *Ida* and *Cold War* are black and white movies and their genre form is multidimensional.

2. SILENCE AS AN AUDIOVISUAL PHENOMENON

Audiovisual forms (art-, film- and media-related) offer various methods and possibilities of making use of silence as a valuable element of creative workshop as well as extremely suggestive means of expression. As an artistic and workshop procedure, silence is an intentional action, which aims at provoking certain reactions. Its character may be versatile, including: maintaining silence, pause, meditation, contemplation, leaving things unsaid, omitting, suspension or muting. Silence is not a direct synonym for absence or emptiness, it is rather a specific form of the occurrence of meanings and emotions which are impossible to occur through other means of expression. We may view it on two different levels in this audiovisual presentation: sound and image, coexisting and interdependent.

In terms of sound, silence may have a creative function, so that¹¹:

- a recipient gets a possibility to listen to single sounds of nature and of the surroundings (murmur, squeaking, creaking and other noise);
- space for a spoken word is created (the voice of the narrator and lector is audible);
- it builds a meaningful silence (for instance awkward questions, high emotions, absence of words, interrupting);
- high contrast for screaming, noise, commentary, narration is provided (through an appropriate combination of vivid sound-related elements and silence or mute);
- it is a pause—a distinct element of the art of punctuation (it involves balancing between several various parts of the media coverage);
- it is a gradual silencing of individual sounds, music verbal narration;
- it may be considered a highlighting and sound medium (it directs the viewer's attention to the respective part of the communication, highly reinforcing the message).

¹⁰ SKAFF, "‘Ida’ w Ameryce," 213–8.

¹¹ J. SOSNOWSKA, "Cisza w mediach audiowizualnych," *Roczniki Kulturoznawcze*, no. 4(2019): 94–107.

In terms of image, silence may have a creative function, so that:

- space for image display is created (it involves balancing between a picture, image and a spoken word through a symbolic exposure);
- it becomes a non-verbal element of communication which is abundant and based on verbal silence;
- it sharpens contrast and, thus, it enhances image itself (for instance a silent cry or a pause in a conversation);
- the element of audiovisual construction (including an assembly rhythm);
- a clear sign for a recipient: a full stop, comma, ellipsis or an exclamation mark (adequate punctuation marks in the sound and image system);
- dramatising of the media coverage (an intentional break of the narrative flow, an excessive pausing or contrasts between sound and imagery).

In a movie, a bridge between objective reality and cinematic imagination is an important means of expression. Making use of silence and its various forms and contexts gives an opportunity for “space, time and a human being to undergo a technical and artistic transformation. They are a part of creating the world of image which tells a story about the surrounding world and it constitutes an essence and sublimation of spacetime.”¹²

Visuality of the film is the most essential feature and a component of the creative world of the film. The film speaks via images, evokes emotions via image, allows to touch the film reality in a perceptual way. Image is what we call the power of expression, when a word loses its meaning; it has to withdraw and eventually vanishes. Simultaneously, it may become a trap of simplification and explicitness.¹³ Furthermore, silence may become a visualisation method for contents difficult to say or describe. The component of visualisation may be viewed on several different levels¹⁴:

- a) compositional (including frames, film set, perspective),
- b) mood (including coloring, light),
- c) symbolism (including references, symbols and signs),
- d) sound (including music, sound effects, and narration).

The analysis will cover those works of art that fit into the above mentioned patterns in two major subcategories: imagery and audiovisuality.

¹² R. BIRKHOLC, “Laboratorium analizy filmu. Interview by prof. Seweryn Kuśmierzyk,” *Załącznik Kulturoznawczy*, f. 5 (2018): 325.

¹³ D. ARIJON, *Gramatyka języka filmowego*, trans. F. Forbert-Kaniewski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wojciech Marzec, 2007), 13–5.

¹⁴ Por. J. PŁAŻEWSKI, *Język filmu* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Książka i Wiedza, 2008).

3. ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF SILENCE IN PAWLIKOWSKI'S *IDA*

Pawlikowski announced that *Ida* was not supposed to be a novel's narration, a story, but a kind of meditation. He wanted the film "to consist if images and sounds in which majority of scenes would be made from the same angle, in one long shot. It is a kind of a movie lacking informative shots and dialogues. It was supposed to operate by suggestion, without typical tricks, with a limited camera movement."¹⁵

The work created became a contemplative and mute film and each of its layers had a strong influence of silence:

a) compositional layer (frame, film set, perspective)

In *Ida* the way of composing the scene is very specific, it breaks all the conventions distorts the represented world. The film reality combines the documentary perspective and the feature artistry. The 4:3 digital format allows creating a more photographic and pictorial rather than cinematic aesthetics of the picture. Whereas the distorted and visually mute scene introduces a metaphysical element. Due to free, empty and silent space, an imaginary space occurs.¹⁶

Framing the character is done by background elimination, close film sets or framing with empty space. Silencing the characters and their space in *Ida* may be compared to the painting of Jan Vermeer.¹⁷ In the way of capturing of the visual field one can discern inspiration of Hopper and Hammershøi who immortalized silence in their works of art.¹⁸ The reduction of details, focus on emptiness and silence calls us to contemplate, penetrate the character's intimacy and privacy.



Ida – monastery scenes

¹⁵ The quote is taken from Paweł Pawlikowski's lecture held on 25th of June 2014, in accordance with Colin Young Annual Lecture w National Film and TV School in Beaconsfield.

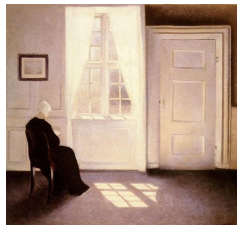
¹⁶ "Łukasz Żal," accessed April 16, 2020, <https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/lukasz-zal>.

¹⁷ T. ROBESON, "Ida Review: 'Eerily Perfect,'" accessed April 16, 2020, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/film/ida/review/>.

¹⁸ Por. A. SOBOLSKA, "Hammershøi. Mistrz samotności i ciszy," accessed May 18, 2020, <http://recogito.eu/hammershoi-mistrz-samotnosci-i-ciszy/>.

*Western Motel**A Woman Reading by a Window*

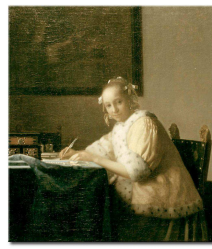
E. Hooper

*A Woman Reading by a Window**Interior with a Young Woman*

V. Hammershøi

*Interior with a Mirror*

Ida P. Pawlikowski

*A Girl with a Pearl**A Lady Writing a Letter*

J. Vermeer



Ida P. Pawlikowski

Pawlikowski concentrated on characters' faces, he frequently uses a close film set, he eliminates dispensable elements of framing space, invoking strong emotions at the same time. The acting style of the main character is tantamount to the way of presenting her. There is a noticeable contrast to the movies by Kawalerowicz and Dreyer.



Ida P. Pawlikowski



The Passion of Joan of Arc C. Dreyer



Mother Joan of the Angels J. Kawalerowicz

The nature of telling *Ida* is a slow narration constructed by wide and static shots, repeatability of composition, maintaining of overlaps (fragments of shots after the characters step out of the shot). Pawlikowski builds the frame space, closes it and creates the impression of non-space frame.¹⁹ It creates a sort of

¹⁹ K. MAKA-MALATYŃSKA, "Opowiedzieć niewidzialne. Próba analizy filmu 'Ida' Pawła Pawlikowskiego," *Narracje o Zagładzie*, no 1 (2015): 223–4.

fencing that a viewer wants to jump over and see what is behind.²⁰ The returning *silent portrait* enables a highly evocative ending or beginning of dramaturgical scenes. The interpretation of character's face strongly engages a recipient who, intuitively, strives to read the character's thoughts. Close shots, focusing on a face, mime and look are, in some ways, a filming tool used to reveal the character's thoughts and spirituality. Silence not always accompanies the silent portrait which is a particularly evocative and stylistic tool. A significant element is presenting one's eyes and face which are said to be a description of the world.

b) mood (color scheme, light)

Each of the levels influences the expressiveness of the visual form but it also shows the elements of plasticity, pictoriality, synchrony or asynchrony, or even sensitive "creativity expressed in an original color juggling, composition, illumination."²¹

Building the mood by means of symbolism gives the sense of realism or, on the contrary, introduces a reader to the unreal world (dreamy and fantastic). Colour influences the imagination of a viewer, generates certain specific emotions, builds the mood as well as the character. Furthermore, colour itself may be an important component of manipulation of the recipient.²²

Eventually, Pawlikowski gives up colour in his works of art. He creates art works in black and white, provides the necessary space for silence and contemplation. Color treatment used in his films contrasts the cinematography of Kieślowski's *Three colours* or Bergman's *Cries and Whispers*. Their films are called films of silence, metaphysics and explode with bright colours (especially red).



Cries and Whispers I. Bergman

Red K. Kieślowski

Ida P. Pawlikowski

Building meanings for single colours Pawlikowski substitutes with colour-based ascetism. A peculiar monochromatic character of the painting is not only an element

²⁰ I. ŁAPIŃSKA, "Obraz. Barwa filmu," *Media, Kultura, Społeczeństwo* 15, no 9–10 (2014): 71–8.

²¹ ŁAPIŃSKA, "Obraz. Barwa filmu," 76.

²² P. BELLANTONI, *Jeśli to fiolet, to ktoś umrze: teoria koloru w filmie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wojciech Marzec, 2010).

of subconscious historicism and documentalism, but also of ascetic silence, a space for contemplation, seeking spirituality. “Contrast becomes one of the most essential cinematic means of expression in *Ida*. A game of black and white meanings.”²³ Extraordinarily calm *Ida* is presented in light tones, whilst (expressive) *Wanda*—in dark tones.



Ida, Wanda – colour contrast of two opposite characters

“The game of greyness mixed with black and white shades becomes the major visual and meaning-related motive of the film. It is particularly visible within the prologue as well as in the first scene in the aunt’s apartment. The motive of light as the source of illumination is perfectly captured in the Skiba’s cowshed”²⁴ where we may see a bright light in the strained glass window. The author strives to present intangible assets by the means of abstraction and by the use of light. Depriving the film of its colour layer and silencing it enables the image to fully unleash the potential of expressing by light, contrast and shading.²⁵ Maximum use of light reveals the character’s personality, emotions; it depicts the emerging world as more realistic as it really is. Monochromatic character and fading colours may also relate the film to a specific photographic perspective which, in fact, inspired the camera operator, Łukasz Żal, by fashion studio photography of Irving Penn one may notice the relationship between light, the main character and background.²⁶ Impact of photo reportage by Cartier-Bresson, the creator of the crucial moment in photography, which may be “understood as capturing a single

²³ MAKA-MALATYŃSKA “Opowiedzieć niewidzialne,” 224.

²⁴ MAKA-MALATYŃSKA “Opowiedzieć niewidzialne,” 243.

²⁵ Por. P. WOJTOWICZ, “Koncepcja ideowo-artystyczna zdjęć do filmu ‘Tam i z powrotem’ – opis autorski,” *Images*, no 24(2014): 200.

²⁶ Ryszard Lenczewski. *Cinematography from still to movie*, accessed April 12, 2020, <https://www.lensculture.com/articles/ryszard-lenczewski-cinematography-from-still-to-movie>.

fleeting moment, a twinkling of an eye and close them in a sophisticated painting frame”.²⁷

c) symbolism (references, symbols, signs)

The world of *Ida*, in the context of symbolic silence, is a silent presence of the character of Ida in two different dimensions:

— explicitly contrasted with her aunt: Ida-aunt = silence and noise = balance, melancholy and impulsiveness, they nearly create a graphic pattern of a chessboard;

— compared to a Christ figure: in close-ups and in ubiquitous silence in the prologue, she is confronted with the portrait of Jesus Christ; both characters remaining silent.



Contrast of two characters in *Ida* by P. Pawlikowski

d) sound (music, sound effects, narration)

Pawlikowski forms a stark contrast between the abundance of cinematic means of expression and their elimination. The greatest human dramas may take place in the total silence (remaining concealed). According to the critics, *Ida* is a poetic cinema in which “more is expressed with no words, strongly inspired and strengthened by Coltrane’s music than by words; scarcely heard.”²⁸ Silence is a vital part of communication between the protagonists—it is clearly visible in the dialogues of external characters—prolonged pauses, silence, awaiting the reply.

In many cases, this failure to respond, formulating rhetorical questions in the dialogue is stronger, more evocative than a potential reply. *Ida* herself is a listening character, tight-lipped, indrawn. Her gesture, look, decision, action express more than words. Words are unnecessary. Silence may become a synonym for inability to speak—suspension, omission, gagging. In *Ida* silence is frequently a sort of an inner monologue of the characters. In case of *Ida* there are prolonged

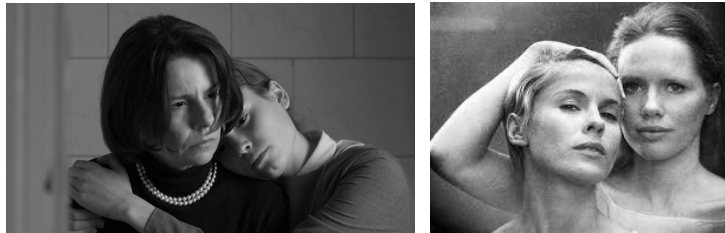
²⁷ K. SADKOWSKA, “Długi proces, czy ułamek sekundy? Fotografia decydującego momentu – Henri Cartier-Bresson,” accessed April 12, 2020, <https://niezlasztuka.net/o-sztuce/fotografia-decydujacego-momentu-henri-cartier-bresson/>.

²⁸ WRÓBLEWSKI, “Paweł Pawlikowski.”

moments of silence during voiceless scenes, frequently of a more melancholic tone. In case of Wanda the moments of thoughtfulness and of internal silence are based on the principle of contrast—we can observe the character's face, having no sense of reality in opposition to the surrounding world (music in a bar, traffic noise or even a court case):



Wanda in the scenes of reflection, silence



Ida P. Pawlikowski 2013

Persona I. Bergman 1966

“A formal asceticism of *Ida* and the process of removing words may fully be seen in the subsequent parts of the screen. The original version of the script was in collaboration with Rebecca Lenkiewicz and it underwent a gradual modification.”²⁹ Pawlikowski creates the impression of silence not only through composition, muting the dialogues or monochrome colours, but also through the use of long takes that prolong the shooting scene, waiting time, they tone down the editing session of the story. The characters in *Ida* are highly contrasting by the means of silence: *Ida* stars in silent scenes whilst Wanda, on the contrary, is seen in a big city rhythm, club, music, radio news, gramophone sounds. Silence allows a viewer to broaden the so called *sound horizon* beyond what is visible. There are moments of silence that force a viewer to concentrate and look forwards to sounds. Gradually, a viewer becomes accustomed to silence and finds silence, tranquility in himself. Communication between a recipient and an artistic and semantic statement is outstandingly strong. Acoustic possibilities in the movie were reduced, muted, specific communication between a viewer and a film history was built.

²⁹ MAKA-MALATYŃSKA, “Opowiedzieć niewidzialne,” 247.

In *Ida* it is plain to see that contrast is created by means of sounds and silence. Dramatic scenes take place in silence (conversation between *Ida* and *Wanda*; *Wanda*'s funeral) and soon they are contrasted with the bar scenes with loud music, laughter and humming. Similarly, the city and the countryside, *Wanda*'s house and the monastery are contrasted with silence as well.

The path the heroine follows also runs in silence:

- the path with other nuns and Christ figure;
- the path with *Wanda* to her parents' grave in the woods;
- the way back to the monastery;

Silence (muting the scene) emphasizes other sounds and a constant clamour that become meaningful:

- a rapid sound of a lighter reveals *Wanda*'s nervousness and desperation;
- an intense sound of kicking may be understood as desperation and grief of a mother;
- the sound of a passing car reinforces the solitude of characters.

Sound involves an additional sense and generates a new kind of sensorial reception.³⁰ Highly emotional scenes take place in silence, without crying or screaming, music (*Wanda*'s grief after finding the skull of her murdered son) An interesting procedure is the monastic silence that seems to be a natural surroundings. Nevertheless, single sounds are clearly audible in the monastery. They do not express emotions, feelings, needs, but they are more like a synonym of lonely everyday life, daily routines and activities: eating (a loud sound of tapping the spoon while eating soup); walking (clearly audible steps), tidying or washing. These preternaturally exposed sounds, strongly contrasted with omnipresent silence. Their amplitude is noticeably higher despite the prevailing silence impossible to break through. The sound technician recalls: "Plenty of scenes written as dialogues take place with no words spoken. While preparing the scene where the heroine says goodbye to the nuns, we were struggling with attaching the micro-ports under the vestments. Eventually, *Paweł* decided they would no longer be necessary as the actresses said no words. Similarly, *Paweł* treats acting. He resigns of excessive masks, gesture, mime to the minimum necessary."³¹

³⁰ Por. D. BORDWELL, and K. THOMPSON, *Film art. Sztuka filmowa, wprowadzenie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wojciech Marzec, 2010), 297.

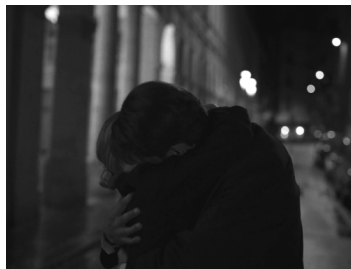
³¹ K. FRYC, "Dźwiękowiec 'Zimnej wojny': To było największe wyzwanie w mojej pracy," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 24, 2019.

4. THE ANALYSIS OF USING SILENCE IN *COLD WAR*

As a musical film, *Cold War* substantially differs from *Ida* for it is directed towards sound reception. It is a combination of a newsreel and a poetic love story. Ways of using silence may be viewed in several different layers of cinematic work. In the film, the mood becomes an element of each analyzed layer, therefore it is not listed as a separate point of description:

a) compositional (frame, film set, perspective)

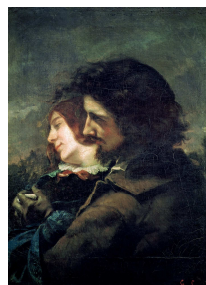
Silence accompanies not only dramatic scenes, but also intimate scenes: while kissing, declaring love, happiness and abandonment. The evoked images have a painting-like ability, slightly aesthetic, referring to the painting style of Chagall or Courbet.



Cold War P. Pawlikowski



The Pink Lovers M. Chagall



The Happy Lovers G. Courbet

The final scene in which characters are sitting on a bench, also takes place in silence. Only after stepping out of the frame, soft music may be audible. Lovers' intimate scenes take place in a quiet, peaceful space; in the surroundings of nature. Artistic frames contrasting characters' clothing and personality fulfill the vision.



Intimate scenes of Zula and Wiktor

At the same time, critics notice a contrast in terms of moving “a camera that follows an energetic Zula and stops at introverted Wiktor. This way a director and a cameraman present differences of personalities of those two lovers.”³² The way of guiding the camera is more dynamic than in *Ida*, but – still – balanced, slow, quiet and clearly composed shots prevail. Silent portraits occur and like in *Ida*, they give the opportunity to present the inner world of characters.

b) symbolism (references, symbols, signs)

Cold War tells about love by means of image and music. That gives the opportunity to confront listening and observing in a cinematic work. Muting, listening to music and tranquility “symbolize the initiation into beauty, perfection, sense and purity. Pawlikowski frequently stops the camera on viewers faces of listeners of performances of Mazurka or Zula’s recital, regular jazz concert goes in Paris.”³³ Scenes which are deprived of characters’ statements, music or excessive sound intensity are also meaningful. At the beginning of the movie as well as in the epilogue there are scenes taking place in the same setting: in an old destroyed orthodox church. In the first scene the moment of mystical confrontation is experienced by Kaczmarek while in the epilogue it is the moment when Zula and Wiktor get married. Symbolism of scenes is complemented by a destroyed by a destroyed fresco of Christ figure (his eyes). Light, coming from the oculus, is an important element of the above mentioned scenes as it can be understood as the eye of God, observing the characters and their tragic fate.

³² J. MARCZYŃSKI, “‘Zimna wojna’: Piosenka mówi prawdę o miłości,” *Rzeczpospolita*, June 6, 2018.

³³ E. DREWNIAK, “Bóg i inne przypadki,” accessed May 21, 2020, <http://teatralny.pl/opinie/k196-bog-i-inne-przypadki,2438.html>.



Zula and Wiktor in the Orthodox church



Kaczmarek in the Orthodox church

References to suffering out of love and Shakespearean Ophelia half-submerged in water are symbolic. Mike Millis' painting presents floral symbolism, simultaneously, it reflects, in a very naturalistic way, the richness of composition in which a figure is one of the most essential elements.³⁴ A similar situation is noticeable in *Melancholy* by von Tier. In *Cold War* the director avoids details to the minimum. Zula, while swimming in the river, sings a love song a cappella. There are no colors or extensive floral composition. Instead, Pawlikowski uses a trick of light, silence, empty space around the unhappy character.

*Cold War* Zula in the river*Ophelia* J.E. Millais*Melancholy* L. von Tier

³⁴ J. THOMAS, "Ophelia 1851-1852. Painting by John Everett Millais," in *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era, 1760-1850*, ed. Ch.J. Murray (New York-London: Routledge, 2004), 828-30.

c) sound (music, sound effects, narration)

In *Cold War*, the director has applied punctuation marks that directly refer to and constitute the silence. They are black frames without the soundtrack and background music. The punctuation marks are the elements that change the thread of narration, move the play forward, and break the current emotional layer of the film. They bring the rhythm into the play from the point of a history film structure, but also render the rhythm artistic and emotional. The punctuation marks may be given the meaning of a full stop: a definite end of the statement. Being used repeatedly, black silent frames are too sharp and change the emotional tone too rapidly. They also give the opportunity to a historical shift in time in narration. By limiting the characters' decisions, their common life and coming back in a completely different circumstances, the actual power of a temporary silence can be seen, a fragmentary blackness on the screen.

As Pawlikowski's critics observe, he operates the silence, "mutes the music if necessary, and then the silence plays in our head, grows and absorbs the image."³⁵ Music is a replacement for a dialogue and narration and builds the chronological line. It is also a sign of a historical and cultural situation together with personal characters' entanglements. Moreover, music allows to stimulate and express emotional states and increases their reception. In fact, it creates the rhythm of the story.³⁶ Music acts without words: it is not a silence, but it mutes a dialogue and narrative area. This is how works the main musical composition in a "Two hearts" film, which appears in a various settings as a measure of affections between Zola and Wiktor. Music is often contrasted with main characters' dramatic scenes that occur in silence, without music.



The silence during the trip on the Seine

³⁵ DREWNIAK, "Bóg i inne przypadki."

³⁶ Por. H. KOSTRO, "Muzyka opowiada," accessed May 17, 2020, <http://www.gsf.pl/wkf/muzyka-opowiada/>, oraz FRYC, "Dźwiękowiec 'Zimnej wojny.'"



A dynamic music and dance

5. SILENCE AT PAWLIKOWSKI'S CINEMA

Pawlikowski creates silent and auteur cinema that is often characterized by melancholy and cinematic asceticism, creating at the same time a broad film image of various interpretations. The silence in analysed films possesses a few distinct images:

- a) The compositional silence between its content and form. Pawlikowski dampens the image, focusing the viewer's attention on the stage, its content and symbolism. He gives the opportunity to listen in silence, placing us in a dark French bar, with Zuzanna Jankowska singing *Two hearts*. He builds simple, clean frames and calms the space.
- b) He applies a sound contrast as exposing silent and muted scenes as well as creates rhythmic disharmony in audio and video field.
- c) The silence has a spiritual and metaphysical dimension. The scenes that have reference to transcendence and characters spiritual dimension, occur in silence (the ones in the Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, and on a bench). However, the emotional scenes have a twofold character: they are muted as well as very dynamic in terms of sound and production.
- d) The silence becomes a punctuation mark and censorship. In *Cold War*, the director has applied punctuation marks that refer directly to and constitute silence: they are black frames without a sound and musical background. Moreover, they are the element which changes the narrative thread, moves on the narrative, and breaks the current emotional layer in the film.
- e) There often appear silent frames that are characters' portraits being silent and thoughtful. That is a sign for the viewer to look for the character's emotions without any means of cinematic expression. It is a simple frame, silence and

-muted composition that let the imagination work. Pawlikowski's cinema is an evidence of the image strength in confrontation with a dialogic layer. The bigger a close up and a portrait clarity is, the greater level of a film work abstraction is, together with the ambiguity of its interpretation.

- f) The silence as a way of creating a character. An example of that is *Ida*: she would not be complete without silence, and that, paradoxically, may not convince the viewer. *Ida*'s sounds are purely metaphysical, a hero's inner spiritual path—silence, music, and prayer. Memory and memories are often the silence, intimacy, a hero's mystery, such as it is in *Wiktor*'s case.
- g) He escapes from applying silence as an element of horror and fear, which is so often used in cinema. It is particularly seen in genre cinema: horror, science fiction and fantasy film.
- h) The silence has a poetic and aesthetic dimension. It is used to diversify particular film threads, support dramaturgy of scenes, co-create personalities and heroes' experiences. The hero's statement is often his weakness thus giving an unambiguous interpretations of silence being polysemic. Combined with image, it gives the hero a different way of a visionary life.
- i) In an image layer, he makes references to painting expressing silence, melancholy and reflection.
- j) Pawlikowski mutes the characters' space. The exterior silence becomes open and extensive thus reminding of a desert or a steppe. The silence of the rooms is metaphysical and specially limited, but it goes beyond the visual space.
- k) The silence applied by Pawlikowski has its own dynamics and it is not completely static. It calms visually and it is the synonym of the image calming. Moreover, the silence is evolutionary in the course of the narrative and creation of the character, and develops the opportunity for a comprehensive creation of the character's identity.
- l) The community of silence, or the common silence as a measure for demonstrating the character—an order, the silence of lovers and community.

Pawlikowski is a poet of the cinema, who applies a poetic medium of expression into a film in order to tell the story through the image and sound. The silence is one of the most important means of expression both for the film work and the viewer. Pawlikowski applies a minimalistic style, where the silence is on the level of narration, image and sound. The particular elements of visuality in the cinema, such as composition, light, frame geometry, spatial relations, colour, camera's movements, optics language—those elements determined dramaturgy, narration, visual attention and viewers' involvement and emotions as well as

searching for the meanings within the frames and the context between the shots. The power of staging and cinematography measures can be seen in the sequence of film shots that form a polysemic and complex compositional effect. The silence in Pawlikowski's art is not only a reality but also the characters' experience. The silence allows to create the space for mystique, imagination, abstractiveness, illusion, or dream. The image and sound silence enables the viewer to focus his attention on the transmitted content. It also intensifies the viewer's vigilance, however, it can be a film trap. The noise is more powerful in terms of content and faster in the viewers' reactions, so the silence cannot be unnoticed. Paradoxically, its subtlety can be considered as a nonsignificant automatic medium of expression. Therefore, the silence involves greater competences from the viewer. Pawlikowski's cinema alters the film reception style throughout the silence, combining the original way of black and white cinema perception with modern technology achievements and the author's sensitivity.

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SILENCE AS A CINEMATIC EXPRESSION IN THE WORK OF PAWEŁ PAWLIKOWSKI

Summary

Silence seems to be one of the most important expressions of a film work, although it is often overlooked in scientific research. The article is an attempt to analyze the achievements of Oscar winner Paweł Pawlikowski in terms of the use of silence in films. Two awarded films by the director were analyzed: *Ida* and *Cold War*. In the audiovisual / film message, we can consider it on many coexisting levels of the structure of a film work, both sound and image, as discussed in this

article. The results of the research show that silence is not a direct synonym of absence or emptiness, it is rather a specific form of the appearance of meanings and emotions impossible to exist by other means of expression.

Keywords: cinema; silence; narration; image; sound; movie.

CISZA JAKO FILMOWY ŚRODEK WYRAZU W TWÓRCZOŚCI PAWŁA PAWLIKOWSKIEGO

Streszczenie

Cisza wydaje się jednym z najważniejszych środków wyrazu dzieła filmowego, chociaż często jest pomijana w badaniach naukowych. Artykuł jest próbą analizy dokonań zdobywcy Oscara Pawła Pawlikowskiego pod kątem wykorzystania ciszy w filmach. Przeanalizowane zostały dwa nagrodzone filmy reżysera: *Ida* oraz *Zimna wojna*. W przekazie audiowizualnym/filmowym możemy to rozpatrywać na wielu współlistniejących poziomach struktury dzieła filmowego, zarówno dźwiękowego, jak i obrazu, co podjęto w niniejszym artykule. Wyniki badań wskazują, iż cisza nie jest bezpośrednim synonimem nieobecności czy pustki, jest raczej specyficzną formą pojawiania się znaczeń i emocji niemożliwych do zaistnienia innymi środkami wyrazu.

Słowa kluczowe: kino; cisza; narracja; obraz; dźwięk; film.