



OUTSIDERS AND EXILES: THE FILMS OF JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI

Moonlighting

The screening on Wednesday 29 March will be introduced by Jerzy Skolimowski

The astonishing thing about *Moonlighting*, given the battery-farming methods invoked to ensure topicality, is the intricate subtlety with which its meaning is built up layer after layer, so that even someone who had never heard of Solidarity and was therefore blind to that particular parable, could read the film alternatively as a Bressonian study of personal relationships under pressure from social constrictions, or as a casebook even wittier than Polanski's *The Tenant* in exploring the foreigner's despairing disarray when faced with alien speech and customs. If there is a certain rough-and-readiness about the film, it derives less from the production circumstances than from the off-the-cuff improvisational quality that has always overlaid the tendency towards surrealistic imagery in Skolimowski's work.

Take, for instance, the classically simple long shot of Jeremy Irons cycling away down a deserted street as Nowak sets off on one of his crazier missions and rounds the corner just as his voice on the soundtrack, mumbling explanations, recalls that he has forgotten an all-important photograph. Suddenly, as the camera waits patiently for the bicycle to return, a dog and a cat appear from opposite sides of the frame, the cat warily arching its back in Cold War fright as it passes the dog indifferently going about its business. Obviously a happening, one of those accidents that reward a filmmaker when he is doing everything right, the shot nevertheless epitomises the extraordinary sense of formalism with which Skolimowski manages to endow naturalism (or vice versa).

A less fortuitous example comes in the first supermarket sequence, where the four Poles gape open-mouthed at the awesomely tempting variety of goods on display, and their delighted foray with rapidly filling trolleys ends just as a hovering supervisor pounces on a hapless female shoplifter. Formal enough in a conventional sense, but a more genuine formalism is imposed on the scene by two entirely naturalistic details which invest it with the quality of an almost surreal warning: the organ blasts dispensing 'Heilige Nacht' over the tannoy system as suitable Christmas fare (intimating the Poles' misery over their enforced absence from church), and the pair of hip Black shoppers swaying ecstatically to unheard rhythms (from earphones which recall the ubiquitous possibility of bugging and wire-tapping).

Throughout the film, in fact, Skolimowski puts naturalistic detail to formal use. Nowak's early intimation of why communications have been cut with Poland comes from a row of TV sets glimpsed in a shop window: no sound, just images, but with the sense of desolation evoked by shots of tanks in the streets of Warsaw unbearably intensified by the absolute silence. A sense of desolation later transposed to a scene where Nowak, lying brooding in bed with the useless second-hand TV set beside him, imagines that he sees his girl Anna (in fact the reflection of a snapshot tacked on the wall opposite) appear on the screen, momentarily animated in silent reproach by his own agitation. Similarly with a whole network of casual shots designed to illuminate

the relative importance in Nowak's troubled mind of his feelings about the absent Anna, the job in hand and the fate of Solidarity: one of him stopping to stare in horror at a row of Solidarity posters (he had previously passed the same posters in different circumstances without noticing them), or several of him staring longingly at a girl in the house opposite (but not even noticing when she undresses before his very eyes).

Extremely funny in its account of Nowak's running battle with English manners and customs ('I can speak their language,' he mournfully complains, 'but I don't really know what they mean'), where he invariably manages to turn misunderstandings to good account, even funnier in its observation of the deadpan skill with which Nowak pulls the wool over suspicious eyes in becoming a master shoplifter, *Moonlighting* is exemplary in the way it gradually expands Nowak's duplicity in everything he does to a more general application. At first, all one has to hang on to is the fact that he is not (by his own admission) a member of Solidarity, and that he is merely a catspaw for a mysterious boss able to finagle foreign currency for imperialist living standards in a manner hardly consonant with party ideology. But once in London – at the same precariously safe distance from HQ as Warsaw from Moscow – he is able to exercise a certain autonomy; and his policy of duplicity, however well-intentioned, is gradually exposed as a declaration of bankruptcy in the successive stages of his 'regime'. First a rude attempt to assert authority (no smoking, no noise), then a gesture of conciliation (the purchase of the TV set), a reluctant admission of fallibility ('It's not true I always fail; I'll show them!'), a time of desperate measures (advancing the clock to persuade the weary workers that they have slept well), a confession of failure ('I thought I could control these men, but I'm weaker than they are'), and finally abject collapse in the face of rebellion ('They don't want to be told what to do any more. Let them try').

A remarkable film, *Moonlighting* is all the more remarkable in that this parable never interferes with its character conflicts or its sly humour, and certainly never becomes anything so overt as a message; while its sharp-tongued satire, taking its cue from Jeremy Irons' superlative portrayal of well-meaning bafflement, is constructively compassionate not destructively mocking.

Tom Milne, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, September 1982

MOONLIGHTING

Directed by: Jerzy Skolimowski
©: Michael White Limited
Presented by: Michael White
Moonlighting was developed with the assistance of: N.F.D.F.
Produced by: Mark Shivas, Jerzy Skolimowski
Associate Producer: Michael Guest
Production Accountant: Michael Brent
Location Manager: Rufus Andrews
Production Assistant: Lorraine Fennell
Runner: Nikolas Korda
1st Assistant Director: Peter Cotton
2nd Assistant Director: Nicholas Daubeny
3rd Assistant Director: Rod Lomax
Continuity: Pat Rambaut
 Casting: Debbie McWilliams
Original Screenplay by: Jerzy Skolimowski
Script Assistance by: Barrie Vince, Boleslaw Sulik, Danuta Stok, Witold Stok
Director of Photography: Tony Pierce Roberts
Camera Operator: Jimmy Stilwell
Camera Focus: Barry Brown
Follow Focus, 2nd Camera: Cedric James *
Gaffer Electrician: Laurie Shane
Stills Photographers: Murray Tulip Close, David Farrell
Special Effects Supervisor: Roy Whybrow
Editor: Barrie Vince
Assistant Editors: Michael Connell, Andrew Stears, Jacques Leroide
Production Designer: Tony Woollard
Assistant Art Director: Peter Young
Production Buyer: Roma Aplin
Prop Master: Brian Gamby
Construction Manager: Bill Simpson
Costumes by: Jane Robinson
Wardrobe Mistress: Masada Wilmot
Make-up Artist: Sheila Thomas
Hairdresser: Marsha Lewis
Titles by: Advance Film Promotions
Film Processing by: Rank Film Laboratories
Music Composed by: Stanley Myers
Electronics by: Hans Zimmer
Sound Mixer: David Stevenson
Sound Assistant: Michael Tucker

Re-recorded at: World Wide Sound
Dubbing Mixer: Richard King
Dubbing Editor: Alan Bell
The producers would like to thank: Aquascutum
Publicist: Allen Burry
Camera Equipment by: Joe Dunton (Cameras) Ltd.
Lighting Equipment by: Lee Electric (Lighting) Ltd.

Cast

Jeremy Irons (*Nowak*)
Eugene Lipinski (*Banaszak*)
Jiri Stanislav (*Wolski*)
Eugeniusz Haczkiwicz (*Kudaj*)
Dorothy Ziencowska (*Lot Airline girl*)
Edward Arthur (*immigration officer*)
Denis Holmes (*neighbour*)
Renu Setna (*junk shop owner*)
David Calder (*supermarket manager*)
Judy Gridley (*supermarket supervisor*)
Claire Toeman (*supermarket cashier*)
Catherine Harding (*lady shoplifter*)
Jill Johnson (*haughty supermarket customer*)
David Squire (*supermarket assistant*)
Mike Sarne (*builder's merchant*)
Lucy Hornak, Robyn Mandell (*Wrangler shop assistants*)
Ann Tirard (*lady in telephone box*)
Christopher Logue (*workman*)
Hugh Harper (*newspaper boy*)
Julia Chambers (*chemist's assistant*)
Fred Lee Own (*Chinese man*)
Kenny Ireland (*timber man*)
Trevor Cooper, Iain Ormsby-Knox (*hire shop men*)
David Gant (*Aquascutum assistant*)
Jennifer Landor (*Aquascutum shoplifter*)
Jenny Seagrove (*Anna*)
Jerzy Skolimowski (*boss*)
Ian McCulloch (*boss lookalike*)
Laura Frances Hart (*the lookalike boss' woman*)

UK 1982©
97 mins

OUTSIDERS AND EXILES: THE FILMS OF JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI

Jerzy Skolimowski in Conversation Tue 28 March 18:30
The Shout Tue 28 March 20:45 (+ intro by Jerzy Skolimowski);
Wed 5 Apr 20:55; Fri 28 Apr 18:30
Walkover (Walkower) Wed 29 Mar 18:20 (+ Q&A with Jerzy
Skolimowski); Sat 8 Apr 18:10
Moonlighting Wed 29 Mar 20:45 (+ intro by Jerzy Skolimowski);
Sun 9 Apr 13:00; Sat 15 Apr 18:20
Hands Up! (Rece do gory) Fri 31 Mar 20:45; Mon 10 Apr 15:40
Barrier (Bariera) Sat 1 Apr 18:20; Tue 4 Apr 20:50 (+ intro by season
curator Michael Brooke)
EO Sat 1 Apr 20:50; Wed 5 Apr 18:20; Fri 21 Apr 20:50;
Sat 22 Apr 18:20; Thu 27 Apr 20:45

Dialogue 20-40-60 (Dialóg 20-40-60) Sun 2 Apr 12:30; Sat 15 Apr 20:45
Deep End Sun 2 Apr 15:40; Mon 10 Apr 18:30; Wed 19 Apr 20:55
Le Départ Sun 2 Apr 18:30; Mon 17 Apr 20:40
Identification Marks: None (Rysopis) Mon 3 Apr 21:00; Sun 9 Apr 18:40
Outsider and Exile Tue 4 Apr 18:15
The Lightship Sat 8 Apr 12:15; Fri 14 Apr 20:40
11 Minutes (11 minut) Sun 16 Apr 12:30; Sat 29 Apr 20:30
Four Nights with Anna (Cztery noce z Anna)
Sun 23 Apr 12:40; Fri 28 Apr 20:50
Essential Killing Sun 23 Apr 18:40; Sat 29 Apr 14:40

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SIGHT AND SOUND

EO will be available on BFI DVD and Blu-ray from 3 April (available to
pre-order at the BFI shop). *Identification Marks: None* and *Hands Up!* will
be available on a 2-disc BFI Blu-ray from 24 April

Walkover and *Barrier* will be released on Blu-ray
by Second Run later this year

Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email prognotes@bfi.org.uk

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