



Accordian Harmonia

Director: Wojciech Jerzy Has
Poland 1947
13 mins
Digital

Goodbye to the Past Rozstanie

Director: Wojciech Jerzy Has
Production Company: Zespół Filmowy 'Kamera'
Screenplay: Wojciech Jerzy Has, Jadwiga Żylińska
Based on the novella by: Jadwiga Żylińska
Director of Photography: Stefan Matyjaszkiewicz
Editor: Zofia Dwornik
Art Director: Jerzy Skarzynski
Costume Designer: Jerzy Skarzynski
Music: Lucjan M. Kaszycki
Cast:
Lidia Wysocka (*Magdalena*)
Władysław Kowalski (*Olek*)
Gustaw Holoubek (*Oskar*)
Adam Pawlikowski (*Żbik*)
Irena Netto (*Wiktoria*)
Danuta Krawczyńska (*Iwonka*)
Maria Gella (*countess*)
Zbigniew Cybulski
Władysław Dewoyno
Poland 1960
76 mins
Digital (restoration)

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The Long Strange Trips of Wojciech Jerzy Has

Goodbye to the Past

Although Wojciech Has had already featured strong female characters in his films, (notably Maria Wachowiak's Lidka in 1958's *Farewells*), his fourth feature *Goodbye to the Past* – also known as *Partings*, a direct translation of the Polish *Rozstanie*, and ironically subtitled 'A Sentimental Comedy' – was his first to revolve specifically around a female protagonist.

She's Magdalena (Lidia Wysocka), a middle-aged Warsaw-based actress who has already amassed plenty of memories to rummage through – and a contemporary Polish audience would have similar memories of Wysocka herself, a major domestic stage and screen star prior to WWII. The film sees Magdalena returning to the wellspring of many of these memories, as she travels to her hometown for the first time in many years in order to visit her ancestral home following the death of her grandfather and hear the reading of his will; she's his sole surviving descendent.

It rapidly becomes clear why she rarely goes back home and that this will most likely be her final visit, as she now couldn't be more of a fish out of water. Far from the idyllic rural retreat of her formative years (she says in voiceover, 'I feel as if I'm flipping through a book from my childhood'), the town is now regarded – and implicitly looked down upon – through sophisticated metropolitan eyes that she had yet to develop earlier. And while she meets up with people that she once knew well, she feels similarly detached from them, and for identical reasons.

Whereas she once appreciated the stolid certainty that the town and its people provided, she now recognises just how far they fall short of her ideal – no matter how much Has and cinematographer Stefan Matyjaszkiewicz go out of their way to make things look welcoming (the moment she revisits her old bedroom, a ray of sunlight breaks through the window, as if to cast new light on her memories). She also stays pointedly aloof from matchmaking attempts being made on her behalf by the elderly countess (Maria Gella) involving her aimless son Żbik (Adam Pawlikowski), and while the lawyer Oskar Rennert (Gustaw Holoubek) might normally be considered an excellent catch – and he's certainly interested in her – he's ultimately too associated with a past she's trying to escape. 'I imagine how ridiculous this place must seem to you,' he tells her at one point – and as the local lawyer of many years' standing, he knows the town and its people from top to bottom, lucrative expertise that will evaporate if he moves elsewhere.

There's a nifty in-joke that lets us share her perspective when Magdalena very briefly encounters an instantly recognisable Zbigniew Cybulski in a restaurant. 'Who is he?' Oskar asks. 'A famous actor,' she replies, only for Oskar to look blank. Cybulski had become a major star prior to filming *Goodbye to the Past*, so in this respect Has's original audience would have most likely taken Magdalena's side – and his ultra-brief appearance is all the more potent in retrospect since he'd go on to play major roles in three out of Has's four next films (*How To Be Loved*, 1962; *The Saragossa Manuscript*, 1964; *The Codes*, 1966), and would doubtless have appeared in more if it hadn't been for his fatal accident in 1967.

Even the house itself, while outwardly solid and reassuringly familiar, is in a state of irreversible transition – formerly an aristocratic family home, it's about

The Long Strange Trips of Wojciech Jerzy Has

The Saragossa Manuscript + intro

Rękopis znaleziony w Saragossie

Tue 1 Apr 18:40

The Noose Pętla

Wed 2 Apr 20:00 (+ pre-screening discussion);

Wed 16 Apr 18:15

Farewells (aka Lydia Ate the Apple) Pożegnania

Fri 4 Apr 18:10; Fri 18 Apr 20:40

One Room Tenants Wspólny pokój

Mon 7 Apr 20:45; Fri 18 Apr 18:15

Goodbye to the Past Rozstanie

Fri 11 Apr 20:50 (+ intro); Mon 21 Apr 16:10

The Doll Lalka

Sat 12 Apr 19:50; Sat 19 Apr 12:00

Gold Dreams Złoto

Mon 14 Apr 20:50; Wed 23 Apr 18:00

The Hourglass Sanatorium

Sanatorium pod klepsydrą

Thu 17 Apr 18:00

In Cultural Partnership with



This retrospective is presented in partnership with the ICA, which will also be hosting exclusive screenings of Has' works.



The 23rd Kinoteka Polish Film Festival is part of the UK/Poland Season 2025.



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to be rented out (there being no question of the professionally Warsaw-based Magdalena living there full time), although it will still be managed by Wiktoria (Irena Netto, who played the landladies in *Farewells* and *One-Room Tenants* and who offers a similar character study here), who's less concerned about the identity of her employers provided there's still employment on offer – to quote Annette Insdorf, 'With a whisper of Chekhovian sympathy, Has shows how the working class is better equipped for the new world than those who were born into wealth.'

This change of ownership of a lavish property parallels the one in *Farewells*, albeit this time not triggered by Nazi occupation – and further echoes of *Farewells*, presumably intentional ones, can be seen in the casting of Holoubek and Pawlikowski in similar roles to the ones they played in that film. Indeed, in Holoubek's case, there are also echoes of his reputation-making breakthrough in *The Noose* (1957), in that Oskar Rennert is also fond of a drink, albeit not to anything like the same self-destructive extent as that film's protagonist Jakub.

The only character from whom Magdalena doesn't feel alienated is Olek (Władysław Kowalski), thanks to the coincidence of them arriving at the same time, and it's to him that she turns whenever she needs to hear a supportive voice – Has visually establishes his apartness from the community by showing him riding his white Lambretta past a funeral carriage drawn by black horses, and he's equally out of place when surrounded by black-clad mourners who regard him with understandable suspicion. But Magdalena doesn't – indeed, she and Olek will later establish a surprising amount of common ground, even if the considerable age gap (a full two decades in the case of the actors; most likely similar for the characters) will probably undermine any erotic connection. But such a connection is nonetheless more apparent between them than it is between Magdalena and, say, Oskar, despite the latter clearly wishing that there was one.

Like virtually all Has's films, *Goodbye to the Past* had a literary source, in this case a novella by Jadwiga Żylińska, who is also credited as screenwriter (her only such credit), and who therefore authorised a significant change to the ending – in the novella, a key character dies before the end. And in retrospect the film clearly anticipates Has's next two films – *Gold Dreams* (1961), whose protagonist is also played by Władysław Kowalski (and is virtually the same character), and especially the magisterial *How to Be Loved* (1962), with which it shares a protagonist who's a successful actress, but gives her considerably darker and more emotionally draining memories through which to sift.

Michael Brooke, season curator