

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Taking Liberties: Gender, Transgressive Patriotism, and Polish Drama 1786–1989 by Halina Filipowicz

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Lovejoy insightfully analyzes some of the best short documentary films made at the end of the 1950s. While ostensibly serving the thematic aim of promoting Soviet military standards of correct behavior and comportment by criticizing negative examples, these films visually exhibited the attractiveness and even the potential legitimacy of romantic priorities. The ambiguities and paradoxes of personal and socio-political behavior were to become a prevalent theme in Czech New Wave films. In spite of party hard-liners' attempts to suppress liberalizing tendencies in the early 1960s, Army Film recruited a new generation of FAMU graduates, including Jan Schmidt, Pavel Juráček, Jiří Menzel, Jan Němec, and Karel Vachek—filmmakers who also moved on to attract international attention and awards for their feature-length films later in that decade.

By the mid-1960s, leadership of Army Film had passed on to people of a more reformist bent, with Bedřich Benda as head and Roman Hlaváč as chief dramaturge; as Lovejoy shows, they advanced the idea that Army Film had to deal with soldiers' civilian as well as military lives and more broadly with the challenges faced by young people. When thematic possibilities were expanded as a result of the growing reform spirit within the party, the future New Wave directors began producing documentaries which critiqued the stagnant neo-Stalinist system by visually conveying alienation and conformity, with their films getting expanded exposure on Czechoslovak television. Lovejoy analyzes the clever approaches and techniques the filmmakers used and shows how the unit's leadership was able to influence the more direct censorship process within the military to get these films approved. Of course, after the Soviet-led invasion of August 1968, the purges of reformers began. Nonetheless, several stunning films were still produced by Army Film in 1969, recording the despair, dismay and resignation of the population. The DVD that accompanies Lovejoy's well-researched, analytically perceptive, and engagingly written book contains eleven of the films which she treats in detail, including four banned shortly after they were made in 1969 and seven other earlier films exhibiting the best work from the 1930s, the 1950s, and the Prague Spring period.

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Taking Liberties: Gender, Transgressive Patriotism, and Polish Drama 1786–1989.

By Halina Filipowicz. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014. xvi, 361 pp. Notes. Index. \$90.00, hard bound. \$35.00, paper.

In this interdisciplinary study, Halina Filipowicz combines historical breadth, detailed research, and complex critical and theoretical lenses with startling results. She covers a wide variety of neglected theatrical “peripheries” in Polish drama since the late eighteenth century—apparently marginal theatrical works that nevertheless consistently address the central fault lines of Poland's tumultuous political history. In content, the works Filipowicz considers actually cover over a thousand years of Polish history, reaching back to the legendary pagan Queen Wanda. The book ends with examples dating from the Soviet and Nazi occupations and the transition out of communist rule in 1989. Filipowicz's use of feminist and gender theory to interpret both the historical subjects and their translation into dramatic form provides an essential and insightful filter to the sheer volume of archival material she has uncovered. It also proves highly generative to her high-risk project of moving beyond the canon of Polish drama and established categories of Polish theater history.

Filipowicz's study has a twinned thematic focus: she combines the dramaturgy of patriotism in response to a series of immediate existential threats to the Polish state and national identity with how gender complicates the dramatic representation of a variety of patriotic protagonists, both male and female. The historical subject matter of these plays combined with the theme of patriotism pushes Filipowicz's material and methodology beyond the institutional, biographical, or aesthetic concerns of conventional theater history into the broader discourse of national history, political theory, and identity—as well as of dramatic representation as political intervention. As a result, this book is as much a political history as a literary or theatrical one: well-known political figures such as Tadeusz Kościuszko or Emilia Plater are at times the subjects, while others such as Wanda Wasilewska or Lech Wałęsa appear as authors or even performers.

The dramatic genre in question here is primarily that of the history play, which at its best lives a double life: that of national myth-making and that of metaphorical commentary on current political events. As a result, while the earliest plays that Filipowicz discusses are from the late eighteenth century, the subjects include not only Queen Wanda but the legendary Zofia Chrzanowska, a “woman warrior” connected to the history of Poland's successful war with the Ottoman Empire in the late 1600s. The book's opening section focuses on the political and cultural crises (and opportunities) of late eighteenth-century Poland in the midst of the partitions that eventually erased the Polish state from the map of Europe. Possibly Filipowicz's greatest discovery in the study is how both the dramaturgy and the political events of the 1790s set the mold in remarkable ways for a line of Polish historical drama through Anna Bojarska's *The Polish Lesson* in 1989. This line of work both includes a series of protean female protagonists (such as the Romantic revolutionary Emilia Plater) and, of equal importance for Filipowicz's study, a series of complex dramatic portraits of the ultimate eighteenth-century Polish patriot, Tadeusz Kościuszko.

The paradoxical stakes of the project are Filipowicz's emphatic linking of the critical representation of the largest historical crises in Polish history with obscure dramatic works of wildly uneven quality and impact. The historical and political insights are consistently surprising and engaging nevertheless, even when specific plays may not be in literary or theatrical terms (and perhaps never were). Among the discoveries of Filipowicz's method is the significance of the circulation of print editions of new Polish plays in the eighteenth century relative to the reach of live performance or that Władysław Anzyc's popular classic *Kościuszko at Raclawice* (1880) became the most-produced play in interwar Poland. Given the obscurity of most of these texts, and the vast gaps remaining in the translation of Polish literature into English, the non-Polish reader must take Filipowicz at her word about both the content and the character of the plays and other texts she considers. In the case of Bojarska's *The Polish Lesson*, the text remains unpublished even in Polish, though commissioned and directed in Warsaw by no less than Andrzej Wajda.

Filipowicz takes for granted the remarkable dance of theatrical performance with national politics in Poland, which was already in full play around Warsaw's nascent National Theatre in the 1790s no less than in the twentieth- or twenty-first centuries. This special relationship increases the potential significance of the play of gender in the works Filipowicz considers, however provisional the feminism embodied. Meanwhile, the issues of national identity, citizenship, and patriotism hover over Polish politics no less in 2016 than in the 1790s.

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