

80^s AGAIN!

edited by
Aneta Jabłońska
Mariusz Koryciński



*jolanta i tobiś
film club*

The Time Machine Series | Volume I:

80s AGAIN!

A MONOGRAPH ON THE 1980s

edited by: Aneta Jabłońska and Mariusz Koryciński

© Some Rights Reserved | Jolanta Słobodzian Film Club | Warsaw 2018

ISBN: 978-83-64111-83-9

ABSTRACT | In his essay *A Rosebud given to Jolanta Słobodzian* Mariusz Koryciński presents the Polish educator and film director, revealing the idea behind the monograph *80s Again!* and pondering what makes the 1980s distinct as an era in the culture of the 20th century.

Mariusz Koryciński

mariusz.korycinski@gmail.com

Coeditor of the interactive volume *Różne oblicza edukacji audiowizualnej* (*Facets of the Audiovisual Education*) and author of chapters in the following edited collections: *Niezwykłe inspiracje spoza kadru* (*Amazing Inspirations from Beyond the Frame*); *Zombie w kulturze* (*Zombie in Culture*) and *Różne oblicza edukacji audiowizualnej* (*Facets of the Audiovisual Education*). Published in a number of Polish journals; co-organised conferences and courses on cinema and audiovisual education. Member of Polish Society for Film and Media Studies.



*Jolanta Słobodzian Film Club was founded to commemorate
a Polish director and a relentless film educator.*

*The Time Machine Series will consist of monographs concerning subsequent decades
of the 20th century. Each book will contain essays devoted to culture
and important social issues.*



INTRODUCTION

A Rosebud given to Jolanta Słobodzian

Translated by Jacek Wełniak

There are different concepts of culture. According to one of them – not the most important one – art should save: an image of passing reality, an elusive moment, a person who is not with us anymore.

When setting up a film club, we decided to name it after Jolanta Słobodzian, in order to revive a memory of this fascinating person and take it out of press archives, tightly sealed bookcases and decaying film tapes.

She was a director by education, yet on her own she only made one documentary, *...Dymny, Dymny...*. She also directed a play written by Ireneusz Iredyński, entitled *Żegnaj, Judaszu*. Most people remember her perhaps as head of Dyskusyjny Klub Filmowy (Film Discussion Club) from the 1980s. She may have been important to some people as a co-organizer of Stars Festival at Międzyzdroje in Poland.

The spectrum of functions and professions resulted in a complicated biography, where nothing was obvious. Słobodzian is not among us anymore, thus leaving us with nothing else but to refer to the memories of those who knew her.

Renata Lis, the author of a book on the Russian writer Ivan Bunin, who used to participate in discussions on films led by Słobodzian, told me: "[...] she had serious educational ambitions concerning us [...]. All this happened in the mood of freedom and respect for individual searches, hesitations and doubts, without any pressure or indoctrina-

tion". Szymon, quoted by Katarzyna Surmiak-Domańska in her reportage on Słobodzian, presented a different vision of those meetings: "Whenever someone said something naïve, she would shout 'What the heck are you talking about!?'".

What was then Jolanta Słobodzian really like? Did she dream of directing movies, or directing others? Did she want to work at the grass roots, or be a star of the red carpet? Did she struggle with contradictory desires? Or perhaps she was full of contradictions herself?

When trying to learn more about her, we feel like a character of *Citizen Kane* – the film with which she started her displays and discussions: each new person brings a new voice, a new distinct point of view, for everyone has their own 'truth' about other people.

For us, the most important thing was Słobodzian's passion and her idea to teach about cinema and reach the places that cinematic education usually does not reach. Of course, in the 1980s and the early 1990s, she realized this idea using the means available at that time: by visiting secondary schools, or travelling all over the country. Today, perhaps, but not for sure, she would engage in heated discussions on Skype and use Snapchat to publish pictures from her journeys, or Facebook to publish selfies with stars.

Contemporary limitations are much easier to overcome than those experienced in the times of communism and the period of political transformation. That is why *80s Again!* is basically published in a digital form. We wish to reach all those interested in gaining knowledge, not only the ones who visit libraries, and not only those who can afford to buy a printed book. We have prepared its two language versions, in order for the Polish thoughts to flow freely, just like the English-language ones.

Now that the book is ready for publication, the question that baffles me is: would Jolanta Słobodzian like the book devoted to the 80s?

Before we try to guess an answer, I need to clarify one issue. When Poles talk about the 80s, they think about those years in a double-track manner: either in the domestic or international context. At first glance, the period is associated with martial law in Poland, and with pastel colors and joyful music in the West.

The conclusion of the movie by Welles brings the answer that the mysterious Rosebud – which Kane mentioned before his death, and to which the investigation depicted on screen was devoted – is a sled.

It is, however, not the item itself that needs to be the explanation of the main character's mystery, but the time and space it refers to: the childhood realm. The 80s – if we look at them through the prism of popular culture, including Polish popular culture – may appear as an unreal, non-existent realm, filled with laughter and adventure.

It is to this realm that so many want to return to, even if they return to the Neverland. Hence the appearance of a certain soft drink in "a legendary 80s edition". Hence the popularity of synthwave, drawing from electronic music by Giorgio Moroder, John Carpenter or the Goblin group. Hence the interest in movies such as *Kung Fury*, co-financed by Internet users.

If we thus assume that the culture of the ninth decade of the 20th century escaped from the problems of daily existence, then our volume, which focuses on art, would not probably be to Słobodzian's liking. In a conversation with Tadeusz Sobolewski, she declared her beliefs: she valued movies that reflected reality, and referred to the end of the century as decadent.

However, *80s Again!* proves that simple divisions do not work, as most of the chapters present mutual permeation between politics and comics, cinema with technology and music, truth with fiction, popular culture with avant garde. The thesis is confirmed by history itself: the 80s in Poland is not only the martial law, but also the meetings at the Round Table. In the USA it is not only ever-present joy, but also an assassination attempt on Reagan or the crash of Challenger.

In the aforementioned conversation with Sobolewski, our patron said: "[...] art [...] exists to help us live". If the art of the 80s let somebody feel happy, even only for a moment, then Słobodzian would probably like our volume.

That is the way it is: offering joy does not mean avoiding serious problems, and visiting small towns does not make it impossible to organize a large festival. The aesthetics of a certain period, extinct in theory, gives life to new works after years.

Let this volume be a Rosebud to our Readers: a gate to the realm of many faces, several, yet not all, which we wished to show you.

Let this volume also be a Rosebud which we give – beyond time and limitations – to Jolanta.

I used, among other sources, the following articles: *Na co potrzebne mi kino. Spotkanie z Jolantą Słobodzian* ("Kino" 1992, No. 4, pp. 16–19) and K. Surmiak-Domańska, *Spływał z niej czerwony dywan* ("Wysokie Obcasy" No. 21, supplement to "Gazeta Wyborcza" from 27 May 2000, pp. 10–19) and the interview *Spadamy we wszystkich kierunkach* („Odra" 2013, No. 11, pp. 47–51).

Mariusz Koryciński
Milanówek, 25 July 2016



Jolanta Slobodzian Film Club presents *80s Again!* – a collection of academic essays describing selected phenomena in culture and society of the 1980s, with special focus on their amazing interfusion: politics with comics, cinema with technology and music, truth with fiction, or popular culture with the avant-garde. This book opens the newly launched The Time Machine Series series, which will include publications on the subsequent decades.

Dealing with most interesting topics, the chapters included in 80s Again! make it a volume of high academic and educational value. The contributors are competent researchers who address the problems of the 1980s culture in all its richness. The monograph will be surely met with a favourable response, since its theme is original and innovative.

Prof. Paweł Tański