

Doctoral Distertation Summary

From a Leading Role to an Episode.

Collaboration with Wojciech Smarzowski, as Exemplified by Roles in *Without secrets, Hatred, Clergy, The wedding day* and *Good home*

Doctoral dissertation written under the supervision of

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Wojciech Smarzowski has accompanied my artistic and professional path from the very beginning. After all—if priority of production is determined by the date of its premiere—I made my debut with him. In the years that followed, *Without secrets*, I appeared in the cast of every Smarzowski's film.

In the subsequent chapters of my work, I describe my successive encounters with Smarzowski. I focus on the individual stages of creating a role—from casting, through pre-production, my own work on the character, rehearsals with the director and other actors, training in specific skills required for a given role, all the way to the actual shooting.

Parallel to describing the process of creating these roles, I analyze Smarzowski's cinema: how—in my view—he sees and understands it, how he builds his films and the worlds he depicts, and above all, how he works with actors and how this work influenced me as a young actor. Smarzowski, focused on the actor as a partner, communicates quickly and effectively. He swiftly establishes a shared goal and a common language. He says little about acting technique. Instead, he inspires the actor with simple instructions, often metaphorical, deliberately inconcrete, yet – thanks to “tuning in to the same wavelength” – they open up the actor's imagination.

As a screenwriter, he writes intense, psychologically demanding, showpiece roles for actors. As a director, he ensures the psychological credibility of the characters' actions while

maximizing the stakes and constructing the protagonist's extreme mental states. At the same time, he is not interested in the so-called "acting excess"—a kind of formal, technical solution to a scene. Aware of how vigilant an observer the camera is, Smarzowski strips actors of "acting," provoking them instead toward "being", toward pure emotion and pure action.

"There are no small roles", as the acting community likes to say. In Smarzowski's cinema, there certainly are none. Indeed, Smarzowski applies the same measure and attention to all roles in his productions – absolutely all of them. Even the smallest episode in his films is constructed precisely and consciously. Actor and director together determine a given character's relationship to the other characters and events in the story, very often even finding room for what is known as a character arc, a transformation and a point.

The specificity of this outstanding director's working methods, and the fact that he largely surrounds himself with long-term collaborators, allows me in my doctoral dissertation to consider the phenomenon of the "Smarzowski's ensemble." Moreover, the fact that in Smarzowski's films I have created both leading and supporting roles, as well as episodic ones, allows me to reflect on the role and place of the actor within a film work, the function of a character within the whole piece, and the differences in constructing major and minor roles. In short, a leading role gives the actor space to nuance what and how they wish to tell in the story. The smaller the role, however, the greater the discipline it demands from the actor in communicating with the viewer. Supporting and episodic roles should be built from clear, distinctive components. The actor should choose a firm, decisive course (one that serves the film's content and places the role in the appropriate position within the narrative) and follow it boldly.

In the concluding section of my dissertation, I describe the influence that my collaboration with Wojciech Smarzowski has had on my pedagogical work. I confront and compare the experience gained on his film sets with my work as an assistant to prof. dr hab. Grzegorz Chrapkiewicz. Following the path set by my mentors, I treat students as creative partners. I believe that the outcome of a semester should be the result of shared, creative exploration rather than a score imposed by me, which students are expected to master and reproduce.

I encourage students to make their own artistic decisions—to discover and cultivate their intuition. Using a certain simplification, it is worth simply “allowing students to act.” No one is perfect from the first attempt. Students of acting must continually try, explore what is new, make mistakes, and learn from them in order, ultimately, to find their own path.