

Homo Faber. Accident or Necessity

Chance - *l. cadentia, that which falls out*

1. apparent absence of cause or design; destiny;
2. fortune: often personified
3. a happening; fortuitous event; accident; "That power which erring men call chance" - Milton

Webster's New Twentieth Century
Dictionary of the English Language

*They'd be amazed to hear
that Chance has been toying with them
now for years.*

*Not quite ready yet
to become their Destiny (...)*

Wisława Szymborska,
Miłość od pierwszego wejrzenia,
in: *Koniec i początek*

From the present-day viewpoint, Greek art – the problems that it tackles and the questions that it poses – can be comprehended, generally speaking, in two diametrically different ways. Its examples can be understood either as permanently connected with a certain stage in history and thus perceived as symptoms of the immaturity and "infancy" of European culture, or encompassed in an understanding glance and viewed as an expression of own questions and doubts.

In a discussion with the doctrine of historicism, which assumes a stage structure of the historical process and constant progress in the domain of thought and art, Daniel Bell formulated the following remark: *The historicist answer is a conceit. Antigone is no child, and her keening over the body of her dead brother is not an emotion of the childhood of the race. Nor is the contemporary tale of Nadezhda Mandelstam, searching for the body of her dead husband (the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam, who disappeared in Stalin's concentration camps) in order to bury him properly, a case of precocity "on a higher plane"*.¹

Take a closer look at the significance of this statement made by the American sociologist. Antigone and Nadezhda Mandelstam. What is the meaning of this

comparison, what is it about? True: we understand something only in a comparison. The one performed by Bell is, however, of a special sort and is certainly not a rhetorical ornament encrusting a discursive argument for the sake of greater effectiveness. The exceptionality of this comparison does not result from the fact that a poignantly real and historically documented experience has been compared to an event and a person whose source was first an archaic myth and subsequently the imagination of an ancient tragedian, while the sole real quality is the literary record or the duration of the theatrical spectacle. It also does not originate from the fact that it brutally confirms the known paradox formulated by Wilde about life imitating art. The issue at stake is much more fundamental, namely, that something of this sort could have taken place and was feasible.

Sophocles staged *Antigone* in about 441 B.C., Osip Mandelstam perished in a Soviet camp 2 400 years later. The timespan separating those two events can be also translated into another, non-chronological measure. In that case, it will involve the enormous mental and cultural distance separating the two epochs between which Bell's comparison built a bridge. At this stage it is unimportant why he acted in that manner but how was it possible. After all, the heart of the matter does not lie in the fact that the compared events are similar (albeit not exactly). Much more essential appears to be the very motion of imagination linking that, which ostensibly cannot be connected.

In order for this bond to possess a more profound meaning and to be something more than a mere formal trick based on external similarity there must exist a conviction about the essential identity of the comparable elements. In other words, there must exist a conviction that the experience contained in Sophocles' tragedy is not solely the reflection of the historical moment when the play was written, and that the sense of the experience does not end in recognising it as a literary monument, but that it is transcended by the ever living, existential topicality contained therein.

Myth, religion, and art are by their very essence impervious to all rationalistic attempts and their logic poses a challenge to categories of Aristotelian or dialectical logic. It is exactly due to them that man delves into the foundations of human condition, invariable in each epoch and culture. This is why we find Sophocles moving even though the social and economic structures from his epoch have vanished two thousand years ago, a fact that amazed even Marx who was, after all, ready to reject any sort of supra-historical values.² This thought expressed by Ernesto Sabato makes it possible to better understand the comments proposed by Bell.

A condition for the comparison carried out by the American expert on culture involves, therefore, such a comprehension of history, which without annulling

variability and negating differences between successive moments in history sees it predominantly as an area of questions and existential situations. *These are existential questions which confront all human beings in the consciousness of history: how one meets death, the nature of loyalty and obligation, the character of tragedy, the meaning of courage, and the redemptiveness of love or communion. The answers will differ, but the questions are always the same.*³ In a thus comprehended history of culture, in history conceived as the space of shared questions, Antigone and Nadezhda Mandelstam share the same plight and hold hands as if above all centuries.

In the cited fragment of Bell's book Greek archaics maintains an astonishingly close contact with contemporary experience. Contemporaneity seeks its reflection in the symbolic message of the Greek myth and tragedy, and becomes illuminated by it. Apparently, in the perspective revealed by the above-mentioned comparison contemporaneity is not, so to speak, identical. It can contain the not always recognisable stratum of trans-historical meanings. This holds true to an equal degree both for events and biographies that are part of "living" history as well as for events and biographies recorded in art and other cultural "texts".

The cinema frequently embarked on the Greek "theme" and plots of Greek tragedies were filmed with various success.⁴ Probably more interesting than such productions are those films whose reference to Greek symbolic and mythology is never direct but resorts to allusion or is unintentional. In a foreword to a Polish edition of his *Semiotics of Cinema* Yuri Lotman, writing about neo-mythologisation in the cinema and, more extensively, in twentieth-century art, quite unexpectedly commented on the meaning of a film with which the Polish public is familiar to such a degree that it "knows it by heart" and rather does not expect that something more and of interest could be discovered. *Polish readers of the book are probably well acquainted with Roman Polanski's Knife in Water (1962), a film of breakthrough importance for the Polish post-war cinema. I am certain, however, that not all are familiar with Pausanias, the neo-Platonist Porphyry and other sources. Meanwhile, there are profound links between Polanski's film and the rite in question, which in Athens was known as the slaying of the bull and which is the source of the well-known words: buffoon and buffoonery. The myth describes the terrible crime of sacrilege committed by someone who killed the sacrificial bull of Zeus: the bull was struck with an axe and finally finished off with a dagger. When the country started to suffer from famine the Pythia announced that Zeus would forgive the crime if the perpetrator was punished and the bull - eaten. The recreation of the court trial accompanied by a ritual consumption of the bull comprised an annual Athenian ritual. The slayer declared that he would have never committed the crime if*

someone had not handed him an axe; that person in turn pointed to someone who had sharpened the axe and who put the blame on girls-hydrophores who supplied water for the sharpening, while they accused the man who slaughtered the bull with the knife and denounced the latter. Since the knife could not say anything in its defence it was pronounced guilty and drowned.

The contemporary artist interpreted the buffoonery of drowning the knife as a question of responsibility. *A crime had been committed but no one is guilty - hence the perpetrator proves to be the "knife in water".*⁵

Further on, Lotman drew attention to the fact that the film message is *encoded upon numerous occasions* and that depending on the "applied" code the process of deciphering the film will also change. It is essential for the relation between various interpretations not to be that of exclusion. Today, *Knife in Water* can be interpreted as a manners and morals "text", a portrait of a fragment of Polish reality of the 1960s; at the same time, we may disclose its "non-contemporary", supra-historical sense by using the yardstick of the Greek myth and ritual. In the second instance, contemporaneity, ostensibly so familiar and native, starts to emit astonishing meanings. Just as was the case in the cited comparison proposed by Bell so here too film situations and events at essential moments go back to their Greek "models" without losing their contemporary character. Furthermore, importance is attached not only to that, which the film repeats from the Greek myth and rite but also to the way in which it modifies and develops them.⁶

The findings of the American sociologist and the comments of the Russian semiotician are an excellent introduction to the proposed interpretation of Volker Schlöndorff's film *Homo Faber (Voyager)* and its fundamental orientation points. We shall accentuate - as Bell did - the importance of the existential identity of questions appearing in the film with historical "texts", and to indicate - as Lotman did - the way in which a "multi-code" interpretation of a film may contribute to discovering within it unexpected strata of meanings.

Schlöndorff's film is a screen version of *Homo Faber*, the novel by Max Frisch (1957). The scenario was written thanks to the cooperation of both authors. At the time, Frisch was already gravely ill and Schlöndorff was one of the few persons who visited him before death. The writer still managed to see the film at the first special screening in Zurich, to which he invited all his friends. Schlöndorff recalled that the director was pleased but after the film ended he left the still dark interior without talking to anyone or bidding farewell.⁷ I recollect the circumstances accompanying the origin of the film because they constitute an important context, not solely historical but primarily existential. In particularly vital statements Schlöndorff

reconstructed his conversations with Frisch. We shall return to them upon several occasions.

Frisch told me: "The reason for this book was my trip to South America in 1954. I saw and experienced a lot and wanted to tell about it. Then, suddenly, while writing, there appeared that auburn ponytail on the ship's deck. I thought that some sort of a romance would be a good idea. Several pages later, I noticed that it would end with incest. I must discontinue this motif, I thought, these two books cannot be matched. I shall be incapable of merging jungle and incest, about which no nothing". Naturally, he wrote on and combined the two. I also remember that he said: "When I started writing I thought: let's hope that this book will have a happy end. I don't want to offer the world yet another tragedy". And yet due to its tragic ending the book resembles a dirge of sorts.⁸

It is difficult resist the impression that the scenario written together with Schlöndorff was Frisch's "funeral dirge", a farewell to the world, and a testament of sorts. Another essential moment came when Schlöndorff decided (for the second time) to try to obtain permission for filming the book. At the end of the 1970s, urged by one of the Paramount producers, Schlöndorff thought about transferring Frisch's prose onto the screen. The whole venture failed due to a motif present in the book, which Frisch too regarded as an obstacle. He regarded incest as taboo and explained to representatives of Paramount that in no case should it be shown on screen.⁹

Several years later the idea of basing a film on Frisch's book returned quite unexpectedly or, to refer to a motif emerging in Faber's story, purely by chance. Several years ago, when I moved to New York, I had doubts about everything, especially my career, and toyed with the idea that after thirty years of working in the film industry it was high time to learn something serious, to study architecture or medicine. For many reasons things were not turning out right. Suddenly, I recalled the title *Homo Faber*. (...) I had not read the book from the time offer made by Paramount, but (...) suddenly *Homo Faber* appeared to be of utmost urgency: this film was the solution to my crisis. I am well aware of the fact that this is a case of abusing literature for the purpose of self-therapy.

Asked whether the publication of *Homo Faber* was an illumination of sorts Schlöndorff confirmed: Yes. It took place while I was walking down a New York Street. I returned to my apartment, wrote a letter to Max Frisch, and politely enquired whether the copyright is already available. He answered: "For long no one wanted this bride, now there are two suitors and I'm afraid that she is already spoken for". Half a year later he informed me that the copyright would be available already at the end of 1987 if I were still interested. Soon, I met him for the first time in Zurich. From the very start our contacts were cordial. We sat at a table and I asked him the same question, which you ask me: how did the book come about?¹⁰ We know the answer.

Schlöndorff's film follows all the most important points of the Frisch novel. There are, however, two noteworthy differences, the first involving the construction of the *dramatis personae*. Faber, the lead protagonist in the book, writes down his account while critically ill and waiting for surgery that, everything seems to indicate, will fail. Frisch proposed that the director should resign from a "somatisation" of this character: *This man should not be sick. A person with such experiences should be well*. The second difference is connected with the plot. The film lacks a whole chapter – *The Second Stage*, describing Faber's story from his departure from Athens to the death of his daughter, the return to an Athenian hospital and the period of anticipating surgery.

What is Schlöndorff's *Homo Faber* about? This is a film about love, or rather loves: Faber's first mournful love for Hannah, unsuccessful and ending with the lovers parting. Then there is the second love, Sabeth's feeling for him, fatal love with the entire horror inherent in that adjective from whose vernacular version the connection with the Latin *fatum* has vanished. The third love – that of a mother for her daughter, remains in the background. What else? It is about a meeting, or rather meetings. About strange, inexplicable meetings evading all logic, which suddenly, from a certain moment, start to create a pattern of a cohesive chain of dependencies. What else? About roaming, or rather wandering that assumes the form of prosaic tours and meandering together, with all metaphorical-symbolic references.

Voyager is thus first and foremost an intriguing tale in which we recognise themes and motifs present in European culture "since time immemorial". Schlöndorff distinctly accentuated the fact that the cinema continues the ancient tradition of supplying tales, although by using new measures: *The force of the American cinema lies in the fact that it tells about people and events. If one were to take a close look at the career of, for instance, Billy Wilder, whom I know well, then one will always notice the stress on the interesting tale and the way in which it is recounted. The cinema is thus a continuation of the traditions of the itinerant storytellers of yore. I mentioned the significance of the plot and the story, but the stories are told over and over again.*¹¹

"The same old stories ...". What sort of story, "ever the same", is told by *Homo Faber*? To put it as succinctly as possible: this film is a recreation of the story of Oedipus, although not literal or primitive. It repeats the story of Oedipus but with certain attempts at re-touching it, inserting omissions, and transposing the ancient plot. Most importantly: by placing Oedipus in contemporary sets the film introduces the fears and problems of its period while preserving the essence of the original tale. It has retained those elements that allow us to recognise in Faber the protagonist of So-

phocles' tragedy. This suggestion will be the prime object of interpretation and analytical "proof", by no means a facile task since, as certain authors stress, the world of the ancient Greeks, Greek tragedy, and its protagonists comprise a reality that we regard as almost totally alien.

In a characteristic of the features of the prime types of Greek heroes (Homeric, tragic, erotic, contemplative), Wystan Hugh Auden discussed the tragic hero by recalling Oedipus and in a rather symptomatic fashion commented on the possible existence of a protagonist personified by him in modern dramaturgy: *We are so habituated to the belief that a man's actions are a mixed product of his own free choices for which he is responsible and circumstances for which he is not that we cannot understand a world in which a situation by itself makes a man guilty. Take the story of Oedipus, for instance. Here a man who hears a prophecy that he is to kill a father and marry his mother, tries to prevent it coming true, but in vain. How would a modern playwright treat this? He would reason that the only way for Oedipus to make certain of escaping what is foretold is for him to never kill anybody and never to marry anybody. He would therefore begin by showing Oedipus leaving Thebes and making these two resolutions. He would then proceed to involve him in two situations, firstly, one in which he is done a mortal injury by a man, secondly one in which he falls passionately in love with a woman who returns his love, situations, that is, of temptation, in which he is torn between doing what he wants and breaking his resolve.*

He yields to both temptations, he kills the man and marries the woman, excusing himself as he does so with a lie of self-deception, that is, instead of saying to himself, "There is a possibility, however slight that they are my father and mother; therefore I must not risk it" he says, "It is quite impossible that they should be my father and mother, therefore I may break my resolve". Unfortunately, of course, the slight possibility turns out to be the actual fact.

In Sophocles nothing like this happens. Oedipus meets an old man on the road, they have a trivial quarrel, and he kills the old man. He comes to Thebes, solves the riddle of the Sphinx, and makes a political match. About these two deeds he feels no guilt nor is he expected to feel guilty. It is only when in fact they turn out to be his father and his mother that he becomes guilty. At no time has been conscious of being tempted to do what he knows he should not do, so that at no time is it possible to say, "That was where he made his fatal mistake".¹²

Keeping in mind the doubts expressed by Auden let us recall at the onset the main points of the film story of Walter Faber.

Found (by chance) by a stewardess at the Caracas airport Faber boards a plane whose start was delayed because of him. On board, he (by chance) makes the acquaintance of Herbert Hencke. As a re-

sult of a (chance) breakdown the plane is forced to land in a Mexican desert where Faber (by chance) finds out that his co-passenger is the brother of his old best friend, Joachim, who married Hannah, Faber's former fiancée. He goes back to New York and from here travels to Paris. His ship is to sail in a week, but Faber (by chance) buys a ticket for a ship departing a few days earlier; on board, he meets (by chance) a young woman and proposes to her, but they both can recognise a joke. In Paris Faber suddenly and without a definite reason (by chance) goes to the Louvre where he once again meets Sabeth. Next, as a result of his unplanned decision (made by chance) they travel in a rented car to the south of Europe. In one of the hotels on the way they spend the night together. In a (chance) conversation with Sabeth, Faber finds out that her mother's name was Landsberg, the same as that of a woman who was once pregnant with him and who was supposed to become his wife. Due to a (chance) fall along the rocky coastline Sabeth dies a few days later. Quite a lot of coincidences. But is this enough to treat the story, here summed up in a rather textbook fashion, as a contemporary variant of the Greek myth and its transposition into the Sophocles tragedy? True, it contains a long list of accidents playing the same important role as in the story of Oedipus. But the film does not have an oracle, whose words incessantly affect the protagonist, there is no Sphinx, Faber does not marry his mother nor does he kill his father, etc. – in other words, there are no motifs of essential meaning for the classical tragedy. Does the motif of an incestuous relationship involving a father and a daughter entitle us to recognise Faber as an embodiment of Oedipus? Even if we were to treat incest as an important, not only structurally, element of the Greek tale it is still an insufficient argument to suggest upon its basis that the two characters are suitable for the parts.

Nevertheless, it seems that contentions in favour of such an interpretation are strong. Before we present them we have to resolve a question of basic importance for our claims: who is Oedipus and what in his myth and the tragedy is "really" important? The answer to this ostensibly simple question is not that easy since contemporary exegetes have exceptionally acknowledged the tragic protagonist. The celebrated conflict of interpretations has, in the case of Oedipus, found an excellent illustration and confirmation. Let us recall in an abbreviated form several "canonical interpretations" connected with his name.¹³

Freud extracted a single element from the entire story and turned Oedipus' relation with his mother into the Oedipus complex. By doing so, he deprived Oedipus of tragic traits and enclosed his symbolic dimension and multiplicity of meanings within an uncomplicated biological aspect of unconscious desires.

Oedipus was forcefully taken from the classical stage to a clinic and laid down on a psychoanalyst's couch. Such an interpretative cure did him little good. Let us keep in mind that it was not Greek tragedy that was built upon the basis of the Oedipus complex, but it was that latter that was created upon the foundation of Greek tragedy.¹⁴

For Lévi-Strauss, in turn, the Oedipus myth (just as any other myth) is predominantly a game of differences within its structure, a logical tool of sorts, revealing irreconcilable contradictions. According to this interpretation Oedipus together with his story and drama becomes transformed into a myth. The protagonist is reduced to playing the part of a "constitutive individual". Nonetheless, symbolic meanings proposed by the Oedipus myth cannot be enclosed into such a purely logical perspective. The symbol precedes and transcends the *logos*. Just as important is the fact that a reconstruction of the myth is not tantamount to an extraction of its meaning, which Lévi-Strauss described as a cognitive function: *What is here called a meaning-function is not at all what the myth means, its philosophical or existential content or intuition, but the arrangement, the disposition of themes, in short, the structure of the myth*¹⁵. So much: the structure of a myth, and so little: the structure of a myth.

Vladimir Propp represented a slightly similar approach in an extremely interesting text on the connections between the Oedipus motif and folklore. This is a clear example of the historical orientation of the "late" Propp, seeking in the plots of tales, legends, and epic works a reflection of concrete life situations and historical matter. But he too, just like Lévi-Strauss, regarded "Oedipus" to be a formal unit, one of the "motifs" of folklore plots, a structural counter.¹⁶

Yet another treatment of Oedipus is epitomized by René Girard. It must be said at the very onset that Lévi-Strauss and Propp were interested predominantly in the formal-logical aspect of the Greek tale, while Girard tried to answer the fundamental question: what are the Oedipus myth and legend about? In evocative prose, mixing persuasion with open conceit and gnostic certitude, he argued that only the scapegoat mechanism is capable of explaining the basic meaning of the story of Oedipus. This mechanism is just as effective when we inquire into origin and structure.¹⁷

A community in the throes of a conflict or violence or burdened with misery turns, in Girard's opinion, towards a selected innocent victim who becomes the focus of all amassed negative emotions. Collective violence that causes the suffering or death of that victim restores desired order and recreates the community. The "cause" and "reason" of the misfortune are thus expedited to the outside, beyond the limits of the community.

We have found ourselves within the range of the basic categories of the Girard anthropology: the sac-

rificial crisis, group murder, mimetic desire, and the scapegoat mechanism. This undoubtedly original conception, announced by Girard in: *La Violence et le Sacré* and then developed in several of his other books, unfortunately features a jarring one-sided approach. Almost everything that Girard deals with is elucidated by reference to the same interpretation scheme. By way of example, Oedipus is inserted into an "all-explanatory" hypothesis and, apparently, is supposed to confirm solely the veracity of the previously accepted premises. Girard's extravagant reading of familiar texts is annoying, and the same can be said about the apodictic manner in which he formulated his conclusions and the totalism of his conception, apparently excluding the possibility of all polemics. *Ethnologists are shocked by my blasphemies*, Girard declared bombastically, extremely pleased with himself.¹⁸ Not only shocked: sometimes their approach is extremely critical.

The four above listed interpretations of the story of Oedipus were supposed to constitute a "negative" backdrop for further proposed reflections. We found them unacceptable for several reasons. The first suggests a "bipolarisation" of the classical protagonist. The next two perform his "formalisation", and the last reduces his complexity, forcing him to match an *a priori* accepted scheme. This is why I suggest relegating them to the margin and turning towards philosophical and hermeneutic interpretations of the story of Oedipus. It is here that we shall seek intuitions casting light on the adventures of Walter Faber.

The feature that characterises Faber probably the best is his profession. He is an engineer, a designer, and a constructor of dams. His is a concrete mind, trusting exclusively the senses without succumbing to the illusions of the "divine arts of the imagination". When Hencke compared the landscape around the crushed car to a land of dinosaurs he heard a cold reply claiming that this was a case of erosion and warning against being carried away by imagination. Faber is also amazed by the metaphorical expressions in the statements made by Sabeth. He does not suspect even for a moment that he too, despite his concreteness, is a metaphor. This is a man who places his whole trust in technology and its accomplishments. During one of the discussions conducted on the ship, upset by the remarks made by other passengers about art, origin and eternity, he joins in to add ironically that it is not art and religion that keep the ship afloat but American technology. Faber is a mathematical being and his consciousness is governed by the logic of probability.

The film outlines much more moderately than the novel a likeness of Faber as a technical mind subjected solely to mathematical calculations and the laws of statistics. Frisch's Faber is on the borderline of exaggeration. One of the engineer's characteristic arguments

admits that he does not believe in the verdict of fate or in destiny since as a technician he is accustomed to taking into consideration the formulae of probability. Without the forced landing in Tamaulipas on 2 April everything would have followed a different course: he would have never met young Hencke, perhaps never heard about Hannah, and up this day never realised that he is her father. It is even quite possible that Sabeth would be still alive. Admittedly, this was more than sheer coincidence – it was a whole chain of coincidences. In order to recognise improbability as an existing fact there is no need for mysticism, and mathematics suffices.

To put it mathematically: probability and improbability do not differ as regards their essence but frequency of occurrence, and the occurrence of a phenomenon that is more frequent is much more credible. When, however, something improbable takes place it is by no means a supernatural effect, a miracle or something of the sort, as laymen are fond of claiming. Whenever one speaks about probability, it always contains improbability as the extreme case of possibility, and if that improbability does take place, then there are simply no foundations for astonishment, outrage or mystification.¹⁹

Quite possibly, this exaggeration on the part of Frisch is justified. After all, Faber is not only a surname attached to a concrete person; the word also characterises a certain ideal type, a model figure: *homo* (this time without a capital H) *Faber*. In the case of a model we always deal with a certain overstatement, sometimes close to a caricature. Walter Faber interfering in Nature by resorting to ideas typical for an engineer is its perfect model-like embodiment. Daniel Bell's earlier cited work contains an explanation of the term: *homo faber: Man as homo faber sought to make things, and in making things he dreamt of remaking nature. To be dependent on nature was to bend to its caprices and acknowledge its tyrannies and diminishing returns. To re-work nature, to make fabricated things, was to enhance man's powers. The industrial revolution was, at bottom, an effort to substitute a technical order for the natural order, an engineering conception of function and rationality for the haphazard ecological distributions of resources and climates.*²⁰

In order to better understand the meaning of Faber's passion and that of *homo faber* intent on emulating Nature in its act of creation and on subjecting it to "technical tooling" it is necessary to situate it in a perspective different from the usually applied one. It will no longer be a mere chapter in the history of technical achievements but a fact from the history of man understood as *homo religious*. This is not a mistake. *Homo faber*, after all, continues, albeit not quite in a straight line, the work of alchemy. The alchemist cooperated in the perfection of matter, accelerated its

natural "work". The very idea of alchemical transmutation embarks upon archaic beliefs about the possibility of altering Nature by work. Ancient metallurgists and mediaeval alchemists envisaged Nature as an emanation of the *sacrum*, but the contemporary *homo faber* acts in a space devoid of signs of hierophany. He also does not conceive "work" involving Nature as tantamount to perfecting it. Despite this difference he unconsciously realises the unfulfilled aspirations of alchemy: the wish to render Nature perfect and to rule over Time. Mircea Eliade declared that it is necessary to seek in dogma characteristic for the nineteenth century (claiming that man's true mission is changing and transforming Nature, that he can produce better and quicker than Nature, and that he is predestined to be its master) that one should seek the authentic continuation of dreams cherished by alchemists. The soteriological myth of protecting and, ultimately, salvaging Nature has survived camouflaged in the bombastic programme of industrial societies, which have chosen the task of a total "transmutation" of Nature and its transformation into "energy".

From the viewpoint of the history of culture one could say that in their desire to replace Time alchemists anticipated the most significant elements of the ideology of the modern world. Chemistry gathered only the crumbs of the alchemical heritage, whose largest part remains elsewhere, in the literary ideologies of Balzac and Victor Hugo, the naturalists, the systems of the capitalistic, liberal or Marxist political economy, materialistic or positivistic theologies of infinite progress, and, finally, wherever faith in the unlimited potential of "homo faber" flares up and the eschatological value of labour, technology, and the scientific exploitation of Nature is seen. Having deliberated over this, we discover that this fervent enthusiasm is based on a single certainty: by subjugating Nature with the assistance of physico-chemical sciences man feels ready to compete with it, but this time without losing Time. From now on, work and science will perform the deed of Time. With the help rendered by that which he regards as most important within himself, modern man undertakes the function of temporary existence, in other words, he replaces time.²¹

Follow this trace. The Latin word: *faber* means artisan, carpenter, blacksmith. Affiliated words - *fabre*, *fabrica*, *fabricatio*, *fabricator*, *fabricor* – sustain the idea of creating, the creative activity contained in *faber* (e.g. *fabricor* – to create, to give life). More: indicating the artificiality of that, which has been produced they contrast this type of creation and natural "creation", thus bringing them closer to the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*. The very word *faber* already resounds with a prediction of divine creation and power.

The film contains a scene whose meaning is wholly emblematic – Faber showing his engineering projects

to representatives of Third World countries. The large screen above him depicts a battle waged by the chaotic element of water and man's ability to tame the elements. The last scene of this instructive film shows an already erected dam and water captured within the walls of the receptacle. Applause. Overwhelming victory. Faber – the divine creator. Faber – the demiurge.

Recall, while continuing for a while the etymological motif, that the meaning of the Greek *demiurgos* is close to the Latin *faber*. *Demiurgos* is an artisan, a potter, and according to the Gnostics – a creator of the material world. In Greek mentality *demiurgos* was closely connected with the idea of knowledge – extraordinary, mysterious, and forbidden.

In a fascinating text about the symbolic of the Oedipus myth (to which we shall return) Sergei Averintsev, discussing the motifs of incest and its connections with the symbolic of power and knowledge, recorded a close affiliation in Greek tradition of the sages and the Magi (and thus those who possessed secret knowledge) and craftsmen. Classical consciousness treated the crafts as a magical art. The master was thus a humble but fully-fledged comrade of the magus. Both had penetrated extraordinary secrets inaccessible to laymen, both are capable of subjugating demon forces (the pseudo-Homeric *potter's song* describes the fantastic demons battled by Greek potters; other craftsmen shared the same plight). Artemidor referred both to the crafts and magic. An interesting parallel can be even conducted for the modern European epoch, which, after all, deprived the handicrafts of a magic nimbus: suffice to recall the meaning of the word “mason” to understand just how strongly the custom of linking crafts with occultistic initiation.²²

The text by Averintsev makes it possible to notice that the etymological sources of technology, a domain closest to Faber, possess magical-sacral roots. Thus Faber – let us gather the heretofore noted motifs – is a person who discovered the mysteries governing Nature, who is “above”, who knows, and cultivates his “magical knowledge” reserved for the few with the dedication of a missionary in lands suffering from “ignorance”; finally, he has assumed a position reserved for the gods. Note, at the same time, how strongly this idea of knowledge is combined within the character of Faber-*faber* with the idea of power comprehended not in political categories but quasi-divine ones; this power over time reveals itself in unhampered designing and forecasting the future.

Faber brings alive the image of Prometheus—the redeemer together with the whole heroic-tragic characteristic contained in that classical symbol. Prometheus, as we recall, was the master of numerous skills and arts (i.a. blacksmithery!) but also, and this is recalled more rarely, a divine potter, as follows from certain ancient

interpretations. Prometheus becomes a sculptor of people. This means that man's configuration of reference is no longer divine order, which could be violated and bring about his defeat. Man is now self-dependent and certain of his knowledge and potential.²³

Schlöndorff's film, to put it explicitly, is not solely and above all a critique of contemporary civilisation and its rationalistic-technological appendages, the spirit of calculation and Promethean optimism. Such an interpretation would reduce the film at least to the level of on-the-spot publicistics, albeit acute and devoid of illusions. This is not enough. The Faber character contains many more meanings. The engineer's deifying technical intellect contains the discernible feature of a tragic hero. This is classical *hybris*. In the afore-mentioned characteristic of Oedipus, Auden wrote outright: *The original sin of the Greek tragic hero is hybris, believing that one is godlike*.²⁴ Now the connection between Faber and Oedipus has become somewhat clearer. Let us, therefore, follow further this trail of barely marked suitability.

The crime committed by Sophocles' Oedipus involved two events: the murder of his father and the incestuous relationship with his mother. Despite the fact that these are two different deeds the crime remains essentially the same. From the point of view of Oedipus the murder of his father is “only” an initial step necessary for marrying his mother. Incest “really” brands the perpetrator. Interestingly, classical authors also shared this attitude: already the tragedy by Sophocles features suitable premises. In the famous IV station the chorus speaks only of: *fatal wedlock, thou didst give me birth* pursued by revenge (v. 1217), without any mention of patricide. In *The Odyssey* Homer too differentiates the premise from the main event: *He married after having killed his father*. In paradoxographic literature, a genre from the domain of popular culture dealing with unusual events, there is simply no allusion to patricide. Here, Oedipus is unambiguously and, it could be said, necessarily linked with incest. The crime committed by him was, therefore, marrying his mother, additionally burdened with murdering his father.²⁵

While analysing the motif of incest within the context of classical culture Averintsev noticed not only a biological phenomenon but also primarily a symbolic dimension. In an extremely precise manner and by resorting to oneirocritique he revealed the symbolic relation between incest and winning and wielding power. The incestuous dream (son and mother) in the symbolic system of Graeco-Roman antiquity was an important prophecy for the ruler and politician. Depending on the manner of seizing power – legally or by means of usurpation – it was, respectively, a fortunate or ominous sign. The motif of incest was also connected, as has been mentioned, with the symbolic

of knowledge. Schlöndorff's film animates this symbolic tangle. There is no doubt that the incestuous (totally unconscious) relationship between Faber and his daughter cannot be treated literally and purely biologically. Schlöndorff: *We agreed that incest could be some sort of a metaphor*²⁶. Paradoxically, this uncertainty on the part of Frisch and Schlöndorff (*could be*) as regards the meaning of the incestuous relationship presented in the film is an advantage from our point of view. It demonstrates that in this case we are within a symbolic space: unclear, non-discursive, allusive, with a barely suggested significance. What sort of a metaphor or symbol is cinematic incest? At the onset, let us once again resort to the subtle arguments expounded by Averintsev.

In antiquity incest was symbolically associated with knowledge, albeit of a special variety - unusual, mysterious, prohibited. Incest was forbidden and terrifying, but divine mysteries too were reserved and inspired horror. Such was the nature of the symbolic tie between incest and knowledge.²⁷ The recorded experience also casts a light on the close connection between incest and knowledge, indicating the affiliation of the sphere of cognition and the domain of Eros. The Biblical use of the verb "to know", denoting penetration of the mystery of the female body, is universally recognised ("And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, ..."). Such an application was adopted also in the Greek. By way of example, in the writings of Menander a girl confesses that her seducer "got to know her", while Plutarch consistently granted the verb in question a purely erotic connotation. Similar instances are encountered in the case of Heraclides of Pont, Callimachus and many other authors. If the Greek language discloses in erotic declarations that "knowledge" signifies the "penetration" of a mystery, then this aspect is without question also *a priori* embedded in Oedipian incest and means the penetration of the most concealed life secret.²⁸

We mentioned previously that Faber is the one who knows, who possesses knowledge. He, who possesses knowledge does not have to seek it. Nor does he expect that some sort of knowledge could enlighten him. What kind of knowledge, therefore, can be achieved by a person who already knows? A true puzzle. Let us return for a while to Oedipus.

Karl Jaspers described Oedipus as a man who wants to know²⁹, in other words, one that does not know. But Oedipus already has at his disposal considerable knowledge. He is sovereign, discerning, solves the puzzle, and defeats the Sphinx³⁰. He has demonstrated certain knowledge and learned something. He knows many essential things, but still wishes to know.

There exists a distinct similarity between the knowledge belonging to Faber and that possessed by Oedipus. This is the type of knowledge based on exag-

gerated trust in the power of the intellect, knowledge that is connected with a conviction about the potential of an exclusively rational study of the mysteries of life. Importantly: this is knowledge-power. Such homonymy expresses the essence of the issue at stake. There is a single difference – in the case of Oedipus such knowledge is connected with power, rule, and political authority, with becoming blinded by power. In the case of Faber, however, this is knowledge of the technical mind, completely convinced about the limitless potential of interfering with Nature, controlling and governing it. Note that in both cases this knowledge refers to the outer world and carries the idea of manipulating and subjugating reality. It is the sort of knowledge that is suffused with a utilitarian-pragmatic aspect.

Time to return to our puzzle. Now it is easier to solve it. Despite the fact that he knows, Faber can still find something out because his incestuous relationship with his daughter possesses knowledge entirely different from the one that so far has been at his disposal. Erotic "penetration" is tantamount to self-penetration, the penetration of one's interior and fate. This is the sort of knowledge whose light brutally brings forth the essence of knowledge already possessed. It reveals the illusions and *hybris* of the other. It shows insignificance or, at any rate, secondariness *vis a vis* the first. The light of s e l f k n o w l e d g e illuminates k n o w l e d g e - p o w e r and not *vice versa*.

There where there is crime (even unintentional) there must exist also punishment. At the same time, this concept of punishment does not have a penalising nature, even more so considering that in the play by Sophocles the protagonist metes out punishment himself. Here, the logic of punishment is ruled by the principle of symmetry or, one is inclined to say using the famous description coined by Blake, *fearful symmetry*. Having learned the truth about himself Oedipus:

...The pin of gold, broad-beaten like a flame,
He tore from off her breast, and, left and right,
Down on the shuddering orbits of his sight
Dashed it: "Out! Out! Ye never more shall see
Me nor the anguish nor the sins of me.
Ye looked on lives whose like earth never bore,
Ye knew not those my spirit thirsted for:
Therefore be dark for ever."³¹

The eyes that rested on externalities, the illusions of things, and were unable to perceive the truth of the essential and concealed are gauged out. Symbolically, Oedipus assumes the role of Tiresias and starts to notice that, which the blind seer has known for long. He becomes a "blind seer".³² Now, for the last time, here is the incomparable commentary by Averintsev, who wrote that both the tragic irony in the conversation between the blind, but seeing Oedipus and the blind seer Tiresias, as well as the closing lament of the cho-

rus about the governance of sight compel us to place the act of self-blinding committed by the protagonist within a context of an opposition between the essence and the visual. Oedipus plucked out his eyes, which betrayed him, while blinded by the invisible and beguiled by the obvious. His knowledge turns against him and his sight turns towards his innermost self. Apparently, wisdom-force and wisdom-power are crime and blindness, the dimmest possible darkness of ignorance. Now, immersed in the darkness of physical blindness Oedipus seeks different wisdom – self-cognition; he must see clearly that, which remains inaccessible to his eyes.³³

In *Homo Faber* the motif of the eyes plays an important part almost from the very beginning. Excusing himself Faber tells the stewardess that he was unable to catch the plane on time because he suddenly felt ill because of [his] eyesight. During the evening car ride, somewhere in France, he complains about his eyes, to which Sabeth replies that she will be his eyes. The tragic irony of those words becomes apparent much later. Finally, a scene, one of the earliest in the plot (and maintained in sepia) and, at the same time, chronologically the last (repeated in colour at the end of the film), in which the motif of the eyes becomes cleansed of all physiological-medical associations. Up to that moment, eyes could still dominate the reception of the film. Now, we see Faber in sunglasses, waiting, already after the death of Sabeth, in an airport hall in Athens and confessing that he was incapable of committing suicide. More, he was unable to look because he could not see. In any case, there was nothing to look at since she was no longer.

The dark sunglasses accentuate Faber's blindness – one could add: symbolically, if that word could be freed of the universal meaning that it assumes within this context. Punishment-blindness is not meted out literally. Nonetheless, Faber's blindness is just as real: he admitted that he could not look because he could no longer see. The eyes that up to then looked and did not see, now, just as in the story of Oedipus, are no longer capable of seeing but begin to perceive, albeit at an entirely different level. Sight is supplanted by its inner counterpart, contemplating in humility the incomprehensible verdicts of fate. This is Faber's "journey to the end of the night".

Oedipus the King by Sophocles was known as a tragedy of fate. In *Homo Faber* this motif appears at the very onset and in different versions, while in the finale it reveals itself with full force. In the afore-mentioned "first-last" sequence we see Faber sitting in the Athens airport hall. Off screen, he asks why did all the events have to befall him? But this commentary is heard once the veils of ignorance have already dropped, at a moment "when everything became obvious", when all is *post factum*, or rather: *post mortem*. Earlier in the

chronological order of events in the film, while sitting in an airplane, Faber turns to a stewardess admitting that he fears becoming embroiled in some sort of a chain of developments.. And in a conversation with Sabeth he asks her casually: *Do you believe in chance?* In Faber's mathematical mind there appears an unclear premonition of future events. But it rapidly becomes neutralised by including them into the logic of probability, which leaves no room for doubt.

Faber is incapable of deciphering signs – forecasts of looming misfortune (Joachim, who hanged himself and whom he discovered together with Hencke, a bas-relief with a likeness of a slumbering nymph –Faber remarks that she seems to be asleep, thus anticipating Sabeth's accident). He is incapable of extracting meanings whose reference to him is the profoundest. During the first meeting with Faber on a ship Sabeth shows him a book, which she took on the journey. It is Camus' *The Stranger* with its refrain of a recurring question about the guilt of the main protagonist. Faber, however, shows no interest. This small detail makes it possible to accentuate once again the similarity between Faber and Oedipus. The latter is frequently called a traveller, a foreigner, and a stranger. From the moment when we get to know him, Faber too is on the road. He does not have a home and constantly moves from place to place, living in hotel rooms. He is never at home. Contrary to Odysseus he has nowhere to return to. Faber – the homeless, Faber – the eternal wanderer. The original title of the film: *Voyager*, underlines and showcases this state of Faber's permanent suspension and roaming.

Faber, as we asserted, sees nothing. Not only does he not know what he is doing but he also does not know what he is saying. During a discussion on religion and art he presents an apotheosis of American technology, declaring with deep conviction that he is ignorant about the appearance of the souls of the condemned. Optimism worthy of a protagonist from Sophocles' tragedy.

Faber also does not notice anything peculiar in the sentences uttered by Sabeth during one of their journeys across Greece, when she says that they have so much to see and that it would be a crime not to go to Delphi. Although this statement was made in a rather innocent travelling-tourist context it is difficult to resist the impression that the second sentence is not only a serious information-sign addressed to Faber but also defines the most profound albeit not named outright motif (in the musical understating of the term) recurring throughout the whole story and touching its very core. It would be a crime not to go to Delphi - at the very beginning of his wanderings Oedipus paid a visit to the oracle at Delphi:

... So privily without their leave I went
To Delphi, and Apollo sent me back

*Baulked of the knowledge that I came to seek.
But other grievous things he prophesied,
Woes, lamentations, mourning, portents dire.*³⁴

Faber had an opportunity to see Delphi at the end of his journeys. He was in a hurry, however, because he wanted to learn the truth as quickly as possible in the belief that it he would discover it in Athens during his meeting with Hannah. Meanwhile, the truth is within his reach. What sort of truth is it? Plato's Charmides says outright: (...) *when a worshipper enters, the first word which he hears is "Be temperate!" This, however, like a prophet he expresses in a sort of riddle, for "Know thyself!" and "Be temperate!" are the same*³⁵. The oracle says: know thyself – the famous: *gnothi seauton*. For Faber "Delphi" is only a locality in his Baedeker tourist guide; it could, however, become a cryptonym, an illusive directive of special knowledge. Just as Oedipus, Faber is a bad hermeneutician.

There exists yet another, equally important, aspect. Remember, after all, that in the Greek world destiny is an actual force. Familiar with the contents of the Delphic oracle Oedipus does everything so that it would not come true. To the scene of tragic recognition he knows nothing about the inappropriate nature of his deeds. Like Faber, guided by some sort of mysterious force (fate? destiny? how should we call it?) he does things that he does not want to do. He aims straight at misfortune, all the time unaware of the meaning of his conduct.

Recall Auden's description of the specific situation in which Oedipus-the tragic hero found himself: *At no time has he been conscious of being tempted to do what he knows he should not do, so that at no time is it possible to say, "That was where he made his fatal mistake"*. At this stage, we could, without misappropriating the characteristic proposed by Auden, describe Faber as the embodiment of a classic tragic hero. After all, Faber is not for a single moment *conscious of being tempted to do what he knows he should not do*.

Schlöndorff: *Why should a man not fall in love with a 25 year-old woman or even marry her. I believe that in the biography of Max Frisch this occurred not once*³⁶. Importantly: Faber did not intend to flirt with Sabeth! In the film this is obvious. There is, therefore, not a trace of temptation. In the Frisch version Faber ponders on his decisions while trying to capture the moment in which he committed the fatal error.³⁷ Are we not mixing conceits by referring specific meanings typical for ancient Greek culture and connected with the idea of destiny to contemporary literary and film reality; is this not a process of projecting Greek notions onto our mental reality?

Tadeusz Czapliński, an outstanding expert on antiquity, responded partly to those doubts in his insightful and passionate article on the "tragedy of

destination". In it, he followed not only the religious and literary sources of *Oedipus Rex* but also discussed modern realisations of the prime theme of Sophocles' great work. Upon the example of plays by Shakespeare (*Macbeth*) and Ibsen (*Ghosts*) Zieliński recorded the changes to which Greek destiny was subjected in modern drama and disclosed its interiorisation. In modern mentality, in contrast to Greek tragedy, destiny ceased being external, a transcendent force acting next to and above the protagonists, and became a psychological moment: a prediction-suggestion, which the protagonist believes (Shakespeare) or immanent destiny, part of history, the past, the protagonist's biography (Ibsen).

The more interesting, therefore, is the conclusion drawn by the brilliant philosopher reflecting on the manner in which the Greek idea of destiny exists in our culture: *After all, even now the fate of Oedipus causes all the sensitive strings of our soul to tremble; naturally, this takes place not because we believe in the existence of transcendent destiny, which occurs in the Sophocles tragedy as the great opponent of the protagonist. No, we regard them only as a symbol – in itself it not real, in contrast to the terrible, unspeakable "something", which it symbolizes. It is exactly this terrifying "something", due to its unextinguished and directly experienced realism that compels us to treat symbolised transcendent destiny as reality. I have in mind, obviously, the contemporary public and not the one from the times of Sophocles or the latter.*³⁸

It is easy to recognize this terrible, unspeakable "something" in the sentence passed by fate, which Faber complained about and was unable to comprehend. He added that he was not in love; on the contrary, before the two protagonists began talking Sabeth was even more of a stranger than any other girl, and the fact that he and his daughter struck up a conversation was an entirely improbable coincidence. They could have just as well walked past each other. Why speak about a twist of fate if everything might have followed an entirely different course.³⁹ Really?

That terrible, unspeakable "something" appeared in the lives of Faber and Sabeth in a mild version and without any forecasts of unpleasant consequences. Just like in the unusual, ironically light and philosophically "heavy" poem by Wisława Szymborska:

Because they didn't know each other earlier, they suppose that

*nothing was happening between them (...)
They'd be greatly astonished
to learn that for a long time
chance had been playing with them.*

*Not yet wholly ready
to transform into fate for them
it approached them, then backed off,
stood in their way*

and, suppressing a giggle,
jumped to the side.
There were signs, signals:
but what of it if they were illegible (...).⁴⁰

Faber and Sabeth. In a short while *chance playing with them will transform into fate*. First by bringing them together in a hotel room, as in another poem by Szymborska, which just like its predecessor penetrates

*Chance turns a kaleidoscope in her hands.
Billions of collared glass particles flash.
Suddenly Hansel's piece of glass
crashes with Gretel's.
Imagine, in the same hotel. (...).*⁴¹

the mystery of chance to find fulfilment some time later in Sabeth's death. Could it be that chance is just another name for destiny?

Faber endeavoured to discover the meaning of the whole story, sought the reasons for his crime, and reconstructed the chain of causes and dependencies that resulted in the "fatal" ending. If the stewardess had not looked for him, if he had not spoken to Hencke, if he had not boarded the ship earlier, if he had not travelled together with Sabeth ... If, if, if. Tragedy is inscribed into the conditional tense. Why did all this have to happen to me, asks Faber. Why did he have to be the "chosen one"? And is he really guilty?

There are no good, i.e. unambiguous answers to these questions. Indicating *hybris* as the sole source of Faber's crime is not the solution but reduces the complexity of the whole story to a single dimension. Such would have been the answer of a moralist. But just as real as Faber's cognitive pride was that *terrible, unspeakable "something"* regardless how we would be inclined to define this ambiguous "Delphic" expression: as chance, destiny or the very fact of having been born. Faber's crime is not ethical (a description introduced by Czapliński), because no ethical ban had been violated consciously. This is a *t r a g i c* crime, in whose case all moral and legal categories lose their sense. Guilt of this sort does not match any of the paragraphs of the penal code and a court verdict is not applicable. This is the sort of crime and its references to contemporaneity that were described extremely aptly by Gardener. The celebrated tragic theory of guilt, which in the case of Aristotle did not as yet play any role, does not exonerate even contemporary tragedy. Tragedy does not take place in those cases where just penance corresponds to the crime and where the moral account of the guilt is complete. Full subjectivisation of crime and fate is also absent in contemporary tragedy. A characteristic feature of the essence of tragedy is rather an excess of tragic consequence. Despite the whole subjectivity of the crime, even modern tragedy includes the moment of that ancient supremacy of

fate, revealed in the disproportion of crime and fate as equal for all.⁴²

Faber, just like Oedipus, is both guilty and not guilty. There where we would like to see an all-examining and resolving alternative we come across an incomprehensible conjunction of contradictions violating the rigours of logic. We face the mystery of individual fate.

Importantly: both in the Schlöndorff film and in *Oedipus Rex* there is no solace. Nor is there any escape from the existing situation. For the protagonist such liberation may be achieved only in and through tragedy. The price of such freedom is tragic clairvoyance, a poignant variant of self-knowledge. Contradictions are not eliminated.

We leave both tragic protagonists: Faber and his wife-to-be Hannah watching fragments of a movie made by Faber during a joint voyage with Sabeth - a laughing, happy and, more significant - living Sabeth. Schlöndorff: *Frisch recalled the experience of watching a film shot with an 8 mm camera, which a friend of his showed every Sunday after the death of his wife. Over and over again, he had to watch how she tirelessly runs across a blossoming meadow from the world of the dead, once again tears her skirt while climbing over a fence and turns her laughing face at the camera. In his opinion this image expressed perfectly the meaning of being dead.*⁴³ We thus abandon Faber-Sisyphus at a moment when he is left only with helpless contemplation of the reality of a shadow, with clairvoyant gazing at non-being.

In a peculiar moment at the end of the story we realise, at first still not very clearly, that it is we, the spectators who just like members of the ancient auditorium are taking part in a tragic spectacle into which we had been drawn by the symbolic-mythical message of the events, not quite aware of the cathartic experiences in the finale. Stranger still is the fact that everything occurred not *via* participating in a theatrical spectacle but at a time when we were looking at the rectangle of the screen. Even Marx, deliberating on the eternal topicality of Greek art, could not have envisaged this.

Endnotes

¹ D. Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, London 1979, p. 165.

² E. Sabato, *Nieznany da Vinci*, „Odra”, no. 7-8: 1985, pp. 45-46. Werner Jaeger wrote in a similar spirit about Sophocles' protagonists: *The ineffaceable impression which Sophocles makes on us today and his imperishable position in the literature of the world are both due to his character-drawing. If we ask which of the men and women of Greek tragedy have an independent life in the imagination apart from the stage and from the actual plot in which they appear, we must answer, "those created by Sophocles, above all others" (...). The perfection of those characters does not lie in the purely formal sphere but its source is contained in*

- much deeper domains of human nature where aesthetic, moral and religious factors are linked and accentuate each other, W. Jaeger, *Paideia*, Warszawa 1962, vol. 1, p. 288 and 290.
- ³ Bell, op. cit., p. 166.
 - ⁴ By way of example: *Orpheus* by J. Cocteau, *Electra* by Cacoyannis and, predominantly, *Oedipus Rex* and *Medea* by Pasolini.
 - ⁵ Y. Lotman, *Semiotyka filmu*, Warszawa 1983, pp. 5-6.
 - ⁶ Lotman stressed the irony and distance towards the depicted conflict distinctly present in Polanski's film: *The protagonists of the film experience a drama that destroys their whole life but for the author the drama lacks tragic profoundness and significance - viewing it from a distance he sees only the eternal buffoonery of a recurring ritual*, ibidem, p. 7. An excellent example of the mythography interpretation of the film in which equal importance is attached to similarities and differences between the mythical story and the plot is the article by T. Jefferson Kline, *Orfeusz transcendujący: "Ostatnie tango w Paryżu" Bertolucciego*, "Polska Sztuka Ludowa - Konteksty", no. 3-4: 1992, pp. 100-107.
 - ⁷ Schlöndorff o Maksie Frischu, „Kino”, no. 10:1992, p. 47.
 - ⁸ Ibidem, p. 19.
 - ⁹ Ibidem.
 - ¹⁰ Ibidem.
 - ¹¹ Schlöndorff z Babelsbergu, „Kino”; no. 5: 1993, p. 33.
 - ¹² W. H. Auden, *Grecy i my*, in: idem, *Ręka farbiarza i inne eseje*, selection M. Sprusiński and J. Zieliński, introd. J. Zieliński, Warszawa 1988, pp. 422-423.
 - ¹³ I assume that the above recalled interpretation concepts are part of basic humanities and there is no need no delve into them more extensively.
 - ¹⁴ P. Ricoeur, *Egzystencja i hermeneutyka. Rozprawy o metodzie*, selection, prep. and introd. P. Cichowicz, Warszawa 1985, p. 141. Cf. also criticism of a one-sided approach to symbols and images in Freudian psychoanalysis: M. Eliade, *Sacrum - mit - historia*, selection M. Czerwiński, introd. B. Moliński, Warszawa 1970, p. 35.
 - ¹⁵ P. Ricoeur, *Model tekstu: działanie znaczące rozważane jako tekst*, „Pamiętnik Literacki”, LXXV, 1984, fasc. 2, p. 349.
 - ¹⁶ V. Y. Propp, *Edyp w świetle folkloru*, typescript. This is an article issued in the collection: *Folklor i dieystvitelnost*, Moscow 1976. I owe access to the translation to the kindness of its author, Danuta Ulicka.
 - ¹⁷ R. Girard, *Sacrum i przemoc*, Poznań 1993, p. 120.
 - ¹⁸ R. Girard, *Kozioł ofiarny*, Łódź 1987, p. 65.
 - ¹⁹ M. Frisch, *Homo Faber. Relacja*, Warszawa 1964, pp. 31-32.
 - ²⁰ Bell, op. cit., p. 148.
 - ²¹ M. Eliade, *Kowale i alchemicy*, Warszawa 1993, p. 176-177; 177-178.
 - ²² P. Averintsev, *W poszukiwaniu symboliki mitu o Edypie*, in: idem, *Na skrzyżowaniu tradycji*, Warszawa 1988, pp. 159-160.
 - ²³ H. G. Gadamer, *Prometeusz i tragedia kultury*, in: idem, *Rozum, słowo, dzieje*, Warszawa 1979, p. 174.
 - ²⁴ Auden, op. cit., p. 423.
 - ²⁵ Cf. Averintsev, op. cit., pp. 154-155.
 - ²⁶ Schlöndorff o Maksie Frischu, p. 19.
 - ²⁷ Averintsev, op. cit., p. 159.
 - ²⁸ Ibidem, p. 160.
 - ²⁹ K. Jaspers, *O tragiczności*, in: idem, *Filozofia egzystencji*, Warszawa 1990, p. 343.
 - ³⁰ Ibidem.
 - ³¹ Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, v. 1268-1273.
 - ³² An expression proposed by Ricoeur, *Egzystencja...*, p. 143.
 - ³³ Averintsev, op. cit., pp. 168-169.
 - ³⁴ Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, v. 786-789.
 - ³⁵ Quoted after: Ricoeur, *Egzystencja...*, p. 74.
 - ³⁶ Schlöndorff o Maksie Frischu, p. 19. Upon this occasion it is worth recalling yet another fragment of Schlöndorff's recollections demonstrating how Frisch regarded *Homo Faber* as a deeply personal work and how "reality" was immersed in "fiction": *Frisch described to me Sabeth on the ship deck in enormous detail: the weather, the way the clouds floated by, and how he never forgot how later, in Southampton, she left the ship and got lost in a crowd. Here, I interrupted him: "Just a moment, they were both sailing to Le Havre". He replied: "Yes, in the book, but in life she got off in Southampton". These are the moments when one no longer deals with a made-up story but comes across something that had been truly experienced* (my emphasis - D. C.), ibidem.
 - ³⁷ Frisch, *Homo Faber*, p. 182.
 - ³⁸ T. Zieliński, *Król Edyp. Tragedia przeznaczenia*, in: idem, *Szkice antyczne*, Kraków 1971, pp. 464-465.
 - ³⁹ M. Frisch, *Homo Faber*, p. 106.
 - ⁴⁰ W. Szymborska, *Miłość od pierwszego wejrzenia*, in: *Koniec i początek*, Poznań 1993, pp. 26-27.
 - ⁴¹ W. Szymborska, *Seams*, op. cit., p. 24.
 - ⁴² F. G. Gadamer, *Prawda i metoda, Zarys hermeneutyki filozoficznej*, Kraków 1993, pp. 145-146.
 - ⁴³ Schlöndorff o Maksie Frischu, p. 19.

