

It is amazing how many cultural models, character types or masks can be used by an artist while creating his work. It is just as interesting that this enormous number of cultural models includes those that are applied most frequently, and references to which endow not only the given work but also its author with virtuosity. Such a cultural model is the mask. At this stage it is necessary to transcend, albeit not to the very end, the most trivial comprehension of this term as part of a carnival costume concealing the face. The mask conceived as a cultural model is a specific symbol of the *self*, something that grants its wearer a new being, a new identity, often demonic or comical but always diametrically different from the true *self* of the person hiding behind it. It was precisely such a mask – helping to become a clown, a devil or anyone else – that often inspired assorted artists, as Mikhail Bakhtin noted in his essay: *Characteristic here is the artistic structuring of an image out of durable popular masks – masks that had great influence on the novelistic image of man during the most important stages of the novel's development (...)*<sup>1</sup>. Such impact was exerted by the mask not only on literature but to an equal or perhaps even greater degree upon painting, photography or film. Bakhtin stressed that a special sort of mask – the folk mask<sup>2</sup> – could have been chosen for assorted situations, was capable of *bearing* merriment and tragedy, and no plot could destroy it once and for all.

GRZEGORZ  
NADGRODKIEWICZ

## Tragicomedy dell'arte, or Pierrotade à la Godard

It is exactly from the tradition of the folk mask that Harlequin, his "nephew" Pedrolino, and Pierrot, perhaps the best known of the three, originate. The latter, a clown with a white powdered face and wearing a white costume with a ruff, became one of the possibly most widely recognised masks. It was Pierrot who was rendered a symbol of mute, unexpressed and unfulfilled love. Regarded as a tragic fool, he saddened and entertained at the same time; first and foremost, he inspired artists and apparently continues to do so up to this day. The Pierrot character attained special place in the cultural tradition of France, especially within the range of the French pantomime. It was precisely





French artists who most frequently resorted to the image of Pierrot, outfitted their protagonists with a set of features ascribed to him, and endowed the reality created by them with the traits of a world in which the tragedy of the sad clown took place. What was the source of the strong position of the white-faced clown in French culture? Naturally, there is a reason why the image of Pierrot affects artists, including Godard, to such a degree. Not by accident is Pierrot's name not just an ordinary diminutive of the French: Pierre.

The Pierrot *dramatis persona* descends, albeit not in a straight line, from the seventeenth-century *commedia dell'arte*, i.e. an artful or professional spectacle in which clearly defined characters improvise their lines, embellishing them with comical *lazzi* – dialogue or action. The core of each Italian comedy cast was composed of two oldsters (Pantaloon and the Doctor), ladies and lovers (*Inamorati*) and two *zanni* (e.g. Brighella and Harlequin) – the most popular and characteristic for the *commedia dell'arte*. The *zanni* were described by various names, such as Harlequin, Trufaldino, Brighella, Buratino, or Pedrolino. Robert F. Storey in his book *Pierrot. A Critical History of a Mask* derived from the latter the name of the sad French clown: *Pedrolino* is an “Italian equivalent” of Pierrot<sup>3</sup>. Storey cited several other theories concerning Pierrot's predecessor, but he regarded the hypothesis associated with Pedrolino as best justified and proposed the most extensive arguments in its favour. Storey attributed the introduction of Pierrot into French literature to Molière, who in the middle of the seventeenth century wrote and staged in Paris the comedy *Le Festin de pierre*, in which one of the protagonists was Pierrot – a mellow lover though wily and witty<sup>4</sup>. This is the onset of Pierrot's presence in French drama, from which his image spread rapidly to other domains of the arts. The early Pierrot still possesses many features of the Italian Arlecchino. Storey described him as *l'homme spirituel*<sup>5</sup>, but in time French mentality and personality turned him into an unhappy Pierrot. The colourful costume composed of

rhombi and worn by Harlequin became replaced by a white billowing blouse and wide pantaloons. Gradually, Pierrot assumed serious psychological features and a variety of traits. Although he was most frequently known as Pierrot, in art he appears just as frequently as Harlequin, his less popular synonym. According to Storey, despite the fact that Pierrot underwent a change he is still simple-hearted, trustful and independent, and his love is still naive<sup>6</sup>. Pierrot constantly offers proof of his Italian lineage, revealing ignorance of the people surrounding him and in certain situations even his stupidity.

With a thus shaped personality Pierrot no longer fits into a single epoch but is above time. The poses he assumes and the mask he puts on not only build his image but become an outright symbol of a certain condition and state of spirit inclined towards sentimental pessimism. For assorted artists Pierrot driven by passion became an inspiring *dramatis persona*, a form that for long has been full of contents; now it suffices to add a “contemporary face” so that he might express all that an artist might wish.

Artists who acted in this way include Jean-Luc Godard with his film *Pierrot le fou* (1965). Taking into consideration the original title it would be difficult to seek a more direct suggestion. The director referred not only to the image of the character, aware of the extent to which it is a carrier of meanings, but also to one of the features of Pierrot's personality. Godard's Ferdinand not only turned into a tearful Pierrot but also contains traits of the devious and clever Harlequin. In the case of Ferdinand these are synonyms, since he possesses as many countenances as the number of the names of the *zanni*. Ferdinand is unable to reveal his true *self* because he cannot take off his mask – the role and its performer are merged into a single complex character. Ferdinand is funny not only as a result of what he does and says – he is also eccentric. In other words, he is one of the contemporary embodiments of Pierrot-Harlequin. Jean-Luc Godard



applied an interesting trick of symbolically dressing his lead protagonist to resemble the prime representative of the French pantomime. The spectator may discover the meaning of all the parallels between Ferdinand and Pierrot by justifying the presence of this particular artifice in *Pierrot le fou* with the assistance of a trans-textual motivation. Reference to the convention of the *commedia dell'arte* (i.e. an assumption of the spectator's previous experience) is necessary in order to be

able to perceive all the similarities and differences between Godard's lead protagonist and Pierrot.

Correspondence between Godard's film and the Pierrot tradition is realised upon several levels. A reference to this tradition is noticeable already in the verbal stratum of the film – the most obvious example being the title. When Ferdinand and Marianne become known as the lead protagonists there emerges a successive parallelism – the girl, despite Ferdinand's

constant and failed protests, continues to call him Pierrot. There comes to the fore yet another feature of Ferdinand as Pierrot – he refuses to accept his new name and his new and adverse – ultimately tragic – fate.

The iconographic stratum of the film indicates even more distinctly that Ferdinand actually is Pierrot. Godard inserted snapshots of reproductions of paintings either in the direct vicinity of the photographed Ferdinand or takes with Marianne, immediately followed by the figure of Ferdinand. The paintings bring to mind assorted portrayals of Pierrot by Picasso, August Renoir or Henri Matisse. The most characteristic and easiest to extract from the film is a reproduction of Renoir's *Pierrot*, with a small boy wearing the costume of a clown. The director thus suggested Ferdinand's childish and naive nature matching the personality of Pierrot.

*Pierrot le fou* refers to the Pierrot tradition also in the construction of the protagonist. Ferdinand-Pierrot steers his life in such a way that each encountered surprise proves to be more acrimonious than the previous and all are tragicomic. The love that he encounters is more bitter than sweet and has an inevitably tragic end. The closing scenes stress the connection between Ferdinand and Pierrot – a confirmation of his condition of a tragic "fool" who perishes in an absurd manner.

Throughout the entire film Ferdinand reads or carries a comic book with the curious title *Les Pieds Nickelés*. Although none of its fragments presented on screen actually display Pierrot, the poetic, shape and colour scheme of the characters bring to mind the appearance of clowns. Pierrot's clumsy floundering in a strange and sad world is the comic and simultaneously tragic act of a clown. The fact that Ferdinand carries and reads this particular comic book (in other words, is somehow attached to it) suggests that his life too can be treated as a clown's frenzied performance.

A detailed description of the Ferdinand *dramatis persona* is rendered possible by applying Arthur Symonds' extraordinarily apt characteristic: *Pierrot is one of the types of our century, of the moment in which we live, or of the moment, perhaps, out of which we are just passing. Pierrot is passionate; but he does not believe in great passions. He feels himself to be sickening with a fever, or else perilously convalescent; for love is a disease, which he is too weak to resist or endure. He has worn his heart on his sleeve so long, that it has hardened in the cold air. (...) He knows that he is condemned to be always in public, that emotion would be supremely out of keeping with his costume (...)*<sup>7</sup>. It is in this way that the scheme of the Harlequin character is realised in Ferdinand's life. His love for Marianne is unhappy and by no means pure because it is smothered by jealousy (this is the reason why he shoots her). Despite the turbulent course

of their relationship it is difficult to believe in great passion. The reason lies in the fact that Ferdinand *becomes learned, perverse, intellectualising his pleasures, brutalising his intellect; his mournful contemplation of things becoming a kind of grotesque joy*<sup>8</sup>.

Why then does the spectator not become repulsed by a protagonist who complicates his fate only to ultimately commit an absurd suicide? This is because the construction of the lead character in *Pierrot le fou* contains a certain dominating feature that justifies Ferdinand, i.e. a set of traits linking him with the tradition of the Italian comedy. Ferdinand is not solely an up-to-date version of the French Pierrot, and although he has a multitude of traits resembling the latter the prevailing ones connect him with the protagonist of the *commedia dell'arte*. If we were to assume that Ferdinand is one of the *zanni* then he cannot enact his *lazzi* alone. A tempting hypothesis suggests that we should treat the whole film by Jean-Luc Godard as a *sui generis* emulation of the *commedia dell'arte* scheme. Apparently, quite a number of arguments speak in favour of accepting this hypothesis as an interpretation-analytical key. This concept places emphasis on interpretation rather than on analysis indicating actual relations within the film. Proving the compatibility of the *commedia dell'arte* scheme with the structure of Godard's film will resemble interpretation rather than methodical analysis.

The *commedia dell'arte*, whose characteristic features include exceptional force and durability, is one of the few products of the theatre<sup>9</sup>, which after so many centuries are capable of strongly affecting works with lively dramaturgy<sup>10</sup>. Apparently, *commedia dell'arte* influences not only the epic or the drama but with equal success also film. *Pierrot le fou* seems to be a model-like example of translating the scheme of the Italian comedy into the language of film in an incompletely pure form but with the preservation of its specific features while, at the same time, reducing the comedy aspects. One would like to say that in this version we are dealing with a specific *tragicomedy dell'arte*. Such a description would be justified in situating Godard's work within a given national tradition. The French, welcoming Italian actors of the *commedia dell'arte*, demanded that the performances be given at least a pseudo-tragic overtone. When they finally began to continue the *commedia dell'arte* tradition, scenes maintained in the tragic style became very popular. The subsequent tradition of Pierrot in France enforced, by the very nature of things, tragedy or outright tragicomedy upon artists who referred to the mask of a clown with a white-powdered countenance.

The core of Godard's *tragicomedy dell'arte*, naturally maintained in the mode of the Italian comedy, are the *zanni* – the *spiritus movens* of action. The text of *Pierrot le fou* provides numerous evidence that not only Ferdi-

nand but also Marianne (and in the second part of the film decidedly the latter) stimulates the action of the film. In the *tragicomedy dell'arte* conception Marianne (applying her entire energy) will play a different part and the mask of the *zanni* must be entrusted to a man. The tragicomic *zanni* is thus, obviously, Ferdinand. As the lead protagonist of the film he simultaneously combines the function of two *zanni*, since as Pierrot he comprises a peculiar combination of astuteness and stupidity. *He delights in cheating others, but himself is easily cheated*<sup>11</sup>. Harlequin-Pierrot can become the axis of the plot (when he drives Marianne home and inaugurates their romance), but at other times he receives only lashes and blows (e.g. when two gangsters try to drown him). Upon yet other occasions he tends to reveal the diabolical features of his ancestor, Harlequin (when he kills his beloved), but can also be the naive Pierrot (when he believes Marianne's assurances about her love for him, while she casts a conspiratorial glance at the audience). He is also a servant, as befits the *zanni* character, when without protest he allows Marianne to embroil him into smuggling weapons. His servility is visible in the film's opening scenes showing him as the "nice" son-in-law of Monsieur Espresso, forced to take part in receptions. Within the context of this argument it becomes significant that both his wife and mother-in-law are Italian (their pretentious surname easily brings to mind Italy). Godard's Pierrot, the son-in-law of the Espressos, thus remains within the range of the impact of Italian culture and the Harlequin tradition. In other words, Ferdinand-Pierrot is also a clown and a jester, increasingly involved in grotesque situations and entertaining the spectator, while at the same time unable to escape the enchanted circle of self-propelling absurdities.

*Commedia dell'arte* was constructed out of intrigues devised by the *zanni* and the small deceits planned by their female lovers – peasants or town dwellers known in the tradition of the *commedia dell'arte* as soubrettes. As a rule, they were housemaids and the multiplicity of their names equalled that of Harlequin (e.g. Smeraldina, Arlecchina, Franceschina). The most popular was Columbine, who was in love with Harlequin or loved by him. Here is her description by Konstanty Miklaszewski: *She was a bonnie, comely and glib country lass; fearing nothing, she treated her masters with license, at times even with impudence, reacting immediately with word and gesture; fit and supple, she was even capable of striking a man*<sup>12</sup>.

Such a likeness immediately brings to mind Godard's Marianne, a baby-sitter (she takes care of children while Ferdinand and his wife go to a party at the Espressos). As a character out of Godard's *tragicomedy dell'arte* she too fits within the limits of the comic and tragic world and in no way is worse than Columbine when she assaults a man at a gas station.

Nor can we negate Marianne's physical prowess (watch her on a beach dancing together with members of her "brother" Fred's ballet company). Marianne certainly feels more at home in the tragicomic world than does Ferdinand, although she too experiences grotesque and, at the same time, tragic situations, their end being the moment of her death. Bold, ruthless and fearless, Marianne takes part in gun smuggling although she becomes emotionally involved; her treatment of Pierrot, to whom she is unfaithful, is outright cynical. Her language sparkles with brilliant ripostes. At the same time, she is unable to overcome the *sui generis* destiny looming over the fate she shares with Ferdinand. Although Marianne seems to be courageous, their joint journey towards death contains moments of weakness (characteristically, while together with Ferdinand on an island, she cries out: *What am I to do? I don't know what to do!*).

Marianne also turns out to be similar (even if only due to her name) to a character in *Les Originaux*, a play by Houdart de la Motte<sup>13</sup>. Marinette, the heroine of this drama written in the spirit of the *commedia dell'arte*, is the object of Pierrot's unhappy love and just like Godard's Marianne pushes the miserable clown to the edge of ultimate despair; helpless and distressed, he poisons her and immediately afterwards himself. Is this scenario of events identical to the finale of Godard's film? The historical transformation of the *commedia dell'arte* is the reason why the Italian housemaid differs from her French successor, the French soubrette. *France (...) refined the early rough Colombina into the dainty Columbine*<sup>14</sup> – wrote Alardyce Nicoll in *World Drama*. The French soubrette has become more sophisticated and elegant, wiser and wittier. She had, therefore, undergone a certain evolution, experienced also by Marianne in *Pierrot le fou*. The opening sequences introduce us to a meek girl who in the course of her acquaintance with Ferdinand starts showing her true face. True, the evolution of Columbine is one from vulgarity to finesse, while in the case of Marianne it runs an opposite course, from calmness and subtlety (the conversation held in a car about life that is not a novel) to cynicism and hypocrisy (the glance at the camera during the stay on an island, betraying her true feelings), but it is the very fact of experiencing a transformation and becoming someone else that is essential.

Just as the Italian comedy so the *tragicomedy dell'arte* is a *sui generis* masquerade. The assumption of masks and the constant changing of the protagonists' names comprise a curious ritual of becoming immersed in mystery and altering identity. Columbine too takes part in this ritual – first she is Pasquella, then Pierette, while upon another occasion she becomes Ricciolina. Similar conversions of identity, although rather in the metaphorical sense, are experienced by Godard's Marianne when Ferdinand calls





her by using the names of the female characters in a book he is currently reading: Marianne becomes Cassandra or Virginia. Her new name always predicts danger and is an ominous spell whose victims ultimately include Pierrot. Here is another parallel between Columbine and Marianne – their fondness for changing costumes. Marianne does so with genuine expertise, very often, and always imperceptibly for the spectator. Nicoll noted that Columbine had plenty of clothes, beginning with a housemaid's casual attire and ending with a stunning white dress known from pantomime<sup>15</sup>. Finally, both women share an outright tragic love for the hapless Pierrot.

The Godardian *tragicomedy dell'arte* is, however, not merely a configuration of mysterious masks and complicated personalities but living people enacting their *lazzi*. Fleeing from Paris, the tragicomic couple, Marianne and Pierrot, incessantly takes part in assorted comic episodes. Just like the protagonists of the true *commedia dell'arte* they constantly “stage” for the spectator assorted images. Take the example of the scene at a petrol station, with both demonstrating grotesque bravura, the scene enacted in a port – a politically *engagée* story of a Vietnamese woman and an American man, or, finally, the sensually danced and performed song about the *fate-line* and the *thigh-line* (*Ma ligne de chance, ta ligne de hanche*). The *lazzi* collection includes additional takes in which Pierrot displays assorted facial expressions (the cigarette smoked in Marianne's Parisian home or the face of an old man speaking about the necessity of describing *la vie toute*

*seule*). Naturally, this is a direct reference to the tradition of Pierrot as a pantomime actor and thus to *lazzi* enacted by Pedrolino<sup>16</sup>. *Lazzi* presented by Marianne and Ferdinand obviously feature a comic trace derived directly from the *commedia dell'arte* albeit always accompanied by tragic overtones. Each scene in which they take part intensifies the tangle of ill-fated circumstances, thus creating a situation without a solution. Escaping from Paris they become involved in car thefts, shoot-outs, gun smuggling and unhappy love, which becomes the reason for their ultimate tragedy.

The *commedia dell'arte* tradition entails clever sayings (*bons mots*) and jokes. Both Pierrot and Marianne are skilful adversaries in verbal duels and witty *tête-à-têtes*. They are also capable of conducting serious conversation (such as the one on the island, when they discuss their life needs). Even stronger than *via* the *bons mots* they are linked with the *commedia dell'arte* by eroticism, which in the film is realised more in the verbal stratum than the visual one. Riding in a car, Marianne tells Ferdinand: *I am kissing you all over*. On a moonlit beach she requests: *Let's make love*. Pierrot, enthralled by her body, sings: *Ta ligne de hanche*. Their words appear to be desultory but they contain an immense emotional load. Mutual erotic fascination can be depicted by citing Konstanty Miklaszewski's description of the erotic element in the *commedia dell'arte*: *Cult of the body, passionate eroticism, monstrous entanglement of dirty intrigues, pandering, adultery, jokes, expressions and gestures more than ambiguous – such is*

the indecency of the *commedia dell'arte*<sup>17</sup>. This was the appearance of a world revealing its affiliation with Godard's world of the *tragicomedy dell'arte*, full of dishonest gangster business affairs, false love and a genuine imbroglio of human destiny.

*Commedia dell'arte*, known also as *commedia popolare*, was intended mainly for a wide audience composed of commoners. It was compelled, therefore, to embark upon assorted issues of interest to this particular social stratum. Nonetheless, numerous features held dear by the public were ridiculed as befits a comedy (e.g. the lascivious behaviour of the soubrettes or the brutality of certain *zanni*). In a similar manner, the *tragicomedy dell'arte* mocked the mass culture of the 1960s (by way of example, the colourised takes in the scene of the party held by the *Espressos* deride the guests' captivation with pop culture). Godard, however, did not allow his *tragicomedy* to reach a member of the audience in such a facile way as the *commedia dell'arte* did. It is much more difficult to detect more profound meanings in his text but elements subjected by the director to a negative evaluation can be discerned rather easily.

*Commedia dell'arte*<sup>18</sup> is a professional, well-crafted comedy known also as *commedia all'improvviso*, a theatrical genre whose characteristic feature is improvisation of the text. Godard's *tragicomedy dell'arte* is also somewhat *all'improvviso*. Naturally, improvisation is the domain of the actors – Marianne and Pierrot, whose entire journey from Paris to the south of France is a sequence of improvised incidents and situations. Talking with each other they seem to be playing a curious game intent rather on the aesthetic effect of the statements than on attaining any sort of understanding. The dialogues thus resemble witty and impromptu questions and answers rather than factual conversation, excellently illustrated by a fragment in which Marianne and Pierrot are sailing in a boat and discussing politics. Marianne starts calculating the length of human life into the number of the seconds it contains. Although her numerical tirade possesses certain charm it does not help the conversation to make any progress. Their curious behaviour, those tragicomic *lazzi* that are the product of an impulse, is also improvised. Situations when both protagonists appear as actors seem to be entirely devoid of any sort of rational premises. The theft of a Cadillac at a gas station and its subsequent drowning in the sea by Ferdinand are deeds dictated by some sort of irrational stimuli, hastily improvised situations.

The protagonists of Godard's *Pierrot le fou* are not merely comedians in love. Pierrot as a *zanni* and Marianne as a soubrette are also nimble and agile actors in a *tragicomedy dell'arte*<sup>19</sup>. Writing about Harlequin buffoonery Miklaszewski indirectly offered a characteristic of Ferdinand's behaviour: *His poses are composed symmetrically, foolish but witty, vulgar but full of charm, always strange and reflecting the state of the soul in accord-*

*ance with the given situation and theme. Marianne vel Columbine – Miklaszewski wrote further on – is lively and merry, implike and limber, with a lissom body in constant motion*<sup>20</sup>. Marianne and Ferdinand continuously prove how much they match the protagonists of the *commedia dell'arte*. Every now and then Pierrot leaps like an acrobat from trees or cliffs, sings and even dances with Marianne, as in the scene when singing *Ma ligne de chance, ta ligne de hanche* they execute a mock *pas de deux*. They are perfect for the parts of Columbine and Harlequin, who – to travesty Nicoll – are bouncing on a stage like a spring and dodging with extravagant gesture<sup>21</sup>.

In the *tragicomedy dell'arte* Pierrot, heir of the Renaissance Pedrolino, becomes a character endowed with truly Romantic features. Storey calls him a *fallen angel*<sup>22</sup>, someone who suffers from inner unrest, succumbs to Romantic melancholy, experiences a spiritual rent, and is doomed. Godard's Ferdinand is familiar with such moods. The world in which he has found himself endlessly provides him with reasons to feel torn apart and to steer his fate towards an ultimate catastrophe. Looking into the rear view mirror of his car he utters the symptomatic words: *...I see the face of a man who's about to drive over a cliff at a hundred kilometers an hour*. His Romantic nature is also confirmed by a scene in which together with Marianne he lies on a beach bathed in moonlight. Harlequin and Pierrot also frequently pursued love affairs with their soubrettes in moonlight or rendered it the theme of poetic metaphors. Storey too mentioned this fact, thus simultaneously confirming Pierrot's Romantic nature<sup>23</sup>.

In Godard's film, Ferdinand changes and evolves just like Harlequin who in the *commedia dell'arte* becomes Pierrot. From a passive husband attending flashy receptions he becomes Pierrot – Marianne's mad lover. He is closer to Pierrot or Harlequin due to the fact that he writes and turns into a tragicomic author whose diary describes his equally tragicomic life. In this manner he starts to resemble Pierrot as a poet from a French children's song<sup>24</sup>.

Finally, yet another similarity between the Italian comedy and the *tragicomedy dell'arte* realised, however, not within the diegesis of the film but due to the specific function fulfilled by the director, Jean-Luc Godard, who in the context of the *tragicomedy dell'arte* became its initiator and director performing the part of the *concertatore* supervising the play. In this capacity Godard also proposed the *scenario*, in which, according to Nicoll, he sketched the plot and determined its climax<sup>25</sup>. First and foremost, Godard was the author of the screenplay to *Pierrot le fou* (borrowing only little from a novel by Lionel White). We are entitled to assume that the *scenario* was not particularly detailed since numerous scenes appear to be improvised (just like the *lazzi* in *commedia dell'arte*, barely marked in the *scenario*). Moreover, Godard-*concertatore* took care that the key scenes were sufficiently

accentuated so that eventually they could transmit meanings granted by the director (in the same way the *concertatore* distinguished elements of the plot).

Ferdinand-Pierrot is no longer a mere protagonist of the *tragicomedy dell'arte*. As a comedian, he becomes the participant of events transpiring in a strange and grotesque world, which Storey described as *le monde pierrotique*<sup>26</sup>. Pierrot strides a world that is recalcitrant and bizarre<sup>27</sup>. This is also the way Ferdinand behaves when he begins to live *as if in an adventure story*. His entire activity seems to stem from a curious (although probably unconscious) need to fill the surrounding world with original events and words. This specific *horror vacui* is the reason why the essence of the acts carried out by Ferdinand-Pierrot – all those thefts, assaults, heists and murders – is a multiplication of a clown's jokes. Ferdinand's journey to the south of France constantly supplies him with new opportunities for performing *lazzi*. His conduct assumes clownish features. When it produces only laughter it becomes a clown's performance; moments later it is an ordinary masquerade (the theatrical scene enacted in a port by Ferdinand and Marianne wearing Vietnamese and American costumes). As a rule, however, Ferdinand proves to be the protagonist of a Harlequinade, a comical and tragic, grotesque and ironic *Pierrotade à la Godard*. Pierrot envisaged by Jean-Luc Godard proves to be the servant of Death<sup>28</sup> (he kills Marianne), but also its victim (after all, he too will soon die). He is naive and pitiful, embroiled in a sequence of tragicomic situations crowned by his absurd demise. The *Pierrotade* in which he participates or rather which he creates possesses a specific Godardesque character. After all, not always did Pierrot's sad adventures end in his death. *Pierrot le fou* produces such a tangle of various circumstances that the only possible conclusion of the main protagonist's story proves to be his death (just as in classical tragedy). This is why the *Pierrotade* constructed by Ferdinand is a *Pierrotade à la Godard* – it runs its course and ends in accordance with the poetic of this director's films.

Finally, here is Mikhail Bakhtin: *Popular masks (...) never perish: not a single plot in Atellan, Italian or Italianized French comedies provides for, or could ever provide for, the actual death of a Maccus, a Pulcinello or a Harlequin. However, one frequently witnesses their fictive comic deaths (with subsequent resurrections). These are heroes of free improvisation and not heroes of tradition, heroes of a life process that is imperishable and forever renewing itself, forever contemporary – these are not heroes of an absolute past*<sup>29</sup>.

#### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Epic and Novel*, in: idem, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, transl. Caryl Emerson, Michael Holquist, Austin – London 1981, p. 36.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibidem.
- <sup>3</sup> Robert F. Storey, *Pierrot. A Critical History of a Mask*, Princeton 1978, p. 15.
- <sup>4</sup> Cf. ibidem, p. 17.

- <sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 114.
- <sup>6</sup> Cf. ibidem, p. 22.
- <sup>7</sup> Arthur Symons, *Aubrey Beardsley*, London 1898, pp. 20-21.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibidem, p. 21.
- <sup>9</sup> The use of the expression "product of the theatre" is intentional since *commedia dell'arte* is not drama *sensu stricto* and a written play but rather the product of the actor, the costume designer or the stage machinist.
- <sup>10</sup> Cf. Julian Lewański, *O komedii żywej*, introduction to: Konstanty Miklaszewski, *Komedia dell'arte, czyli teatr komedianów włoskich XVI, XVII, XVIII wieku*, transl. Sława and Michał Browiński, Wrocław 1961, p. 5.
- <sup>11</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *The World of Harlequin: A Critical Study of the Commedia Dell'Arte*, Cambridge 1963, p. 84. Cf. also: Allardyce Nicoll, *The Development of the Theatre: A Study of Theatrical Art from the Beginnings to the Present Day*, New York 1927, p. 108.
- <sup>12</sup> Konstanty Miklaszewski, op. cit., pp. 51-53.
- <sup>13</sup> Example after: Robert F. Storey, op. cit., p. 27.
- <sup>14</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *World Drama: From Aeschylus to Anouilh*, New York 1961, p. 197.
- <sup>15</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *The Development of the Theatre*, op. cit., p. 107.
- <sup>16</sup> Robert F. Storey, op. cit., p. 25.
- <sup>17</sup> Konstanty Miklaszewski, op. cit., p. 81.
- <sup>18</sup> *Arte* in Italian means not only art but also: skill, profession, handiwork.
- <sup>19</sup> Cf. Konstanty Miklaszewski, op. cit., p. 110.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p. 116.
- <sup>21</sup> Cf. Allardyce Nicoll, *The Development of the Theatre*, op. cit., p. 108.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ange déchu*.
- <sup>23</sup> Storey listed titles and quotes from books confirming Pierrot's condition as a Romantic fond of the mood of a moonlit night (with a slight dose of irony), e.g. the title of the play by Nolant de Fatouville: *Arlequin, empereur dans la lune* (op. cit., p. 24) or the words of Pierrot from another drama: *I could never be such a fool as to agree that the moon is a world. The moon, the moon! Morbleu! And the moon no bigger than an omelette of eight eggs!* (op. cit., p. 25).
- <sup>24</sup> The lyrics of this song depict a sad and despondent clown-poet:  
*Au clair de la lune  
 Mon ami Pierrot  
 Prête-moi ta plume  
 Pour écrire un mot.  
 Ma chandelle est morte  
 Je n'ai plus de feu.  
 Ouvre-moi ta porte  
 Pour l'amour de Dieu.*
- <sup>25</sup> Cf. Allardyce Nicoll, *The Development of the Theatre*, op. cit., p. 105. Cf. also: Guy Braucourt, "Pierrot le fou" ou les héros de Jean-Luc Godard, "Études cinématographiques" 1967, vol. 57-61, no. 59; Konrad Eberhardt, *Jean-Luc Godard*, Warszawa 1970.
- <sup>26</sup> Robert F. Storey, op. cit., p. 73.
- <sup>27</sup> Cf. ibidem.
- <sup>28</sup> Robert F. Storey suggested this function was also fulfilled by Pierrot by referring to the title of Champfleury's *Pierrot, valet de la Mort* (op. cit., p. 114).
- <sup>29</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, op. cit., p. 36.