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The Neo – baroque Film adaptations of Wojciech Jerzy Has

This presentation is a response to a remark of a disgruntled viewer that the films directed by the outstanding Polish filmmaker Wojciech Jerzy Has (1925 – 2000) actually constitute one and the same movie. Paradoxically, this condescending and shallow observation captures precisely the neo – baroque morphogenesis of Has’s cinema. To cinema cognoscenti Wojciech Jerzy Has, trained originally as a painter, has been familiar since the 1960s as the director of the esoteric, black and white, *Rękopis znaleziony w Saragossie* (Saragossa Manuscript, 1965) and the intriguing color film *Sanatorium pod klepsydrą* (The Hour – Glass Sanatorium, 1973), an adaptation of short stories by a Polish – Jewish writer Bruno Schulz. Indeed, all Has’s feature films are adaptations of novels by Polish, Scottish and French writers. The director’s neo – baroque films provide a site for his cultural polemic with the writers hailing from various cultural backgrounds.

I explore the enfolding continuum of all Has’s films as a neo – baroque cinematic artifice: a Wunderkammer – like labyrinthine junkyard situated at a crossroads of Modernity’s looping spatial and temporal paths; an arch – fold which runs from linguistic expression through visual complexity of the cinematic montage to the rich materiality of reality, from the title of Has’s first film *Pętla* (Loop/Noose 1957), to the images of gigantic sea – shells in the end of his last movie *Niezwykła podróż Baltazara Kobera* (The Tribulations of Balthasar Kober, 1988) How Wojciech Jerzy Has connects in his films the theatricality inherent in the neo – baroque experience with its fundamental exaltation of otherness is best understood through the lens of Christine Buci – Gluksmann’s “baroque reason”. The director employs neo – baroque as an “anti – proprietary expression” invoked by Monika Kaup and C.A. Salgado’s neo – baroque’s conciliatory capacity inherent in the assimilation of marginalized influences by the discourse of the center.