

THE PAINTED BIRD



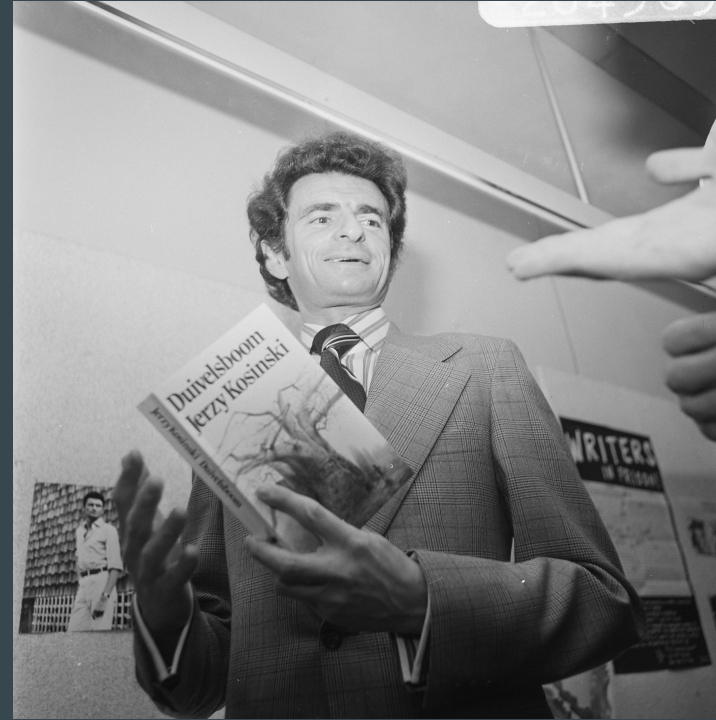
Lisa Delepine et Quittery Mingasson

Jerzy Kosiński (1933-1991)

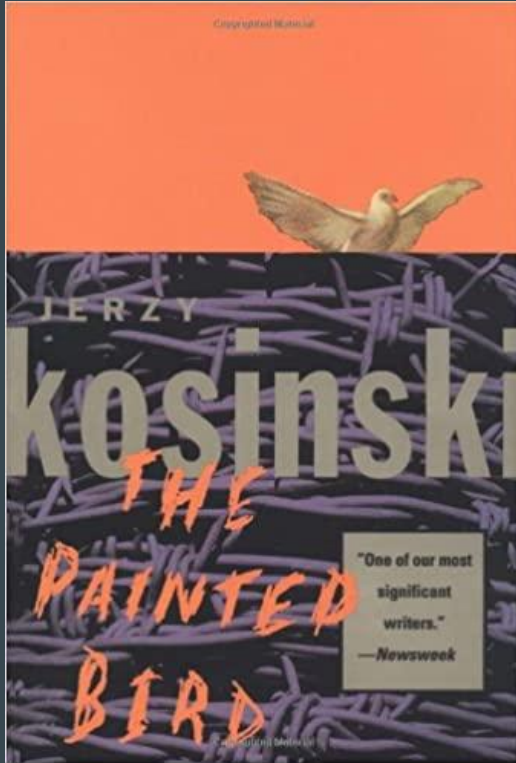
He was born in Poland. During the World War II, he was separated from his parents, and hidden by farmers in the country. After the war, he went back in Lodz and studied political sciences. In 1957, he went to the United States. He became a novelist and professor in the most prestigious American University (Yale & Princeton).

He became a recognized novelist after writing « The Painted Bird ». He received several prizes : National Book Award (1969), distinction of the National Institute of Arts and Letters (1970).

He wrote another well-known book, Being There (1970), but the book made scandal because the author was accused of plagiarism. In may 1991, he killed himself at his house, in New-York.



The Painted Bird



This novel was written in 1965. This is the story of a boy considered as a Gypsy or Jewish during the World War II. His parents sent him in a small village for his safety. He went from village to village where he lived through horrific events every time.

This is a first narrative story, the young boy tells his own story. This is the reason why the book is overwhelming, all the horrors and tortures that he endured and that he saw are described in detail.

Review and Controversy

After its publication, the book divided the critics because of the interpretation of the testimony. On one hand, the book was seen as a autobiography and on the other hand, as a literary fiction. The author himself left doubts around the autobiographical nature of the book in his interviews. Later he declared that the novel is a “pure fiction”

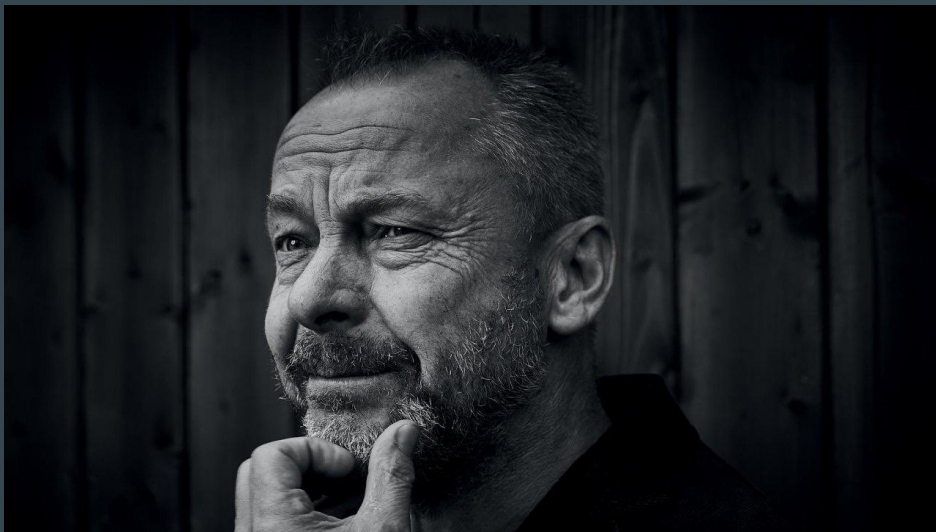
*“Of all the remarkable fiction that emerged from World War II, nothing stands higher than Jerzy Kosinski’s *The Painted Bird*. A magnificent work of art, and a celebration of the individual will. No one who reads it will forget it, no one who reads it will be unmoved by it.”*

*Review by Jonathan
Yardley*

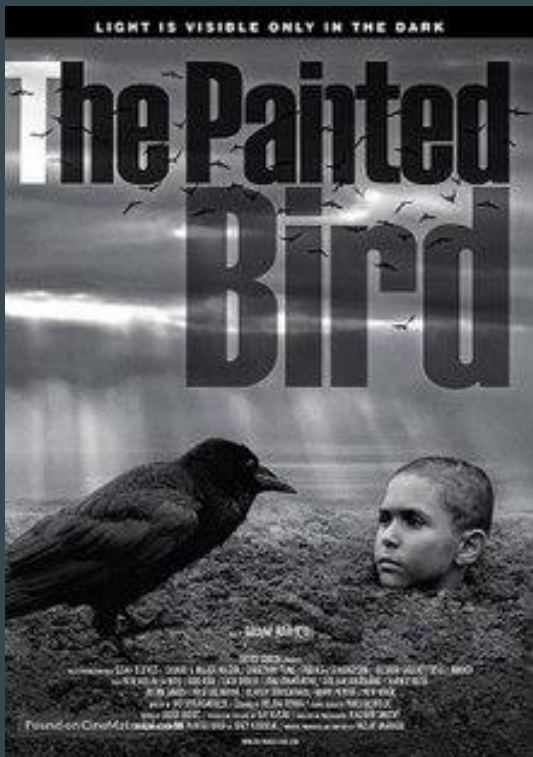
Václav Marhoul

He was born on January 30, 1960 in Prague. He is a Czech film director, screenwriter and actor. He studied at Prague 's FAMU. He was graduated in 1984. After that, he devoted several years to the Prague Five Theatre Association to the art group Tvrdohlaví, but

principally to film studies in Barrandov. In 1997, he founded the company Silver Screen, which is mainly devoted to the production of Czech feature films. The company signed for special events, such as support for the Czech Republic's accession to NATO in 1998 or the Victims of Communism event in 2005. Moreover, Václav Marhoul is involved in Sklep theater and occasionally performs in films and television series, for example : Skřítek, Redakce, Horák. He is a member of the Presidium and the Supervisory Board of the Czech Academy of Film and Television. In 2003, he was successfully included among the directors. He directed his first film "Mazany Filip" based on Raymond Chandler's book. Then in 2008 his second film "Tobruk" was premiered. He also directed « The Painted Bird », that was a success.



The Painted Bird (film)



Václav Marhoul announced his intention to adapt Jerzy Kosiński 's novel « The Painted Bird » in 2012. The film entered in production in 2017. The film was shot in 7 phases. The shoot ended in July 2018. The film had his worldwide premiere at 76th Venice International Film Festival on September 3, 2019.

The film is really faithful to the text, and the scenes of horror are well represented. Moreover, there are very few dialogue that emphasizes the heavy atmosphere.

PROMINENT SCENES



This scene was quite shocking because the young boy only had fever, and Olga decided to bury him. She said that it was a mean to bring out the evil that he had inside himself. People thought that the Gypsies and Jews and the evil inside themselves.

Extract from Chapter 2 p.43 :

I turned my head from side to side, loosening the earth around my neck. But my movements only made the birds more curious. They surrounded me and pecked at me wherever they could. I called loudly, but my voice was too weak to rise above the earth and only seeped back into the soil without reaching the hut where Olga lay.

Extract from Chapter 4 p.54

And with a rapid movement such as women use to gouge out the rotten spots while peeling potatoes, he plunged the spoon into one of the boy's eyes and twisted it. The eye sprang out of his face like a yolk from a broken egg and rolled down the miller's hand onto the floor.



In this scene, the violence is shown without any contrivance. We see the man putting the spoon into the worker's eyes, and the eyes rolling down onto the floor. He did that because the worker had sex with his wife. Later the little boy brought back the eyes to the worker. After, he promised to himself to remember everything he saw.



Extract from Chapter 9 p.105

“Sometimes at night people traveling on the trains to the crematories would toss their small children through the windows in the hope of saving their lives. Now and then they managed to wrench up the floorboards and determined Jews might force their way through the hole, hitting the crushed stone track-bed, the rails, or the taut semaphore wire”.

The young boy saw Jews escaping from a train that was going to concentration camps. This scene was violent because the boy could see what would happen to him if he was arrested by the Germans.

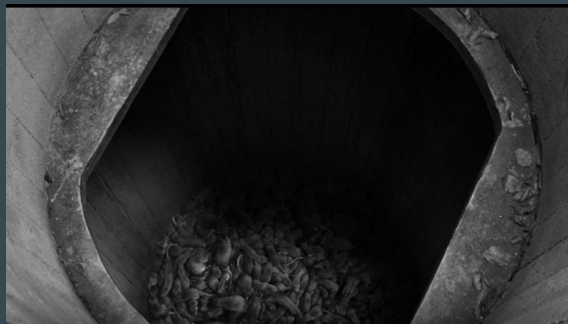


Extract from Chapter 11 p.132

Garbos climbed on a stool, lifted me high, and told me to grab a handle with each hand. Then he left me suspended and brought Judas into the room. On his way out he locked the door.

Extract from Chapter 6 p.75

The massive body of the carpenter was only partly visible. His face and half of his arms were lost under the surface of the sea of rats, and wave after wave of rats was scrambling over his belly and legs.



In the movie, this scene is a mix of several chapters.

Indeed, the carpenter from the chapter 6 and Garbos from chapter 11 were mixed.

In the book, it is the carpenter that is thrown in the bunker and not Garbos.

Garbos is one of the worst character. He tortured the young boy, while he makes the priest believe that he takes care of him.

The priest was the only “friend” of the young boy.

The scene of the Kalmuks is very violent.

They destroyed the entire village, put fire to houses, killed almost everybody and raped women.



Extract Chapter 15 p.172

He rode his horse in circles and then neatly lifted off the ground a naked woman brought to him by the others. He made her sit astride the horse in front of him, and facing him. The horse broke into a faster trot, the rider pulled the woman closer making her lean her back against the horse's mane. At every lunge of the horse he penetrated her afresh, shouting triumphantly each time.

The painted bird refers to the cruel custom of painting a bird's wing before releasing it among its fellow birds, that do not recognise it. Kosinski claims to have observed this custom during his youth in Poland.

This scene is important because it also refers to the child immersed among humans who don't recognize him as one of them because of the colour of his skin.

The boy is dehumanized along all the text. The fact that we don't know his name, that he's always beaten by the others, that he is « welcomed » only to work and be as a slave, all the insults that he received, make the reader, but also the character himself, think that he's is not a human.



Extract from Chapter 5 p.65 :

“The painted bird circled from one end of the flock to the other, vainly trying to convince its kin that it was one of them. But, dazzled by its brilliant colors, they flew around it unconvinced. The painted bird would be forced farther and farther away as it zealously tried to enter the ranks of the flock. We saw soon afterwards how one bird after another would peel off in a fierce attack. Shortly the many-hued shape lost its place in the sky and dropped to the ground”.

CONCLUSION OF THE NOVEL

At the end of the war, the Red Army came in the village where the young boy was. The soldiers took him under their wing. The boy became passionate by the Soviet Union and Stalin. They promised him that if he didn't find his parents, they would come to take him.

He was taken to an orphanage. His parents found him. But the boy couldn't be happy because his heart hesitated between the Soviets and his family. He finally chose to go with his parents.

Opinion

We found this book interesting because we have a different vision of the Holocaust. Indeed we have the point of view of a boy that is on the run. However, the child didn't have a peaceful childhood.

All the horrors that are described in the book are really hard to read. And in the movie, really hard to see, as we can see in the extract of this review.

“Vaclav Marhoul's grim and violent adaptation of Jerzy Kosinski's novel The Painted Bird lived up to its controversial billing at the 2019 Toronto Film Festival after a notorious Venice bow by prompting a mass walkout at Bell Lightbox on Wednesday night.”

Christos Tsirbas for Hollywood Reporter