

WISE Poland

presents

POLITICS TAUGHT TO MY GRANDCHILDREN A Bildungsroman about Europe

W.I.S.E. is a montage of incongruous stories and perspectives, of different shapes and spaces. It was born from a European discussion on the theme of politics – the hopes, the dreams and finally the contradictions of Democracy. Over sixty ‘witnesses’, born between 1926 and 1949 and hailing from four geographically representative countries (Italy, Germany, UK, Poland), have offered their own political biographies, and have thus laid the foundations for the twelve chapters of this novel about our continent – a place very much like a forest, where to get lost is to find oneself.

The chapters dedicated to Poland are:

Chapter IV - EVERYTHING HAS ITS TIME by Katja Van Der Ropp

After 30 years, two ‘veterans’ of the 80s protests find each other again in the empty Grand Theatre of Lodz, tentatively trying to pick up their story from where they left. The echoes of their past, its colours and its sounds invade their backstage tour and transform their meeting in a wistful remembrance of things past, a heightened but always sincere melodrama about age, about a world that changes only to remain the same, about last chances.

Chapter VI – TODAY’S TRUTH IS TOMORROW’S LIE by Heidrun Kaletsch

Lucja, a university student currently working for the Karta Archive, pays a visit to Jan, a retired professor, to interview him about several recordings of Solidarity meetings that he recently consigned to the institute. The tension between the two rises as her thoroughness and ambition threaten to shed a light on past events that have been kept silent up until now. A taut drama where the ideologies of two different generations collide, highlighting the cracks that run through the concept of Truth.

Chapter XI – DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES

by **Sonia Antinori**

The 2010 Smolensk plane crash triggers the fever dream of a young Polish woman, separated from her country by the ash cloud of the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull that is blocking the flights of all Europe. Her obsession with the 'great black pit of History' and all the faceless victims it has swallowed gradually takes hold of her words and leads her into an oneiric liminal territory. A past that is not entirely her own invades her hotel room in between visitations from her father and grandmother's shadows.

A poetic exploration of the Katyn Massacre of 1940.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The bildungsroman that the project W.I.S.E. aims to build through its chapters has as a protagonist the European citizen, who experiences a journey through political awareness. This design is clearly reflected in the evolution that the political discourse undergoes along the sequence Chapter IV – Chapter VI – Chapter XI. It would be superfluous to state this, were it not for the fact that this production, firmly trusting in the self-evidence of such a plan, took the liberty of staging the plays in a different order.

The rationale behind this decision is the wish to give cohesion to the performance as a whole, by making the three texts stations in a progressive deconstruction of fiction. The dramatic structure will gradually shed its layers to exhibit its worn wreck, dwindling into a ghost that insists on standing.

Similarly, in each Chapter the persistence of memory will manifest itself as the persistence of three different kinds of ghosts.

The starting point is the traditional, four-walled intimacy of Chapter VI, which fosters the unfolding of the dialogue as the real protagonist – a lacework of tense conversation and silences. The ghostly presence here will take the shape of a portrait, looming large above the characters and their words, mute but undeniable.

Next is Chapter IV, which is very much aware of its own style and theatricality. It is, among other things, an exercise in the suspension of the audience's disbelief. The ghost of this episode is the ghost of a youth long gone but that cannot be erased from the faces and the eyes of the duettists. The echo of a large empty theatre booms all around them, as loud as the life that it once used to contain.

Finally, Chapter XI presents a situation where categories such as space, time and dramatic cohesion lose their sharpness without compromising the play's sensuous vividness. 'Remnant shadows', as the play calls them, will summon a theatre of Memory, rising among the earth and the little precious mementos that filled the voiceless mouths of Katyn.

Giacomo Lilliù