

## *Life Below the Equator*

An interview with **Krzysztof Warlikowski** by Piotr Gruszczyński

*(A)pollonia, The End and African Tales After Shakespeare. Three plays whose scripts draw inspiration from Coetzee's texts - Elizabeth Costello, In the Heart of the Country and Summertime. Do you remember the first book by Coetzee that you read? What was it and when did you read it?*

It all began before *(A)pollonia*. I was looking for a new style, not so much a new style of writing, but of my dialogue or contact with a viewer. I started reading *Elizabeth Costello*, which is not actually a novel but a collection of lectures, and each lecture is an amazing monologue. That is what hit me in this book: the new form which is further from fiction and more straightforward. I realised that such monologues and other non-monologues would be perfect for theatre. These monologues would take us outside the theatre, which is what I wanted to get away from. I also suspected that this was what the Polish audience needed: a straightforward message, shared experience of what one hears, reflection and diagnosis of that shared experience. A lecture serves this purpose best.

**When I think of you and Costello, who is Coetzee's mask, and who might be one of your masks, I see a relation to what you call an irresponsible fantasy, or more exactly: to responsible irresponsibility. A lecture allows for statements bordering on scandal, forms and situations in inverted and hanging commas. If you are brave enough, you can play *va banque*, breaking every societal norm.**

All of Costello's lectures are very special to me, because they are permeated with psychology and are tinged with emotionality. They are not just dry, scathing speeches. They are placed within a specific context – age, disappointment, artistic compromise and the madness of someone who used to ask fundamental questions and could not find the answers. It is also of great significance to me that they are spoken by a person born South of the equator.