

Christopher Ian Smith on *Diagnosis*

*Diagnosis* is a remarkable work, a dreamlike drift that charts a path through the psyche of the Polish city of Lodz. We are told in the opening titles, it was once ‘a wondrous city of factories and revolutions’, a city that once prospered as a socialist, industrial hub. However, over recent times it has faced many economic, social and cultural challenges. As a study of a place, *Diagnosis* abstains from any kind of chronology or biography, instead we are merely offered glimpses of unfulfilled dreams and hints of a difficult past.

Through birds-eye-view drone photography and slow tracking shots, this subjective perspective on Lodz offers a view of the city as planners and architects had once seen it. These urban scenes offer a counterpoint to the beating heart of the film – observational, personal stories from a selection of the city’s inhabitants, each juxtaposed with moments of psychoanalysis that provide the film’s framework. This is a call and response investigation into the film’s main characters’ personal stories, connections with the city and interactions with others. Our patients are asked to answer questions without thinking: If this city was an animal, what would it be? If this city was a colour, what would it be? If this city was a gender...

What appears initially to be a psychogeography of the city develops into a beautiful, tender and tragic discourse on personal relationships – one most prominently focused (perhaps unsurprisingly, given its basis in psychoanalysis) on the complexities of the parent-child bond. The film’s characters reveal how their interdependence with others has shaped their lives in the city: The man who cares for his Alzheimer’s afflicted mother, the doting father anxious that he is unable to fulfil the expectations of his role, the older woman haunted by a moment of disconnection between her father and her 6-year-old self.

*Diagnosis* is a portrait of a city explored through the humanity of its residents. They are voices both together and alone, networks of experiences, collective memories imprinted on the city’s bricks and mortar.

Now lie down comfortably. Relax. Breathe deeply...

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