

AGNIESZKA SZPILA
HEKSY

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You are holding a torpedo of a book in your hand. Take a comfortable seat in your armchair. Its energy, humour and rebelliousness will awaken your mind and change your thinking.
Olga Tokarczuk, 2018 Nobel Prize winner

Anna Szajbel is the CEO of the state-owned oil company and a sworn scoffer of ecologists and their efforts to protect the environment. One night, however, the tables turn as Anna is caught making love to a tree. The incident, while delivering a mortal blow to her career, brings Anna to a life-changing discovery: for years, she's been deceived by her husband whose lies ruined her life.

The truth leads Anna to a mental breakdown and, in consequence, a dissociative personality disorder. As a result, she is no longer just Anna Szajbel, the former CEO of an oil company. Suddenly, her delusions – or maybe spirit possession – take her to the Duchy of Nysa, governed by radical Catholic bishops. There, she meets Mathilde Spalt, the 17th-century 'Earthen One' who is less interested in worshipping the Heavenly Father and more in Mother Earth and Her daughter the Elder Virgin. Mathilde lives with other women in the woods, having given up on her previous values and comforts.

When the Church decides to cut down the forest to chase the women away, they declare a long-overdue war. The flame of madness that connects Anna Szajbel to Mathilde Spalt and other women is the flame of the stakes that devoured the women who dared to think and feel differently. **HEKSY is a post-porn, ecosexual tale of the new, feminine and intimate, not institutionalised, religion:** of loving everything that belongs to Earth, of sexual relations with Earth's fruit sand roots and the fight against the gynocide conducted by the Church who keeps punishing women for rejecting the patriarchal and religious order along with the values of the bourgeoisie.

AGNIESZKA SZPILA is a writer, screenwriter, activist, ecofeminist and cultural expert. In 2005 WAB published her debut book *ŁEBKI OD SZPILKI* in which she told the story of the "silent

FICTION / NOVEL

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twins” - her daughters, Milena and Helena, and her fight against God, doctors, the Polish social system and her daughter's disability. Three years later she wrote her first novel BARDO, which was a bestseller also published by WAB. Now, she is working on her fourth book (third novel) „DIS” for the same publisher and a screenplay “HEKSY” for Dramatyczny Theatre in Warsaw.

In 2023, Canal+ will present the TV series based on Agnieszka Szpila’s script “The Strange Angels” in which she tells the story of the ghosts of German women raped by Russians and Polish at the end of the Second World War who come back to push their female Polish ancestors to know their real heritage and supernatural skill connecting to their blue blood.

PRAISE

« Szpila's prose – part erotic, part psychiatric – is, above all, obsessed and wild. In my entire reading life I have never come across an equally radical feminist vision. Putting aside male fantasies and looking solely at more or less contemporary references such as Marie Darrieussecq, the author of cult *Pig Tales*, Charlotte Roche shocking the bourgeoisie, striking Carmen Maria Machado, we see that their erotic imagination is confined within boundaries which Szpila transgresses from the get-go. »

Kazimiera Szczuka (the most famous polish literary critic, literary historian, university teacher, feminist and political activist)

« As the American poet and activist Audre Lorde wrote: ”The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house”. *Heksy*, Agnieszka Szpila’s newest book, is the quintessence of this attitude, an attempt at finding a new language and brand new tracks for the imagination. » **Aleksandra Nowak** – Journalist, editor-in-chief of the feminist magazine "G'rls ROOM", interested in broadly understood culture, in particular issues related to cinema, women's creativity and sexuality. In addition to writing and editing texts, she also conducts discussions and workshops as well as activities in social media. She cooperates with various magazines, organizations and cultural institutions.

« One can try comparisons with Olga Tokarczuk or Manuela Gretkowska, but *Heksy* is much more radical and unpredictable... » **Grzegorz Wysocki** – Journalist and publicist for "Gazeta Wyborcza". Author of many interviews (including Makłowicz, Chwin, Wałęsa, Palikot, Urban, Spurek, Gretkowska, Twardoch, Nergal), a series of interviews with PiS voters (the so-called "Kashubian uncles"), reviews of the beginning of the pandemic "Diary of the times of plague". Earlier, i.a. head of WP Opinions, publisher of WPBooks homepage, editor of WP Books, columnist for "Dwutygodnik" and literary critic.

« Agnieszka Szpila’s novel is a fresh and innovative take on a perennial motive of the Call of the Wild Woman. The author cleverly shows links between the patriarchy and the ongoing destruction of nature; female insanity and redemption; the witch hunts and climate change. Acute and contemporary, the story brings a long-needed release of fiery fury towards the destroyers of Mother Earth. » **Agata Czarnacka** (Political philosopher, feminist activist, and writer. She’s an online contributor for the „Polityka“ weekly. In recent years, she co-organized the Black Protest movement in Warsaw and several other social movements. She lives in Warsaw and Paris)

« This revolutionary text restores memory, transforms our female DNA, and demands reinstating all that we have been robbed of.

This literature awakens in us, women, all the wisdom and the power of our female ancestors, it gives us access to goddesses' spaces that seemed to be lost forever (...) It's been a long time since I've encountered a text that would activate in me so much courage in thinking about what theatre can be. For me as a director this change is fundamental: I redefine everything – from the methods of work to understanding social obligations that stand before us – people of theatre (...) *Heksy* fills the gap in our spirituality and gives us material to create new rituals. Rituals for new times. Outside the existing, patriarchal systems of oppression. Outside the Anthropocene. This text bonds us anew with Nature. With Mother. With Earth. Szpila is a Witch. She is a HEKSA”. **Monika Strzępka (Director of the Dramatic Theatre / Teatr Dramatyczny in Warsaw).**