

of the film is the embodiment of simplicity and straightforwardness, as his surname suggests. For this old and decrepit farmer only one more thing remains to be done in life – to generally come to terms with it. At all costs he strives to regain inner balance and harmony with himself. The uncomfortable awareness of life coming quickly to its unavoidable end produces in him a desire to seek reconciliation with his brother, whom he has not seen since he fell out with him ten years earlier. His brother lives a few hundred miles away, but Alvin Straight has poor eyesight and cannot drive a car. Therefore, he hits the road in a grass cutter, travelling at a speed of five miles per hour. He does not give up after the first failed attempt, but tries again. However, this time he is determined to reach his destination. At the end of his journey, Alvin takes a seat on the veranda next to his equally old and disabled brother in order to regain inner peace together. The view of the starry sky accounts for a sort of narrative brackets because it repeats the very first frame of the film, thus putting the whole story into metaphysical perspective.

Alvin Straight comes across all kinds of people on his way. He sees some of them only for a few seconds, like the cyclists passing him by. He stumbles upon wise, tough inhabitants of provincial towns, who do not treat him patronizingly as a harmless freak. On the contrary, they respect his experience and try to understand his motivation to go on such an exhausting escapade lasting over five months.¹ Lynch introduces self-ironical aspects regarding his earlier pictures, full of queer characters and surrealist situations. In *The Straight Story* the twin brothers who repair Alvin's vehicle exemplify such strange characters. A similar impression is given by the grotesque scene in which a woman driver despairs of always running over her beloved animal species – deer, crossing the road every time she ever happens to drive there. Highly grotesque as the scene might be, it is very plausible.

Straight is aware of the fact that there is no one to help him with his probably last mission he has to fulfil in life. He purposefully rejects offers of assistance, which would surely make the journey shorter by a few weeks. As the time wears on, the viewer gets to know Alvin's life: his drinking problems, the tragedy of his mentally-unbalanced daughter and the death of his grandchildren, his remorse after the accidental shooting of a fellow soldier during the Second World War. Fragments of his life come through the stories he tells accidental people, who listen keenly and closely. They get attracted by the inexplicable strength of these simple stories, which are at the same time a source of the metaphysical truth about the essence of life. Alvin accentuates every word he says as each of them carries the ultimate wisdom with it. The hero makes long pauses, thus leaving listeners time for thought. As well as telling stories, he can also carefully listen to confessions of other people, who expect from him

¹ The film is based on a true story.

guidelines for further life. Like an ancient sage, Straight dispenses advice. The latest film by David Lynch, like a growing number of others (for example, *Smoke* by Wayne Wang) is a tribute paid to storytelling. It is simple stories that have an extraordinary, purifying power; they are the source of catharsis. Undoubtedly, after watching this picture the potential keen viewer should turn into a different kind of man: wiser, happier, more sensitive, *more prone to understand and feel*.²

² Grant, Jacques 1991. "An Interview with Andrzej Żuławski". *Film na Świecie*, no. 383, 17.