

Polish National Cinema



Marek Haltof



Berghahn Books
NEW YORK • OXFORD

5

The Polish School Revisited



The real weakness of the Polish School of the 1950s, and the reason for its inevitable disappearance, was that its films presented heroes who were more stupid than History. To my mind, it's wrong to stand on the side of History instead of on the side of your hero.

*Andrzej Wajda*¹

The true birth of postwar Polish cinema had been anticipated long before the canonical films of Kazimierz Kutz, Andrzej Munk, Andrzej Wajda, and others. The term "Polish School" was coined as early as 1954 by the film critic and scholar Aleksander Jackiewicz, who expressed his desire to see a Polish School of filmmaking worthy of the great tradition of Polish art. Jackiewicz wanted to see Polish films that confronted local history and addressed social and moral problems. A filmmaker and an influential professor at the Łódź Film School, Antoni Bohdziewicz later employed the name "Polish School" when referring to Andrzej Wajda's debut film, *A Generation*.²

The dramatic political events of 1956 in Central Europe³ prompted changes in Polish arts. After the workers' riots in Poznań against the communist regime in June 1956 and Władysław Gomułka's return to power in October of the same year,⁴ the impatience and the desire to see the effects of the Polish October were overwhelming. Some of the writers who had produced ghastly Stalinist works emerged reborn as the champions of the new, the first to unmask the atrocities of Stalinism. The disappointment with the Stalinist period, the urge to represent reality's complex nature, and the desire to confront issues that had functioned as taboos in the Polish political as well as cultural life created a stimulating atmosphere for young filmmakers. Their works were expected to play an important role in the political changes introduced after the October of 1956. The new era was eagerly awaiting its debut in films.

The Polish School Phenomenon

The eruption of artistic energy and the emergence of the new wave of filmmakers in Poland after 1956 is usually described as the Polish School phenomenon. When discussing particular national schools of filmmaking or film movements, critics customarily look for works that were produced within a given period by a group of filmmakers who shared the same generational experiences, and whose films embrace a number of thematic and stylistic similarities. Is this the case of the Polish School phenomenon?

Stanisław Ozimek, a Polish film historian, states in his seminal work that the Polish School "was the first discernible ideological and artistic formation in the history of national cinema."⁵ He meticulously enumerates the characteristic tendencies within the school, and proposes the following periods to describe the phenomenon: (1) the initial period (1955–1956), in which the new tendencies are only indicated, hidden under the crust of socialist realist poetics; (2) the proper period (1957–1959), during which filmmakers mostly focus on the themes of war and occupation, and situate their works within the context of the Polish romantic tradition; (3) the phase of crisis (1960–1961), characterized by the classic style and the personalization of presented themes (the importance of the plebeian protagonist); (4) the final stage (1962–1965), distinguished by superficial references to the school's poetics, as well as by the polemic concerning the school's thematic obsessions.⁶ A number of scholars tend to agree about the period of the origins of the school, situating it either in 1955 (the release of Wajda's *A Generation*) or in 1956 (the Polish October). There is no agreement, however, concerning the decline of the school. The majority of scholars locate the end of the Polish School phenomenon earlier than Ozimek, in 1961,⁷ 1962,⁸ or 1963.⁹

Traditionally, scholars deal with a multiplicity of styles. During the Polish School period, they catalogued the major thematic and stylistic properties present during this outburst of authorial expressions. Stanisław Ozimek, for instance, distinguishes the "romantic-expressive" tendency represented at its best in the films of Andrzej Wajda, *Kanał* (*Kanal*, 1957), *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958), and *Lotna* (1959); the "rationalistic" tendency embodied in the films by Andrzej Munk, *Eroica* (1958) and *Zezwane szczęście* (*Bad Luck*, 1960); and the "psychological-existential" trend present in the films of Wojciech J. Has, Stanisław Lenartowicz, and Jerzy Kawalerowicz.¹⁰ Another scholar, Aleksander Jackiewicz, differentiates between the romantic and plebeian traditions in Polish cinema. The first is represented by Wajda and Munk, the second by Kazimierz Kutz and other Polish filmmakers.¹¹

As evidenced by the number of categories listed above, it is difficult to discuss the Polish School phenomenon in terms of thematic and stylistic similarities. Unlike the tedious era of Stalinist cinema, the Polish School period is characterized by differing themes, incompatible poetics, edginess in terms of style and ideology, as well as sheer entertainment value.

The multiplicity of aesthetic tendencies, the various authorial expressions, and the open character of the school make defining or summarizing it an arduous task. One has to take into account films set during or immediately after the war, which debate the Polish romantic mythology, and works that belong to different realms: historical epic (e.g., *Krzyżacy* [*Teutonic Knights*, 1960, Aleksander Ford]), comedy (e.g., *Ewa chce spać* [*Ewa Wants to Sleep*, 1958, Tadeusz Chmielewski]), war drama (e.g., *Wolne miasto* [*Free City*, 1958, Stanisław Różewicz]), psychological drama (e.g., *Prawdziwy koniec wielkiej wojny* [*The True End of the Great War*, 1957, Jerzy Kawalerowicz]), metaphysical drama (e.g., *Matka Joanna od Aniołów* [*Mother Joan of the Angels*, 1961, Kawalerowicz]), Holocaust drama (e.g., *Biały niedźwiedź* [*White Bear*, 1959, Jerzy Zarzycki]), the "new wave experiments" (e.g., *Ostatni dzień lata* [*The Last Day of Summer*, 1958, Tadeusz Konwicki]), black comedy (e.g., *Munk's Bad Luck*), eastern (e.g., *Rancho Texas* [1959, Wadim Berestowski]), and others. The different, sometimes contradictory, approaches are discernible even if one analyzes films made by the same director. Films such as the neorealist *Krzyż Walecznych* (*Cross of Valor*, 1959) and the new wave (in spirit) *Nikt nie woła* (*Nobody Is Calling*, 1960), both directed by Kazimierz Kutz, or the expressionistic *Zimowy zmierzch* (*Winter Twilight*, 1957) and the war drama *Pigułki dla Aurelii* (*Pills for Aurelia*, 1958), both directed by Stanisław Lenartowicz, belong to different realms and represent disparate film poetics.

The ambiguous criteria pertaining to the Polish School and the lack of an aesthetic program articulated by the young filmmakers allow scholars either to limit the number of films to a small group of selected examples or to consider all of the films made during the period in question. Opting for the former approach, Tadeusz Miczka writes arbitrarily that out of 138 feature films released between 1957 and 1963, only 30 belong to the Polish School. According to Miczka, they are distinguished by the "strategy of the psychotherapist" employed by their makers, chiefly Munk and Wajda, who "deeply influenced the social consciousness since they helped to free the national mythology from mystification and lies, permeating the socialist realist poetics."¹² Other scholars, myself included, are more cautious, and choose to depart from the narrow interpretation, preferring instead to observe the complexity of the phenomenon and analyze the various means of expression that appeared during the Polish School period. Marek Hendrykowski discusses not "the school" but "the artistic formation," and stresses that "the term Polish School has been treated ahistorically so far, that it is eliminating by definition, firstly, the moment of internal evolution of the formation and, secondly, the multiplicity of tendencies and styles of its artistic explorations."¹³ Hendrykowski asserts that the artistic formation known as the Polish School was open, multifaceted, evolutionary, polyphonic, and dialogic, and was created by many authors (including directors, scriptwriters, cinematographers, actors, composers, and set designers).¹⁴ Another scholar, Ewelina Nurczyńska-Fidelska, theorizes that the Polish School, as a uniform cultural marvel,

did not exist; instead, we are dealing with the emergence of *auteurs* who initiated a serious artistic and intellectual dialogue with their viewers, and who reflected the spirit of the times in their works.¹⁵

Undoubtedly, it is more feasible to discuss the Polish School period in terms of its authors and the generational change of guard. The Polish School had been created primarily by a new generation of filmmakers—the so-called “generation of Columbuses” (*Kolumbowie*)—born in the 1920s and embodied by the two young poets Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński and Tadeusz Gajcy, who died a soldier’s death during the Warsaw Uprising of August to October 1944.¹⁶ Maria Janion, a Polish expert on romanticism, states that this was “the generation marked by the trauma of war and death ... born under the unhappy, perhaps cursed star.”¹⁷ The young filmmakers were united in their disenchantment with the socialist realist dogma and the simplistic aesthetics of their older colleagues. They were attempting to break with their teachers, mostly prewar left-wing filmmakers and activists whom they interestingly never acknowledged, and trying to forget their own film initiation under the auspices of socialist realism. They turned to recent history, to World War II and the postwar situation, leaving the Stalinist period virtually untouched.¹⁸ The images of Polish history and present-day reality that they produced for the screen disturbed the Polish communist authorities.

The political changes introduced after the Polish October enabled the young filmmakers to move away from socialist realism and, to a large extent, to build their films around their own experiences. Polish literature, traditionally the source for almost half of Polish films, played an even more important role in the late 1950s and at the beginning of the 1960s.¹⁹ Unlike the prewar period, which favored adaptations of literary classics, the Polish School filmmakers preferred novels and short stories published after 1946 by their contemporaries: Jerzy Andrzejewski, Kazimierz Brandys, Bohdan Czeszko, Józef Hen, Marek Hłasko, Jerzy Stefan Stawiński, and others.²⁰ For example, some of the canonical works by Andrzej Wajda and Andrzej Munk, *Man on the Track*, *Kanal*, *Eroica*, and *Bad Luck*, are based on scripts by Jerzy Stefan Stawiński. This coauthor of the Polish School’s success drew on his firsthand experiences as a soldier in the September campaign of 1939 against the invading Germans. He spent time in a POW camp, from which he successfully escaped, committed himself to underground political activities, participated in the Warsaw Uprising, and, after its collapse, was interred in another POW camp. Reflecting Stawiński’s personal experiences, the films made by the Polish School generation bring to light the unrepresented fate of the Home Army members—the truly national resistance against both German and Soviet occupying forces—which fought under the command of the Polish government-in-exile based in London. These films also portray the humiliating military defeat in 1939, the occupation, the Warsaw Uprising, the futility of the armed struggle, and the Polish romantic mythology.

Organizational Changes

The revival of Polish cinema in the late 1950s was helped by a number of organizational changes that had already begun before the Polish October. Starting in May 1955, the film industry in Poland was based on a film units (*Zespoły Filmowe*) system, a new and efficient way of managing film production.²¹ Each film unit was composed of film directors, scriptwriters, and producers (along with their collaborators and assistants), and was supervised by an artistic director, with the help of a literary director and a production manager. Film units were considered state enterprises yet had some rudimentary freedoms; thanks to them, a number of the Łódź Film School graduates quickly achieved strong positions in the national film industry.

In 1957 there were eight such film companies in operation, among them the film unit *Kadr*, which was instrumental in developing the Polish School phenomenon. *Kadr* was headed by Jerzy Kawalerowicz, with Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz (until 1957) and (later) Tadeusz Konwicki as literary directors, and Ludwik Hager as a production manager. Among its members were Andrzej Wajda, Andrzej Munk, Janusz Morgenstern, and Kazimierz Kutz. Other film units included Ludwik Starski’s *Iluzjon* (with directors such as Wojciech Jerzy Has, Sylwester Chęciński, and Jerzy Passendorfer), Jan Rybkowski’s *Rytm* (Stanisław Lenartowicz, Stanisław Różewicz), Aleksander Ford’s *Studio* (Ewa and Czesław Petelski, Janusz Nasfeter), Wanda Jakubowska’s *Start* (Jan Batory, Maria Kaniewska), Jerzy Zarzycki’s *Syrena*, Jerzy Bossak’s *Kamera* (formerly known as “57”), and Antoni Bohdziewicz’s *Droga*. The literary directors included some of the most prominent writers: Anatol Stern, Stanisław Dygat, Tadeusz Konwicki (himself a renowned filmmaker), Jerzy Stefan Stawiński, Roman Bratny, and Jerzy Andrzejewski.²²

The year 1955 also marked the creation of the Central Film Archives (Centralne Archiwum Filmowe) in Warsaw, known today as the National Film Archives (Filmoteka Narodowa). In 1956 the Central Office of Cinema (Centralny Urząd Kinematografii; established in 1952) was replaced by the Chief Board of Cinema (Naczelny Zarząd Kinematografii), part of the Polish Ministry of Culture.

The new policy affected the distribution of films as well. Since April 1958, Polish movie theaters were obliged to screen short films (animated, documentary, or educational) before the main feature, a factor of great consequence for the future of Polish short films.²³ In 1956 there were 2,881 cinemas in operation. Between 1957 and 1961, this number increased significantly (by almost 20 percent), and by 1961 Poland had 1,490 cinemas in the cities, 1,709 in rural areas, and 333 mobile cinemas. This period also marked the appearance of the first cine-clubs (as many as 170 in 1961), which played a vital role in promoting international art cinema in Poland; they often screened films not distributed in mainstream cinemas due to political censorship.²⁴

Political events in the mid-1950s—the post-Stalinist thaw and its aftermath—also affected film distribution. Comparatively liberal politics allowed the Polish film industry to produce and import genre cinema and entertainment films from Western Europe and America. The Film Repertoire Council (Filmowa Rada Repertuarowa), an advisory body initially headed by Jerzy Toeplitz, was founded in 1957. This council was responsible for recommending foreign films. During the late 1950s, the number of films imported from the West increased at the expense of films from the communist countries; between 170 and 180 films from twenty-two countries were released in Poland annually, with local films making up 12 percent of the market.²⁵

The new repertoire policy was characterized by its careful balance between art cinema and popular cinema. The times also required a careful geopolitical equilibrium—half of the films had to come from Soviet bloc countries. For example, the films shown on Polish screens in 1960 consisted of 42 Soviet, 27 French, 21 American, 20 Polish, 18 English, 17 Czechoslovak, 9 Italian, 6 East German, 5 Swedish, and 5 Yugoslavian films. The rest were films from Japan, West Germany, Mexico, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Austria, Argentina, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, China, and North Korea.²⁶ In spite of the dominance of Soviet films (almost half of the Soviet annual production was present on Polish screens), the repertoire was rich and included the most interesting aspects of world cinema.

Immediately after World War II, the appearance of every Polish film constituted a cultural event. Local films had an average audience of about 4.7 million viewers. Between 1950 and 1955, however, the average attendance at Polish films dropped to 2.6 million. In the second part of the 1950s, Polish films regained their popularity, and although attendance was never as high as immediately after the war, they drew more than 3 million viewers per film.²⁷ Total annual cinema attendance was the highest immediately after the 1956 Polish October, with 231 million viewers. Later, despite the number of successful Polish films, the diversity of imported films, and the increased number of cinema theaters, there was a slow decline of cinema attendance: 205 million viewers in 1958, 195.5 in 1959, 186 in 1960, and 179.6 in 1961. As in other European countries, the increasing impact of television was partly to blame for the declining numbers. In 1957, for example, there were 22,000 television sets in Poland; only four years later, there were as many as 959,000.²⁸

Polish films, always popular with local audiences, were starting to receive international acclaim, and were winning a number of awards at various film festivals. The awards include two Silver Palms at Cannes for *Kanal* and *Mother Joan of the Angels*, Grand Prix for *Ewa Wants to Sleep* at San Sebastian, FIPRESCI award for *Ashes and Diamonds* at Venice, Golden Lion at Venice for *Świadectwo urodzenia* (*The Birth Certificate*, 1961, Stanisław Różewicz), FIPRESCI award at Venice for *Nóż w wodzie* (*Knife in the Water*, 1962, Roman Polański), and Grand Prix at San Francisco for *Jak*

być kochaną (*How to Be Loved*, 1963, Wojciech J. Has). During the same period, Polish documentary filmmakers (e.g., Kazimierz Karabasz) and filmmakers specializing in animation (e.g., Witold Giersz, Walerian Borowczyk, and Jan Lenica) were also being recognized abroad and winning awards at numerous film festivals.

Influences

Starting in the mid-1950s, a split developed between young emerging filmmakers, trained at the Łódź Film School, who believed in a genuine depiction of vital national themes, and older filmmakers, including Aleksander Ford and Wanda Jakubowska, who opted for cinema imitating the Soviet epic models. The young filmmakers clearly favored the Italian neorealist approach, which offered them a chance to break with their predecessors and reflect the spirit of the de-Stalinization period. Reproached by the communist authorities during the time of the reigning socialist realism, Italian neorealism became the alternative to the portrayal of falsified reality. Although often absent on Polish screens, major works of neorealist cinema were shown during closed screenings at the Łódź Film School.²⁹

Neorealist influences are already discernible in some of the films made in 1954 (discussed in the previous chapter): *Five Boys from Barska Street*, *A Night of Remembrance*, and *Under the Phrygian Star*. Wajda's *A Generation* heralds the Polish School phenomenon, and remains an example of a transitional work fusing the poetics of socialist realist films with neorealist observation. The film tells a "coming-of-age" story set during the war. Its protagonist, an ordinary streetwise character from a poor district of Warsaw, Stach (Tadeusz Łomnicki), joins the communist resistance when he meets and falls in love with an underground communist courier, Dorota (Urszula Modrzyńska). In the film's finale, Stach leads the underground unit after Dorota is arrested.

A Generation, based on Bohdan Czeszko's novel about Gwardia Ludowa (People's Guard), the communist military resistance formed in 1942, is a work tainted by political compromise. It remains, by and large, a socialist realist film influenced by the neorealist style. Like Czeszko's novel, Wajda's film is heavily stereotyped and rewrites recent Polish history from the communist perspective. It contains a distorted picture of the occupation in Poland with its black-and-white portrayal of the different factions of the underground—the nationalist Home Army members are stereotyped as "collaborators" and "pseudopatriots," and the communist People's Guard members are vaunted as the "true patriots." The film also reverses the proportions of the Polish underground: the role of the communist underground is exaggerated at the expense of the Home Army. Like other socialist realist works, Wajda's film also has its "positive" working-class hero in the center, who acquires the correct (Marxist-Leninist) knowledge about history thanks to the guidance of the experienced communist

activists. *A Generation* is less schematic than classic socialist realist films: "It successfully combines an expression of an acceptably optimistic social and political position with true lyricism, an idealization of personal experience, of remembered attitudes," rightly observes Bolesław Sulik.³⁰

The straightforward story of *A Generation*, set in the working-class milieu, was shot mostly on location with young, unknown actors, who were to become familiar faces of the Polish School cinema: Tadeusz Janczar (1926–1997), Zbigniew Cybulski (1927–1967), Tadeusz Łomnicki (1927–1992), and Roman Polański (b. 1933). The opening tracking shot of the film introduces a familiar setting from a number of Italian neorealist films: an impoverished Warsaw suburb with shacks and barren industrial buildings. The viewer sides with the most complex character in this film, Janek Krone (Tadeusz Janczar), the prototype of Wajda's heroic protagonist: doubtful, troubled, and tragic. At first, the character of Janek appears to provide a contrast to the socialist realist hero, Stach. But Janek is multidimensional and ambiguous, and ends up dying an unnecessary, "absurdly heroic death."³¹ This type of character anticipates other film personae such as Maciek Chełmicki in *Ashes and Diamonds*.

The realistic depiction of the war and the postwar reality was a natural reaction against the sugarcoated poetics of socialist realism. There were both stylistic and ideological oppositions created by the Łódź Film School graduates, who wanted to manifest a personal, auteurist approach after the Stalinist period during which the author had been silenced and only the system had a voice. The dose of realism, enormous by Polish standards in the mid-1950s, was often unbearable for the censors, who reacted in several cases; they were harsher toward contemporary realistic films than films dealing with recent history. Jerzy Zarzycki's *Lost Feelings*, for example, was withdrawn from the screens soon after its release. The premieres of two other, lesser known films, *Koniec nocy* (*The End of the Night*) and *Miasteczko* (*Small Town*), both collectively directed, were delayed. The former, made in 1956, was released in December 1957; the latter, produced in 1958, premiered in March 1960.³²

The End of the Night,³³ *Lunatycy* (*Sleepwalkers*, 1960, Bohdan Poreba), and *Lost Feelings* all deal with the themes of juvenile delinquency and hooliganism, which were "discovered" approximately at the same time by Polish documentary filmmakers. From 1956 to 1959, about twenty films of the so-called "black series" were made, beginning with Jerzy Hoffman and Edward Skórczewski's *Uwaga, chuligani* (*Attention, Hooligans*, 1955). In contrast to the socialist realist mode of representation, this and other documentary films portrayed the negative aspects of life as well. These facets—hooliganism, prostitution, and alcoholism—were never mentioned in the previous era. Particularly known are documentaries by Kazimierz Karabasz and Władysław Ślesicki, *Gdzie diabeł mówi dobranoc* (*Where the Devil Says Good Night*, 1957), and *Ludzie z pustego obszaru* (*People from Nowhere*, 1957). The title of the latter became a description of the criminal sphere of life.

Ewelina Nurczyńska-Fidelska applies the term *czarny realizm* (literally, "black realism") to a group of realistic, yet stylistically different, films including *The End of the Night*, *Small Town*, *Lost Feelings*, *Sleepwalkers*, *Winter Twilight*, *Damned Roads*, and *Pęta* (*Noose*, 1958, Wojciech J. Has).³⁴ They formed the Polish version of Italian neorealism and, as Nurczyńska-Fidelska suggests, were characterized by a dark presentation of reality and stylistic as well as thematic borrowings from American *film noir*. In the context of Polish politics during the 1950s, every attempt at representing the darker side of everyday life became explicitly a political act. Hooliganism, for instance, was not portrayed exclusively as a social malady; instead, it was presented as an indirect accusation of the communist system.³⁵

Damned Roads, directed by Czesław Petelski and based on Marek Hłasko's short story, frequently and deservedly appears in Polish critical works as the main example of "black realism." The film, set after the war in the sparsely populated Bieszczady Mountains (in southeastern Poland), deals with a group of brutal, rootless men working as logging truck drivers. *Damned Roads* also serves as an example of a socialist realist film about production *à rebours*. It lacks the didacticism of the previous era. The characters populating the screen (played by Emil Karewicz, Leon Niemczyk, Roman Kłosowski, and others) are clearly anti-model workers—daredevils known only through their pseudonyms, shipwrecked people driving old rickety trucks.³⁶ Although there is one Communist Party member among them, Zabawa (Zygmunt Kęstowicz), sent there to supervise the production plan, he has nothing to do with the Stalinist heroes. His wife Wanda (Teresa Iżewska), the only female in this male-oriented world, the equivalent of a *film noir* femme fatale, dreams of escaping from this god-forsaken place with any willing man from the base.

Kurt Weber's cinematography aptly captures the gloomy scenery of the portrayed reality and stresses its fatalistic and claustrophobic aspects. Even the optimistic ending, which features new trucks coming to the base for the two remaining truck drivers, does not weaken this film's overwhelmingly pessimistic tone. Criticized in 1959 by some film reviewers for its dark portrayal of an animal-like existence, and by Hłasko himself for the addition of a happy ending that is not present in his short story (he withdrew his name from the credits), *Damned Roads* remains to this day one of the darkest pictures of the "bright communist reality."

A number of filmmakers adopted influences apart from neorealism in order to free themselves from the stiff corset of socialist realist poetics. For instance, *Winter Twilight* and *Noose*, labeled as "black realist" films, situate themselves on the margin of mainstream Polish cinema by relying on expressionistic devices and mood. *Winter Twilight* portrays a small town somewhere in the eastern part of Poland. Its episodic narrative structure (Tadeusz Konwicki's script) focuses on an old railwayman, Rumsza (Włodzimierz Ziemiński), who is disappointed with his son Józek's choice of a wife. Józek (Bogusz Bilewski) marries a woman

from outside the small community after finishing his military service. The film's plot is suggested rather than developed; the atmosphere remains more important than the action. With the help of Mieczysław Jahoda's cinematography, Stanisław Lenartowicz (b. 1921) creates delicate mood and intimacy. The reliance on stylized flashbacks into the pre-war period, the use of symbolism and expressionistic imagery, the observation of local customs and rituals produce a place that did not exist previously in the socialist realist world. Film critic Stanisław Grzelecki notes that "on the rubble of socialist realism spins what was cursed before: metaphors and symbols, moods and half-tones, dreams and fogs ... indistinct life at small railroad stations."³⁷ This film's symbolism and expressionist devices, however, were criticized by the majority of Polish critics. Interestingly, Lenartowicz objected to the labeling of his film as "expressionistic," considering expressionism as a distinct and closed period in film history.³⁸

Noose, another expressionistic film, deals with alcoholism and portrays a single day in the life of an alcoholic young man, Kuba (Gustaw Holoubek). It is a film about the impossibility of escaping fate, about a reckless drive to destruction that ends in suicide. The action of *Noose* is limited to the protagonist's room and several streets that resemble a nightmarish landscape peopled by weird characters. The city serves as a reflection of Kuba's anxieties and his state of mind, which is on the verge of collapse. As in other films by Has, small objects, such as the clock and the black telephone, have important roles and virtually become characters in this film.

In *Noose* and his other works, Wojciech J. Has ignores history and politics, that fateful fascination of Polish cinema; he does not take political stands, and trusts his own imagination. He has always been unreceptive to artistic and political fads and the current polemics surrounding Polish film. He looks for universal themes and universal settings. "I reject matters, ideas, themes only significant for the present day. Art film dies in an atmosphere of fascination with the present," declares Has in a 1981 *Kino* interview.³⁹ Like Wajda's, Has's scripts are based on well-known works of literature, yet he always transforms them with his easily recognizable visual style. In his works made during the Polish School period—*Noose*, *Pożegnania* (*Farewells*, 1958), *Wspólny pokój* (*Shared Room*, 1960), *Złoto* (*Gold*, 1961), and *How to Be Loved*—Has does not present typical Polish romantic heroes. His characters do not rebel or fight, and history seems to ignore them. The world they inhabit is built of their own dreams, fantasies, and fears. They live as if outside of history and time, trapped in a surreal reality. "The protagonists remain paralyzed by internal defeat; their world passes with cruelty, madness, and beauty, but this is a simulated movement, a simulated time," explains Piotr Wojciechowski.⁴⁰ *How to Be Loved*, Has's classic film based on Kazimierz Brandys's story, is slightly different. It offers a female perspective on the war. The protagonist Felicja (Barbara Krafftówna) finds love more important than national duty, and she pays a heavy price for it.



Figure 5.1 Barbara Krafftówna and Artur Młodnicki in *How to Be Loved* (1963, Wojciech J. Has)

World War II

Realistic depictions of the post-Stalinist reality did not constitute the main trend during the Polish School period. The primary concern remained history, World War II in particular. For the filmmakers, the "point of reference is not the historical reality," says Andrzej Werner, "but the notions that surround it, those mythologized forms of comprehension."⁴¹ The Polish School filmmakers did not introduce just a single perspective on recent Polish history. Instead, they offered polemic voices and a variety of cinematic styles. The atmosphere of the post-Stalinist thaw enabled them to deal with several taboo topics, such as the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 and the fate of the Home Army fighters.

The differences in the treatment of history can be seen in a number of films polemic to the then official version of history and to each other. For example, two films dealing with the Warsaw Uprising, Andrzej Wajda's *Kanal* and Andrzej Munk's *Eroica*, both scripted by Jerzy Stefan Stawiński, portray two visions of this both cherished and criticized moment in the Polish past.⁴² The majority of Polish scholars discuss these and other films in the context of the local romantic tradition as the works inspired by and debating this legacy. Scholars frequently juxtapose Wajda's romanticism and Munk's rationalism, comparing Wajda's dramatic characters, torn

between their sense of duty to the nation and their personal happiness, to Munk's commonsensical, pragmatic protagonists.⁴³

Andrzej Wajda, a proponent of the Polish romantic tradition, deals with the national history in his most important works made during the Polish School period. "Wajda's films are pervaded with the intention of interpreting the manifestations, the features and the social functions of the national mythology," writes Ewelina Nurczyńska-Fidelska.⁴⁴ His protagonists are caught by the oppressive forces of history and function as its unfortunate victims. Wajda's breakthrough film, *Kanal*, concerns the final stage of the Warsaw Uprising. It narrates the story of a Home Army unit that manages to escape German troops via the only route left—the city sewers.⁴⁵ From its opening sequence, *Kanal* depicts a bleak vision of defeat. The voice-over narration introduces the leading character-insurgents, offers laconic comments on them, and tells the viewers that they are watching the last hours of the characters' lives. Since the viewer is told that there is no hope for the protagonists, the film's dramaturgy relies on "how" rather than "what." The main part of the film is set in the Warsaw city sewers, in which the majority of the fighters meet their deaths. The choice of this unusual environment largely explains the use of expressionistic lighting and claustrophobic camera angles, as well as the darkness of the set. The setting of the action, expressionistic in style, is also surrealist in spirit. It is a nightmarish underworld permeated by madness, death, and despair—full of dead bodies, German booby traps, and excrement.



Figure 5.2 Tadeusz Janczar and Teresa Izewska in Andrzej Wajda's *Kanal* (1957)

Kanal offers an allegory on the agony of the city and the annihilation of its inhabitants. From a contemporary perspective, however, it is easy to point out the film's historical inaccuracies, for example, that the Red Army was watching on the other bank of the Vistula River when the uprising was suppressed by the Germans. In a defensive comment, Wajda explains:

the only thing that may strike one is the absence of one element, namely "force of circumstances" (let us leave it at that, in inverted commas) which precipitated the drama; but I can see no way of presenting this on the screen until the problem has first been sorted out by the historians on the basis of the evidence. Anything that I might suggest going on my own conjectures would be merely nebulous hypothesis.⁴⁶

The Warsaw Uprising is a controversial subject in Poland to this day, and the release of *Kanal*, the first film to portray the legendary uprising, sparked passionate debates. In the film, Wajda neither glorifies the uprising, as was expected by the majority of his countrymen in 1957, nor does he criticize the official communist stand on the "liberation" of Warsaw by the Soviet troops. Instead, he stresses the patriotism of the Home Army soldiers, their sense of duty, and their heroic yet futile effort. They gain sympathy as ill-fated casualties of the war and the victims of political manipulations. Certainly, *Kanal* is not a paean to the Home Army heroes, but rather a film demythologizing Polish-style heroism. The commanding officer of the company of insurgents, Lieutenant Zadra (Wiercystaw Gliński), voices his doubts: "With small arms and hand grenades against tanks and planes. We'll never learn." His second-in-command, Lieutenant Mądry (Emil Karewicz) responds: "Orders are orders. Stop rationalizing."⁴⁷ Earlier in the film, after listening to an officer say "we'll be hailed by posterity. They won't take us alive," Zadra bitterly responds: "That's right, the Polish way!"

The Warsaw Uprising is also the central focus of the first part of Andrzej Munk's *Eroica: Scherzo alla Polacca*, released eight months after *Kanal*.⁴⁸ It is a tragic-grotesque film that depicts a different, everyday face of Polish heroism stripped of romantic myths. The film introduces an unusual (by Polish standards) wartime antihero, Dzidzius Górkiewicz (Edward Dziewoński). He is an opportunist, a black-market dealer, and an accidental hero of the uprising. This protagonist is not a brave, doomed soldier as one might expect, but rather a suspicious civilian. Acting as a mediator between the Home Army command in Warsaw and the Hungarian army unit, which is stationed near his house at the outskirts of Warsaw, Munk's protagonist serves the uprising. But his motivations are not ones cultivated by the Polish romantic tradition.

Rafał Marszałek writes that Poles learned the ideals of sacrifice and martyrdom from their tragic eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history, which resulted in the standardization of the national past. This history has affected Polish "patriotic art," which is characterized by a combination of idealism and naturalism, and by a reliance on pathos, national symbols,



Figure 5.3 (From the left) Barbara Połomska, Edward Dziewoński, and Leon Niemczyk in Andrzej Munk's *Eroica* (1958)

and allegories.⁴⁹ Munk's film introduces characters facing the same problems as Wajda's insurgents, yet their actions are devoid of the romantic aura. The director clearly separates himself from the dominant national mythology, and offers a bitter satire on Polish-style heroism—pejoratively known in Polish as *bohaterszczyzna* (heroism for the sake of it).

Munk's film *Zezowate szczęście* (*Bad Luck*, aka *Cockeyed Luck*, 1960), also scripted by Jerzy Stefan Stawiński, belongs to the same tradition. Set between the 1930s and the 1950s, it introduces another perspective on history that is atypical for Polish cinema. The film's protagonist, Jan Piszczyk (Bogumił Kobiela), is a Polish Everyman who desperately wants to play an important role in the course of events, yet, with no luck on his side, becomes another victim of history.⁵⁰ Piszczyk is an antihero—a moronic opportunist and an unreliable narrator who relates the sad story of his life. In six flashbacks he presents himself as "the eternal plaything of history whose pranks he subjectively interprets as 'bad luck.'"⁵¹ The mixture of generic conventions (from burlesque to political satire) helps Munk to portray Piszczyk as the victim of political circumstances—totalitarian systems (communism and fascism) and the war—and an oppressive childhood. Munk's tale about the failure of political mimicry may be perceived as a very Central European story. This model had an impact on other films, for example, Péter Bacsó's *A tanú* (*The Witness*, produced in 1969, released in 1978), a Hungarian film set during the Stalinist years that introduces

another hapless opportunist clashing with political circumstances beyond his understanding.

* * * *

The discourse on recent Polish history permeates a number of other films made during the Polish School period. Andrzej Wajda's *Ashes and Diamonds* and Kazimierz Kutz's *Nobody Is Calling* deal with the fate of the Home Army soldiers at a time when World War II was practically over, but fighting continued between the Soviet-imposed communists and the nationalist Home Army, the two warring factions in Poland. Both films explore similar themes, yet present them in a disparate manner.

Ashes and Diamonds is generally regarded as the climax of the Polish School. It is considered the world cinema classic that "tamed communist Poland for the Western viewer, rendering it palatable, acceptable."⁵² But when this film was made, it was attacked by the communist establishment and by Aleksander Ford, who contested its alleged "counterrevolutionary nature." The film was poorly received at the official state meeting of the film commission. It was only because of another screening organized for Communist Party intellectuals by the author of the adapted book, Jerzy Andrzejewski, that the film's release had any success.⁵³

The film takes place in a small provincial town "somewhere in Poland" with its action beginning on 8 May 1945, a date that symbolically signals the end of the war. Its action is largely confined to the Monopol Hotel, where the official preparations to celebrate the end of the war are being made by the authorities. Because of the unity of place and time (the bulk of the film is set at night) and the thespian conflict of choices, the film can be considered a classical drama. The story concerns the Home Army fighter Maciek Chełmicki (Zbigniew Cybulski), who carries out his superiors' orders and assassinates the new district secretary of the Communist Party, Szczuka (Wacław Zastrzeżyński). *Ashes and Diamonds*, however, does not portray a personal conflict, but rather a conflict of opposing political forces ("The fight for Poland, the fight for what sort of country it's going to be, has only just started," explains Szczuka at the beginning of the film). The "new Poland" is represented by the Polish communists, the security force officers, the small-town political opportunists, and the Polish and Soviet troops on the city streets. The "old Poland" is embodied by the isolated Home Army fighters and their officers, and by the anachronistic remnants of the prewar nobility and intelligentsia who are ridiculed in the film. Given the political circumstances, Maciek's death is inevitable: Polish soldiers shoot him, and he lies in convulsions in a fetus-like position as death overtakes him on the enormous city garbage heap (perhaps the Hegelian rubbish heap of history).

Maciek serves as another tragic romantic hero torn between duty to the national cause and the yearning for a normal life. The Polish romantic protagonist always solves such a dilemma by considering national matters as

having topmost priority; he knows that he has to sacrifice his private happiness at the altar of national needs. Like other Polish romantic characters, Maciek is a prisoner of a fate that he is powerless to escape. By killing Szczuka, he expects to fulfill his duties to the underground Home Army and to free himself from the war. The girl he meets and falls in love with, Krystyna (Ewa Krzyżewska), offers him a chance to lead a normal life. This is, however, an illusory prospect, since the postwar Polish reality did not welcome people with Maciek's past. In Wajda's film, the Home Army Major Waga (Ignacy Machowski) elaborates on this in his comments to Andrzej (Adam Pawlikowski), Maciek's commanding officer: "And what have you been fighting for? For a free Poland, wasn't it? But was this how you imagined it? You must be aware, lieutenant, that in Poland as it is, the only chance for you and thousands like you is to fight on. Where can you go with your record? In this country everything is closed to you. Except prison."

Ashes and Diamonds depicts a cross-section of Polish society. Unlike the one-dimensional archetype of socialist realist characters, Wajda's protagonists are multilayered and open to interpretation. According to his trademark formula, "lyric protagonists in dramatic situations,"⁵⁴ Wajda makes the anticommunist Maciek a seductive hero who contemplates the "to kill or not to kill" dilemma. The director contrasts the stylized acting



Figure 5.4 Zbigniew Cybulski (left) and Adam Pawlikowski in Andrzej Wajda's *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958)

of Cybulski (Maciek) with the restrained acting of Pawlikowski (Andrzej). Furthermore, Maciek's political enemy, Szczuka, the new party secretary, an ex-soldier of the Spanish Civil War who has just returned from the Soviet Union, is portrayed as a leader with human qualities, not a poster-like exemplar at all: he is aging, fatherly, and tired. In the opening sequence, when Szczuka meets the workers after the first failed attempt on his life, the camera portrays him in the manner typical of socialist realist films, with low-angle shots of him standing in front of the workers who are portrayed, also typically, as a group. Other diverse characters in supporting roles include the opportunist Drewnowski, the apparatchik Świąćki, the alcoholic journalist Pieniążek, and Szczuka's teenage son, Marek, a Home Army soldier captured by the security forces (this story element is not present in the literary source).

Wajda comments on the tragic fate of his protagonist: "The source of his tragedy is that this boy does not accept reality, does not accept history as it is, but history as he has dreamt of it. Precisely speaking, thinking about life, about history, about the country, he uses notions he received as an inheritance from the romantic stream of Polish literature."⁵⁵ Wearing dark glasses ("during the uprising, I stayed too long in the sewers," he explains to Krystyna) and clothing that do not represent the postwar reality, Maciek serves as an exemplary hero of the late 1950s. Polish writer and filmmaker Tadeusz Konwicki writes on Cybulski's rendition of Maciek:

I didn't like him as Maciek in *Ashes and Diamonds* because he reminded me too much of the American actors in fashion at that time—James Dean, Montgomery Clift.... But Home Army bumpkin that I am, it [the film] stuck in my throat. Yes, we had our fashions, fads, modes. But our fashions did not include blue jeans, sunglasses, excessive drinking, neurotic kicks, hysterical sobbing, and short-term love affairs.... We were coarse, common; we wore knickers; we were punctual, reliable, restrained, embarrassed, hungry for death, afraid of one another, mistrustful of the elite, and timid in our feelings, gestures and words. We were simply different, we were simply genuine because we had not yet been reflected in the mirror of art.⁵⁶

Although Cybulski has been frequently compared by Polish critics to Dean, the similarities between the two actors seem superficial. When asked about it, Cybulski said, "Dean had such great individuality that copying him is an unattainable dream. One can copy him in a satirical program, but not in a two-hour film. Besides, I acted in a similar manner in *A Generation*, and I did not know that he existed and I couldn't have known, because his films, as we all know, were made in 1955 and 1956. Comparisons are made because I employ the same acting method...."⁵⁷

Ashes and Diamonds is known for its romantic celebration of doomed heroes and its flamboyant style ("baroque" is the frequently ill-used word in film criticism). Striking visual effects, references to Polish national symbolism, and the ambivalent use of religious imagery characterize the film. The motif of fire in particular, here associated with death, plays an

important role in Wajda's film. In the opening sequence, Maciek's victim is shot in the back, and he catches fire as he collapses against church doors that open, revealing the altar. In another celebrated example, Maciek and Andrzej recall (while at the hotel bar) the years of fighting, during which ideological distinctions were clear. They drink to the memory of their dead companions, lighting glasses of alcohol as blazing memorials to their fallen friends. In the final sequence, the killer and his victim embrace in a grim dance of death, with fireworks bursting suddenly behind them. The fire of Maciek's gun and the festivity's fireworks marking the end of the war provide an ironic and bitter comment on the illusory nature of peace. Wajda also employs symbols taken from Polish art iconography. Some of them border on surreal touches, for example, an upside-down crucifix in a destroyed church that separates the two lovers, Maciek and Krystyna; the presence of a white horse; and the final scene with the Ogiński polonaise played off key. The accumulation of some religious symbols in *Ashes and Diamonds* and the treatment of religion in general are seen by Paul Coates as Buñuelian in spirit.⁵⁸

Unlike Wajda, Kutz portrays surviving heroes who give up their romantic gestures; he is interested in their isolation and loneliness, which is stressed through the composition of frame and the use of the landscape. Although sometimes classified with Munk as representative of the demythologizing trend in Polish cinema, Kutz focuses not on the national mythology but on the everyday, the unheroic, and the plebeian. He is interested not in symbols of national importance but in concrete situations, not in history and the fate of Poles but in detailed observations of human psychology. This treatment of common protagonists is already present in Kutz's well-received debut, *Krzyż Walecznych* (*Cross of Valor*, 1959), which consists of three novellas dealing with ordinary soldiers in ordinary situations. The first one, *Krzyż* (*Cross*), narrates the story of Socha (Jerzy Turek), a soldier from a village who returns home only to find it destroyed. In this new situation, his medals and bravery make no sense. In the second part, *Pies* (*Dog*), a group of Polish soldiers cannot carry out an order to shoot a German shepherd dog, although they have learned that it was used in a concentration camp. The third novella, *Wdowa* (*Widow*), which deals with maintaining myths at all costs, tells the story of ex-soldiers who, after the war, settle in a small town. There they keep alive the mythic presence of their dead military commander, imposing this cult onto his unhappy, young, and beautiful widow.

One of the most original, yet for a long time critically neglected, films made during the Polish School period is Kutz's *Nobody Is Calling*, scripted by Józef Hen and loosely based on his novel.⁵⁹ Kutz admits that his intention was to make a film polemic with *Ashes and Diamonds* since, as he puts it, the protagonist of Andrzejewski and Wajda serves as an example of the very Polish form of stupidity that places the romantic gesture above one's own life.⁶⁰ Maciek's alter ego in *Nobody Is Calling*, Bożek (Henryk Boukołowski), is a Home Army fighter who is hunted by his former colleagues



Figure 5.5 Jerzy Turek in Kazimierz Kutz's *Cross of Valor* (1959)

for an act of military disobedience: his refusal to carry out the death sentence on a communist. He hides after the war in a small town in Poland's western territories (the so-called "Regained Lands"). Among other displaced people, wounded by war and with complex backgrounds, he meets Lucyna (Zofia Marcinkowska) and falls in love with her.

After working together on *Cross of Valor*, Kutz and his cinematographer Jerzy Wójcik (also the cinematographer of *Ashes and Diamonds*) strove to challenge the prevailing aesthetics of Polish films. The episodic, slow-paced story of *Nobody Is Calling* is maintained by means of the ascetic, frequently static black-and-white images. The youth and the physical attraction of the two lovers clash with the gloomy atmosphere of the city, as if to stress that love has been born against the environment or in spite of it. In the course of the love affair, there are fewer and fewer objects within the frame, probably to present the perspective of the lovers, who are completely obsessed with each other and shut out the world. The images of dilapidated walls, empty streets and apartments, decaying window frames, and the devastated postwar landscape register the feelings of the two protagonists and function as their psychological landscape.



Figure 5.6 Henryk Boukołowski in Kazimierz Kutz's *Nobody Is Calling* (1960)

The meticulous composition of frame, the scarcity and repetitiveness of dialogue that is supplemented by Bożek's voice-over narration, Wojciech Kilar's original music (his debut as a composer), and the contrasting acting personalities of Marcinkowska and Boukołowski help to create the new wave-like style of the film. Like Stanisław Lenartowicz in *Winter Twilight* and Tadeusz Konwicki in *The Last Day of Summer*, Kutz searches for a new style and a new language of cinema. *Nobody Is Calling* bears similarities to the later new wave films, chiefly works by Michelangelo Antonioni. In the context of highly politicized Polish cinema, its formalist poetics, bordering on aesthetic provocation, caused consternation among film critics and the disapproval of the film authorities. As a result, voice-over narration that clarifies the action was added, but the shortened film had to wait several years to be recognized as a work of art.⁶¹

Kutz's return to the realistic depiction of World War II with *Ludzie z pociągu* (*People from the Train*, 1961) was greeted with a sigh of relief by Polish critics. The film, set in a small provincial railway station during the war, portrays an "average" day during the occupation, with the familiar psychology of the crowd and accidental heroism. While presenting the mosaic of intertwined incidents and the broad spectrum of Polish society, Kutz depicts gestures devoid of pathos, and relies on detailed observations that may foreshadow the "small realism" of the Czechoslovak cinema in the 1960s. Unlike Wajda, he deheroicizes the protagonists (Kutz's trademark throughout his career) and narrates their stories in a realistic manner, eschewing symbols and metaphors.

The themes of the war and the occupation return in a number of films, not necessarily works entangled in the national debate about the Polish romantic legacy. Frequently, these are reconstructions of well-known military actions that do not refer to the national discussions usually accompanying the portrayal of the armed struggle. Stanisław Lenartowicz, in *Pills for Aurelia*, and Jerzy Passendorfer (b. 1922), in *Zamach* (*Answer to Violence*, 1959), focus on the sensational aspect of the occupation and portray the Home Army actions in the manner of action suspense cinema. For example, the latter film, popular with Polish audiences, reconstructs the actual February 1944 assassination of Franz Kutschera, the commander of the SS and police forces in occupied Warsaw.

The war also features prominently in the films directed by Witold Lesiewicz (b. 1922). *Dezertor* (*The Deserter*, 1958), set during the war in Upper Silesia, concerns the fate of young Poles living in the territories annexed by the Reich who are forced to join the German army. The film is known for its well-used setting of a coal mine, where the main part of the action takes place, and the suspenseful chase sequence in the mine's labyrinths. Lesiewicz's next film, *Rok pierwszy* (*First Year*, 1960), narrates the story of Otryna (Stanisław Zaczek), a communist sergeant left behind the front line who, in the fall of 1944, tries to implement communist rule in a small Polish town. At the militia station, however, the sergeant encounters members of the Home Army, led by the corporal Dunajec

(Leszek Herdegen), who do not support his plans and who are his political opponents. Otryna is unable to convince them to join the new political order, and is powerless to prevent six of them from joining the anticommunist partisans. The conflict in *First Year* is presented as a drama of choices; the personal conflict is related without resorting to black-and-white schematas. A similar portrayal of the psychology of varied characters can be seen in Lesiewicz's subsequent film, *Kwiecień* (April, 1961), a story concerning the soldiers of the Second Polish Army during the final stages of the war (April 1945). Although known chiefly for its epic portrayal of the war, *April* pays tribute to the common soldier, the plebeian soldier introduced by Kutz in his *Cross of Valor*.

Another common character-soldier appears in *Ogniomistrz Kaleń* (*Sergeant-Major Kaleń*, 1961), directed by Ewa and Czesław Petelski.⁶² The film, set in 1946 in the Bieszczady Mountains (in southeast Poland), describes the bloody postwar conflict involving Ukrainian nationalists of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), remnants of the Polish underground fighting the communist government, and regular Polish troops. The protagonist of this "cruel ballad,"⁶³ Kaleń (Wiesław Gołas), is portrayed almost as a folk hero. Not a typical heroic soldier, he experiences torture, betrayal, and the ferocious death of his comrades. The scene of their death at the minefield, where they are pushed by the encircling Ukrainian unit, is one of the strongest scenes in Polish cinema. The setting of the film in the Polish "wild east," its lively action filled with chases and escapes, and its individualistic hero prompted some Polish critics to look for parallels with the American Western genre. The Western conventions, however, seem to be of lesser importance in *Sergeant-Major Kaleń* than those of the Soviet "action film classics," such as the Vasiliev's *Chapaev* (1934).⁶⁴

In Polish history September 1939 symbolizes defeat and betrayal. It also marks the end of an era harshly criticized in postwar Poland. A small group of works set at the outbreak of war include Leonard Buczkowski's *Orzeł* (*The Submarine "Eagle,"* 1959), a film about the escape of an interned submarine; Stanisław Różewicz's *Free City*, the story of the heroism of the Polish postal workers on the first day of war in Gdańsk (Danzig); and the same director's first novella in his three-part *Birth Certificate*. The last portrays September 1939 through the perspective of a child, and introduces an almost archetypal character in Polish cinema, played by Wojciech Siemion: a simple soldier entangled in the meshes of history.⁶⁵

The release of another film, Andrzej Wajda's *Lotna*, stirred a heated national debate in Poland about the representation of the military effort in 1939. Wajda's solemn treatment of vital national concerns sometimes works against his films. The accumulation of national symbols and nostalgic images associated with prewar Poland in *Lotna*—Wajda's farewell to the Polish romantic mythology—appears almost as a mockery of Polish romantic concerns. Wajda's first film in color narrates the story of a mare, *Lotna*, that passes from one ulan to another during the September campaign. The film also features one of the most discussed scenes in Polish

cinema: the symbolic attack on the German panzer troops undertaken by the Polish cavalry. Especially powerful is an image of an ulan hitting the barrel of a German tank with a sabre in an act of desperation.

Made twenty years after the September campaign of 1939, *Lotna* is saturated with images that refer to the national iconography. It resembles a "national chromolithograph" peopled not by full-blooded characters, but rather by clichéd figures performing anachronistic rituals. Wajda's film refers to the patriotic paintings by Artur Grottger and Wojciech Kossak, and employs the stereotypical, almost kitschy, emblems of the "old Poland": an old country manor and an equally stereotypical image of a village; a girl from the manor bidding farewell to her soldier; picturesque ulans parading to face their death; the typical Polish countryside bathed in gold and green. The film features ulans, relics of the Polish romantic myth, and symbols of the Polish soldier up until World War II. Commenting on the importance of the mythology of ulans in Poland, Marian Ursel writes: "The apotheosis of the ulanship and its features led to the almost mythical cult of this formation. The ulan himself became the model to be emulated. The year 1939 caused this myth to be turned into ashes by the steel caterpillar treads of German tanks."⁶⁶

The war also serves as a point of departure for films focusing on the psychology of their characters. This is especially evident in some of the films of Stanisław Różewicz, Jerzy Kawalerowicz, and Tadeusz Konwicki. Różewicz's *Trzy kobiety* (*Three Women*, 1957) could be considered the continuation of Jakubowska's *The Last Stage*.⁶⁷ It is the story of a group of women who are liberated from a prison camp and settle in a small town in the Polish "Regained Lands." This realistic film is about the friendships that survived the war, but are now tested by everyday life.

Psychological war dramas usually narrate their stories with two planes of action. Set in the present, they stress the effects of the war, the inability to communicate and love because of the war. Memories of the war return as nightmarish flashbacks and prevent burned-out protagonists from completely returning to life. Jerzy Kawalerowicz's *The True End of the Great War* serves as a good example of this narrative strategy. It is a psychological study of a woman, Róża (Lucyna Winnicka), and the two men in her life—her emotionally disturbed husband, a concentration camp survivor, and the man she turned to when she thought that her husband was dead. Róża no longer loves her husband, yet she tries to take care of him out of pure compassion. This situation, hopeless for her and the two men involved, ends with her husband's suicide.

Kawalerowicz's intimate film, made in the spirit of the post-October thaw, breaks with the stylistic monotony of socialist realist works, and relies heavily on the use of subjective camera. "The camera seems omnipresent, all knowing, taking often the point of view of one of the characters; the consistently maintained depth of focus gives it an opportunity to display its potential," writes Alicja Helman.⁶⁸ Kawalerowicz explains that he "wanted to give the film a slow, hopeless rhythm which

is the rhythm of the protagonists' lives."⁶⁹ The realistic scenes, set in the postwar conditions, are interrupted by flashbacks into the past, done in an almost expressionistic manner. In the opening sequence, Róża's reminiscences of a happier past are juxtaposed by her husband's recollections of the death camp. The reality of the camp, portrayed from his point of view, is nightmarish and deformed—a reflection of his suffering as well as his psychological and physical disintegration.

Tadeusz Konwicki's films also move between the present and the past. He attracted the attention of critics and readers when he detached himself from the socialist realist dogma with his 1956 novel *Rojsty* (*Marshes*), which told the story of the Home Army unit who fights the Germans then the Soviets. Konwicki's 1958 experimental film, *The Last Day of Summer*, intimate and ascetic in style, deals with his favorite themes: evocations of past times, and the impossibility of overcoming the burden of war. Although the war is not shown directly in this film, it overshadows the action of two characters who meet by chance on an empty Baltic beach. In his next film, *Zaduszki* (*All Souls Day*, 1961), Konwicki discontinues the realistic narrative by including four lengthy flashbacks that deal with the past war. The obsessive memories of Michał (Edmund Fetting) and Wala (Ewa Krzyżewska) are nearly independent filmic novellas within this film. The two protagonists, who are crippled by war experiences, are incapable of forgetting and unable to live in the present. They cannot free themselves from the war, portrayed as a destroyer of happiness, which hangs over them and meddles with their current affairs. In Michał's recollections of the past, a beautiful female lieutenant, Listek (Elżbieta Czyżewska), appears. She is antiheroic, fragile (emphasized by her oversized uniform and a delicate voice when she makes patriotic speeches), and protected by the whole partisan unit, which is in love with her. When Listek dies an absurd death, she is mourned as a saint or, perhaps, the symbol of a better world.

Beyond the War

To limit the Polish School to films dealing with World War II and realistic works portraying Poland during the de-Stalinization period (the narrow definition of the Polish School) is to neglect the most important aspect of the post-October cinema in Poland: its diversity. This period introduced animators who achieved international success in the world of animated films: Walerian Borowczyk, Jan Lenica, Mirosław Kijowicz, Witold Giersz, and Daniel Szczechura, among others. Children's films that also targeted adult audiences—such as Janusz Nasfeter's *Małe dramaty* (*Small Dramas*, 1960) and *Kolorowe pończochy* (*Colored Stockings*, 1960), and Jan Batory's *Odwiedziny prezydenta* (*The Visit of the President*, 1962)—were noticed by Polish critics and received awards at international festivals. Also, there were the first films about the young generation that did not refer directly

to politics or social problems: *Do widzenia, do jutra* (*See You Tomorrow*, 1960), by Janusz Morgenstern, and *Niewinni czarodzieje* (*Innocent Sorcerers*, 1960), by Andrzej Wajda. Both featured jazz scores by Krzysztof Komeda, and tried to introduce new lyrical tone to contemporary films. Another film, *Rancho Texas*, by Wadim Berestowski, was an unsuccessful attempt to produce a Polish version of the American Western.

The year 1960 marked the production of the first postwar historical epic and the most popular Polish film—an adaptation of Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Teutonic Knights* by Aleksander Ford. This widescreen film in Eastmancolor, the first of its kind in Poland, had 14 million viewers in the first four years of its release, and was exported to forty-six countries.⁷⁰ According to figures from 1987, *Teutonic Knights* remains the most popular film screened in Poland, with almost 32 million viewers, ahead of two other Sienkiewicz adaptations—the children's film *W pustyni i w puszczy* (*In Desert and Wilderness*, 1973, Władysław Ślesicki), with 30.6 million viewers, and another historical epic, *Potop* (*The Deluge*, 1974, Jerzy Hoffman), with 27.5 million viewers.⁷¹

The epic character of Ford's *Teutonic Knights* was seen, according to one of the local reviewers, as "the crowning of our achievements to develop the Polish film industry, the evidence of a certain maturity in the sphere of production and organization."⁷² At the center of Ford's film is the historical defeat of the Order of Teutonic Knights by the combined Polish-Lithuanian forces at the battle of Grunwald in 1410. The making of this film 550 years after the battle, and almost one thousand years after the baptism of Poland (the year 966), certainly had major political relevance. Like Sienkiewicz's novel, it reinforced the images of the heroic past and functioned as "the national remedy in all colors."⁷³

Another film, *Ewa Wants to Sleep*, by Tadeusz Chmielewski (b. 1927) became the second successful Polish postwar comedy after *Treasure*. Unlike *Treasure*, *Ewa Wants to Sleep* offers absurdist, grotesque, situational humor and lyricism in the spirit of René Clair, a director highly regarded in Poland. The influence of Clair's early sound period films (for example, *Le Million*, 1931) is visible in Chmielewski's balancing of fantasy and fact, and in his light and witty treatment of situations and protagonists. The simple story concerns a young woman, Ewa (Barbara Kwiatkowska), who comes to a strange town where the whole population seems to be either policemen or thieves, and are busy playing their games. This surreal town offers Ewa no place to sleep, and this problem of not having a place to spend the night is at the center of Chmielewski's comedy. Although saturated with thinly veiled references to Polish reality, this film belongs to a group of the first postwar Polish pictures that were produced for pure entertainment. Others include later comedies by Chmielewski, and a series of films starring Tadeusz Fijewski as Anatol, beginning with *Kapelusz pana Anatola* (*The Hat of Mr. Anatol*, 1957, Jan Rybkowski).⁷⁴

During the Polish School period, Jerzy Kawalerowicz also produced two stylistically refined films: *Pociąg* (*Night Train*; aka *Baltic Express*, 1959)



Figure 5.7 A scene from Aleksander Ford's *Teutonic Knights* (1960)

and, two years later, *Mother Joan of the Angels*. These two internationally known films place themselves outside of mainstream Polish cinema, at least the kind of cinema praised by local critics during the Polish School period. Both films received numerous awards, including the Georges Méliès award, and Lucyna Winnicka received the Best Actress award at the 1959 Venice Film Festival for her role in *Night Train*. Kawalerowicz also won a Silver Palm at the 1961 Cannes Film Festival for *Mother Joan of the Angels*.

The protagonists of *Night Train*, Marta (Lucyna Winnicka) and Jerzy (Leon Niemczyk), are forced to share a compartment in an overnight train heading for a Baltic resort. Both characters are confused and feeling lonely: Marta wants to break up with her lover (Zbigniew Cybulski), who follows her onto the train; Jerzy is a surgeon who blames himself for the death of one of his patients on an operating table. The film becomes a murder mystery when an afternoon paper reports the case of a wife murdered by her husband; Jerzy's nervousness makes him a possible suspect. The action of the film, mostly restricted to a train compartment, develops slowly until the police board the train to search for the suspected murderer. The chase sequence, as police and passengers try to apprehend the murderer, interrupts the rhythm of the film, and temporarily moves the action out of the train. The capture of the terrified murderer (which clears Jerzy from suspicion) is neither the climax nor the finale of the film. The train continues its unhurried journey and stops at its destination without any major dramatic shift. The trip ends as it began—in normality.

Kawalerowicz's film defies simple interpretations. Its narrative barely sketches the characters' psychology (similar to one's actual knowledge in comparable circumstances), yet the characters are intriguing and the story involving, almost suspenseful. *Night Train* is a film with Hitchcockian overtones. With the help of his cinematographer Jan Laskowski, Kawalerowicz fills the story with tension and nuance—mostly, with his careful composition of frame. "Through setting, rhythm, pace, lighting, physicality, in short, with his *mise en scène* Kawalerowicz placed himself among the great directors of Europe," write Michałek and Turaj.⁷⁵ The limited space of the action does not pose problems for him. While the background is moving (images behind the train windows), the center of the action remains comparatively motionless. The camera captures the gestures and behaviors of the two main characters and other passengers on the crowded train. Kawalerowicz explains: "In *Night Train* I split, if I can say so, the story of one melodrama onto several characters; the yearning for feelings was granted to all the characters in the film."⁷⁶ Their expectations and unstated desires are matched by the rhythm of the moving train, the opening and closing of compartment doors, the overall monotony of the travel.

According to Alicja Helman, *Night Train* introduced the "motif of a woman who feels foreign in a world ruled by men, a woman who is not understood, and who attempts to slip away from men's hates and loves, both of which are painful."⁷⁷ This motif, prominent in Kawalerowicz's

later work, is also discernible in *Mother Joan of the Angels*. This film is loosely based on the well-known story about the possessed nuns at the seventeenth-century monastery in Loudun, France—also the subject of Ken Russell's film *The Devils* (1971). Kawalerowicz's work is an adaptation of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's short story set in eighteenth-century eastern Poland. This classic tale about demonic possession presents two main characters: Mother Joan (Lucyna Winnicka), the supposedly possessed mother superior, and Father Suryń (Mieczysław Voit), a young ascetic and devout exorcist. The latter is sent to the convent after one of his predecessors was burned at the stake for his involvement with Mother Joan. Others unsuccessfully try to free Mother Joan from her demons (she admits to being possessed by several demons, and she can even name them). To understand the nature of evil, Suryń visits the rabbi (also played by Voit). The manner of portraying this encounter indicates Suryń's journey into the self.⁷⁸ The exorcist is unable to free Mother Joan and the possessed nuns from demons. In the course of time, the psychological tension, and perhaps a physical attraction, develops between Joan and Suryń. When Father Suryń exhausts the traditional methods (prescribed rituals, prayers, self-flagellation), he consciously commits a horrid crime (the killing of two stable boys) to liberate Mother Joan and the convent's sisters from demons and place them under his care.

The ascetic mise en scène of Kawalerowicz's film indicates the characters' psychology. Jerzy Wójcik's photography, with clear contrast between black and white elements within the frame, portrays a barren, inhospitable landscape with only four buildings. The bright convent on the hill and the dark inn at its bottom play a crucial role in the film's concept. The convent is inhabited by the white figures of the nuns, whirling during the devil's activities, their robes flowing in a carefully choreographed manner. The whiteness of the nuns' robes is juxtaposed with the dark robes of the exorcists and the black or shadowy background. The carefully composed static images, with the occasional vertical and horizontal movement of the camera, capture the characters in the center of the frame.⁷⁹

The first feature-length film by Roman Polański, *Knife in the Water*, which was released exactly one year after the premiere of *Mother Joan of the Angels*, offended political leaders and the film authorities because of its "cosmopolitan" and apolitical nature.⁸⁰ Like Kawalerowicz in *Night Train*, Polański employs elements of the thriller genre, avoids political or social commitment, and defies the typical communist expectations of a work of art. The film's success in the West (including the first Polish nomination for the Academy Award in 1963) was treated with suspicion in Poland, and only increased the hostility toward its maker.⁸¹ A number of Polish critics looked at Polański's film through the prism of the director's personality and biographical legend, which later became a critical pattern in the West, with the release of Polański's subsequent films.⁸²

After his early series of surrealistic and grotesque short films, including the best-known *Dwaj ludzie z szafą* (*Two Men and a Wardrobe*, 1958),



Figure 5.8 Lucyna Winnicka in Jerzy Kawalerowicz's *Mother Joan of the Angels* (1961)

Polański strove with *Knife in the Water* to make a film "rigorously cerebral, precisely engineered, almost formalist." As he further recalls in his biography, *Roman*, "It started out as a straightforward thriller: a couple aboard a small yacht take on a passenger who disappears in mysterious circumstances. From the first, the story concerned the interplay of antagonistic personalities within a confined space."⁸³ The story, limited to three characters, concerns a well-to-do Warsaw sports journalist, Andrzej (Leon Niemczyk), and his younger wife, Krystyna (Jolanta Umecka), who invite a young hitchhiker (Zygmunt Malanowicz) for a yachting weekend. The bulk of the film's action is then confined to a small boat in the Mazurian lakes, where a fierce rivalry develops between the worldly journalist and the insecure hitchhiker who challenges him. Often framed between the two men, Krystyna serves as their "prize," and is perfectly aware of her role in the conflict. The jazz score of Krzysztof Komeda, who also worked on Polański's short films, and the photography of Jerzy Lipman help to create the vibrating, jazzy tempo and mood; Marek Hendrykowski compares the composition of Polański's film to modern jazz compositions.⁸⁴

The End of the Formation

A number of voices in recent Polish scholarship favor the assertion that the decline of the Polish School was not "natural," that it was not related to the exhaustion of its themes and the manner in which they were presented, but rather that it had to do with the pressure of politics and the increasing conflict between the filmmakers and the communist regime.⁸⁵ The demands for greater independence for the film units and softer censorship were incompatible with the attempts of the Communist Party to regain total control over the filmmaking process, which had been characteristic of the pre-October period.

Toward the end of the 1950s, the communist authorities had been sending many signals that the relative freedom of expression would no longer be tolerated. The party was disappointed with the messages and themes permeating Polish films, and with the "westernization" of Polish filmmakers. As a result, the autonomy of the film units was gradually limited, and stricter control of films was administratively implemented. Although the Main Office for Control of the Press, Publications, and Public Performances (Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk) was responsible for media censorship in general, censorship was frequently much harsher at the film units level. The Committee for Evaluation of Scripts (Komisja Ocen Scenariuszy) was the first major obstacle for a film project to be approved.

The restrictive policy of the Communist Party can be observed toward some of the representative films of the Polish School. The most frequent way to punish the makers of "unwanted films" was the limited distribution of their works (as in the case of *Nobody Is Calling*, *Winter Twilight*, and

The End of the Night). Another form of punishment was delaying the premiere of some films, and in extreme instances even banning them, as was the case with *Ósmy dzień tygodnia* (*Eighth Day of the Week*), directed by Aleksander Ford. This Polish/West-German production, based on Marek Hłasko's story and starring Zbigniew Cybulski and Sonia Ziemann (the German actress), was made in 1958 and distributed in Germany (as *Der Achte Wochentag*); it did not premiere in Poland until as late as 1983.⁸⁶ The third practice, which reflects the suspicion, as well as the aversion, of the communist leaders toward some of the films, was the reluctance to send some of them to international film festivals.⁸⁷

The Resolution of the Central Committee Secretariat of the Polish United Workers' Party, issued in June 1960, marked the actual end of the Polish School.⁸⁸ In this document, the communist authorities objected *expressis verbis* to the pessimism of a number of Polish films, their lack of compliance with the party line, and the strong role played by Western cinema in Poland. As a remedy, the resolution imposed stricter limits and more rigorous criteria on imported films from the West. It also postulated that films purchased from other socialist countries, chiefly from the Soviet Union, should be privileged. As a result, between 1961 and 1969, the number of films from the Soviet bloc countries increased to 57 percent (for 35mm films) and 75 percent (for 16mm films).⁸⁹ This same party document also postulated making political and educational films needed in the process of "building socialism," films that reflected current problems from the socialist perspective, and works inspired by the "progressive tendencies" in Polish history. The document also referred to the role of "socialist film criticism." It recommended increasing the number of pro-party writers and party functionaries in the processes of scriptwriting and script approval, and proposed to develop "socialist entertainment films." The intentions behind the latter directive, which were fully implemented in the 1960s, were twofold: to neutralize the popularity of foreign "bourgeois" films, and to turn away the attention of Polish society from the pressing economic problems experienced under Władysław Gomułka's regime.

The Polish School began to lose its impetus at the beginning of the 1960s. Although political developments once again defined the Polish cinema, there were also nonpolitical reasons that contributed to this decline. In September 1961, Andrzej Munk died tragically while making his *Pasażerka* (*The Passenger*, finished by Witold Lesiewicz, with a premiere in 1963). At the beginning of the 1960s, Andrzej Wajda began making films abroad: in 1962 *Sibirska Ledi Makbet* (*Siberian Lady Macbeth*, aka *Fury Is a Woman*), produced in Yugoslavia; an episode in France for *Love at Twenty*; then, in 1967, *Gates to Paradise* in England.⁹⁰ During the early 1960s a group of young filmmakers emerged for whom the point of reference was no longer local history or other concerns associated with the Polish School. For example, the first films by Roman Polański and Jerzy Skolimowski were similar to current international cinema and influenced

by their own personal experiences. Polański migrated to France after making *Knife in the Water*, his only full-length film made in Poland.⁹¹

Several films made in the mid-1960s, however, returned to Polish history and the moral dilemmas of World War II. These films, including Tadeusz Konwicki's *Salto* (*Somersault*, 1965), debunk the Polish war mythology and focus on the impossibility of freeing oneself from the shadow of the war, as in Wojciech J. Has's *Szyfry* (*Cyphers*, 1966) and Stanisław Jędryka's *Powrót na ziemię* (*Return to Earth*, 1967). Another prominent group of films refers directly to the war: the Holocaust in *Naganiacz* (*The Beater*, 1964), directed by Ewa and Czesław Petelski; moral dilemmas of the underground fighters in *Stajnia na Salwatorze* (*The Barn at Salvator*, 1967), by Paweł Komorowski; and the tragedy of September 1939 in *Westerplatte* (1967), by Stanisław Różewicz. The main preoccupations of the Polish School also return in some of the films made in the 1970s, for instance, in the film *Hubal* (1973) by Bohdan Poręba. The real end of the Polish School, and the farewell to its poetics, is probably marked by Andrzej Wajda's *Pierścionek z orłem w koronie* (*The Ring with a Crowned Eagle*, 1992), a film that examines issues first explored in *Ashes and Diamonds*.⁹²

Notes

1. Andrzej Wajda, quoted in Peter Cowie, "Wajda Redux," *Sight and Sound* 49, no. 1 (1979–1980): 32.
2. Aleksander Jackiewicz, "Prawo do eksperymentu," *Przegląd Kulturalny* 51/52 (1954); Antoni Bohdziewicz, "Czyżby cyprysy i pinie na Powiślu?" *Łódź Literacka* 2–3 (1955). Quoted from Stanisław Ozimek, "Konfrontacje z Wielką Wojną," in *Historia filmu polskiego 1957–1961*, vol. 4, ed. Jerzy Toeplitz (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe), 14.
3. October 1956 marks the uprising against the communist regime in Hungary, which was brutally crushed by the invading Soviet troops at the beginning of November.
4. On 20 October 1956, the newly elected leader (First Secretary) of the Polish United Workers' Party, Władysław Gomułka, summarized the Stalinist period by saying: "The system of the years past broke human characters and consciences, trod on people, spat on their honor. The instrument of power was slander, falsehood, and even provocation. Tragic missteps were committed, innocent people were sent to their deaths. Others were imprisoned, many for long years. Some of them were Communists. Many people were bestially tortured. Fear and demoralization reigned. We have finished with this system, or better said, we shall finish with it once and forever." Quoted from Mira Liehm and Antonin J. Liehm, *The Most Important Art: Soviet and Eastern European Film after 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 176. In spite of his denouncement of Stalinism, Gomułka was by no means a liberal leader. The Polish October was an eruption of patriotic feelings and hopes that were quickly suppressed by the Communist Party.
5. Stanisław Ozimek, "Spojrzenie na 'szkołę polską,'" in Toeplitz, *Historia filmu polskiego 1957–1961*, 201.
6. *Ibid.*, 206–207.
7. Tadeusz Lubelski, *Strategie autorskie w polskim filmie fabularnym lat 1945–1961* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1992), 113–193.
8. Boleśław Michałek and Frank Turaj, *The Modern Cinema of Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 19–34.
9. Liehm and Liehm, *The Most Important Art*, 174–198; David A. Cook, *A History of Narrative Film* (New York: Norton, 1996), 684.
10. Ozimek, "Spojrzenie na 'szkołę polską,'" 205–206.
11. Aleksander Jackiewicz, "Kordianowskie i plebejskie tradycje w filmie polskim," *Kino* 11 (1969): 2–11. Also discussed in his "Powrót Kordiana. Tradycja romantyczna w filmie polskim," *Kwartalnik Filmowy* 4 (1961): 23–37.
12. Tadeusz Miczka, "Cinema under Political Pressure: A Brief Outline of Authorial Roles in Polish Post-War Feature Film 1945–1995," *Kinema* 4 (1995): 37. The term "psychotherapy" had been also used consciously by some of the filmmakers, for instance, by Wajda, who stated that Polish filmmakers "approach their work seriously, as a kind of psychotherapy." Stanisław Janicki, *Polscy twórcy filmowi o sobie* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1962), 84.
13. Marek Hendrykowski, "'Polska szkoła filmowa' jako formacja artystyczna," in *Szkoła polska – powroty*, eds. Ewelina Nurczyńska-Fidelska and Bronisława Stolarska (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1998), 9.
14. *Ibid.*, 10–11.
15. Ewelina Nurczyńska-Fidelska, "'Szkoła' czy autorzy? Uwagi na marginesie doświadczeń polskiej historii filmu," in Nurczyńska-Fidelska and Stolarska, *Szkoła polska – powroty*, 30–31.
16. Andrzej Munk and the scriptwriter Jerzy Stefan Stawiński were born in 1921, Jerzy Kawalerowicz in 1922, Stanisław Różewicz in 1924, Wojciech J. Has in 1925, Tadeusz Konwicki and Andrzej Wajda in 1926, and Kazimierz Kutz in 1929. The term *Kolumbowie* (Columbuses) comes from the celebrated novel by Roman Bratny, *Kolumbowie rocznik 20* [*Columbuses Born in 1920*], published for the first time in Warsaw in 1957. The novel was adapted in 1970 as a popular television series, *Kolumbowie* (five episodes), directed by Janusz Morgenstern (b. 1922).
17. Maria Janion, "Jeruzalem Słoneczna i Zakłęty Krag," *Kwartalnik Filmowy* 17 (1997): 5.
18. Stalinism was unavailable to filmmakers because of censorship. One may speculate that perhaps another reason was the involvement of some of the filmmakers with the socialist realist dogma—they would have to deal with their own fascination with Stalinism. For instance, Andrzej Munk, who later made seminal Polish School films, started his career at the beginning of the 1950s with a number of documentary films made in the spirit of socialist realism. They include, among others, *Zaczęto się w Hiszpanii* (*It Started in Spain*, 1950), *Kierunek Nowa Huta* (*Direction: Nowa Huta*, 1951), and *Pamiętniki chłopów* (*Peasant Diaries*, 1953).
19. The importance of Polish literature as a source for Polish films is discussed in the context of postwar cinema by, among others, Marek Hendrykowski, "Zagadnienie kontekstu literackiego filmu na przykładzie polskiej szkoły filmowej," in *Film polski wobec innych sztuk*, ed. Alicja Helman and Alina Madej (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1979), 44–60; Wojciech Soliński, "Podłoże literackie filmów szkoły polskiej," in *Polska Szkoła Filmowa. Poetyka i tradycja*, ed. Jan Trzynałowski (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1976), 31–39; Maryla Hopfinger, "Adaptacje utworów literackich w polskim filmie okresu powojennego," in *Problemy socjologii literatury*, ed. Janusz Stawiński (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1971), 467–489.
20. However, to my knowledge, the term "Polish School of literature" has never been used in Poland to describe the works written by these writers.
21. The concept of film units goes back to the ideas propagated before the war by the Society for the Promotion of Film Art START. Before 1955 there were unsuccessful attempts to create film units. For example, in 1948 three such units were founded in order to stimulate film production: Blok, managed by Aleksander Ford; Zespół Autorów Filmowych (ZAF), by Wanda Jakubowska; and Warszawa, by Ludwik Starski. They were disbanded in 1949.
22. I refer to Edward Zajiček's data in his *Poza ekranem: Kinematografia polska 1918–1991* (Warsaw: FilMOTEKA Narodowa and Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1992), 142 and 202.

23. Jerzy Toeplitz, "Drogi rozwoju kinematografii," in Toeplitz, *Historia filmu polskiego 1957–1961*, 383.
24. *Ibid.*, 381 and 388.
25. Ewa Gębicka, "Sieć kin i rozpowszechnianie filmów," in *Encyklopedia kultury polskiej XX wieku: Film i kinematografia*, ed. Edward Zajiček (Warsaw: Instytut Kultury and Komitet Kinematografii, 1994), 436.
26. Jerzy Płażewski, "Film zagraniczny w Polsce," in Zajiček, *Encyklopedia kultury polskiej XX wieku*, 341.
27. Edward Zajiček, "Szkoła polska. Uwarunkowania organizacyjne i gospodarcze," in Nurczyńska-Fidelska and Stolarska, eds., "Szkoła polska" – powroty, 177 and 180. For example, *Ewa Wants to Sleep* had 3.6 million viewers; *Answer to Violence*, 3.8 million; and *Ashes and Diamonds*, 3.4 million.
28. Toeplitz, "Drogi rozwoju kinematografii," 388 and 417.
29. Bolesław Michałek, "Polska przygoda neorealizmu," *Kino* 1 (1975): 30.
30. Bolesław Sulik, Introduction, *Andrzej Wajda: Three Films* (London: Lorrimer, 1973), 9.
31. *Ibid.*, 13.
32. Aleksander Jackiewicz, in a review of *The End of the Night* titled "Neorealizm polski" (Polish Neorealism), states that this modest film fully implements the neorealist tenets for the first time in Polish cinema. Another critic, Juliusz Kydryński, compares this film with *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), by Richard Brooks, then not shown in Poland. Quoted from Lubelski, *Strategie autorskie*, 123.
33. *The End of the Night* is truly a cooperative, almost a student, effort. Apart from the three directors (Julian Dziedzina, Paweł Komorowski, and Walentyna Uszycka), it has six scriptwriters (including Professor Antoni Bohdziewicz of the Łódź Film School and writer Marek Hłasko—the symbol of the post-October Polish literature), and three cinematographers (including Jerzy Wójcik, the cinematographer of *Ashes and Diamonds*, *Nobody Is Calling*, and *Mother Joan of the Angels*).
34. Ewelina Nurczyńska-Fidelska, "Czarny realizm. O stylu i jego funkcji w filmach nurtu współczesnego," in Nurczyńska-Fidelska and Stolarska, *Szkoła polska – powroty*, 33–47.
35. *Ibid.*, 38.
36. The film's thematics were often compared to Henri-George Clouzot's *The Wages of Fear* (1953), popular on Polish screens since its 1955 premiere.
37. Stanisław Ozimek, "Od wojny w dzień powszedni," in *Historia filmu polskiego 1957–1961*, vol. 4, ed. Jerzy Toeplitz (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1980), 139.
38. Janicki, *Polscy twórcy filmowi o sobie*, 50.
39. Piotr Wojciechowski, "Prorok naszych snów," *Kino* 4 (1995): 20.
40. *Ibid.*, 20.
41. Andrzej Werner, "Film fabularny," in *Historia filmu polskiego 1962–1967*, vol. 5, ed. Rafał Marszałek (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1985), 21.
42. Another film set during the Warsaw Uprising, *Kamienne niebo* (*A Sky of Stone*, 1959), directed by Ewa and Czesław Petelski, deals with the fate of a group of Warsaw dwellers buried in a cellar of the collapsed building.
43. For example, the difference is already stressed in the table of contents of Michałek and Turaj's *The Modern Cinema of Poland*: "Andrzej Munk: The Perspective of a Sceptic" and "Andrzej Wajda: The Essential Pole."
44. Ewelina Nurczyńska-Fidelska, "Romanticism and History: A Sketch of the Creative Output of Andrzej Wajda," in *Polish Cinema in Ten Takes*, ed. Ewelina Nurczyńska-Fidelska and Zbigniew Batko (Łódź: Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1995), 9.
45. The Polish title of the film, *Kanał*, literally means "sewer."
46. In Bolesław Michałek, *The Cinema of Andrzej Wajda* (London: Tantivy Press, 1973), 32.
47. All of the Home Army fighters' names are pseudonyms, for example, "Zadra" means "splinter," "Mądry" means "wise."
48. The second part, *Ostinato Lugubre*, which narrates the story of Polish prisoners of war in a German camp, is a satire on heroism and the anachronistically understood "soldier's honor." The third segment, *Con bravura*, different in spirit since it utilizes the Polish

- romantic legend, deals with the experiences of the wartime couriers crossing the Tatra Mountains. Munk decided to drop *Con bravura* from the final version of his film; it premiered in 1972 on Polish television. The "musical titles" are obviously of parodic nature, but they also testify to Munk's interest in music. See, for example, his 1958 short film *Spacerek staroniejski* (*A Walk in the Old Town*).
49. Rafał Marszałek, *Filmowa pop-historia* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1984), 344.
 50. In the *Scherzo alla Polacca* part of *Eroica*, as well as in *Bad Luck* and later in *The Passenger*, Andrzej Munk introduces the perspective of characters with whom the viewer cannot identify—that of the sly dog, the opportunist, and the German female officer from the concentration camp, respectively. Munk's merciless satire on opportunism and bureaucracy, *Bad Luck*, is continued by Andrzej Kotkowski in *Obywatel Piszczczyk* (*Citizen P.*, 1989), and by Kazimierz Kutz in *Straszny sen Dwidziusia Górkiewicza* (*The Terrible Dream of Dwidziusia Górkiewicz*, 1993), both scripted by Jerzy Stefan Stawiński.
 51. Alicja Helman, "Andrzej Munk: *Cockeyed Luck*," *MovEast* 2 (1992): 101.
 52. Tadeusz Konwicki, *Moonrise, Moonset*, trans. Richard Lourie (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1987), 56.
 53. See Lubelski, *Strategie autorskie*, 154. The title of the film—and its literary source, Jerzy Andrzejewski's novel—comes from a metaphor drawn from a nineteenth-century poem, "Za kulisami," by Cyprian Kamil Norwid. Its lines are recited in the film.
 54. Wajda's comment, originally published in *Przegląd Kulturalny* 15 (1959). Quoted from Marian Ursel, "Legenda romantyczna w polskiej szkole filmowej," in Trzynadłowski, *Polska Szkoła Filmowa*, 83.
 55. Bolesław Michałek, "Mówi Andrzej Wajda" [interview with Wajda], *Kino* 1 (1968): 42.
 56. Konwicki, *Moonrise, Moonset*, 56–57.
 57. Konrad Eberhardt, *Zbigniew Cybulski* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1976), 59.
 58. Paul Coates, "Forms of the Polish Intellectual's Self-Criticism: Revisiting *Ashes and Diamonds* with Andrzejewski and Wajda," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 38, nos. 3–4 (1996): 294–296. The scene with the inverted crucifix that separates the two lovers may be understood as a symbol of the overthrown values, "mordantly fuses the Wellesian and the Buñuelian," according to Coates (p. 294).
 59. Tadeusz Lubelski provides a detailed analysis of the adaptation of Hen's novel into film. Hen's novel dealt with a taboo topic: the fate of the Polish citizens in the Soviet Union after the outbreak of World War II and the annexation of the eastern Polish provinces by the Soviets. Banned for almost forty years, the book was not published until 1990. Tadeusz Lubelski, "Z Samarkandy do Bystrzycy, czyli o perypetiach filmu *Nikt nie woła*," in Nurczyńska-Fidelska and Stolarska, *Szkoła polska – powroty*, 81–97.
 60. Elżbieta Baniewicz, *Kazimierz Kutz: Z dotu widać inaczej* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1994), 152.
 61. Lubelski, "Z Samarkandy do Bystrzycy," 93–95.
 62. Ewa (b. 1920) and Czesław (1922–1996) Petelski, the married couple working together on the majority of their films.
 63. Ozimek, "Konfrontacje z Wielką Wojną," 121.
 64. *Ibid.*, 120–121. Stanisław Ozimek quotes the 1974 interview with the Petelskis in which they stress that their Łódź Film School generation was educated on *Chapaeo*, and that the ending of *Sergeant-Major Kaleri* (the death of the protagonist) testifies to this inspiration.
 65. Wojciech Siemion (b. 1928) almost repeated his role from *Birth Certificate* in Jerzy Passendorfer's films, chiefly in *Kierunek Berlin* (*Direction Berlin*, 1969) and its sequel, *Ostatnie dni* (*Last Days*, 1969).
 66. Ursel, "Legenda romantyczna w polskiej szkole filmowej," 74.
 67. Aleksander Jackiewicz stresses this aspect in his review of Różewicz's film, "Ostatniego etapu ciąg dalszy" [*The Last Stage Continues*] reprinted in his *Moja filmoteka: kino polskie* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1983), 196.
 68. Alicja Helman, "Jerzy Kawalerowicz: A Virtuoso of the Camera," in Nurczyńska-Fidelska and Batko, *Polish Cinema in Ten Takes*, 53–54.

69. Ozimek, "Konfrontacje z Wielką Wojną," 82.
70. Stanisław Janicki, *Aleksander Ford* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1967), 81.
71. Quoted from Małgorzata Hendrykowska, *Kronika kinematografii polskiej 1895–1997* (Poznań: Ars Nova, 1999), 427. The figures clearly show the preference for local films, mostly adaptations of national literary canon; out of twenty films listed, as many as thirteen are Polish productions.
72. Jerzy Pelc, "Krzyżacy," *Film* 36 (1960): 4.
73. The title of Zygmunt Kałużyński's review, "Lekarstwo narodowe we wszystkich kolorach [National remedy in all colors]. Quoted from Ozimek, "Od wojny w dzień powszedni," 187.
74. Its continuations were made in 1959: *Pan Anatol szuka miliona* (*Mr. Anatol Is Looking for a Million*), and *Inspekcja pana Anatola* (*The Inspection of Mr. Anatol*), both also directed by Jan Rybkowski.
75. Michałek and Turaj, *The Modern Cinema of Poland*, 101.
76. Janicki, *Polscy twórcy filmowi o sobie*, 35.
77. Helman, "Jerzy Kawalerowicz," 55. The emergence of the new protagonists during the Polish School period, both men and women, deserves a separate publication. Unlike the socialist realist characters, who were immune to sex and unwilling to give up production for love, the new protagonists are multidimensional, are torn between duty to the nation and private aspirations, and are frequently interested only in personal issues. For example, Urszula Modrzyńska, the socialist realist star in *Not Far from Warsaw* and *A Generation*, displays different qualities in Leonard Buczkowski's *Deszczowy lipiec* (*Rainy July*, 1958). Lucyna Winnicka in *Night Train*, the female insurgent Stokrotka (Teresa Iżewska) in *Kanal*, and other female characters are experienced, strong, sexual, and in charge of men. The issue of the representation of female characters by the Polish School filmmakers is discussed by Joanna Pyszny, "Kobieta w filmach szkoły polskiej," in Trzynałowski, *Polska Szkoła Filmowa*, 91–101.
78. Seweryn Kuśmierczyk, "Matka Joanna of Aniołów: Szkic antropologiczny," *Kwartalnik Filmowy* 17 (1977): 82–83.
79. Michałek and Turaj, *The Modern Cinema of Poland*, 104.
80. Władysław Gomułka, the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, officially condemned the film in August 1963 at the plenary assembly of the Central Committee. Grażyna Stachówna, *Roman Polański i jego filmy* (Warsaw, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1994), 42.
81. I am writing here about the "official hostility" toward Polański's film in Poland. *Knife in the Water* won the "Złota Kaczka" [Golden Duck] award for the best Polish film of 1962 in the popular plebiscite organized by the magazine *Film*.
82. Roman Polański's life often overshadows his films. His films are (pop) psychoanalyzed to excess. The number of books on Polański does not match their quality. These are mostly biographies, sometimes scandalizing ones, that cannibalize Polański's much publicized "private" life. Fine texts, such as Herbert Eagle's chapter on Polański, are rather infrequent. Herbert Eagle, "Polański," in Daniel J. Goulding, ed., *Five Filmmakers* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 92–155.
83. Roman Polański, *Roman* (New York: William Morrow, 1984), 156–157.
84. Marek Hendrykowski, "Nóż w wodzie: Modern Jazz," *Kwartalnik Filmowy* 17 (1977): 86–96.
85. For example, Ewa Gębicka, "Partia i państwo a kino. Przypadek 'szkoły polskiej.' O ideologicznym stylu odbioru filmów i jego konsekwencjach," in Nurczyńska-Fidelska and Stolarska, *Szkoła polska – powroty*, 129–144; Alina Madej, "Bohaterowie byli zmęczeni?" in *Syndrom konformizmu? Kino polskie lat sześćdziesiątych*, ed. Tadeusz Miczka, assistant ed. Alina Madej (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1994), 10–26.
86. The dark picture of Polish reality portrayed in *Eighth Day of the Week* was unacceptable for the Communist Party authorities. The banning of Ford's film served as a clear signal that nobody was exempted from communist censorship. Ford "was the Film Polski" for a number of years, and still an influential and well-connected person in the late 1950s. Problems experienced with *Eighth Day of the Week*, however, did not prevent Ford from making the epic superproduction *Teutonic Knights* just two years later.
87. This is the case of *Ashes and Diamonds*. Wajda's film had not been sent to Cannes because, in Aleksander Ford's words, it had "ambiguous political meaning." Quoted from Madej, "Bohaterowie byli zmęczeni?" 15.
88. "Uchwała Sekretariatu KC w sprawie kinematografii," National Film Archives in Warsaw (no. 130). Reprinted in Miczka and Madej, *Syndrom konformizmu?* 27–34.
89. Ewa Gębicka, "Obcinanie kantów, czyli polityka PZPR i państwa wobec kinematografii lat sześćdziesiątych," in Miczka and Madej, *Syndrom konformizmu?* 42.
90. Wajda's *Gates to Paradise* has never been released in cinema theaters.
91. Roman Polański's films made outside of Poland include works made in England, France, and the United States. Polański directed *Repulsion* (1965), *Cul-de-sac* (1966), *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967), *Macbeth* (1968), *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *Che? (What? 1973)* *Chinatown* (1974), *Le Locataire (The Tenant)*, 1976), *Tess* (1979), *Pirates* (1986), *Frantic* (1988), *Bitter Moon* (1992), and *The Ninth Gate* (2000). Polański's artistic output, because of its diversity, manipulation of the genres' rules, and cosmopolitan nature, is not easily defined. There is, presumably, nothing Polish about his films, unless we take a tendency toward the bizarre and the grotesque as a typical Polish feature. In spite of their diversity and genre-oriented nature, Polański's films break conventional formulae and are characterized by the strong presence of the authorial self. The films exhibit the director's highly visual style, his personal thematic obsessions, prevailing images of the violent and the grotesque, and an adept mastery of manipulating the viewer's emotions.
92. As described by Andrzej Wajda. See Bożena Janicka, "Żegnaj, szkoła polska" [Farewell, the Polish School] *Film* 4 (1993): 2–3. Paul Coates writes: "It is tempting to describe *The Ring with a Crowned Eagle* as frustrated dreamwork upon *Ashes and Diamonds*." Coates, "Forms of the Polish Intellectual's Self-Criticism," 300.