



Jagiellonian University in Kraków  
Faculty of International and Political Studies  
Institute of European Studies

**Anna Harmash**

student ID number: 1199684

Field of study: European Studies

# Politics of History on the Screen: Unveiling the Continuity of Myths in Polish State-Endorsed Cinema

Magister (MA) Thesis

Thesis written under the supervision of  
Dr Łucja Piekarska-Duraj, Jagiellonian University [Uniwersytet Jagielloński]  
Dr Catherine Gibson, Tartu University [Tartu Ülikool]

August 2024  
Krakow, Poland

Field of Studies: European Studies

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of:

Master of Arts in Political Science (MA) in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies: Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland

International Master's (IntM) in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies: University of Glasgow, UK

Master of Arts in Social Sciences (MA) in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies: University of Tartu, Estonia

Word count of the thesis: 24, 811

Authorship Declaration: I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.



*Anna Harmash, August, 26, 2024*

### **Non-exclusive licence to reproduce thesis and make thesis public**

I, Anna Harmash (05/06/2000) herewith grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to the work created by me, "Politics of History on the Screen: Unveiling the Continuity of Myths in Polish State-Endorsed Cinema", supervisors Dr Łucja Piekarska-Duraj, Dr Catherine Gibson,

- reproduce, for the purpose of preservation, including for adding to the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright;
- to make the work specified in p. 1 available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright;
- I am aware of the fact that the author retains the rights specified in p. 1;
- I certify that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe other persons' intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines cinematic portrayals of the Warsaw Uprising in historical fiction films endorsed by two ideologically divergent regimes: the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) and the Law and Justice Party (PiS). Both regimes advanced conflicting memory of Polish history, tailoring the discourses to align with their respective ideological agendas by focalizing or silencing some pages of history. However, through a comparative analysis of films endorsed by the regimes, this thesis argues that the PZPR and PiS followed the same template in constructing their memory narratives that framed Poland as a nation of exceptional heroism and martyrdom, and justified an uncritical approach to politics of history. This thesis analyzes cinematic narratives presented in films about the Warsaw Uprising—a traumatic historical event that was marked by “blank spots” in the official memory during the People’s Republic of Poland but became an widely commemorated and glorified event, emblematic of Polish collective identity under PiS-led politics of history. A cinematic discourse analysis of six state-endorsed productions (five feature films and one episode from a popular television series released between the 1950s-1970s and the 2010s) was conducted to identify, decode, and interpret memory narratives and depictions of heroism using elements of the dominant Polish myth. The interpretation of the cinematic renderings of the Uprising relied on concepts of collective identity, national myths and schematic narrative templates, and considered the ideological, social and political contexts in which the films were produced. The research demonstrates that, while introducing some critical reflections and “remembering” the Uprising differently, the state-enforced films produced under both regimes build their narratives on the dominant myth of Poland being “Christ Among Nations”. Ultimately, this thesis seeks to understand why seemingly ideologically divergent political regimes deploy similar narrative strategies.

Keywords: politics of history, Warsaw Uprising, collective memory, identity, national myths, films.

## Streszczenie

Niniejsza praca analizuje filmowe przedstawienia Powstania Warszawskiego w filmach historycznych zatwierdzonych przez dwa ideologicznie odmienne reżimy: Polską Zjednoczoną Partię Robotniczą (PZPR) oraz Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS). Oba reżimy promowały sprzeczne wizje polskiej historii, dostosowując dyskursy do swoich ideologicznych agend poprzez wyeksponowanie lub wyciszenie pewnych aspektów przeszłości. Jednakże poprzez porównawczą analizę filmów popieranych przez te reżimy, niniejsza praca dowodzi, że zarówno PZPR, jak i PiS, korzystały z tego samego szablonu przy konstruowaniu narracji pamięci, które przedstawiały Polskę jako naród o wyjątkowym heroizmie i męczeństwie oraz uzasadniały bezkrytyczne podejście do polityki historycznej. Praca analizuje narracje filmowe ukazane w filmach o Powstaniu Warszawskim — traumatycznym wydarzeniu historycznym, które w oficjalnej pamięci okresu PRL było naznaczone „białymi plamami”, ale stało się szeroko upamiętnianym i gloryfikowanym wydarzeniem, emblematycznym dla polskiej tożsamości zbiorowej w ramach polityki historycznej prowadzonej przez PiS. Przeprowadzono analizę dyskursu filmowego w sześciu państwowo wspieranych produkcjach (pięciu filmach fabularnych i jednym odcinku popularnego serialu telewizyjnego wydanych w latach 1950-1970 i 2010), w celu zidentyfikowania, rozszyfrowania i zinterpretowania narracji pamięci oraz przedstawień heroizmu, wykorzystując elementy dominującego polskiego mitu. Interpretacja filmowych przedstawień Powstania opierała się na koncepcjach tożsamości zbiorowej, mitów narodowych oraz schematycznych wzorców narracyjnych, uwzględniając konteksty ideologiczne, społeczne i polityczne, w których powstawały filmy. Badania wykazują, że mimo wprowadzenia pewnych krytycznych refleksji i „odmiennych” sposobów „pamiętania” Powstania, filmy państwowe wyprodukowane za obu reżimów opierają swoje narracje na dominującym mitem Polski jako „Chrystusa Narodów”. Ostatecznie praca ta dąży do zrozumienia, dlaczego pozornie ideologicznie odmienne reżimy polityczne stosują podobne strategie narracyjne.

Słowa kluczowe: polityka historyczna, Powstanie Warszawskie, pamięć zbiorowa, tożsamość, mity narodowe, filmy.

*“When commemoration freezes into permanent forms that cannot be changed without cries of sacrilege, we can be certain that it serves the particular interests of its defenders and not their moral edification”.*

*– Tzvetan Todorov (2001, p. 21), The Uses and Abuses of Memory*

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
Research Puzzle.....	2
Cinema as a Lens onto Politics of History.....	4
Research Questions and Objectives.....	6
Structure of the Thesis.....	7
<b>Chapter 1. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework</b> .....	9
1.1 Collective Memory as a Fiber of Collective Identity.....	9
1.2 Politics of History through Mnemonic Narrativization.....	11
1.3 Myths as Schematic Narrative Templates for Collective Memory.....	12
1.4 Films as Vehicles of Memory and Myths.....	16
1.5 Summary.....	19
<b>Chapter 2. Historical Context</b> .....	20
2.1 Historical background of the Warsaw Uprising.....	20
2.2 The Warsaw Uprising in Memory and Myth-Making.....	23
2.3 The Use of Cinema in Politics of History.....	26
2.4 Filmmakers and the Intentions behind their Films.....	28
<b>Chapter 3. Methodology</b> .....	32
3.1 Research Design.....	32
3.2 Selection of Films.....	34
3.3 Methods for Analyzing the Films.....	36
3.4 Considerations and Limitations.....	40
<b>Chapter 4. Empirical Research and Findings</b> .....	42
<b>4.1 Films Produced under PZPR Politics of History</b> .....	42
4.1.1 Demythologization of “Beautiful Death” in Kanał (1956).....	42
4.1.2 Accidental Hero – Still a Hero? Eroica (1957) as an Ode to Ordinary Heroism.....	52

4.1.3 Cztorej Pancerni i Pies (1966) as an Emblem of National Communism.....	56
4.1.4 Godzina “W” (1979): a Moralizing Romantic Tribute to the Young Polish Heroes	62
<b>4.2 Films Produced under PiS-led Politics of History.....</b>	<b>68</b>
4.2.1 Ticking All the Boxes: Miasto 44 (2014) as a Postmemory Superhero Epic.....	68
4.2.2 Was It All Worth It? Kurier (2019) as a Defender of the Core Patriotic Values.....	75
<b>4.3 Synthesis and Discussion of Findings.....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Filmography.....</b>	<b>101</b>

## List of Figures and Tables

<b>Table 1.</b> <i>List of selected films, state endorsement mechanisms, and method of access</i> .....	36
<b>Figure 1.</b> <i>The Logic of Comparison</i> .....	32
<b>Figure 2.</b> <i>Panorama of Destroyed Warsaw in the Opening Credits (Wajda, 1956, 00:01:10)</i> .....	42
<b>Figure 3.</b> <i>Composer Michał Pauses by a Ruined Piano (Wajda, 1956, 00:04:52)</i> .....	43
<b>Figure 4.</b> <i>A Field Grave of a Fallen AK Soldier (Wajda, 1956, 00:07:38)</i> .....	44
<b>Figure 5.</b> <i>Injured Korab Neutralizes a Goliath with a Shovel (Wajda, 1956, 00:27:35)</i> .....	46
<b>Figure 6.</b> <i>Zadra Receiving the Orders to Evacuate His Unit Through the Sewers (Wajda, 1956, 00:33:38)</i> .....	47
<b>Figure 7.</b> <i>Field Graves on the Battlefield Representing a “Beautiful Death” (Wajda, 1956, 00:23:19)</i> .....	48
<b>Figure 8.</b> <i>AK Colonel Pictured as a Powerless Hero Destined to Die an Undignified Death (Wajda, 1956, 1:04:00)</i> .....	49
<b>Figure 9.</b> <i>Trapped in the Sewers Stokrotka Represents the Uprising’s Entrapment (Wajda, 1956, 1:21:43)</i> .....	50
<b>Figure 10.</b> <i>Demoralized Zadra Descends Back into the Sewers to Find and Save his Unit (Wajda, 1956, 1:32:12)</i> .....	51
<b>Figure 11.</b> <i>Dzidzius Portrayed as an Unprincipled Opportunist Enjoying the Company of a High-Ranking Enemy Officer (Munk, 1957b, 00:08:25)</i> .....	53
<b>Figure 12.</b> <i>Dzidzius Running to Join the Uprising (Munk, 1957b, 00:40:36)</i> .....	55
<b>Figure 13.</b> <i>Janek Captures Two Nazi Soldiers Who Surrender in the Moment (Nalecki, 1966, 00:11:21)</i> .....	57
<b>Figure 14.</b> <i>Janek is Pictured Holding a Photograph of His Missing War-Veteran Father (Nalecki, 1966, 00:17:09)</i> .....	58
<b>Figure 15.</b> <i>LWP Fighters and Civilians Listen to a Child Recite a Poem About the Battle of Westerplatte (Nalecki, 1966, 00:11:59)</i> .....	59
<b>Figure 16.</b> <i>A Shot of the Kierbedź Bridge Seen Through the Tank Periscope (Nalecki, 1966, 00:22:38)</i> .....	60

<b>Figure 17.</b> <i>Wounded Sowa Struggles to Reach the Polish flag (Morgenstern, 1979, 00:01:14:38)</i> .....	63
<b>Figure 18.</b> <i>Kotwica Painted Over a Nazi Wall Poster (Morgenstern, 1979, 00:03:22)</i> .....	64
<b>Figure 19.</b> <i>Czarny Rejoices Upon Hearing About the Red Army Approaching Warsaw (Morgenstern, 1979, 00:05:20)</i> .....	65
<b>Figure 20.</b> <i>Andrzej and His Father Embrace Before He Joins the Uprising (Morgenstern, 1979, 00:52:23)</i> .....	66
<b>Figure 21.</b> <i>Unable to Join the Others, Sowa Holds the Flag from a Window (Morgenstern, 1979, 01:15:35)</i> .....	67
<b>Figure 22.</b> <i>Stefan Decides to Follow His Father's Footsteps (Komasa, 2014, 00:17:16)</i> .....	69
<b>Figure 23.</b> <i>Stefan Joins the AK (Komasa, 2014, 00:18:35)</i> .....	70
<b>Figure 24.</b> <i>Stefan Marching Through a Burning Building (Komasa, 2014, 01:25:22)</i> .....	72
<b>Figure 25.</b> <i>Ala Hiding from Bombardments (Komasa, 2014, 00:54:05)</i> .....	73
<b>Figure 26.</b> <i>A Panoramic Shot of War-Ravaged Warsaw in 1944 (Komasa, 2014, 01:54:15)</i> .....	74
<b>Figure 27.</b> <i>A Panoramic Shot of Modern-Day Warsaw (Komasa, 2014, 01:54:45)</i> .....	74
<b>Figure 28.</b> <i>Jan Nowak Delivers a Speech Before the Main Command of the Home Army (Pasikowski, 2019, 01:34:56)</i> .....	76
<b>Figure 29.</b> <i>Nowak and the Insurgents Run to Liberate Warsaw (Pasikowski, 2019, 01:47:00)</i> ...	77

## Introduction

Myths are valuable frameworks for collective identities: they reference the past to provide directions for the future, telling the story of how a group came to be, who belongs to it, what it represents, and what it should aspire to be. Myths are imbued with meanings and values that establish the shared understanding of the group's identity and boundaries, and "their genesis and transmission are an important object of study in themselves" (Keating, 2008, p. 111). In Poland, intertwined and mutually reinforcing myths of heroism and martyrdom (victimhood) form a cohesive narrative depicting Poland as a "Christ Among Nations". Originally shaped by the intelligentsia of the nineteenth century liberation movements as a response to the Partitions of Poland, this dominant myth was further reinforced by the national traumas of the Second World War and became foundational to Polishness. In the collective imagination, heroic suffering came to signify Polish "special national destiny" (Miłosz, 1983, p. 118).

While myths are products of social exchanges, they also hold political significance and are thus subject to appropriation. In Poland, the myth of heroism, along with the memory of the Second World War, one of the most traumatic episodes in the nation's history, has been reinterpreted both in the Polish People's Republic (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, PRL) and after the under the democratic transition. The Polish United Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR) recontextualized the myth in more than one way to legitimize the regime and ideologically align the memory of the war with the changing post-war geopolitical circumstances in Eastern Europe (Wawrzyniak, 2015). In the post-Stalinist period, establishing communist rule and promoting national communism in Poland would have been impossible without minimizing and altogether silencing the contributions of Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*, AK) soldiers—the underground partisan armed forces serving under the Polish government-in-exile during the war—in the resistance against Nazi Germany. This was done to portray the Polish People's Army (*Ludowe Wojsko Polskie*, LWP) as the sole liberators and the only heroes who sacrificed their lives to free Poland (Kunicki, 2012; Waskiewicz, 2010). As such, despite being tainted by communist ideology, politics of history in the PRL aimed to build a collective identity based on the romantic tradition of Polish national liberation movements (Wawrzyniak, 2015).

By the end of the 1990s, nearly a decade after the Round Table Agreement had brought the opposition to power, controversies over the biographies of some government officials and allegations of their collaborationism with the communists led to the establishment of the Institute of National Remembrance (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*, IPN) (Machcewicz, 2023). The matters of history, memory and identity came to the forefront and crystallized into the new politics of history (“*polityka historyczna*”), substantiated by the narratives of Polish heroic victimhood (Kasianov, 2022). Its initiators and most ardent proponents of this effort were the Law and Justice Party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS) and its political allies (Kasianov, 2022), who were in power as a majority government from 2005 to 2007 and 2015 to 2019, or served as opposition. They aimed to strengthen national identity and rectify the collective memory that was “destroyed or distorted” during the PRL (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, 2005, p. 18; Official website of the President of the Republic of Poland, 2015).

Therefore, the memory of Poland’s invasion by Nazi Germany and the USSR, and the country’s subsequent subjugation by the latter became its central themes. In its pursuit to address the communist mistreatment of history, protect Poland’s “good name,” and foster national pride, PiS-led politics of history called for the recognition of the AK “flawless heroes” who were previously silenced and persecuted (Peters, 2016, p. 5; Waskiewicz, 2010, p. 48). It sought to universalize and project the original experience of the Polish resistance, including their heroism, moral superiority, and dignified victimhood onto subsequent generations, while rebutting any alternative interpretations of the past (Kazlauskaitė, 2022; Official website of the President of the Republic of Poland, 2008).

### ***Research Puzzle***

Although specific narratives changed over time, both groups of state memory actors—PZPR and PiS—aimed to shape the image of Poland as a nation of heroes, victims, or often both. PZPR’s exclusionary approach to politics of history was taken on by PiS politicians, who embarked on constructing Polish collective identity as the “all-good new self” (Kazlauskaitė, 2022). It is particularly puzzling, as Joanna Wawrzyniak (2015, pp. 225-227) concluded in her research on the legacy of communist-era approaches to politics of history, that the populist right-wing state

actors, despite their strong anti-communist stance, continued to adhere to the nationalist “heroic victimhood” narrative template. This thesis will investigate the apparent paradox of why, despite promoting contending official interpretations of the past and being ideologically and politically antithetical, the historical politics of PZPR and PiS were enforced using the same template.

This research puzzle will be addressed by analyzing cultural artifacts—specifically, historical fiction films—that were endorsed by the state and created in the context of politics of history under the PZPR and PiS governments. Although the narrativization and mythologization of Second World War memory in the PRL and post-democratic transition period have been studied both comparatively and as standalone cases within Central and Eastern European and Polish memory studies, scholarly attention has largely focused on memory institutions (Behr, 2022; Stola, 2012), museums (Bogumił, 2015; Kazlauskaitė, 2022; Żychlińska & Fontana, 2016), veteran organizations (Wawrzyniak, 2015), and official commemorations (Czyżewski, 2020; Waskiewicz, 2010). However, there has not been any study comparing how films endorsed by the PZPR and PiS portray the memory of the past through the lens of Poland’s dominant myth.

And yet, cultural representations of collective memory is of paramount significance in shaping collective identity. It is through culture which draws from the nation’s history that memory transcends individual experiences and serves as a unifying force for collective identity (Assmann & Assmann, 1987; J. Assmann, 1995/1988). Moreover, since myths and collective memory are themselves products of culture, the analysis of cultural artifacts can provide answers to important questions in social sciences, namely “how cultural symbols serve to underpin identities and beliefs, and how they adapt to changing circumstances” (Keating, 2008, p. 112). Geneviève Zubrzycki (2011) noted that “the historical and the everyday are joined in the making of national identity” (p. 22). The narratives found in cultural embodiments of myths and memory outside of institutional contexts have greater outreach and are less overt representations of dominant ideologies compared to those presented in museums or during official commemorations. This makes non-institutionalized vehicles of memory consumable “everyday commodities,” rendering the discourse behind them more pervasive (Zubrzycki, 2011, p. 23). In sum, scrutinizing the discourse behind cultural artifacts contributes to the understanding of how the politics of history influence collective memory and thus identity.

Therefore, the rationale behind this thesis is twofold. First, to address the existing research gap. Second, to investigate how two ostensibly ideologically opposed and temporally separated political regimes—the communist extreme-left PZPR and the anti-communist right-wing PiS—have adhered to a similar template for constructing collective memory through the films they endorsed.

### *Cinema as a Lens onto Politics of History*

Cinema is chosen as a primary source for comparative research of political instrumentalization of collective memory and national mythology for several reasons. Firstly, films are semiotically rich vessels of meaning, which they render using a combination of audio-visual, linguistic, and spatial discourses (Bateman & Schmidt, 2012). The visual and symbolic language of film can help uncover the subtle ways in which myths influence political narratives and collective memory. Similarly to myths, films frame realities, episodes and characters, organizing them into structured stories with specific meanings (Kaes, 1990). Polish film historian Marek Hendrykowski (2000) underlined that representations of memory in films do not provide historical knowledge but rather convey the meanings attributed to the past. In this context, historical fiction films, while not aiming for precise historical accuracy, narrate history by highlighting significant aspects and offering metaphorical truths that encourage the audience to “think historically” (Kaes, 1990, p. 112). Thus, films can illustrate the continuity and transformation of myths over time, providing a dynamic understanding of their relevance for different ideological, political and mnemonic regimes.

Secondly, cinema is an integral component of what Zubrzycki (2011) defines as a “national sensorium”—a product of convergence and exchange of visual and material culture “through which subjects become ideologically and affectively invested in the nation” (p. 22). Due to their affective quality, cinematic narratives amplify viewer identification with story-lines and characters (Axelson, 2015; Jerslev, 2006). The narrative impact of cinema makes it a valuable medium of propaganda. This was recognized as early as in 1922 by Vladimir Lenin, who considered “that of all the arts the most important for us is the cinema” (Lenin, 1933, p. 10). Anatoly Lunacharsky, the first head of the People’s Commissariat for Education, supported the

potential that Lenin saw in using films for Soviet mass-propaganda, noting that “Cinema’s strength lies in the fact that, like any art, it imbues an idea with feeling and with captivating form but, unlike the other arts, cinema is actually cheap, portable and unusually graphic. Its effects reach where even the book cannot reach and it is, of course, more powerful than any kind of narrow propaganda” (Lunacharsky, 1924, as cited in Taylor & Christie, 1988, p. 109). Films socialize viewers into a particular historical knowledge and ideology that is promoted on screen. Values and worldviews are often conveyed through the nuanced behaviors and choices made characters, providing the audience with behavioral and conceptual role-models. These elements, expressed through characters’ dilemmas, emotions and moral conflicts, reflect the underlying principles and societal norms that films seek to promote or critique. By analyzing these representations, one can gain insights into the ideological underpinnings that shape the narrative. In sum, historical fiction films are “information-rich” sources for understanding the politics of history since they contain narratives that can be decoded, analyzed, and juxtaposed with state-sponsored memory narratives and national myths.

The analysis of narrative patterns can be further strengthened by thematically focusing on a historical event that has been remembered differently under the PZPR and PiS-led politics of history. For this reason, the research will investigate cinematic representation of the Warsaw Uprising (1944). The Uprising presents an intriguing case because, due to the active role of the AK and the Soviet Union’s reluctance to support the Uprising, it was marked by “blank spots” in the official memory of the PRL, but emerged as the focal point of Second World War commemoration after the democratization (Waskiewicz, 2010; Wawrzyniak, 2015). Furthermore, its feasibility was and continues to be disputed. During the Stalinist era, from the end of the war until 1956, the Uprising was portrayed as a catastrophic loss of lives in vain, while the responsibility for the tragedy was placed on the AK leaders and Polish government-in-exile (Davies, 2004; Waskiewicz, 2010). With Gomułka’s Thaw in October 1956, the policy of limited rehabilitation for the ordinary AK soldiers led to them being recognized as brave patriots whose fate was carelessly decided by the “flawed” leadership of the Underground Polish state (Waskiewicz, 2010, p. 49). Later on, the Solidarity movement of the 1980s weakened the censorship over public and private memory, entailing a reverse trend: criticism of the Uprising was equaled to the support of the communist regime (Waskiewicz, 2010). Finally, in the agenda of the populist right-wing, there has been no room for debating whether the Uprising was

worthwhile. Especially after PiS consolidated its power, the Uprising came to symbolize Polishness in the romantic nationalist tradition, embodying Poles' heroism and their resolve to fight for collective freedom against all odds (Waskiewicz, 2010).

### ***Research Questions and Objectives***

The research questions progress from a micro-level analysis of the films' content; to situating the films within the historical and ideological context in which they were produced; to finally exploring the broader continuity of the "heroic victimhood" narrative template across ideologically divergent political regimes.

**1. What elements and practices of portraying heroism have been used in Polish state-endorsed historical fiction films on the Warsaw Uprising? How do the films' cinematic narratives reflect the dominant myth?**

The questions aim to explore how depictions of heroism are woven into the cinematic narratives to determine whether these narratives align with the "heroic victimhood" template. The findings are intended to support or challenge the possibility of applying the previously made conclusions about the continuity of the narrative template to cultural representations of collective memory.

**2. How do these cinematic narratives correspond to or deviate from the politics of history of the PZPR and PiS?**

The objective is to explore whether the films are "typical" of the ideological, political and social realities and in which they were produced by juxtaposing how they remember the Uprising and its heroes against the official memory narratives. Another aim is to investigate the nuances in how the films represent the memory of the Uprising to illuminate the complexities involved in the imposition of official interpretations of history across the two periods.

**3. Why has the narrative template endured despite the conflicting memory narratives of ideologically divergent political regimes?**

The aim is to explain why the films that remember the Uprising and its heroes differently still adhere to the dominant myth in their cinematic portrayals of history. On the macro-level, the question is aimed at identifying the “causes-of-effects” that underpin the enduring relevance of the Polish dominant myth (“Christ Among Nations”) for political regimes in Poland.

The research can contribute to the growing discussion within the memory studies sub-field by uncovering how nationalist political regimes instrumentalize collective memory, tailoring their narratives to align with national myths through popular culture. Given its focus on Poland, the study is particularly relevant to European studies, and more specifically, to Central and Eastern European (CEE) area studies. Additionally, it aims to advance nationalism studies by examining the persistence of national mythology across divergent ideological and political contexts. The findings are especially pertinent for the CEE region, where post-transition collective identity reconstruction often involves nationalist discourses.

### ***Structure of the Thesis***

In Chapter 1, relevant conceptual literature will be reviewed and discussed with the aim of constructing a guiding framework for the empirical research and interpretation of the findings. The review will be supplemented by the contributions dealing with Polish politics of history and national mythology. Furthermore, a review of state-of-the-art scholarly works that have explored memory narratives and myths in Polish cinema, including the works on the Warsaw Uprising, will be provided.

Chapter 2 will provide historical context of the Uprising, outlining ideological and political context in which official memory narratives around it have evolved. It will also delve into how the Uprising has been mythologized under PZPR and PiS’ politics of history. Furthermore, an overview of how cinema has been used for the objectives of politics of history will explore the key dynamics between film industry and the state in PRL and since 2005. The last sub-section will present relevant biographical information about the filmmakers and their declared intentions behind the films to identify their potential positionality and support the interpretive analysis.

Chapter 3 will present the methodology used in this thesis: research design, rationale for the film selection, methods of analysing the films, and the limitations of the research.

In Chapter 4, the interpretive analysis of cinematic narratives will be conducted to illuminate how the films imagine the heroism of the Warsaw Uprising; in what way they reflect official memory narratives; and how their cinematic narratives correspond to the “heroic victimhood” template. The findings will then be synthesized and discussed using the conceptual framework and take-aways from the contextual overview to address the first and the second research questions.

Finally, the conclusions will be drawn, firstly, by interpreting the findings using the conceptual framework and reflecting on how they align with the conceptual and thematic literature that was discussed. Secondly, by critically evaluating how the research results address the research puzzle and therefore the macro-level research question. Thirdly, by reflecting on their implications for Central and Eastern European studies, and suggesting the directions for future research.

## Chapter 1. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

### *1.1 Collective Memory as a Fiber of Collective Identity*

In his seminal work *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson (1983/2006) proposed an understanding of a nation as an imagined political community, whose boundaries and ideological attachments are formed through communicative-cultural experiences of engaging in common practices. It is through these practices and the shared beliefs and values that collective identity is established to bind a “metaphorical kinsfolk” into a nation as we know it (Breuilly, 2016, p. 629).

However, collective identity cannot be formed without a nation’s reliance on a common vision of its past. In the most simplistic and abstract form, the concept of **collective memory** could be defined as a reconstruction of historical events at the group level, that is generated, diffused, negotiated, and internalized by individuals belonging to the mnemonic community. French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1994/1925), in his seminal book, *Social Frameworks of Memory* highlighted collective memory’s crucial role in creating a sense of continuity that unites community members with a shared sense of belonging. He argued that while collective memory draws on personal recollections, the individual memories are necessarily shaped by the group’s shared framework of remembrance. Halbwachs’ view on the duality of collective memory was echoed by Barry Schwartz, a scholar of social theory and social action, who functionally defined collective memory as “[...] both a mirror and a lamp - a model of and a model for society” (Olick & Robbins, 1998, p. 124).

Such a preferable version of the past is enforced by political actors who institute and promulgate “invented traditions”, i.e. routinely followed fixed cultural-communicative practices imbued with symbolic and axiological meaning for the nation (Hobsbawm, 1992/1983, p. 1). Moreover, the fusion of personal lived memories of individuals who have experienced a certain historical event into a collective interpretation of the past demands a level of selectivity (Halbwachs, 1992). In other words, projecting personal memories onto a collective level often leads to omissions and over-representation of certain narratives. Paradoxically, collective memory is built on the interplay between personal and communal recollections, while individual

memories are reshaped into collective reconstructions that function as a mnemonic habitus, guiding group members to internalize specific interpretations.

Halbwachs' conceptualization of collective memory focuses on personal lived experiences, suggesting that these recollections, though altered, become embedded in collective reconstructions. However, his theory lacks depth in addressing the perpetuation of distant past memories. Here, the concept of postmemory, developed by Marianne Hirsch, provides a valuable extension. Postmemory involves the active remembrance of unexperienced events through imagination and projection, creating a trauma bond across generations and opening a way to healing (Hirsch, 1996; 2008). In this context, visual representations play a key role. Aleksandra Szczepan (2014) found that cultural and visual depictions evoke past traumas, making abstract memories more tangible and revealing their opacities to those who did not directly experience them.

In turn, Hirsch's work draws on the concept of **cultural memory**, formulated by German historians Jan and Aleida Assmann. The scholars argued that the "concretion" of collective identity at the national level is only possible when everyday informal memories are transformed into cultural artifacts and organized communicative processes, which together constitute cultural memory (Assmann & Assmann, 1987; J. Assmann, 1995/1988). Cultural memory, thus, represents an institutionalized and enduring structure of knowledge that draws upon the group's history as its primary reference framework (Assmann & Assmann, 1987; J. Assmann, 1995/1988). It is apparent how this concept expanded the original understanding of collective memory onto what Halbwachs considered history. On the other hand, Halbwachs' perspective on collective memory is reflected in the concept of communicative memory, which the scholars define as an individual and grassroots level of a "lived" memory. It is socially mediated and informally transmitted through regular intra-group communication, and thus limited in inference and temporal sustainability beyond a few generations (Assmann & Assmann, 1987; J. Assmann, 1995/1988).

## *1.2 Politics of History through Mnemonic Narrativization*

The study of how memory narrativization and instrumentalization construct collective identity and legitimize political changes has been well-explored by Hayden White (1980), Margaret Somers (1994), and Alon Confino (1997), Hodgkin and Radstone (2003) among others. Concepts such as “politics of memory” and “politics of history” became central to this discourse.

Ukrainian historian Heorhii Kasianov (2022) offered new definitions after scrutinizing the scholarly debates. He argued that historical memory functions as a tradition in the Hobsbawmian sense, reflecting a mythologized version of a group’s history. His arguments support Barry Schwartz’s view on the object-subject duality of collective memory: “On the one hand, historical memory is a result of cultural, social, and political engineering; on the other, it is also a tool used to shape cultural, social, political, and religious identities then synthesised into one during an era of nationalism” (Kasianov, 2022, p. 17). Kasianov defined the latter as **politics of history**, a realm in which various political and societal actors interfere in narrativization of the nation’s history for ideological and political purposes. Given this thesis’s focus on how official narratives permeate cultural artifacts, Kasianov’s definition of politics of history is deemed most appropriate.

The objectives behind politics of history warrant greater attention. Recent literature indicates that collective memory often becomes instrumentalized following a regime change. Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik (2014) argued that, in CEE, political actors that emerged during and after the democratic transition gained legitimacy and reshaped social order by reconstructing collective identities through the imposition of “memory regimes” (pp. 15-16). Building on this perspective, Kasianov (2022) proposed a typology of politics of history—exclusivist, inclusivist, and mixed (ambivalent)—which he argues are more stable than volatile memory regimes. The exclusivist model marginalizes and appropriates rival memories to reinforce divisions, while the inclusivist model assimilates conflicting memories into a dominant narrative to reduce diversity. The mixed model, in contrast, allows divergent historical visions to coexist due to their non-salience or non-politicization in public and official discourse.

The new politics of history in Poland, led by populist right-wing nationalists, aligns with Kasianov’s exclusivist model. It aims to rectify communist-era distortions to reveal “historical

truths” and protect Poland’s “good name” (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, 2005, p. 18; Official website of the President of the Republic of Poland, 2015). Alternative versions of history, particularly those critical of the portrayal of Poles as solely innocent heroic victims during World War II, are labeled as “narrative shocks” and a “pedagogy of shame” that the new politics of history seeks to refute (Hackmann, 2018; Mendel & Szkudlarek, 2020). This defensive, uncritical approach, termed “unequivocal” by Joanna Wawrzyniak (2015, p. 225), is associated with resentment, a psychological response that redirects feelings of inferiority and injustice onto others, turning victimhood into a sense of empowerment (Salmela & Capelos, 2021, p. 194). Rūta Kazlauskaitė (2022) found that PiS-affiliated authorities used resentment to reinforce a collective identity of heroic victimhood and justify their didactic history-telling by disparaging critical views. Thus, sustaining feelings of pride and moral superiority became crucial for protecting the Polish collective identity (Kazlauskaitė, 2022).

### ***1.3 Myths as Schematic Narrative Templates for Collective Memory***

Drawing on the previously discussed conceptualizations of collective identity and memory, one can argue that the primary aim of politics of history is forging a common national identity through the construction and dissemination of homogenizing memory narratives. However, the use of the concept of collective memory for the analysis of national identity has also been problematized in the literature.

Duncan Bell (2003), studying how collective identities are constructed discursively in the era of nationalism, critically reflected on the tendency of social science scholars to conflate various social processes under the name of collective memory. Bell argued that creating a sense of belonging requires a common framework for interpreting the past and shared acts of remembrance. His perspective supports the social agency approach to collective memory – or rather remembering, – according to which it is an inter-subjective practice of those with lived experiences, which cannot be transferred from individuals onto the group level. Bell believed that while material representations in cultural artifacts can transmit historical knowledge, they are insufficient for internalizing collective remembrance. Such historical knowledge requires narrativization, and for Bell, narrativization of memory is first and foremost situated within the

realm of myth-making. The scholar defined **myths** as narrative constructions, modes of fabular storytelling that reference a nation's past in a simplified, hyperbolized, and selective manner for the sake of defining a nation and its temporal continuum. They inform which episodes of collective memory are incorporated into the collective identity, and structure how they are remembered (Bell, 2003, p. 75). Myths are constructed to provide a nation with a sense of continuity and co-belonging by establishing a linearity of its common history, give it meaning by encapsulating the national community's values and ensuring their continuity, and thus legitimize its existence (Bell, 2003).

Bell's premises about the axiological, boundary-making, identity-building, and legitimizing functions of myths are supported by an earlier study, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, by another prominent scholar of nationalism, Anthony Smith (1999). According to both scholars, national myths are based on reproducible narratives that legitimize changes in the present by referencing a specific vision of the past. Smith suggested that the need to use history for purposes of legitimization emerged alongside the spread of nationalism, when ethnic groups faced a crisis of secularism and traditional beliefs, leaving them in search of new sources of meaning-making (Smith, 1999). Thereby, the myths of generational lineages became an ideological foundation of nationalism's belief system. Supported by diverse case studies of England, France, Turkey, Greece, and Israel, the scholar distinguished biological (related to genealogical ancestry) and cultural-ideological (related to ideological descent) modes of myths. Although adapted to each group's history, they have a common form in each nation's mythology. According to Smith's conceptualization, the age of nationalism in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe was marked by references to mythologically distilled heroic archetypes of the "golden age" (Smith, 1999, p. 60, 65). Foundational to each are generational lineages to noble heroes, whether biological or ideological, which construct interrelations and establish cultural, axiological, and ideological coordinates passed down through generations (Smith, 1999). The scholar argued that during periods of regeneration from decline and oppression, previously forgotten values of heroic sacrifice are reinvigorated and used as examples for nationalist mobilization, calling for national self-determination and liberation. Ultimately, myths of ancestry and descent endow self-sacrificing heroism with significant symbolic importance, legitimizing claims to a unique identity, dignity, specific territories, and national autonomy (Smith, 1999, pp. 68-71).

James Wertsch (2008a) similarly treated the process of instrumentalization and narrativization of collective memory as central to shaping “deep collective memory”, which he defined as a reduction of past events to “mythic archetypes” (p. 145). In the case study of Russian collective memory, the scholar concluded that the Second World War memory narratives have remained relatively unchanged in Russia because they catered to a “dominant myth” (Wertsch, 2008b, pp. 126-125). Wertsch introduced the concept of narrative tools that delineated the mnemonic and mythological narratives. While “specific narratives” are mnemonic in essence because they are concerned with the interpretation of particular historical events, figures, dates and such; **“schematic narrative templates”** are stable basic plots that are embedded in a collective identity on a subconscious level (Wertsch, 2008a, p. 142). In other words, “[...] narrative templates are similar to a prism through which we see the world without recognising that the prism bends or shapes our view of what we are seeing” (Wertsch, & Roediger, 2022, p. 3). They are acquired by individuals in the process of socialization into a nation’s cultural, historical and social context through education, media, public celebrations and commemorations (Wertsch, 2002; 2008a; 2008b). Using the case study of why the Russian mnemonic community reacted extremely adversely to the removal of the “Bronze Soldier” memorial in Tallinn commemorating the Red Army’s arrival in Estonia, Wertsch (2008a) convincingly argued that schematic narrative templates employ abstract yet exclusivist narratives which, in turn, guide and structure specific narratives of interpreting the past and present. It is clear that schematic narrative templates correspond to Bell and Smith’s conceptualizations of national myths. Thus, it is possible to argue that they are mythological grand narratives or dominant myths that shape and structure specific mnemonic narratives which are then instrumentalized through politics of history.

In his case study, Wertsch identified that the “Expulsion of Foreign Enemies” schematic narrative template has been the most salient basic plot that dictated how Russian history is interpreted by the members of the Russian mnemonic community (Wertsch, 2002, p. 93). He also laid out the elements constituting the template, which include Russia’s image as a peaceful object of unprovoked foreign attacks that, despite being on the verge of civilizational collapse, showed heroism against all odds and liberated itself, thus proving its status as an exceptional and great nation (Wertsch, 2008a). Notably, these elements correlate with the component myths of decline, heroic age and regeneration, as defined by Smith.

The schematic narrative template intrinsic to the Polish mnemonic community is also structured by the same component myths and strongly resembles the Russian template. It defines Poland as “Christ among nations [...] martyred for the sins of the world and resurrected for the world’s salvation” (Zubrzycki, 2011, p. 25). Representing a dominant myth, it substantiates the collective identity of the Polish nation (represented by Catholic ethnic Poles), as an exceptional heroic victim that managed to rise from the ashes of foreign aggressions and occupations despite being abandoned by everyone (Zechenter, 2019). Thus, its main elements include the *exceptional martyrology* of ethnically Polish national community, known for its *universal heroism and patriotism*, that is forced by history to fight alone for the *freedom* of Poland from imperial powers.

Rooted in the messianic sentiments of the Polish-Ottoman wars, the template was adopted by the nineteenth-century Polish intelligentsia to shape modern national identity during the Partitions of Poland (1795–1918) (Zechenter, 2019). Wawrzyniak (2015) noted its revival and popularization through education in the interwar period, and pointed out to its endurance under communism. She illustrated that immediately after the Second World War, “[...] what was sought was the heroization of mass death” (Wawrzyniak, 2015, p. 63). The PZPR adapted and appropriated the romantic narrative by portraying the LPW, rather than the underground AK or the Red Army, as the true liberators to legitimize the regime (Wawrzyniak, 2015, p. 215). After the democratic transition, PiS-led politics of history built on the narrative template. Annamaria Orła-Bukowska (2006) identifies that, regarding the Second World War, the dominant myth has been recontextualized to promote the following views:

- “(1) Poles were the war’s first official victims;
- (2) laid on the altar to be slaughtered, they fought against two totalitarianisms;
- (3) they were the purest and noblest of heroes, the only nation on the continent which neither collaborated with (via open alliance, facilitated annexation, or unengaged neutrality) nor formally surrendered to the Third Reich;
- (4) although sacrificed to Soviet totalitarianism, Poland had saved Europe from German Fascism and contributed to peace on the continent” (p. 179).

## *1.4 Films as Vehicles of Memory and Myths*

The question arises: how are myths internalized subconsciously? Literature suggests that national myths pervade due to their semiological presence in visual and material culture. Roland Barthes (2009/1957) argued in *Mythologies* that myths communicate dominant ideologies through objects and signs. Later works on national myths, particularly *The Symbolic Construction of Community* by Anthony Cohen (1985), also supported the view that symbols embedded in national myths serve as a cohesive force, enabling the collective to construct meaning and legitimize its existence. However, Barthes warns that the mere presence of myths is not sufficient for myth-telling, because both concepts and images act only as first-order signs that, on their own, evoke social-psychological emotional responses at most. Barthes claims that they only become mythological signifiers when enacted discursively.

In a similar vein, the presence of myths in material and intangible culture was recognized as a key condition for the resilience of national mythologies by Geneviève Zubrzycki (2011) in her study of how Polish nineteenth century mythology has influenced the rebuilding of a national state after the fall of communism. She suggests that “it is the relatively shared set of stories, images and material symbols, and the disagreement as much as the consensus evoked in response to them, that generate ‘a nation’” (Zubrzycki, 2011, p. 24). Zubrzycki conceptualized it as a “**national sensorium**”—a trans-temporal node that emerges through interactions with the cultural manifestations of myths and the sensory perceptions generated by these exchanges and fosters a resilient ideological and affective attachment of individuals to a nation. Therefore, the concept presents a valuable justification for analyzing films as carriers and drivers of mythological narratives.

At the same time, according to the previously discussed concepts of cultural memory, films can be regarded as vehicles of memory because they contain shared knowledge of the past. Robert Rosenstone (2006) argued that cinema’s potential to engage viewers affectively makes it simultaneously more convincing at conveying a particular vision of the past and more subtle in its narration. Anton Kaes (1990), in his analysis of the effect of war films on the American population, noted that cinema’s immersive quality makes it a powerful medium for shaping historical consciousness, surpassing traditional memory vehicles like museums. Reflecting on the

cinema-history nexus, Wulf Kansteiner (2018) emphasized that films transmit visceral mnemonic messages, allowing audiences to connect emotionally with the past. In an earlier contribution to the topic, Pierre Sorlin (1980) suggested that historical fiction, “using the pretext of the past, reorganizes the present” (p. 80). He claimed that despite not being intended to represent history accurately, unlike documentary films—or perhaps precisely because of this—historical fiction tends to be treated by audiences as a shared agreement on the interpretation of history. The links between cinema and myths have also been illustrated in the literature. For instance, Hugo Frey (2014), in his structuralist analysis of the narratives in the French cinema, concluded that films either covertly, or sometimes openly, communicated political myths of nationalist ideology or challenged it. The author also highlighted that films’ content became a point of the government’s struggle to control and mediate its meaning.

The relationship between Polish cinema, and in particular war films, the film industry in the PRL and official memory discourse has also been a subject of scholarly interest of Polish and non-Polish researchers. Contributions made by Bolesław Michałek and Frank Turaj (1988), Ewelina Nurczyńska-Fidelska and Zbigniew Batko (1995), Paul Cotes (2005), Charles Ford and Robert Hammond (2005), Tadeusz Lubelski (2015) are among the most recognized. Marek Haltof (2019) offered a particularly impressive catalogue of Polish feature films made from 1896 to 2017. His focus was on presenting brief analyses of the features and elements contained in the films that made them “recognized both locally and internationally as uniquely Polish” (Haltof, 2019, p. 1). In the context of war films, Lucinda Fenny (2020) studied representation of the Second World War in Polish cinema between 1945 and 1970, providing a rigorous analysis, backed by archival research, of the relationships among the PZPR, filmmakers, film units, Script and Film Assessment Commissions, as well as the socio-political realities in which these war films were created. Her research, however, includes only two films that address the Warsaw Uprising: Andrzej Wajda’s *Kanal* (1956) and Andrzej Munk’s *Eroica* (1957). Małgorzata Stasiak (2021) also incorporated these films, together with Janusz Morgenstern’s series *Kolumbowie* (1970) and Jan Komasa’s *Miasto 44* (2014) as individual mnemonic representations of the Uprising, focusing on how these films reflected shifts in communicative and state-sponsored memory. Additionally, the scholar provided a detailed account of the cultural, social, ideological, and political contexts in which these works were created. Stasiak argued that the earlier films

depict the memory of the event, while the later production illustrates how social imagination constructs the myth of the Uprising.

With regard to the presence of myths in Polish cinema, Mikołaj Kunicki's (2012) analysis of the films by Jerzy Passendorfer, Ryszard Filipiński and Bohdan Poręba revealed how war-positive films from the nationalist-communist era promoted the regime's ideologies and myth of heroism (Kunicki, 2012). The scholar further illustrated how nationalist communist regimes solidified their legitimacy by refurbishing and promoting nationalist myths and shaping collective historical imagination in Yugoslavia, Romania, German Democratic Republic, USSR and PRC. On the other hand, Matilda Mroz (2021) presented a study showing how Polish films about the Holocaust challenged the mythologized image of non-Jewish Poles as either innocent victims or self-sacrificing heroes who saved Jewish Poles. In the literature that analyzes memory and myths in films about the Warsaw Uprising, scholarly focus is most frequently placed on Wajda's works (Falkowska, 2008; Nurczyńska-Fidelska & Stolarska, 1998; Kornacki, 2011; Witek, 2016).

In the most extensive research on the representation of myth in films about the Warsaw Uprising, systematically analyzed cinematic portrayals of the Uprising in all feature films produced from the end of the war until 2014, where it served as either the central or a secondary theme, or appeared as an allusion. Her study also examined the reception and the differences between the original projects and their screen versions. Justyna Czaja (2018) treats the Uprising as a historical myth in itself, shaped and reformulated by both collective imagination and cultural-political realities. This thesis, on the other hand, approaches the myths not as a separate phenomenon constructed specifically around the Warsaw Uprising but as a manifestation of how the dominant myth penetrates social consciousness and becomes instrumentalized by political regimes. It aims to see whether the event has been interpreted consistently according to the mythological template specifically in Polish state-endorsed films to draw conclusions about the relevance of the dominant myth for legitimization of political regimes. Thus, state interference in films as well as their authorship by Polish filmmakers is crucial for this research. Lastly, this thesis includes the analysis of the latest film on the topic that was produced in 2019.

## ***1.5 Summary***

This review of the theoretical literature has outlined the existing academic perspectives on the concepts of collective identity, cultural memory, myths, and politics of history, discussing their components and inter-relations, and linking them to the phenomena woven into the research puzzle. Reflecting on the scholarly hermeneutics has led to the conclusion that cultural artifacts serve as building blocks of collective identities, as they are essential and enduring sources of collective memory and national mythology. Furthermore, an overview of the research on film-memory-mythology nexus strengthened the argument that films are valuable sources for identifying and decoding mnemonic and mythological narratives.

Most importantly, a review helped to illuminate the conceptual principles of how mnemonic and mythological narrativization is used to construct and instrumentalize collective identity. In this regard, exploration of James Wertsch's conceptualization revealed that schematic narrative templates—"invisible" basic plots—organize memory narratives employed in politics of history and shape individual interpretations of the past. Juxtaposing Wertsch's concept with national/dominant myths has led to the conclusion that both are based on the same premises. This is important for two reasons.

Firstly, it establishes that the nationalist "heroic victimhood" narrative template, referred to by Wawrzyniak (2015, p. 227), is indeed a dominant myth, a relatively stable construction that structures collective memory. Secondly, this conclusion will guide the cinematic discourse analysis of historical fiction films about the Warsaw Uprising heroism. The research will explore whether the films construct a consistent heroic archetype and follow the dominant myth in their depictions of the Uprising, despite being "typical" of the period in which they were created. Specifically, it will analyze memory narratives (Wertsch's "specific narratives") within the films against the socio-political and ideological contexts of their creation to determine if they align with the official interpretations. By applying the concept of schematic narrative templates, the study will then interpret the findings to explain why the films that remember the Uprising and its heroes differently still adhere to the dominant myth in their cinematic portrayals of history.

## **Chapter 2. Historical Context**

### ***2.1 Historical background of the Warsaw Uprising***

This subsection provides an overview of the key geopolitical and domestic developments that shaped Poland's position by August 1944 and influenced the Uprising's course. It synthesizes a range of scholarly works, and although interpretations may vary, this thesis does not intend to engage with the historiographical debates surrounding this period. This historical timeline is important for the interpretive analysis since it outlines the "raw material" which was later selectively incorporated in official memory discourses and recontextualized to fit the mythologized version of the past.

After five years of German and Soviet occupation, Polish attempts to have the Soviet occupation recognized as equally deserving of condemnation as the German invasion were unsuccessful. Prime Minister Mikolajczyk's efforts to restore diplomatic ties with the USSR before the Soviet "liberation" of Poland also proved futile (Woodward, 1962). Initially, the USSR's formal neutrality and fears of pushing it closer to Germany prevented London from adopting a resolute anti-Soviet stance (Karski, 1985). After the USSR joined the Allied coalition, Britain's reluctance to support Polish interests was driven by the need to maintain Allied unity (Ciechanowski, 1974). The Red Army's counter-offensive strengthened Stalin's position over the American and British allies, who, unable to meet his demands for a second front, made secret concessions at Poland's expense (Ciechanowski, 1974).

By October 1943, the Polish government-in-exile recognized that only military action by the Underground armed forces could liberate Poland and protect it against further Soviet occupation or the imposition of a communist regime. While Mikolajczyk was wary of military action without Western backing, General Inspector Sosnkowski believed that a military operation, despite its costs, would channel the population's strong desire to resist the occupier (Ciechanowski, 1974). He feared that failing to harness this sentiment might drive people to join the Polish-Soviet Berling's Army that was advancing toward Poland, thereby discrediting the AK and the London-based authorities (Ciechanowski, 1974; Popowycz, 2021). In February, 1944, the AK launched guerrilla offensives under Operation "Burza" (Operation Tempest) in Volhynia. The AK engaged in ad-hoc military cooperation with Soviet forces during active combat, but by

May, it failed since most AK units were eliminated, or disarmed and incorporated into Berling's Army (Ciechanowski, 1974). Later attempts to capture other key centers, such as Wilno (Vilnius), Lwów (Lviv) and Lublin, followed a similar pattern: the liberated territories quickly fell under Soviet control, and "Burza" failed to achieve its political objectives. (Ciechanowski, 1974).

Thus, the AK command came to realize that the last hope for reclaiming Polish sovereignty was through an uprising in the capital. However, its Warsaw-based manpower was not sufficient nor well-armed for the large-scale operation, as was acknowledged by Bór-Komorowski as late as July 14 (Ciechanowski, 1974). Yet, a week later his opinion shifted following a meeting with AK generals (Garliński, 1964; Borkiewicz, 1957). The situation seemed promising as the Soviet front advanced and German forces were retreating from Warsaw (Ciechanowski, 1974). On July 25, Bór-Komorowski notified the émigré authorities of the preliminary decision to launch the uprising, requesting them to coordinate with the British government for the involvement of the Polish Parachute Brigade and the bombing of airfields (Ciechanowski, 1974). Bór-Komorowski's decision was backed by "Burza"-related instructions, which allowed him to decide independently on seizing "important centers" before Soviet troops arrived (Ciechanowski, 1974, pp. 287-288). The approval from the government went against General Inspector Sosnkowski's view that an uprising in Warsaw would be unjustified and futile; however, his communications with Bór-Komorowski were either blocked or altered (Davies, 2004). Meanwhile, the British response to the requests for military support was negative due to the logistical challenges and the need for obtaining USSR's permission to use air bases under its control (Davies, 2004). Having no direct contact, AK's coordination with the Red Army was impossible. Nevertheless, based on what was later proven to be inaccurate intelligence, Bór-Komorowski made the final decision to begin the uprising on August 1 at 17:00 (Szostak, 1969, Ciechanowski, 1974). Thus, the decision was driven by military and intelligence miscalculations, the urgency to act on German defeats, and the risk of the Soviet-backed Committee of National Liberation co-opting popular sentiment (Davies, 2004).

The Uprising was planned to a week at most (Przegiętka, 2016). With no heavy artillery and air power and only 10% of its 40,000–50,000 soldiers armed, the AK managed to seize significant areas of the city within the first four days, although with heavy losses (Siekierski,

2004). Of particular importance for the later articulation of the myth of heroism was the fact that the resistance was driven by youth: insurgent fighters were mostly in their late teens–early twenties, while children from scout units performed communication and delivery tasks (Popowycz, 2021). The AK’s initial success was hampered by German reinforcements that arrived on August 5–6, quickly shifting the balance of power (Davies, 2004; Popowycz, 2021). This occurred when the Soviet offensive was temporarily halted, allowing the Germans to reestablish supply lines and concentrate its forces on crushing the Uprising (Davies, 2004). The civilian population, which suffered 40,000 casualties from indiscriminate German bombardments in just those two days, also played a proactive role through subversive activities and resistance to SS orders (Siekierski, 2004; Popowycz, 2021). The immense suffering of the Warsawian population became deeply woven into the memory of the Uprising, laying the foundation for the myth of Polish martyrdom. Despite massive casualties, the Uprising turned into a war of attrition from mid-August until the fall of the Old Town on August 26 (Davies, 2004). Such resilience of the practically unarmed insurgents gained particular importance in later cinematic depictions of heroism.

Meanwhile, the Red Army and NKVD actively hindered the passing of the AK reinforcement across Vistula, which ran contrary to Stalin’s empty promises of Soviet assistance (Mukhina, 2006; Davies, 2004). Moreover, the USSR repeatedly rejected the possibility of RAF and American planes refueling at the Soviet-held air bases after dropping military aid in Warsaw (Davies, 2004). The RAF-led Warsaw airlift from southern Italy proved insufficient: it was hindered by the dangers of flying through German-occupied territories, Soviet attacks on the planes, damage to the aid or its inaccessibility to the AK, and a delay in Soviet approval for passage through “their” airspace (Davies, 2004). By early September, the Red Army recaptured its positions on the left bank. However, it only interfered on September 16, when the AK was on the verge of capitulation (Davies, 2004). Four days later, Berling’s limited forces that had been sent across the Vistula promptly retreated (Davies, 2004). Having suffered major military collapses across Warsaw and with no Soviet offensive in sight, AK command was set to announce capitulation. At early hours of October 3, after 63 days of fierce resistance, the Uprising ended in defeat with immense casualties (Nowak, 2021). Meanwhile, the Red Army watched Warsaw’s final annihilation until “liberating” it in January 1945.

## ***2.2 The Warsaw Uprising in Memory and Myth-Making***

The official memory of the Warsaw Uprising in the immediate post-war years and during the Stalinist period was dictated by the local communist authorities' dependence on Moscow's grand narrative of brotherhood in arms and the challenges of legitimizing the new system in a country where the Underground State and liberation movements had existed since the start of the war. The establishment of the Soviet-sponsored regime in Poland, represented by the Polish Committee of National Liberation in Lublin, was announced on the eve of the outbreak of the Uprising on July 22, 1944. During the preceding five years of continuous resistance, Polish national consciousness only solidified. The identity divisions between "Us" (Poles and the Allies) and "Others" (Germans, Ukrainians, Soviets) were sharpened (Kersten, 1993, p. 11). The traumas of previous long-term subjugations shaped the image of communist rule as an existential threat, associated with the memory of Russia as an aggressor who is seeking Poland's destruction (Zaręba, 1997).

In this context, Soviet policy of non-recognition of the Polish government-in-exile involved aggressive propaganda to undermine the Underground State (Kersten, 1986). It targeted AK members with accusations of inaction, anti-Soviet sentiment, and collaboration with Germany (Sawicki, 2005). The Soviet narrative held the Underground leadership responsible for the Uprising's failure, while portraying ordinary insurgents as patriots misled by the "treacherous" London government (Waskiewicz, 2010, pp. 48-49). These views became entrenched in post-war journalism and historiography (Rabiński, 2002). For example, a pro-communist article from August 24, 1944, in *Rzeczpospolita*, claimed the Uprising revealed the "horrifying truth" about Sosnkowski's orders and suggested that Warsaw's residents spoke with "hatred" about Bór-Komorowski ("*Na pomoc Warszawie*", 1944, p. 1). The propaganda portrayed the Polish-Soviet forces as true liberators, while concealing the Soviet army's lack of intervention ("*Na pomoc Warszawie*", 1944, p. 1). The official Soviet narrative emphasized a united front, depicting Polish and Soviet soldiers fighting together for Warsaw's freedom ("*Na pomoc Warszawie*", 1944, p. 1).

Following the Uprising's defeat in October, 1944, the communist defamation of the AK leadership intensified, setting the tone for the narrative until the end of the Stalinist period (Sawicki, 2005). AK generals were blamed for crimes against the Polish nation and fratricide

(“Do ludności ziem”, 1945, p. 3), while the Uprising was labeled as a deliberate attempt by the reactionary bourgeoisie Sanation regime to regain political power (Sawicki, 2005; Szacka, 2006). During 1950–1953, the “bad” memory of the Uprising could not transcend the communicative level of remembrance since the communist authorities purposefully silenced it (Szacka, 2006; Szpociński, 2015). The means of erasure included mass purges of ordinary AK soldiers – many were sentenced on the charges of cooperating with the Nazis to “actively combat socialist authorities” and communist partisans (Waskiewicz, 2010, p. 48). Instead, LWP and communist partisans were recognized as the “heroic sons of the nation” (Stasiak, 2021, p. 20). Yet, the communist regime was faced with a formidable challenge of having to deal with the “unfavourable” private memory, especially given the tremendous scale of the destruction (Stasiak, 2021; Kula, 2004).

After Stalin’s death, the Soviet bloc saw political changes that softened the repression against AK soldiers and led to their partial rehabilitation. During Gomułka Thaw in October, 1956, AK veterans, especially young working-class insurgents, were officially recognized as patriotic heroes exploited by the “reactionary” regime (Sawicki, 2005; Waskiewicz, 2010). In the late 1960s, local communist partisans were given the status of national heroes due to the influence of Mieczyslaw Moczar, a proponent of national communism and LWP general (Kunicki, 2012). This narrative supported Gomułka’s national communism project: it upheld the image of the regime as independent and authentically Polish by appropriating the sentiments of heroism and sacrifice familiar to the population (Zaręba, 2001). The partial rehabilitation of AK soldiers was a strategic move to maintain public credibility and prevent potential unrest (Sawicki, 2005).

At the turn of the 1960s-970s, dissatisfaction with the regime reintroduced the narratives of Polish heroic resistance and placed the Uprising back into the national consciousness (Szacka, 2006). Edward Gierek’s more conciliatory approach to politics of history sought to unify the nation for economic prosperity (Stasiak, 2021). The memory of the Uprising was increasingly incorporated into textbooks, commemorations, and mass media, celebrating the AK sacrifice for Poland’s freedom (Sawicki, 2005; Stasiak, 2021). Additionally, John Paul II’s 1979 speech in Kraków led to dual commemorations of the Uprising: an official ceremony organized by the

PZPR's Propaganda Department and one by the political opposition, supported by the Catholic Church (Stasiak, 2021).

Consequently, the relative liberalization of politics of history in the 1970s made it possible for supporters of Solidarity to reinstate the AK insurgents as symbols of Polishness and role models for political opposition, using the myths associated with the Uprising as a lens for interpreting the then-current socio-political context (Stasiak, 2021; Sławiński, 2001). However, it was primarily the patriotic values associated with the Uprising and not its means that appealed to anti-militaristic Solidarity (Stasiak, 2021). The dissidents highlighted the communist distortions of the collective memory surrounding the Uprising, strengthening public anti-communist sentiment (Davies, 2004). The societal demand for correcting the "blank spots" in collective memory led to the establishment of the Social Committee for the Construction of the Warsaw Uprising Museum in 1981 (Sawicki, 2005). The erection of the Warsaw Uprising monument to commemorate the 45th anniversary of its outbreak symbolized the resolution of the mnemonic struggle and the end of the communist regime in Poland (Stasiak, 2021). However later, political and economic challenges of democratic transition weakened the significance of politics of history in public and political discourses (Czapliński, 2009).

The new millennium saw efforts to redefine Polish national identity using the familiar mythological narratives. The shift came with the populist Law and Justice party criticizing the Round Table Agreement for its perceived failure to fully sever communist influences, which they argued undermined the democratic order (Machcewicz, 2023). This anti-communist, right-conservative faction labeled the transition as an "unfinished revolution" and criticized Solidarity leaders for their perceived leniency towards the past (Mark, 2011). Amid the identity vacuum from the "return to Europe" after democratization, there was a push to redefine Poland's history on its own terms (Żychlińska & Fontana, 2016). The PiS-led government revived the "Christ Among Nations" myth to resonate with historical traumas and address the communist-era distortions of the Uprising's legacy. These efforts accumulated in the establishment of the Warsaw Rising Museum in 2004 whose narratives anchor the myth of Polish universal heroic victimhood in "historical truths" (Żychlińska & Fontana, 2016).

Despite its tragic defeat, PiS-sponsored politics of history used the Uprising as a means of mobilizing the population around feelings of pride in national history and the belief in the

intrinsic moral superiority of the Polish nation. For example, President Andrzej Duda, defined the insurgents' quest for freedom as a legacy that is passed down through generations, asserting that their fight was a continuation of past struggles for Polish independence (The Official Website of the President of the Republic of Poland, 2018). The heroism of the insurgents as a model of action for current generations was emphasized by former prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki, who stated that "We are walking together with those Insurgents and the values that guided them" (The Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2023). Under PiS-sponsored politics of history, the Uprising has become a widely mythologized and glorified historical event, actively referenced in the contemporary identity-building process, not in the least because it fits the mythological narrative of heroic victimhood.

### ***2.3 The Use of Cinema in Politics of History***

The importance of cultural memory and the affective quality of cinema as its vessel has been recognized and used by the PRL and PiS authorities to reinvent the myth in various ways, yet not for dissimilar ends. The start of the nationalization of the film industry in 1944 entailed the creation of a Film Division and later the Department of Film Propaganda within the Ministry of Information and Propaganda (Zajiček, 1985). Central governmental institutions under the Ministry of Culture and Art, such as the Central Office of Cinematography (*Centralny Urząd Kinematografii*, CUK) (1952–1957) and later the Main Office of Cinematography (*Naczelny Zarząd Kinematografii*, NZK), wielded various degree of control over the content, production and distribution of films depending on the larger political context (Haltorf, 2019). The main goals of the institutions were to use film as a means of information dissemination and ensure political unity in the industry (Fenny, 2020, p. 37). The Department of Culture of the PZPR had a special film section, as the communist authorities recognized the role of film as means of spreading propaganda, solidifying and popularizing the ideology of the new regime (Fenny, 2020, p. 37).

Later, Władysław Gomułka's rule tightened the grip on cultural life in the Republic. The 1960 Resolution of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PZPR on Cinema signaled the party's dissatisfaction with how the previously made films advanced the socialist ideology (Uchwała sekretariatu KC w spraw o kinematografii, 1960, as cited in Fenny, 2020, p. 38).

Subsequently, during the 1960s, PZPR used cinematography to advance the party line and impose the official interpretation of Polish history (Zwierzchowski, 2013). Specifically during Władysław Gomułka's regime and under the strong influence of LWP General Mieczysław Moczar in the 1960s, the authorities requested films that would heroicize Polish communists and the victories of Polish-Soviet "brothers in arms" to advance the ideology of national communism (Gębicka, 1994; Zwierzchowski, 2013, p. 324).

After PiS launched their politics of history, the officials and institutions affiliated with the party pushed their interpretation of history and the narrative of universalizing heroism through popular media and public museums for several reasons (Kazlauskaitė & Salmela, 2022; Kazlauskaitė, 2022). Firstly, the use of media and museums enables greater outreach to audiences; secondly, emotive audio-visual language and immersive exhibitions help to build a "projective affective proximity" to the original traumatic experiences, enabling the audience to relive and relate to them on a sensorial level (Kazlauskaitė, 2022, p. 704). Given the potential that cinema, and specifically historical fiction, has in containing and disseminating memory and mythological narratives, and due to its unique ways of affectively influencing the audience, it holds equal strategic importance for the social sharing of mnemonic-mytho narratives.

Developments in Poland after 2005 indicate intensified attention from state authorities and government officials on cinema as a tool for narrativizing history. For instance, the Polish Film Institute (Polski Instytut Sztuki Filmowej), a new state film institution that emerged in 2005 as the chief national cinema development authority, is charged by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage to allocate public funding for the development of cinematography via state-aided support schemes devised under the Act on Cinematography of 2005 and the Act on Financial Support of Audio-visual Production of 2018 (Kancelaria Sejmu RP, 2018). In particular, the Act on Cinematography states that precedence in obtaining financial support is given to films based on their "importance for national culture and the strengthening of Polish tradition and language" (Kancelaria Sejmu RP, 2005, art 22, 3.2). It is further specified that film productions which "draw on the Polish cultural heritage; take up important historical themes; strengthen the national identity and popularize patriotic subjects, especially in works addressed to children and young people; and protect and preserve Polish cultural heritage in the area of film" are given priority (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2019, p. 440). The plans to invest in

Polish cinematography to “promote Polish history and Polish interpretation of history” on screen were further highlighted by Jarosław Sellin, former Secretary of State of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, in his 2015 speech at the Sejm on the state of affairs in the politics of history and the construction of historical memory (Sejm of the Republic of Poland, 2015). The view was supported by Jan Ołdakowski, director of Warsaw Rising Museum (MPW), who stated that “productions devoted to national heroes have their permanent place in the cinematography of states that attach great importance to patriotic education” (Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego, 2016).

#### ***2.4 Filmmakers and the Intentions behind their Films***

Andrzej Wajda (1926-2016) was the most prominent figure of the Polish School of directors and, perhaps, the best-known filmmaker in Poland. The national and personal traumas of the Second World War were central themes in Wajda's filmography. Having grown up amid the brutality of the German occupation, he joined the AK at the age of sixteen (Falkowska, 2008, p. 13). At the same time, the director was known for his anti-communist and anti-Soviet stance, fueled by a loss of his father, who was executed by the Soviets near Kharkiv (Falkowska, 2008, p. 12; Fenny, 2020, p. 151). Having survived the war, Wajda felt a sense of duty to tell the stories of those who did not (Wajda, 2000, p. 306). He acknowledged that the intelligentsia of the post-war years was “[...] the voice of our dead” and “it was our responsibility to give testimony about these horrifying years, untold damage, and terrifying fate which were inflicted upon the Polish nation, and even worse, upon those who were the best” (Wajda, 1996).

According to Falkowska (2008), Andrzej Wajda was deeply affected by the images of Warsaw destroyed during the Uprising. His film *Kanał* (1956), the second in his war trilogy and the first feature film about the Warsaw Uprising, is based on Jerzy Stefan Stawiński's novel of the same name. Stawiński, who fought in the September campaign and joined the AK in 1940, participated in the Uprising from the start, and his novel reflects his personal experiences and those of fellow insurgents (Mętrak-Ruda, 2017). On 26 September, Stawiński led his platoon of seventy insurgents through Warsaw's sewers for sixteen hours, with only three of his men reaching the city center (Konicpolska, 2007; Stawiński, 2005). Among Stawiński's works

celebrating the heroism of the insurgents, Wajda chose to tell the story of their downfall in the city sewers and the devastating defeat of the Uprising (Stawiński, 2007). Wajda was drawn to the novel not only for its authenticity but also for its depiction of the extreme sacrifices made by the insurgents and the grim realities of their defeat (Wajda, 2014). The film *Kanał* aimed to help the generation that suffered this tragic defeat come to terms with their trauma and reflect on the profound impact of the Uprising (Wajda, 1968, p. 5).

Andrzej Munk (1921-1961), another leading representative of the Polish School who took up the theme of the Uprising in his work, was personally affected by it. In 1940, while in Warsaw, Munk joined an underground socialist armed resistance group subordinate to the AK, and later fought in the Uprising from its outbreak (Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego, n.d.). After the war, he joined the PZPR, but was soon expelled for “reprehensible behaviour” (Fenny, 2020, p. 108). The first part of his *Eroica* (1957), *Scherzo Alla Polacca*, is based on another novel by Stawiński, *Węgrzy* (*The Hungarians*), described by the writer as an ironic reflection on the experiences he has encountered (Stawiński, 1968, p. 4). The director stated that the film was about “an unnecessary, wasted heroism” (Munk, 1957a, p. 11). At the same time, Munk rebutted accusation of promoting anti-heroism: “*Eroica* does not criticize heroes. On the contrary, those who act irrationally are portrayed with sympathy and sentiment. It simply illustrates the irrationality of heroism” (Łysakowska-Trzoss, 2014). The director explained that with *Eroica*, he intended to show how the pervasive atmosphere of heroism turned even “rational” individuals, who did not identify with the “hero culture”, into heroes (Nawój, 2005).

Konrad Nałęczki (1919-1991), most famous for directing the television series *Czterej Pancerni i Pies* (*Four Tankmen and a Dog*) (1966-1970), also experienced the war first-hand. However, unlike Wajda and Munk, Nałęczki was a decorated LWP lieutenant (Filmweb, n.d.). The series’ script is based on a novel of the same title by Janusz Przymanowski (1922–1998), a prolific writer of war novels, a member of the PZPR, and a journalist for pro-communist outfits (FilmPolski.pl, n.d.-b). Przymanowski was also a decorated LWP colonel: after participating in the defense of Poland in September 1939, he was interned in the USSR and later took part in the Soviet westward offensive under Berling’s command (FilmPolski.pl, n.d.-b). Przymanowski emphasized that he based the novel on LWP soldiers’ biographical accounts (Sroczyński, 2022).

Janusz Morgenstern (1922-2011) was another representative of the generation of Columbuses: he lost his closest family in the Holocaust and spent years in hiding (Morgenstern, 2007). The director learned about the Warsaw Uprising just before he was forced to enlist in the LWP under the threat of Soviet imprisonment (Morgenstern, 2007). He worked with Wajda as an assistant director on *Kanał*, but was unable to make his own film contributions on the topic because his projects failed to pass script censorship in the 1950s (Morgenstern, 2007). *Godzina "W"* ("*W*" Hour), which he saw as a continuation of the Polish School tradition, finally reached audiences in 1979 (Morgenstern, 2007). Indeed, as the earlier *Kanał* and *Eroica*, the film's script is based on Stawiński's novel. According to Morgenstern, the film aims to show that the Uprising is "not history, but a pivotal moment in the nation's life and societal consciousness, filled with different personal destinies, dramas and tragedies" (FilmPolski.pl, n.d.-c).

Jan Komasa (born in 1981) is a representative of the postmemory generation. The director recalled that his formative years were characterized by the period of "forgetting" the past (Komasa, 2014). However, in 2006, he decided to write the script and direct a film about the Uprising: the topic which compelled him because of the "national obsession" surrounding it (Komasa, 2014; 2011). *Miasto 44* was written based on interviews with the insurgents and their diaries (Komasa, 2011). The director stated that he aimed to help the audience immerse themselves in the insurgents' emotional journey into the unknown, and believed that telling the story through the experiences of young people would create a stronger emotional attachment (Komasa, 2013, p. 8). The director saw the insurgents as having stronger ethos compared to today's younger generation (Komasa, 2011). Producer Michał Kwieciński seconded this, stating that the film was intended to help young Poles understand the meaning of the fight for freedom (Koszewska, 2013). Komasa (2011) claimed that he did not overly glorify the insurgents but instead showed how even those who might never have been considered heroes could become them.

Władysław Pasikowski (born 1959), director and screenwriter of *Kurier* (2019), was approached by Jan Ołdakowski to create a film about Jan Nowak-Jeziorański as part of a series on Polish national heroes (Pasikowski, 2019a). Jan Nowak-Jeziorański (1914-2005), a legendary courier between the government-in-exile and the Polish underground resistance, is best remembered for influencing the initiation of the Uprising (Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego,

2016). Pasikowski (2019b) accepted the offer, feeling a sense of debt to the insurgents, but maintained that his directorial freedom was not compromised. In co-writing the script, he relied on Nowak's autobiography and the information that his co-writer had obtained from personal meetings with the courier (Pasikowski, 2019a; 2019b).

Ołdakowski explained that the MPW wanted to tell a moving story of why ordinary people become heroes and to encourage young Polish and foreign audiences to “learn more about a man to whom Poland owes its gratitude” (Senkowska, 2018). To attract Polish younger viewers and foreign audiences, the film's producers aimed to portray Nowak as a Polish James Bond (Pasikowski, 2019c). Importantly, the MPW sought to demonstrate why the Uprising was seen as justified, even from the perspective of someone who had initially opposed it (Senkowska, 2018). Pasikowski emphasized that the film aimed to prompt the audience to contemplate where Poland might be today if those who chose to stand up against the oppressors had not done so (Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego, 2016). For Pasikowski (2019b), it was most important to make the audience trust Nowak-Jeziorański's character and “believe in his change of opinion about the sense of the Uprising”.

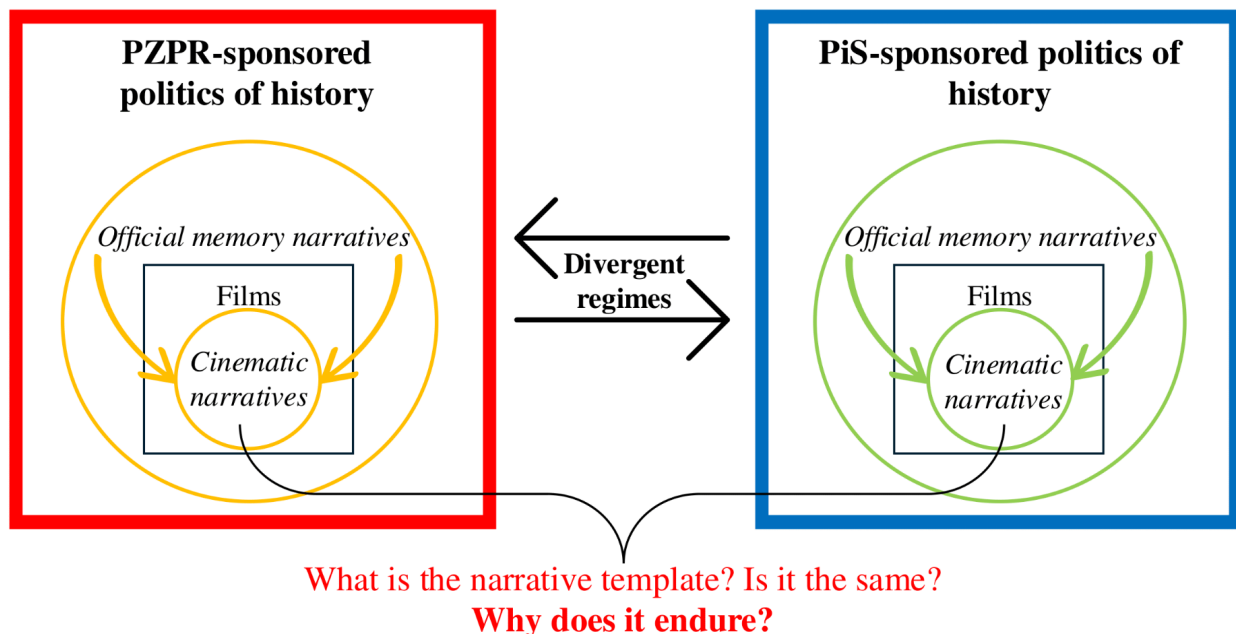
## Chapter 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

This thesis adopts a comparative research design, utilizing a comparative case study that examines differences and commonalities across time (focusing on films from chronologically distant periods) and across two ideologically opposed regimes (PZPR and PiS). This approach best aligns with the research puzzle and the objective of explaining the perplexing similarities in the politics of history between two temporally separated and ideologically divergent political regimes. The units of comparison are memory narratives advanced in the state-endorsed historical fiction films on the Warsaw Uprising. In this study, cinematic narratives that depict historical events are viewed as an extension of the politics of history. Consequently, they are attributed to two distinct periods: the PRL era and the Republic of Poland under PiS. The comparison is based on individual state-endorsed productions made in the PRL and the Republic of Poland by Polish directors, making them the units of analysis. Schematically, the logic of comparison can be visualized as suggested by Figure 1:

**Figure 1**

*The Logic of Comparison*



The comparative approach has been acknowledged as an effective way for discovering “whether similar mechanisms and processes drive changes in divergent periods, places and regimes” (McAdam et al., 2001, p. 82), while acquiring a dense, context-based knowledge of the cases and unveiling the “causes-of-effects” behind the phenomena (Della Porta, 2008, p. 202). An interpretive analysis of narratives contained in cultural artifacts is an opportunity to shed light on what common meanings and thus collective consciousness the individuals are socialized into (Keating, 2008, p. 111). According to Della Porta and Keating (2008, p. 26), “interpretive research aims at understanding events by discovering the meanings human beings attribute to their behaviour and the external world [...] more specifically the motivations that lie behind human behaviour”. It is deemed the most suitable approach for this thesis as it focuses on making sense of the narratives presented in films, deciphering what interpretation of the Warsaw Uprising and its participants is being conveyed on screen, to delve into the underlying structures and conventions that shape ways of cinematic storytelling.

With regard to the context overview, both “groups” of official memory narratives will be systematically studied based on relevant academic literature and primary sources, such as direct statements and media narratives, against four aspects. Firstly, official memory narratives regarding the Uprising and its participants, and the objectives behind them will be explored with relation to the PZPR and PiS-led politics of history. Secondly, the research will trace how the myth of heroism has been recontextualized and evoked in relation to the Uprising during the two periods. Thirdly, it will investigate how cinema was used to advance official narratives and explore the relationship between the film industry and the state. Lastly, biographical information on the directors and scriptwriters of the selected films will be provided to supplement the analysis with the context of their positionality.

Altogether, the logic of inquiry behind the research follows an interpretivist approach based on abductive reasoning, wherein “the researcher tacks continually, constantly, back and forth in an iterative–recursive fashion between what is puzzling and possible explanations for it, whether in other field situations (e.g., other observations, other documents or visual representations, other participations, other interviews) or in research-relevant literature” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011, p. 27). According to the methodological literature, a disciplined configurative case study must be substantiated and guided by a conceptual framework that

ultimately provides possible explanations of the “causes-of-effects” (Vennesson, 2008, p. 227). Thus, a framework built upon the state-of-the-art conceptual literature on collective memory and national mythology will guide the analysis and explain the endurance of narrative templates. The overview of the role of the romantic tradition in Polish myth-making will further aid the analysis.

### ***3.2 Selection of Films***

The films to be analyzed were selected based on several criteria. Firstly, only state-endorsed historical fiction productions made in the PRL and the Republic of Poland under PiS by Polish directors were chosen. State endorsement is defined as either undergoing a censorship process or receiving state support, such as co-production or supervision. Analyzing state-endorsed productions maintains a clear connection to state intervention in cultural representations of memory, ensuring consistency with the conclusions of previous research and allowing for comparability between the two periods by accounting for PRL-era censorship. Secondly, only productions by Polish filmmakers were included, based on the premise that their cognitive background and positionality could be influenced by the Polish mnemonic habitus and politics of history. Thirdly, given the thematic focus on the Warsaw Uprising and the myth of heroism, the selected material revolves directly around the Uprising participants, excluding films that primarily address the civilian experience.

Six productions—five feature films and one episode from a television series—were selected based on their synopses and information from the online database [filmpolski.pl](http://filmpolski.pl), managed by the Leon Schiller Polish National Film, Television and Theatre School in Łódź. The five-episode television series *Kolumbowie (Columbuses)* (1970) by Janusz Morgenstern was excluded due to the extensive material it covers and its release shortly after mid-1960s films, a period with minimal changes in state control over media. Similarly, an episode of *Podziemny Front (Underground Front)* (1965) was omitted because of the series lesser popularity and ideological and thematic overlap with the cult *Czterej Pancerni i Pies (Four Tankmen and a Dog)* ([FilmPolski.pl](http://FilmPolski.pl), n.d.-a). Including both series would not significantly impact the analysis of how politics of history were reflected on screen. Instead, Janusz Morgenstern’s *Godzina „W” (“W” Hour)* (1979), which focuses directly on the insurgents, is included. The decision to

include *Kanal* (1956) and *Eroica* (1957), produced eight months apart from each other, both directed by the two most prominent directors of the Polish Film School and written based on scripts by Jerzy Stefan Stawiński, is grounded in the stark differences in how they portray the insurgents.

The range of the study periods is defined as from 1956–1979 and 2014–2019, based on the year of the first and last historical fiction production that falls under the outlined criteria. Importantly, not a single film—affiliated with state support or not—about the Warsaw Uprising was made between 1992 and 2012. A great share of material is widely accessible via streaming platforms. The list of films along with the information about the mechanisms of their endorsement by state and the ways in which their content was accessed is summarized in Table 1.

<b>Political regime</b>	<b>State endorsement</b>	<b>Film/Episode in a series</b>	<b>Production year</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Access</b>
<b>The Polish People's Republic</b>	Undergone censorship	<i>Kanal</i>	1956	Andrzej Wajda	Streaming platform <i>Eastern European movies</i>
		<i>Eroica</i> , novella <i>Scherzo Alla Polacca</i>	1957	Andrzej Munk	Streaming platform <i>Eastern European movies</i>
		<i>Czterej Pancerni i Pies</i> ( <i>Four Tankmen and a Dog</i> ), episode <i>Most</i> ( <i>Bridge</i> )	1966	Konrad Nałęczki	Streaming platform <i>TVP VOD</i>
		<i>Godzina „W”</i> (“ <i>W</i> ” Hour)	1979	Janusz Morgenstern	Streaming platform <i>TVP VOD</i>

<b>The Republic of Poland under PiS</b>	Produced in cooperation with the Warsaw Uprising Museum, National Centre for Culture ( <i>Narodowe Centrum Kultury</i> ) and under the honorary patronage of former President of Poland Bronisław Komorowski	<b><i>Miasto 44</i></b> ( <i>Warsaw 44</i> )	2014	Jan Komasa	Streaming platform <i>TVP VOD</i>
	Produced in cooperation with the Warsaw Uprising Museum	<b><i>Kurier</i></b> ( <i>The Resistance Fighter</i> )	2019	Władysław Pasikowski	Streaming platform <i>TVP VOD</i>

**Table 1.** *List of selected films, state endorsement mechanisms, and method of access*

### **3.3 Methods for Analyzing the Films**

Cinematic narrations of the Warsaw Uprising and their alignment with the “heroic victimhood” narrative template will be comparatively analyzed to see whether the conclusions from earlier academic contributions could be applied to cultural representations of collective memory. For this purpose, the elements of the “Christ Among Nations” dominant myth will be used as an interpretive framework. Relying upon the analysis of the academic explorations of the myth by Orła-Bukowska (2006), Wawrzyniak (2015) and Zechenter (2019); synthesized with the conceptual contributions of Wertsch (2008a) and Smith (1999), the interpretive framework will consist of the following elements:

- *Martyrology*: being a chosen one destined to endure suffering for the wrongdoings of others (foreign aggressors) and serve as a bulwark that protects the world from them is a “special national destiny” of members of the nation-community.

- *Universal heroism against all odds*: bravely fighting alone while on the brink of full devastation.
- *Personal sacrifice for collective freedom*: the ideal of freedom, however distant, stands as the highest value and ultimate individual and collective goal, surpassing the cost of any individual life.
- *Exceptionality*: the noble qualities and values displayed in the course of suffering and resistance make the members of the nation-community exceptional heroic victims.

The interpretive framework will be applied to analyze cinematic narratives (how stories are told) and discourse (the methods used), employing a cinematic discourse analysis method. Jürgen Habermas (1967) captured the essence of critical discourse studies, noting that “language is also a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimize relations of organized power. Insofar as the legitimizations of power relations [...] are not articulated [...] language is also ideological” (p. 259). John Bateman (2017), a scholar of critical discourse studies, pointed out that cinema’s ideological conditioning was identified before similar findings in linguistics. He argued that critical film analysis can deconstruct power relations—reflecting Fairclough’s (2013) concept of power behind discourse—to understand how meaning is constructed for ideology, power, and social control through the semiotic audio-visual communication of films.

Similarly, the cinematic discourse analysis method is used for the analysis of film’s metacommunication, contained in linguistic and audio-visual information (Janney, 2012). Unlike the traditional critical discourse analysis, concerned primarily with text as “the material site of emergence of immaterial discourse” (Kress & Bezemer, 2023, p. 140), this method analyzes “the language in film and [...] the discourse of mise-en-scène, cinematography, montage, and sound editing used in narrating cinematic stories to viewers” (Janney, 2012, p. 1). Yet, it is more concerned with understanding how films interpret the events and characters they portray, what meaning they convey to the audience, and less, at least explicitly, with identifying the political forces behind such cinematic interpretations. This pitfall is mitigated by linking films to state control directly, as reflected in the selection of state-endorsed productions as units of analysis. Moreover, the empirical research is complemented by a contextual overview of official memory

narratives, the use of the myth of heroism in politics of history, and relationship between the film industry and the state during the two periods.

Richard Janney (2012, pp. 4-5) identified the following subsystems that will be used as points of interpretive analysis of explicit and subliminal messages that contribute to the central cinematic narratives: *language* (any text and on- or off-screen narration); *staging* (setting composition); *gesture* (gazes and facial expressions); *cinematography*; *editing*; and *post-production*. These subsystems are incorporated into the two planes of the discourse: diegetic (referring to the inter-character communication); and extra-diegetic (which encapsulates what the cinematic discourse communicates) (Piazza et al., 2011). Both planes of communication are invariably important for constructing, and thus also interpreting, the meaning in films (Desilla, 2012). Employing the method of cinematic discourse analysis will help answer the first research question with the aim to deconstruct, in the words of Bateman (2017) the “ensembles of diverse semiotic expressive resources” contained in them (p. 614). Therefore, both planes of communication and all the subsystems will be analyzed to comprehensively interpret the meanings attributed to the characters and events, and how they correlate with the elements of the interpretive framework.

Firstly, the analysis will describe and interpret heroic archetypes, identifying who is chosen to represent a hero and what attributes are selected to portray heroism. In line with the interpretive framework, particular attention will be paid to the qualities of nobleness, such as moral integrity, courage and bravery; but also to civic values and virtues attached to the heroes, such as patriotism and proactive engagement in the fight for collective freedom. This decision is linked with the next point of analysis, which concerns the investigation of the narrative techniques that are employed to evoke viewer identification with the heroic figures depicted in the films. Previous research shows that the relatability of characters significantly impacts viewers’ emotional attachment to them. It leads audiences to judge characters based on their own idiosyncrasies and to internalize the characters’ experiences and qualities, which influences their value systems and self-identities (Axelson, 2015; Jerslev, 2006). Such impact on empathetic identification is particularly strong at character-level narratives (Axelson, 2015; Jerslev, 2006). Therefore, the analysis of heroic film figures will shed light onto what attributes and qualities are chosen to be representative of a role-model.

Still, *mise-en-scène* narratives are significant for emotional engagement. Originally denoting stage composition, *mise-en-scène* now includes everything translated onto a screen (Martin, 2014). Following David Bordwell's (2005) perspective, it refers to cinematic staging, encompassing the arrangement of objects and figures (setting composition) and how they are captured by the camera (montage and editing). Settings and audio-visual techniques infuse scenes with emotions, guiding viewer responses (Axelson, 2015; Janney, 2012). Analyzing *mise-en-scène* explores how a film imagines the Warsaw Uprising and the intended audience atmosphere. For instance, portraying the Uprising as a heroic battle with graphic scenes might evoke respect and pride, glorifying heroes as "empowered victims" (Kazlauskaitė, 2022). Conversely, depicting imprisonment or less dignified settings might frame them as "powerless victims" (Kazlauskaitė, 2022). Both portrayals contribute to the "heroic victimhood" narrative, with empowered victimhood offering role model associations, while powerless victimhood prompts reflections on heroism's costs. Thus, the chosen story to represent the Uprising is crucial for understanding how cinematic narratives reinforce or challenge mythological narratives.

Simultaneously, shot composition techniques, such as close-ups, will be analyzed for their role in providing a scene with "co-text" and highlighting specific details (Carroll, 2003; Janney, 2012). Sergei Eisenstein's montage theory informs this analysis, emphasizing how the length, sequence, and pattern of shots manipulate viewers' attention (Dancyger, 2018). Shorter shots often signal climactic, emotionally intense moments, maintaining viewer engagement through excitement or alertness (Dancyger, 2018). In contrast, long takes offer a more immersive experience, allowing deeper reflection on continuous action or significant themes (Dancyger, 2018; Henderson, 1980). Techniques like tonal editing cater to specific emotions, while rhythmic montage of recurring movements may indicate conflict, stirring unease and alertness (Dancyger, 2018). These methods shape viewers' inferences about a scene's message, enhancing the narrative's impact with contextual information (Axelson, 2015; Janney, 2012).

Lastly, memory narratives woven into the plotline will be examined. This point runs parallel to previous aspects of the empirical research, and is necessary for investigating whether cinematic narratives continue to construct consistent heroic archetypes and convey enduring myths, while still adapting to the prevailing canons of politics of history of their respective periods.

The findings will be interpreted through the conceptual framework, an analysis of the historical context, and the directors' biographies, which may have influenced their positionality. To enhance the reliability of the research, personal inferences made during the film analysis will be cross-referenced with interview and memoir commentaries from the filmmakers regarding their intentions behind the work.

### ***3.4 Considerations and Limitations***

The research has some nuances and limitations that need to be acknowledged. The most evident one is the issue of reception. The audience's reactions and perceptions are significant for evaluating whether a film was effective in conveying the intended message or emotions and establishing the narrative impact, and the analysis of reception would be relevant in further efforts to enrich the study. However, it is outside the scope of this thesis to examine how reception contributes to the overall meaning of the film. Instead, this study aims to analyze how filmmakers interpret the past and to what extent their vision aligns with official narratives, rendering reception analysis important for the present study focus. Another point that has to be addressed is the inclusion of television series' episodes along with separate feature films into the research. Given the lack of feature films on the Warsaw Uprising produced in the 1960s, an episode of a widely broadcasted television series *Czterej Pancerni i Pies* (1966) is included for the analysis. Although televisual and filmic analyses do have methodological differences that are significant for the film studies discipline (Piazza et al., 2011), they are considered inconsequential for this research. It is how these productions imagine heroism and what meaning they convey that is the object of this study, much less the stylistic nuances. In connection to that, for the sake of brevity and efficacy and at the expense of terminological precision, the terms "film" and "cinema" will be used throughout this thesis as a generalized reference to all televisual and filmic material. For similar reasons, while acknowledging that films are collaborative creative efforts, this thesis attributes decisions and creative agency to the director, who is recognized as the leader of the production team and the primary figure associated with the work.

The main limitation is the lack of overview on the censorship the pre-1989 films faced, which prevents determining if certain aspects were removed from the final work. While censorship-related outcomes and assessments related to *Kanal* and *Cztery Pancerni i Pies* have been revealed by directors themselves (Wajda, 2017) or are well documented in the literature (Fenny, 2020; Dabert, 2021), others require archival research and would thus go beyond the scope of the thesis. Lastly, despite having an overall intermediate level of Polish and a higher level of spoken and written language comprehension due to being a native speaker of two Slavic languages, specific lexicon might be unfamiliar to me and I might not always pick up on subtle nuances in the meaning which are important for the analysis. These challenges are addressed by using automatic translation subtitles available on streaming platforms or, when necessary, provided by external software.

## Chapter 4. Empirical Research and Findings

### *4.1 Films Produced under PZPR Politics of History*

#### *4.1.1 Demythologization of “Beautiful Death” in *Kanal* (1956)*

The film’s opening credits, integrated with climactic visual and audio narratives, ambush the viewer with an unambiguous message of what this story of the Warsaw Uprising will tell. The three minute-long imagery of what once must have been a city, now ragingly burning out to one continuous apocalyptic debris (Figure 2), is accompanied by Jan Krenz’s solemn orchestration that is hardly a *Lacrimosa*. It rather resembles a military march and conveys a sense of urgency and tension while also elevating the tragedy portrayed on the screen.

#### **Figure 2**

*Panorama of Destroyed Warsaw in the Opening Credits (Wajda, 1956, 00:01:10)*



The staging of the first scene helps to advance the narrative of universal heroic victimhood. Leading the unit across the rubble is Lieutenant Zadra, once an ordinary civilian and now their commander. The off-screen narration underscores that he is the one who bears the full responsibility for his recruits, while the lingering shot on Lieutenant's facial expressions highlights the heaviness of this weight and the care he has for his unit. Yet, however deep, disturbed and hopeless Zadra's gaze might be, he continues to lead his unit forward. Immediately following the Lieutenant is a child, yet nothing apart from his age indicates that he is any different from the rest. The narrator goes on to introduce the protagonists: most of them are youths who promised their mothers that "they would stay warm". This dissonance underscores the heartbreaking realization that their coming of age is starkly different from what it should have been under normal circumstances. The company of wounded, exhausted, but steadfast insurgents is completed by a wandering composer Michał, who joined the Uprising just a day earlier and seemingly cannot find his place. As an artist, Michał cannot help but stop near a destroyed piano, sorrowfully pressing its keys (Figure 3). This scene communicates another significant loss of the Polish nation—the loss of generations of intelligentsia and their cultural and intellectual achievements, which have once again been wiped out by the brutalities of war.

**Figure 3**

*Composer Michał Pauses by a Ruined Piano (Wajda, 1956, 00:04:52)*



A brief dialogue scene reveals the motivations behind the insurgents' heroism. It unfolds between Zadra and his superior, whom the Lieutenant finds wounded and mournfully gazing at a field cross marked by a broken helmet with the AK's crowned eagle insignia (Figure 4). Though initially irritated by the intrusion, the officer brushes off Zadra's questions about his injury, joking that he got it from a "strong wind." Whether he was mourning a friend, relative, recruit, or superior who wasn't as lucky as him to escape with just a head injury remains unclear. There is no time for lamentation; the insurgents know they won't have a "fun time," but perhaps a "fun death" that will be hailed by future generations in a "true Polish way," as Zadra suggests.

**Figure 4**

*A Field Grave of a Fallen AK Soldier* (Wajda, 1956, 00:07:38)



The story of another character, who had similarly suffered a serious injury and lost her mother, portrays her as numb to all the physical and mental pain she had endured. If not for the disconcerting image revealing the severed leg, nobody would have guessed what had happened

to this terse but still sanguine woman. The scene's dynamic movement and visual chaos amplify the contrasts of the Uprising: cheerful young women embrace each other next to rows of injured insurgents, while priests conduct funerals and soldiers carry on with their duties. The officer's remark about wishing to stay on the battleground among the fallen is ambiguous: does he want to remain close to those he fought with, or does he see it as a more "honorable" way to die? The dialogue also reveals that it's the fifty-sixth day of the Uprising, and even if one wished to give up, there's no option but "hell." Faced with hell on earth, the fight for future collective freedom is deemed worthy of sacrifice, or perhaps it's the honorable martyrdom that future generations will remember that makes it worthwhile.

In the first half of the film, Lieutenant Zadra, as suggested by his nickname that can be translated as "splinter", is the only one who allows himself to articulate his doubts about the feasibility of fighting against overwhelming German forces. A rhetorical "When are we going to learn?" slips out as the Lieutenant nervously pats dry the sweat on his face while assessing the dire circumstances of the company. However, this fleeting moment of doubt is swiftly countered by Mądry's ("wise" in English) calm, or rather accepting, "Orders are orders". This brief interaction portrays the insurgents as victims of poor decisions made by military leadership, reflecting the communist narrative that blamed the AK command for the Uprising's failure. It also prompts the viewer to reflect on whether the insurgents' sacrifice was justified.

Musical accompaniment by composer Michał in the scenes set in the "despicable bourgeois" villa-turned-military base, reflects the multilayered nature of *Kanał*. After starting off with dramatic, repeated descending scales, the pianist is asked to change the tone and play "La Cumparsita" instead. Unable to maintain a careless uplifting mood for longer than ten seconds, Michał ultimately breaks into a dreamy, romantic sonata. Indeed, the love stories run parallel to the main plotline. For instance, there is the romance between the young liaison officer Stokrotka and the valorous cadet Korab, who, wearing a signature Juliusz Słowacki white shirt, bravely neutralizes a Goliath with just a shovel, embodying the spirit of this romantic hero (Figure 5). Then there is the less pure but equally dramatic affair between the naïve Halinka and the secretly married Mądry. These personal stories make the protagonists of *Kanał* feel like "real" people. The director demonstrates that normal life – growing up, falling in love, appreciating the arts – continues alongside the context of the Uprising. At the end of the day, they are ordinary people,

all “eaten with fear”, yet they have no choice but to keep fighting. This element of humanizing the heroes strengthens viewer identification with the protagonists, but it also aligns the film with the canons of the romantic tradition. Whether a middle-aged civilian turned commander, a child, a young boy or girl, an unarmed artist, or a “Rambo” adorned with ammunition belts, Wajda's protagonists embody a universal hero, emphasizing that heroism is not otherworldly but innate to everyone when it comes to regaining freedom.

### Figure 5

*Injured Korab Neutralizes a Goliath with a Shovel* (Wajda, 1956, 00:27:35)



A turning point in the narrative comes when Zadra receives the order to withdraw from the district of Mokotów to Warsaw's city center through the sewers. Lieutenant's facial expressions, visible hyperventilation and a prolonged pause indicates that his worst fears have come true (Figure 6). Having gathered his thoughts, Zadra initially refuses to stick to the order, fearing that he would let down those who trusted him, who shed their blood only to “run away like rats through the sewers”. At the same time, his superior's comment that they all trusted

someone can be construed as an Aesopian reference to the Red Army, who promised aid but failed to deliver. The Lieutenant is faced with a tough choice: to save the lives of his recruits or let them perish in battle, fulfilling their special destiny. Ultimately, Zadra's reluctance to agree with the orders communicates that an individual life is less important than the heroic moral code. The disappointment from the realization that the insurgents' mission has failed is encapsulated in Michał's remark. Devastated by his inability to be useful in any way other than playing music for the insurgents, he laments, "That is the real tragedy".

### **Figure 6**

*Zadra Receiving the Orders to Evacuate His Unit Through the Sewers (Wajda, 1956, 00:33:38)*



The Platoon's descent into the city's sewers carries profound symbolism. A viewer becomes immersed in the dark, eerie, and claustrophobic atmosphere of the labyrinthine sewers – a Warsawian River Styx through which the lost souls of the trapped insurgents move in despair. Notably, with an exception of madness-driven Michał playing ocarina, the scenes from this part of the film are not accompanied by any musical narratives. The silence not only focalizes

attention on the visuals and dialogues, but also amplifies the isolation and fear that the characters experience. Wajda's commentary on the fate of the Uprising is allegorically represented through the entrapment of the insurgents in the channels with no way out. The director also references *Divine Comedy*, likening the sewers to Dantean hell. However, it is hardly the one that Zadra hoped for in the first scenes. Secondly, the two contrasting types of “empowered” and “powerless” heroic victimhood emerge through the symbolism of light and darkness. On the barricades, the field crosses, ever-present in the surface scenes, symbolize a heroic sacrifice for which the insurgents will be remembered and honored by future generations (Figure 7).

**Figure 7**

*Field Graves on the Battlefield Representing a “Beautiful Death”* (Wajda, 1956, 00:23:19)



Conversely, the heroes will meet a martyrological but undignified death in the pungent sewers. This fate befalls an unnamed insurgent, shot and falling back into darkness as he strives to return to the light, or even a decorated colonel whose memory is destined to fade like his body left behind in the channels (Figure 8). There is little left to imagination—this is also the destiny of

the Third Platoon. Separated into three groups, the protagonists quickly lose morale. In the darkness of the sewers, their moral weaknesses—cowardice, egoism, unfaithfulness, and even madness—are laid bare. Yet, paradoxically, this environment reiterates the message of universalism by humanizing the heroes and making their struggle relatable to the audience.

**Figure 8**

*AK Colonel Pictured as a Powerless Hero Destined to Die an Undignified Death* (Wajda, 1956, 1:04:00)



The fate of the Platoon is a metonymy of the Uprising as a whole: high in spirit and armed only with patriotic ideals, the characters were left to die alone. As soon as any one group finds the exit, their hopes of freedom are shattered by externally imposed barriers. A most notable and symbolically charged example is the scene where the exhausted Stokrotka, who has been carrying the badly wounded, barely conscious Korab through seventeen hours in the sewers, finally sees a ray of light and the sight of the river Vistula, only to realize that their exit, their only hope for survival, has been barred. Stokrotka's gaze over the river reveals a silent

acceptance of defeat, while her grasping the bars and placing her head between them can be construed as an expression of pleading for mercy (Figure 9).

**Figure 9**

*Trapped in the Sewers Stokrotka Represents the Uprising's Entrapment* (Wajda, 1956, 1:21:43)



The subsequent lingering shot on the Vistula's other bank gives the viewer a moment to reflect. This is another example of Wajda's Aesopian language. The director could not explicitly comment on the Soviet inaction and instead relied on the private memory of the Uprising, trusting the viewer to know who was denying freedom to Poland in the Praga district. Another remaining character, Mądry, did manage to find his way out of the sewer only to be immediately caught by the enemy. Having no more will to live, the second-in-command decides not to surrender into captivity, but to be executed. Zadra also willingly decides to face certain death after discovering that his unit was not following him. The final long shot captures Lieutenant's despair at the prospect of returning to the sewers. He pauses halfway down the manhole, torn

between the sights of the long-awaited streets of Warsaw and the crushing responsibility for his recruits (Figure 10). The moment of contemplation is brief; the lives of many outweigh the life of one.

**Figure 10**

*Demoralized Zadra Descends Back into the Sewers to Find and Save his Unit* (Wajda, 1956, 1:32:12)



#### ***4.1.2 Accidental Hero – Still a Hero? Eroica (1957) as an Ode to Ordinary Heroism***

Andrzej Munk's take on Polish heroism seemingly could not be more different from the tragic and heroic pathos of *Kanał*. The first part of the "Heroic Symphony", *Scherzo Alla Polacca*, revolves around the events of the Uprising, and as suggested by its title ("Polish Joke" in English), they are portrayed in a less somber manner. Unlike *Kanał*, the film does not start with a depiction of the horrifying tragedy of war, but with comedic absurdity. Accompanied by almost mocking fanfare and xylophone, the opening scene introduces Dzidzius ("Baby" in English) Górkiewicz. Dressed in a neat formal suit, he participates in a formation drill but appears disengaged from the training. If it were not for the war-torn landscape, it would be hard to guess that this type of routine exercise is taking place in the middle of the Uprising. Yet, it does not take long for a reminder to come. The military aircraft, which has been loudly hovering in the air, goes unnoticed by everyone except Dzidzius for a long time. The protagonist quickly abandons his young soldier course, confidently stating that risking life for a drill is not for him. Yet, his lack of interest in the Uprising ultimately saved the group, making him an unwitting hero. Despite intense air attacks, the corporal resumes the formation training. Such a portrayal of the insurgents ridicules their overzealous dedication to the commanders' carelessness, and can be viewed as a critique of the romantic, often self-destructive heroism.

Dzidzius also appears to lack situational awareness when he asks a random housewife if the Germans are letting people out of Warsaw. Such ignorance makes him seem unaffected by the realities of the war. His living environment reinforces this observation. Displaced from Warsaw, Dzidzius resides in a lavishly decorated villa in an undisturbed and seemingly peaceful village of Zalesie. During an intimate conversation with Hungarian lieutenant Istvan Kolya, his wife Zosia assures Dzidzius that they were not discussing "politics," referring to her husband's participation in the Uprising. For a large part of the film, Dzidzius is depicted as a self-absorbed anti-hero with questionable loyalties and a weak moral compass—an embodiment of shameful moral impotence in both his personal life and his civic stance. The protagonist's lack of principles is evident from his unfaithfulness to his wife, as well as his inaction towards her infidelity.

Driven by vanity and fear, Dżidzius rejects the insurgents' nudgings to join the resistance as a soldier, running away from their accusations of cowardice. Ultimately, he is an opportunist who enjoys delicacies and drinks in the company of a high-ranking military official allied with the enemy, unhesitatingly calling him a brother (Figure 11). Dżidzius mockingly refers to the insurgents as bandits out of concern for his own safety but changes his views on the fly after realizing that Kolya supports the Uprising. Yet, when later confronted about his participation in the Uprising, Dżidzius does not hold back on vanity and exaggerations: suddenly, he portrays himself as a Polish patriot, even a commander. Still, Dżidzius is as much likable and relatable as he is despised by his compatriots. However vain and unprincipled he may be, Dżidzius genuinely rejoices upon hearing about the possibility of Hungarian military support for the insurgents and decides to do his part, albeit with the hope of receiving a medal.

### Figure 11

*Dżidzius Portrayed as an Unprincipled Opportunist Enjoying the Company of a High-Ranking Enemy Officer (Munk, 1957b, 00:08:25)*



Unlike Wajda, Munk openly includes references to the Red Army's non-participation in the Uprising. In terms of such memory narratives, an important dialogue occurs between Dzikowski and Major Grzmot. Dzikowski, still hopeful for the imminent arrival of the Soviet forces, discovers that they are still stationed in Otwock. He is portrayed as a voice of criticism of the AK leadership, unleashing angry accusations on the Major: "You really screwed up this Uprising... Could you not have planned it better?" Grzmot's explanation that the delay is due to the Red Army being pushed back by the German forces might initially be seen as apologetic. However, the Major later remarks, nodding regretfully, that reaching any concrete agreements was impossible due to the Soviet non-recognition of the Polish state. He expresses confidence that Warsaw and Poland will be "liberated" by the Red Army but also acknowledges what such "liberation" would entail. Alluding to the subsequent re-occupation of Poland by the USSR, he states: "This is the Polish tragedy. Didn't you study history?" This scene clearly demonstrates the presence of Romantic mythology in *Eroica's* narrative: Poland is portrayed as a victim, torn apart by foreign powers; a martyr who constantly suffers to satisfy the hunger of geopolitical ambitions; abandoned by others, it has no choice but to liberate itself at the expense of massive human tragedy.

After hearing the truth about the circumstances and prospects of the Uprising, Dzikowski begins to change: he is still not thrilled about taking risks but shows sensitivity to the cause and takes on the task of being a liaison between the AK headquarters and the Hungarians. Munk demonstrates that even in the most individualistic and hedonistic person, there is a patriot – an "accidental hero". Finally, having delivered the message, Dzikowski finds out that the AK leadership refused to strike a deal with the Hungarian side. Was it because the insurgents could not transport Hungarian weapons and combat vehicles into Warsaw, or were there other reasons? While Munk provides no explanations, he portrays the disappointment and anger that Dzikowski and the major feel regarding this decision. Ultimately, the narrative suggests that the AK command should also be held accountable for their failure to adequately support volunteer fighters during a critical phase of the Warsaw Uprising, implying that with better leadership and strategic decisions, the resistance could have been more successful. This message is reinforced throughout the film by absurd portrayals of the AK's lack of communication and coordination, not only with the Allies and the Red Army but also among the AK members themselves.

By the end of his conversation with Major Grzmot, who invited Dzidzius to join the Uprising and called him a partner, the viewer sees him deep in thought as he watches Grzmot leave for Warsaw. Being left alone with his wife Zosia, who embodies his old self—unprincipled, opportunistic, and materialistic—Dzidzius decides to abandon his comfort and previous beliefs, choosing to return to the righteous path by joining Grzmot (Figure 12). Eventually, although he may not yet embody the “perfect” image of a committed, self-sacrificing insurgent, he recognizes that despite his mission's failure, he should still assist in any way he can.

**Figure 12**

*Dzidzius Running to Join the Uprising* (Munk, 1957b, 00:40:36)



### ***4.1.3 Czterej Pancerni i Pies (1966) as an Emblem of National Communism***

Polish heroism during the Warsaw Uprising is portrayed from an altogether different angle in Episode 6 *Most (Bridge)* of the first season of the cult series. Similar to *Eroica*, the episode presents a somewhat light-hearted portrayal of the wartime period. Yet, unlike in previous productions, the main characters are LWP soldiers from the First Polish Army, known as Berling's Army.

The episode begins with a group of LWP tankmen in an abandoned house on the outskirts of Warsaw, preparing for the liberation of the city. One of the soldiers, Olgierd, informs that the residents were forcefully displaced by the German forces out of fear that they might join the Warsaw Uprising. This is the first and last mention of the Uprising throughout the entire fifty-two minute episode. Olgierd is also the only one who does not share the group's confidence in the success of the offensive, explaining that no major cities on the Vistula have been retaken through a frontal assault. The Lieutenant's comment, framed as authoritative and wise in contrast to the naive thinking of his subordinates, justifies the delay in the joint Soviet offensive on the city from the Vistula's eastern bank.

Throughout the episode, the protagonists set examples of loyalty to their comrades and to their country. Having arrived in Warsaw, the crew are forced to stop on the outskirts to wait for the infantry, but also due to a personal errand of one of the battalion members, Lidka. In search of her parents, she runs through the destroyed streets full of dead bodies but is held off by open fire. Janek, a young LWP junior lieutenant, concerned for her safety, bravely follows her. Later, the others take his lead. In the next scene, the company of Janek and Lidka is spotted by two Nazi officers who are searching and vandalizing a house. As opposed to the LWP soldiers, who are depicted as skillful and eager to engage in battle, Nazi officers are portrayed as a grotesque caricature (Figure 13). Cowardly, unintelligent, incompetent, and weak opponents, they are easily tackled by the crew and the unarmed civilians who were hiding unnoticed in the house. Even the civilians, mostly children or elderly, managed to outwit, capture and imprison five soldiers from the enemy forces. The locals welcome the LWP fighters, referring to them as the Polish Army. Such wording alludes to the popular recognition of the Polish People's Army as the exclusive armed forces of the country, excluding the AK that is leading the Uprising and

indicating the non-recognition of the government-in-exile not only by Moscow but also by the local population.

**Figure 13**

*Janek Captures Two Nazi Soldiers Who Surrender in the Moment* (Nalecki, 1966, 00:11:21)



During a conversation between Janek and the civilians, the viewer learns that Janek is looking for his father who fought in the battle of Westerplatte in September 1939—a symbol of Polish heroic resistance against overwhelming German forces and self-sacrifice. The emphasis on blood ties communicates that heroism is innate to Poles. It is passed down through generations. This message also establishes a role model association. Later, Janek is pictured contemplatively holding a photograph of his father (Figure 14). This intimate scene suggests that he gathers the courage to fight in the war by drawing strength from his father's example. Thus, it

also encourages the viewer to remember their heroic ancestors and, if need be, follow their example in the future.

**Figure 14**

*Janek is Pictured Holding a Photograph of His Missing War-Veteran Father* (Nalecki, 1966, 00:17:09)



In the preceding emotionally charged scene uses a slow zoom out shot to portray the group of LWP soldiers and civilians all gathered around a child reciting a poem about the heroism and sacrifice of the Polish resistance in Westerplatte despite the loud sounds of a machine gun firing in the background (Figure 15). Even though the thematic focus of this scene is on Westerplatte and not on the Warsaw Uprising, it is important in constructing the overarching heroic victimhood narrative. Firstly, it demonstrates the high degree of national

consciousness among Poles, even the youngest ones, who do not forget to commemorate and show respect for those who gave their lives defending the nation's freedom, even when being in similar dangerous circumstances themselves. Secondly, it shows their fearlessness and resistance: even a child is not afraid of the explosions, as war is something that Poles are generationally accustomed to.

**Figure 15**

*LWP Fighters and Civilians Listen to a Child Recite a Poem About the Battle of Westerplatte*  
(Nalecki, 1966, 00:11:59)



The episode resorts to the theme of child heroism again, highlighting the selflessness and martyrdom inherent to Poles of all ages. For instance, as the crew proceeds in their offensive,

they are helped by a teenage boy who, after being shot, refuses Lidka's medical help, arguing that she should abandon him and help guide the tank instead.

A climatic moment in the narrative takes place as the crew approaches a crossing over Vistula. Using dynamic short shots from inside the tank and its environment, the filmmakers capture the intensity of the battle. The group makes their way forward against all odds, but their luck ends when they almost reach a bridge to the other bank of the Vistula (Figure 16).

**Figure 16**

*A Shot of the Kierbedź Bridge Seen Through the Tank Periscope (Nalecki, 1966, 00:22:38)*



The scene references the Kierbedź Bridge, which was destroyed by retreating German forces on September 13, 1944, to thwart the Red Army's offensive from the left bank of the Vistula (Kałwa, 2017). In the next dramatic shots, the crew is pictured badly wounded in the middle of a

burning street of Warsaw. Just like LWP and the Red Army, the four tankmen and their dog were pushed back just before they could help liberate Warsaw.

The episode aligns with the official memory by reinforcing the myth of brotherhood in arms with the Red Army and the national-communist narrative. Two main non-Polish characters, one of them being tank-man Grigoriy Saakashvili from Georgia, and a Russian nurse named Marusia who is in love with Janek, bravely fight alongside their Polish comrades to liberate Poland. Furthermore, it emphasizes that the local population embraced them and other Red Army officers with open arms. At the same time, the episode makes no mention of the AK and does not include any insurgents in its narrative. Ultimately, it follows the state-sponsored narrative that the communist Polish army, together with the Soviets, had intentions to cross the Vistula but were thwarted by the German forces.

#### ***4.1.4 Godzina “W” (1979): a Moralizing Romantic Tribute to the Young Polish Heroes***

Similar to Wajda, Janusz Morgenstern chose to tell a story of young, freedom-driven volunteers, depicting them as the archetype of ordinary collective heroes. Most of them were still under their parents’ care as they self-organized into insurgent groups based on childhood friendships. However, whereas *Kanał* portrays them as powerless heroes, emblematic of the final days of the Uprising, *Godzina “W”* serves as a romantic prelude to the tragic fate that awaited the idealistic soon-to-be insurgents after 5 p.m. on 1 August 1944.

Throughout the film, the lack of organization, manpower and weapons is frequently highlighted, yet this dire situation does not deter the insurgents. They acknowledge the risks to their lives, but they are used to it after the five years of Nazi terror. Morgenstern unfolds the Uprising through the perspectives of ordinary heroes who were unaware of the scale of tragedy awaiting them. Whether it is cadet corporal Ariosto leading his division or more seasoned Commander Czarny, the heroes are portrayed as valiant and naive, believing that with just twenty-five people armed with grenades and rifles, they could seize the Gestapo headquarters.

Despite being set before the Uprising, the film showcases several instances of the insurgents’ self-sacrificing heroism. For instance, a young volunteer named Sowa risks his life to procure a rifle for his friends planning to join the Uprising. Despite his serious gunshot wound, Sowa prioritizes fighting alongside his childhood friends over his own well-being. Meanwhile, a comment from his friend suggesting they bring him along “so he can at least watch” reflects the youthful immaturity and lack of comprehension of the commitment these heroes made. Another poignant example of heroic sacrifice is portrayed in a scene where a young insurgent, Andrzej, abandoned by his comrades, chooses to join the resistance alone. Witnessing a shootout between Sowa’s group and Nazi soldiers, he courageously uses his only weapons—two hand-grenades left to him by former sworn brothers—to help the group. Andrzej, who had just promised his father he would make him proud, tragically dies even before the Uprising officially begins by defending complete strangers. This scene, thus, perpetuates the myth of nobleness of Polish heroes and national solidarity.

On the other hand, *Godzina "W"* also depicts less courageous, arguably more rational Poles who fear the consequences of openly resisting. The film critiques their lack of “true Polish” spirit, portraying civilians like Jackowska and her son Wacek, whose apartment becomes a military base next to Gestapo headquarters without their consent. Wacek is portrayed as a hedonistic, timid egoist who cannot defend his mother, let alone join the insurgents. As soon as the unit departs to attack the headquarters, the family hastily packs their belongings. Jackowska deliberately ignores the wounded Sowa, left behind due to his injury, as he tries to reach the Polish flag—his last link to participating in the long-awaited Uprising (Figure 17). This emotionally-charged scene, accompanied by liturgical-like music, underscores the film's moral judgment of apathetic segments of society, criticized for their weak civic stance, disregard for the common cause, and lack of empathy.

**Figure 17**

*Wounded Sowa Struggles to Reach the Polish flag* (Morgenstern, 1979, 00:01:14:38)



In terms of memory narratives, the film does not mention the AK, nor does it explicitly indicate which armed forces the volunteers answer to, aligning with *Kanał* and *Eroica*.

Nevertheless, *Godzina "W"* uses symbols as visual cues to guide viewers in inferring the political and military forces driving the Uprising. For example, the film's opening scene focuses on buntings with the *kotwica*—a symbol linked with the AK and the Underground State—painted over the Polish crowned eagle insignia. While this scene captures the removal of forbidden symbols, it also depicts locals' joy and inspiration upon seeing reminders of underground resistance. Later, the opening credits show the *kotwica* painted over a Nazi wall poster reading "Deutschlands Sieg Europas Freiheit" ("Germany's victory – Europe's freedom") (Figure 18). These subtle symbols not only direct viewer attention but also emphasize that Polish national consciousness endured under Nazi occupation.

**Figure 18**

*Kotwica Painted Over a Nazi Wall Poster* (Morgenstern, 1979, 00:03:22)

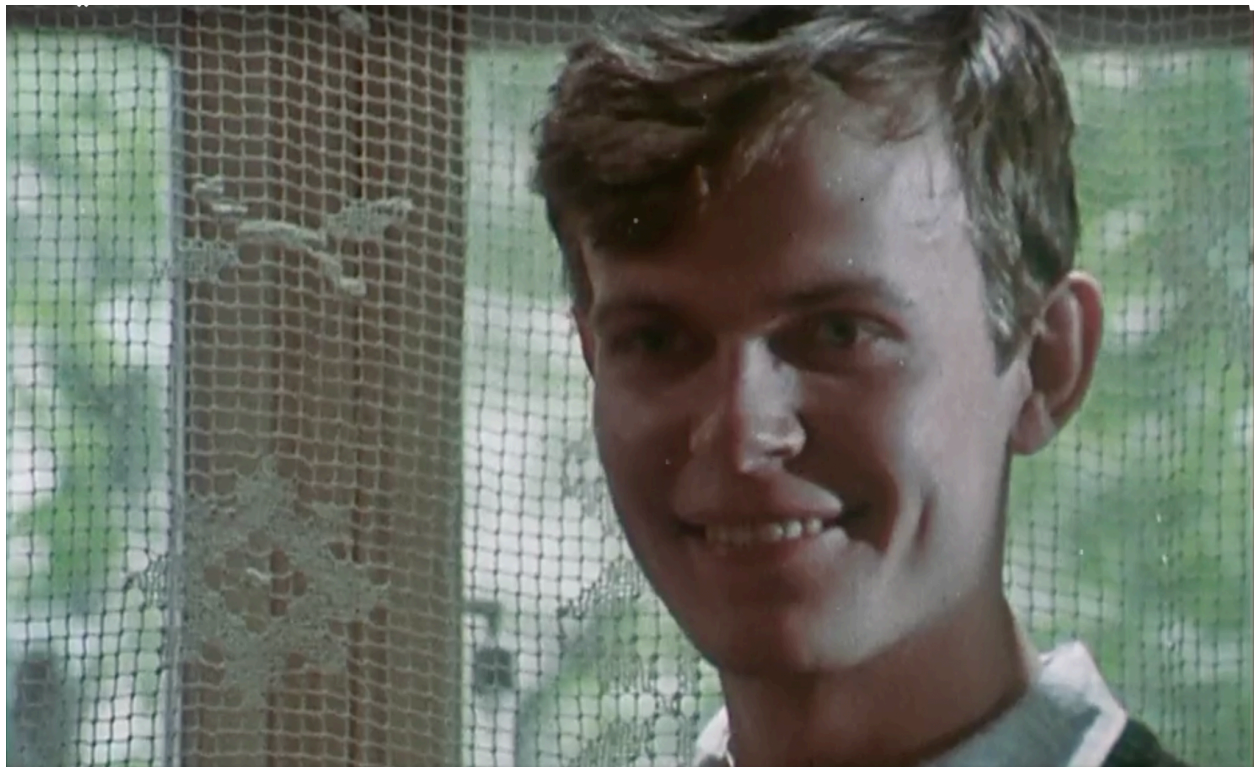


Furthermore, *Godzina "W"* avoids offering critical commentary on the Soviet Union, unlike the earlier films. Characters do not display negative attitudes toward the Soviet Union; rather, they celebrate the Red Army's takeover of Radość, a district in Warsaw. For instance, Czarny views this news as a long-awaited sign that the Uprising will start soon (Figure 19).

Though the film does not explicitly mention the Red Army supporting the insurgents, viewers might infer that the characters anticipated Soviet solidarity, given their belief that the Uprising would last no longer than twenty-four hours. In contrast to the subtle hints in *Eroica*, the film does not interpret the Uprising as also a political resistance against potential communist re-occupation of Poland. Overall, the film's narrative remains ambiguous, given that it portrays the events of August 1, 1944. The interpretation of its messages depends on the viewers' memory of the Uprising's history.

**Figure 19**

*Czarny Rejoices Upon Hearing About the Red Army Approaching Warsaw* (Morgenstern, 1979, 00:05:20)



While the characters who are “happy that they have lived to see this moment” experience optimism, hope, and enthusiasm, and the film avoids major battle scenes or depictions of human losses, it nevertheless communicates tragedy – perhaps more profoundly than the overtly sorrowful and dramatic narratives of *Kanal*. The film relies on the viewer's knowledge the

Uprising did not culminate in “a parade in front of Gestapo headquarters,” as the insurgents had naively envisioned, to advance the narrative of heroic victimhood. At the same time, it puts forward a clear-cut argument that the Uprising was worth the consequences it entailed. For the youth who had endured five years under Nazi rule, the choice was clear from the outset: “Victory or death... It is not worth living any other way”. Even parents of the insurgents, despite the fear of losing their children, supported their fight for Poland’s freedom (Figure 20). For instance, Czarny’s father endorses his active patriotic stance, acknowledging that everyone’s hopes for freedom rest with people like him. Similarly, Teresa’s mother supports her decision to join the Uprising, despite her pregnancy.

**Figure 20**

*Andrzej and His Father Embrace Before He Joins the Uprising (Morgenstern, 1979, 00:52:23)*



Ultimately, *Godzina "W"* stands as a commemorative tribute to the generation of heroic martyrs who risked their lives rather than passively witnessing their nation’s subjugation. It aims to address the concerns of heroes like cadet Ariosto that history does appreciate their sacrifice; and the final scene provides the viewer an opportunity for such introspection. Captured in freeze

frames, the young, motivated insurgents run to fulfill their duty, while the background sounds of shooting blends with the melancholic rendition of the film's musical score. The final shot of Sowa holding the Polish flag from a window (Figure 21) epitomizes the myth of Polish unyielding collective heroism, prompting viewers to reflect on their ancestors' sacrifices for Poland's freedom.

**Figure 21**

*Unable to Join the Others, Sowa Holds the Flag from a Window* (Morgenstern, 1979, 01:15:35)



## ***4.2 Films Produced under PiS-led Politics of History***

### ***4.2.1 Ticking All the Boxes: Miasto 44 (2014) as a Postmemory Superhero Epic***

The opening title card provides context for the Warsaw Uprising to the viewer, highlighting that “the young people, thirsty for freedom and a new life,” and hopeful of the Soviet Army’s support in the fight against Nazi Germany, were its driving force. The first scenes of the film describe what the “new normal” in occupied Warsaw was like: a seemingly peaceful cityscape is contrasted with the routine segregation and subjugation of Poles to their “masters”. While some Poles, mostly servile collaborators in positions of power, accept the status quo to advance in the society of serfdom, others, primarily the youth, are growing increasingly rebellious against the oppression. Against this context, Jan Komasa chooses to tell a story of the Uprising through the tragic experiences of a group of young Warsawians in their late teens and early twenties. This decision can be interpreted as an attempt to provoke an empathetic emotional response from the viewer since the heroic sacrifice of young people, who did not get the chance to fully experience life, is ultimately more tragic. Moreover, it prompts a young viewer to extrapolate the experiences and qualities of the characters into their own lives, making young insurgents role-models for today’s youth.

The two main protagonists, Stefan Zawadzki and Alicja (Ala), come from the Polish intelligentsia. Feminist Ala and her brother Aleksander, who is also an insurgent, hail from a wealthy aristocracy. Stefan is a son of a famous actress, now deeply traumatized by the loss of her husband, a Home Army war veteran. Stefan is portrayed as a father figure to his younger brother and the only support to his distressed mother. Similar to the young LWP tank-man Janek, Stefan is also influenced by the example of his war-hero father. Dressed in his uniform, Stefan sees his new true self in the mirror (Figure 22). Despite the heavy weight of family responsibility on his shoulders, Stefan decides to leave them and follow in his father’s footsteps—his duty to his homeland outweighs the duty he has to his family.

## Figure 22

*Stefan Decides to Follow His Father's Footsteps* (Komasa, 2014, 00:17:16)



The viewer sees Stefan undergoing his right of passage into the AK ranks: in a forest, in the presence of only his friends, he solemnly gives oath to his homeland, pledging loyalty to the president of the Polish Republic and to the Home Army (Figure 23). This rather theatrical scene portrays the Uprising heroes as naïve young idealists, driven by the tradition of romantic heroism and a patriotic commitment to national liberation, yet unaware of the implications of what they were subscribing to.

Their naivety is also captured in the scenes that reference popular discussions about the geopolitical situation of Poland in the summer of 1944. The high-spirited youth saw Poland as an equal ally to the West, and were hopeful for their solidarity and assistance, while an older generation, portrayed as a voice of wisdom, was disillusioned and better aware of the historical tragedies of their country, viewing the Uprising as an irrational enterprise doomed to fail. The protagonists made a choice not to evacuate and wait out the Uprising but to join the insurgents, demonstrating their valor and commitment to the cause.

## Figure 23

*Stefan Joins the AK* (Komasa, 2014, 00:18:35)



However, the film also demonstrates that this decision was not fully informed: the resistance was betrayed by Soviet Russia and the Western allies. Importantly, the AK leadership is not explicitly mentioned in relation to the failure of the Uprising. The scene where the viewer finds out about the lack of weapons and how few people joined the resistance does prompt reflections about poor planning on behalf of the AK leadership. Yet, the focus swiftly shifts onto assigning the main responsibility for the fate of the Uprising to Moscow. The narrative throughout the entire film is clearly anti-Soviet, and even more so anti-Russian. It contrasts the views of the Polish working class, depicted as short-sighted in believing the Soviet offensive in Poland will bring liberation, with those of the wise intelligentsia, who understand that Poland's fate is to be dominated by the neighboring superpowers – whether Nazi Germany or Soviet Russia. In one of the first scenes, a cruel Nazi officer intimidatingly notes that when the communists from Russia take their place, Poles will “beg them to come back”. Later in the film, this point is strengthened by the scene in which incoming Red Army troops commit war crimes by throwing grenades and opening fire at civilians hiding in Warsaw's basements – at those who had rejoiced at the sight of their “saviors”. While the Red Army outwardly demonized, the film occasionally presents humanizing aspects of Wehrmacht. For instance, it shows that the Nazi

forces respected the ceasefire agreement, allowing evacuation of the wounded. Moreover, a Nazi soldier, who used to be treated in the same hospital as the protagonists, is portrayed as principled, albeit in a wretched way, showing mercy towards Stefan who had not harmed him in the past. Lastly, Berling's soldiers are depicted as patronizing and incompetent. The communist commander's assertion that every Pole "fights the same way – the Polish way" is then proven wrong when his arrogance ultimately gets the entire group killed. Moreover, Polish communists are essentialized in their portrayal as less educated, working-class people from rural areas.

Meanwhile, the young AK heroes quickly lose their optimism and fighting spirit as they witness mass death and suffering, lose their family and friends, and are trying to survive. Yet, there is a clear message that runs through the events unfolding on screen: even though Poles could have waited for the Red Army to assume control as the new "masters", they, unlike others, chose to fight back for their freedom with scanty arms, outnumbered, and abandoned by their allies. Although some succumbed to fear, seeing no prospects of continuing the resistance, the majority of the insurgents did not desert even after their initial illusions were shattered by the Red Army's betrayal. Demoralized, exhausted, wounded, and traumatized by the horrifying realities that the Uprising brought on, they still continued to fight. Otherwise, "What was it all for?"

*Warsaw 44* is a fusion of psychological drama and action film. Similar to *Kanal*, dramatic love stories weave through the film's narrative, humanizing the characters and making them more relatable to the viewer. Simultaneously, the heroes are depicted as chivalrous, noble, and often superhuman but nevertheless humble. For instance, initially brave and eager to fight, Stefan is the first one to rush into a room with Nazi soldiers despite being completely unarmed, while the others give in to fear. Later on, due to the mass tragedy he has witnessed and the shock of seeing his family being murdered, Stefan is portrayed as demoralized and suicidal. Yet, not for long: he suddenly realizes that he cannot afford to hide as a civilian and leaves his first love, Ala, to rejoin the resistance. Yet again, in a heroic act, he demonstrates strength of will and patriotism by abandoning his personal life and any chance of even having a life, all in the name of liberating his country. A slow-motion close-up shot, an editing technique not uncommon for *Warsaw 44*, shows a determined and fearless Stefan. Accompanied by upbeat electronic

music, he is confidently marching through a burning building with his group of friends (Figure 24).

**Figure 24**

*Stefan Marching Through a Burning Building* (Komasa, 2014, 01:25:22)



At the same time, Ala is depicted as a strong young woman, devoted to her country and her love interest, Stefan. She is sensitive and altruistic even in the most dangerous situations. Similar to Stokrotka from *Kanal*, Ala rescues wounded, barely conscious Stefan from the air attacks, and carries him in her arms through the sewers. Eventually, Ala finds her place in a hospital as a nurse, working tirelessly to save the wounded, and ultimately advocates for their evacuation. Despite being in imminent danger herself, she also attempts to rescue a baby abandoned by its own father in a basement during the Red Army's attack on civilians.

The film graphically, and arguably excessively, portrays the violence and inhumane scale of the tragedy experienced by hundreds of thousands of Warsawians (Figure 25). Earlier films, tailored to audiences first-hand traumatized by the war, also relied on tragic images of the destroyed city and pervasive death. However, in the case of *Kanal*, these images primarily strengthened the narrative of personal and psychological drama. In *Eroica*, battle scenes juxtaposed tragedy with comedic absurdity. *Warsaw 44*, however, aims to immerse the

postmemory generation in the horrors of the Uprising to the fullest extent possible, showing viewers who have only heard about the statistics of casualties what those numbers actually mean.

**Figure 25**

*Ala Hiding from Bombardments* (Komasa, 2014, 00:54:05)



In this regard, a scene where Stefan and Ala finally reach the surface in Warsaw’s city center only to find it completely unaffected serves as an example of how Komasa encourages the viewer to be conscious of the sacrifice of those who fought in the Uprising. The scene portrays the city center dwellers as completely removed from the tragic realities that are happening in their own city: they only *hear* of the Uprising from the megaphone announcements of the “great victory” while sitting at a cafe and watching a street puppet show. Meanwhile, the wounded and exhausted insurgents, covered in sewage waste after making their way from the burned-down old town, are being photographed as if they were just an exhibit. This scene can be interpreted as conveying an allegorical meaning about the damaging and disrespectful consequences of ignorance towards one's own history. At the same time, while the traumatizing graphic images of ever-present death and destruction do provoke contemplation about whether the Uprising was worth it and should be glorified, the final scene intends to provide a definitive answer. The panoramic shot of a burning Warsaw in 1944 seamlessly blends into today’s cityscape (Figure 26 and Figure 27), which can be interpreted as a message that the free, independent, and prosperous

Poland as the viewer knows it today would not exist without the martyrological heroism of their ancestors.

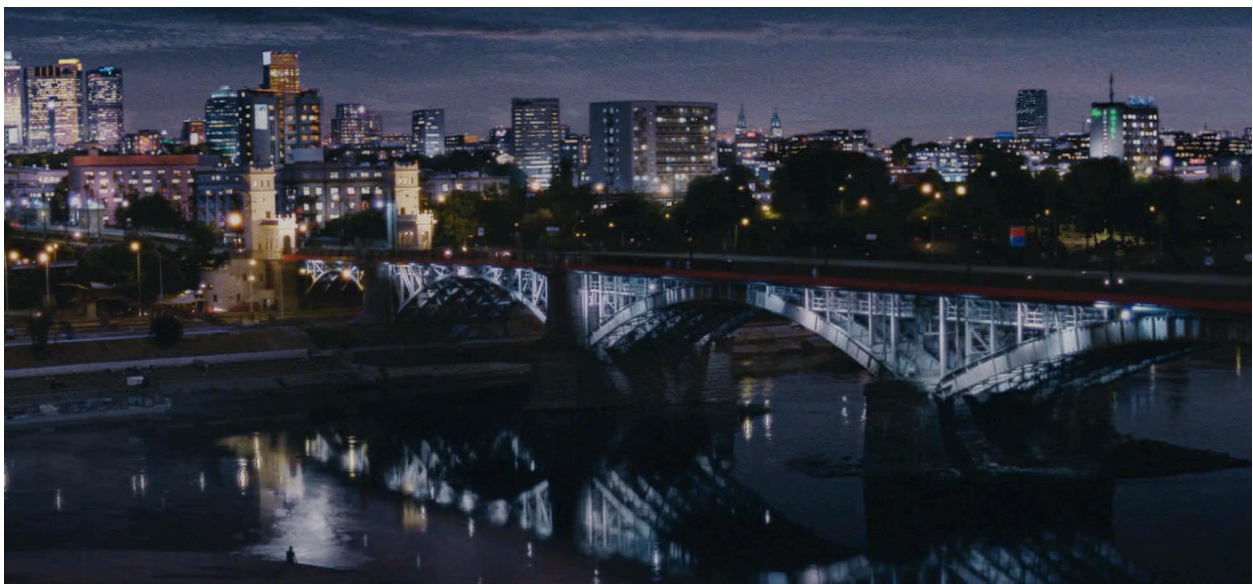
**Figure 26**

*A Panoramic Shot of War-Ravaged Warsaw in 1944 (Komasa, 2014, 01:54:15)*



**Figure 27**

*A Panoramic Shot of Modern-Day Warsaw (Komasa, 2014, 01:54:45)*



#### ***4.2.2 Was It All Worth It? Kurier (2019) as a Defender of the Core Patriotic Values***

The latest film on the topic of the Warsaw Uprising approaches it from a distinctively different angle. Director and screenwriter Władysław Pasikowski presents a story of heroism through a biographical account of Jan Nowak-Jeziorański. A liaison between the General Inspector of the Polish Armed Forces in London and the Main Command of the Home Army (*Komenda Główna Armii Krajowej*; KG AK), his “life’s mission was a free Poland”. Nowak is the ultimate heroic role model: he is portrayed as a chivalrous gentleman, a devoted patriot, and most importantly a self-sacrificing hero. During his stay in London, he persistently advocates for his country, even when the British government no longer prioritizes the Polish voice. As much as his mission is of exceptional importance to the future of his country, he does not hesitate to join Polish partisans whenever they need his help. Nowak is also portrayed as respectful, sensitive and noble. He stands up for a woman that is being harassed, and gives due respect to an unknown fallen partisan.

The storyline of *Kurier* does not directly address the events of the Uprising but instead focuses on how the decision to start the Uprising was made. Through the narration of Jan Nowak’s mission to deliver a communication from the Polish political and military leadership in London to Warsaw, the film illuminates the geopolitical situation in Europe and the debates regarding Poland’s future within the Underground Government in the summer of 1944. Altogether, the rhetoric is as much anti-Soviet as it is anti-German. The opening titles state that as of 1944, the fate of Poland—whether it would emerge as a free, independent state or a subject of the Soviet empire—was being decided by the big powers. Despite this predeterminism, “Poles wanted to fight”. Thus, the first minute of the film communicates the myth of national heroic victimhood: Poland is depicted as a pawn in the hands of the Soviet Union and the Allies, leaving the country alone in its liberation struggle. The stance of the Allies, particularly the United Kingdom, is actively criticized for prioritizing the demands of the USSR and abandoning their guarantees to Poland. The British government is portrayed not only as disinterested in militarily supporting Poland but also as defeatist, encouraging the leadership of the Underground State to abandon plans for active resistance and accept the future Soviet occupation. Against this context, even though the film does not touch on the outcome of the Uprising, the Allies’ inaction is portrayed as the main cause of its potential defeat. At the same time, the film alludes that the

exiled political leadership is responsible for discarding General Inspector's orders and interfering in the decision-making of the KG AK, thus allowing the Uprising to happen.

Ultimately, the film conveys the message that the Uprising was worth the price that hundreds of thousands paid with their lives. Even Jan Nowak, was initially opposed to the Uprising calling it a suicide in light of the Soviet westward offensive and the absence of support from the Allies, changes his mind. The climactic scene of Nowak's emotionally-charged declarative speech before the KG AK, accompanied by solemn and dramatic music, portrays the courier as genuinely convinced of the necessity to start the Uprising (Figure 28).

### **Figure 28**

*Jan Nowak Delivers a Speech Before the Main Command of the Home Army* (Pasikowski, 2019, 01:34:56)



Arguably, it has the potential to convince the viewer as well. Nowak does not hide the fact that the government of the United Kingdom will not support the insurgents, not even with the help of the Polish divisions serving in the RAF. On the contrary, he shatters any remaining illusions that the KG AK might have regarding the support and sympathy of Poland's Allies. Yet, as much as he is emotional about the importance of open resistance for preserving national consciousness and unifying national spirit, he also is portrayed as rational and therefore more convincing. Having been back in Poland for just several days, Nowak realizes that Poles have already been

strongly demoralized by the constant terror and subjugation to the Nazi regime. In this context, empowering the nation to take up arms against the occupier would channel popular resentment into a powerful resistance. On the other hand, if the AK surrendered, the future occupation by the Soviet Union would further undermine Polish national identity. For Nowak, this would be a far greater price than the defeat of the Uprising. He understands that the Soviets would not help the insurgents, and most likely, the Uprising will end up in tragic defeat. But at least Poles will not just be silent witnesses to foreign domination; instead, they “will die in honor”. Nowak acknowledges that however big the price of the Uprising might be, it would be worth it since the freedom of the future generations is the ultimate common goal. His arguments, therefore, clearly align with the heroic victimhood mythology. The final long shot pictures Nowak with a group of empowered insurgents, who had just tackled Nazi officers that had been terrorizing their country, running to save their nation (Figure 29). This demonstrated that he was not just fulfilling the order—he genuinely believed his reasoning.

**Figure 29**

*Nowak and the Insurgents Run to Liberate Warsaw* (Pasikowski, 2019, 01:47:00)



### ***4.3 Synthesis and Discussion of Findings***

*Kanal* and *Eroica*, the two films made during the period of cultural and mnemonic liberalization of late 1950s by the representatives of the Polish School of directors who were personally affected by the Uprising, present two different perspectives on Polish heroism during the Uprising—romantic and rationalist. The earliest film, *Kanal*, is a narrative of endurance and loss, and a testament to how Wajda wanted the Uprising and its participants to be remembered. The film challenges the romantic mythology insofar as it strips the heroes off their shining armor, showing less conventionally honored circumstances of their sacrifice. It also prompts inferences about the cost of the Uprising, questioning the canonic slogans of unwavering heroism and its necessity. Yet, the film does not de-heroicize the insurgents, quite the contrary. It is full of pathos that convey the message of noble universal heroism. A Pole-insurgent is not only the one who perished a “beautiful death” on the battlefield—she or he is also the one trapped in fear and in reeking sewers, an exceptional heroic victim equally worthy of commemoration and respect.

*Eroica*, presented to the Polish audiences only eight months later, offered therapeutic relief to the generation traumatized by the war (Fenny, 2020, p. 145). Its first part, devoid of tragic catharsis and distressing images of suffering, re-wrapped the narrative of universal heroism of the insurgents into an irreverent, tragicomic depiction of an involuntary hero. The journey of Dzidzius’s metamorphosis from an evader, who seizes any opportunity to save himself while also trying to make a name for himself, into a patriot with national consciousness offers the viewer an unusual perspective on ordinary heroes. Rationalist Munk brings them down from the romantic pedestal of moral superiority by demonstrating that even people like Dzidzius would risk their lives for the higher collective goal of freedom.

The two earliest films offer nuanced portrayals of heroism: while challenging some aspects of the mythological template, they simultaneously support it. In an effort to help the war generation confront their traumas, the films of the Polish School challenge the notion that heroes were only those who died a “beautiful death” on the battlefield or remained unwavering in their patriotic beliefs. Still, as much as the films differ in how they want the memory of the Uprising and its heroes to be inscribed in the popular imagination, whether as demoralized victims of history or morally flexible “normal” people, seemingly detached from the “hero culture”, they

promote the same “knightly ethos”, as noted by Marcin Darmas (2014, p, 194). *Kanał* portrays the Uprising through the eyes of those who participated in it, revealing that it was not “the most beautiful Polish battle” as the IPN later framed it (Nowak, 2021). The myth of Polish martyrology is advanced by depicting insurgents in dire circumstances, yet the film also interprets their suffering through the lens of heroism as noble victims of Poland’s “special national destiny”. *Eroica* subverts the belief in the moral superiority of Polish heroes, while also reiterating that self-sacrifice for national freedom is intrinsic to Polishness. Both films uphold the narrative of Poland’s destiny as a victim of foreign aggression that heroically resisted subjugation, even—perhaps especially—when left alone in the struggle for liberation. They can be interpreted as homages to the sacrifices that the heroic ancestors made for the freedom of future generations. Nonetheless, the Polish School films leave the room for the audience to consider whether self-sacrificing, “blind” heroism is always worth its cost.

Conversely, in telling the story of the Uprising through the depiction of the communist army soldiers as the main “heroic sons of the nation”, the episode in the *Cztery Pancerni i Pies* series is devoid of victimizing narrative. Instead, it focalizes on the noble qualities of the Polish heroism, portraying the characters as romantic knights – fearless but kind and sensitive fighters, willing to liberate their country with nothing more than a wooden stick or by facing artillery fire in their tank. The experience of the valorous LWP soldiers during the Uprising is closely associated with their bravery in combat. But unlike Wajda, who challenged the mythology by juxtaposing battles with the grim reality of the city’s sewers to highlight the contrast between the “beautiful death” insurgents had hoped for and the harsh truth; or Munk, who highlighted the “accidental heroism” of his protagonist that survived bombings and saved lives against all odds, Konrad Nałęcki uses battle scenes to uphold the canonical vision of Polish heroism and its attributes. In sum, the episode romanticizes Polish heroism, focalizing on the valour of Polish People’s Army soldiers and their bravery. Moreover, the episode advances the myth of heroic ancestry and universality of heroism native to Poles of different ages and generations.

*Godzina “W”*, much like to *Kanał*, pays tribute to the generation of young people who chose to risk their lives rather than witness their nation’s subjugation. The insurgents are exemplary of the noble heroes whose greatest value is their nation’s freedom symbolizes Polish collective heroism. Morgenstern’s film takes a somber tone but avoids explicit portrayal of the

insurgents as martyrs. Instead, it highlights their hope, determination, and joy in the final hours before the Uprising, as they anticipated freedom from occupation and terror. *Godzina "W"* depicts the insurgents' decision to take up arms for Poland's liberation as the ultimate expression of personal fulfillment and the realization of their unique national destiny. By relying on the viewer's knowledge of the Uprising's tragic outcome, the director reinforced the narrative of their victimhood.

On the other hand, *Miasto 44* adheres to the canonic "heroic victimhood" narrative template much more explicitly. It tells a story of Poland as a victim of constant geopolitical conquests, who was abandoned by everyone to bear the brunt alone. Despite the tragic fate of Poles, they never considered surrendering and giving up their hopes for freedom. The film consistently and graphically portrays the insurgents as martyrs, who at their young age, had to go through the horrors of Nazi and Soviet reprisals but were not broken in their patriotic convictions. The tendency to over heroicize the Uprising, previously uncharacteristic to the films created by and for the war-generation whose communicative memory was still alive, reflects the theoretical propositions that postmemory renders the past in a more opaque way to affectively retraumatize the new generation. *Miasto 44* aims to didactically teach the young postmemory generation about their national genealogical code, fostering patriotic values and a collective identity rooted in empowered victimhood.

The empowered victimhood narrative is also advanced in *Kurier*. Although the director and producer of the film claimed they wanted to show an ordinary hero, it is difficult to compare Jan Nowak, described by the filmmakers as the Polish "James Bond", to unknown ordinary heroes from the earlier films. Rather, the film uses the stance of a respected historical figure who was well-informed about the risks, more than any ordinary insurgent would have ever been, to firmly assert that the fight for freedom is always justified. In sum, the films produced under the influence of the new politics of history, despite presenting a version of the Uprising that refuted the communist mnemonic canons, also build onto the dominant myth.

In *Miasto 44* and *Kurier*, the message of Poland's exceptionality is expressed through the narrative of Poles' unwavering national consciousness and their readiness to die for collective freedom. The films created in the context of the new politics of history ultimately promote the message that the value of freedom of successive generations surpasses the cost of individual

lives. Both films advance the narrative of “empowered victimhood” by appealing to the injustices of Polish history and taking control over the historical traumas by finally naming the offenders.

*Kanał*, *Czterej Pancerni i Pies*, *Miasto 44* and *Kurier* also include the myths of genealogical and ideological generational lineages to noble heroes of the “golden age” in their narratives. For Nałęczki and Komasa’s protagonists, their fathers, who defended the country from occupiers, serve as role models, reminding them of the duty to serve their country. *Kanał*, on the other hand, establishes an ideological lineage between the insurgent Korab and Juliusz Słowacki, a national hero of romantic nationalism. Similarly, *Kurier*, aims to connect the young Polish generation to another national hero, Jan Nowak, whom the filmmakers present as an example to follow. Including the lineage to the heroes can be interpreted as an attempt to remind the viewers of their unique national identity and qualities passed through the generations.

In terms of their reflection of state-sponsored memory narratives, *Kanał*, *Eroica* and *Godzina “W”* proved to be nuanced cases. *Kanał* and *Eroica* are representative of the realities of the Polish Thaw, thus the discourse behind the two films does not quite align with the communist canon of collective memory. Although covertly, the films problematize the Soviet Union’s inaction in supporting the Uprising. They also do not hide nor emphasize the role of the AK in heroically defending Poland, using subtle visual cues to direct the audience’s attention to the allegiance of the insurgents. Wajda subversively explored the memory of the Soviet role in the Uprising’s defeat, while Munk offered a more ambiguous perspective, subtly criticizing both the Soviet intentions and the Uprising’s poor planning and organization. Munk’s criticism of the USSR, however, could be interpreted in more than one way. If taken literally, the comment about the Red Army’s liberation of Poland would not contradict the official memory narrative, particularly given the other remarks highlighting the AK’s coordination and planning shortcomings.

Similar to the directors of the Polish School, Morgenstern did not openly address the affiliation of the insurgents to the AK, guiding the audience to make their own conclusions from the visual cues. Such deviations from the official memory line can be attributed to the periods of liberalization of culture and memory during which the films were made. The fact that

*Godzina "W"* focuses on young, idealistic insurgents driven by the ambitions to dismantle the oppressive regimes can be seen as predicated on the socio-political realities of the late 1970s-1980s. Made during the time when re-democratization of collective memory of the Warsaw Uprising was demanded, it advances the narrative of ordinary collective heroism and portrays the insurgents through the lens of romantic mythological tradition much like *Kanał*. The sentiments of national liberation, harbored by the younger generation of dissident Poles who did not personally experience the war, found reflection in Morgenstern's heroes. Additionally, the underlying tragic and mournful mood that accompanies the film acts as a warning against an armed rebellion – a narrative that was also relevant in Solidarity's discourse.

Official memory narratives are most prominently reflected in the episode of *Czterej Pancerni i Pies* and in the most recent films. The episode illustrates the dominant memory narratives characteristic of Gomułka's national communism program as it celebrates the heroism of the LWP soldiers and reaffirms that joint Polish-Soviet forces liberated the country. In *Miasto 44* and *Kurier*, Poland is portrayed as victim of aggression of simultaneously two expansionist superpowers, and communism is equated to nazism. At the same time, the responsibility for the failure of the Uprising is attributed both to the western Allies and the Soviet Russia, aligning with the populist right-wing anti-Russian and anti-Western rhetoric. *Kurier* also aligns with the official memory narratives promoted by PiS' politics of history, since the film is intended to show that despite knowing they might die, the Poles fought against all odds because that is "the Polish way". Unlike *Kanał* or *Godzina "W"*, the film seeks to unite the nation divided by the debate over whether the Uprising was worth the tragedy rather than leave room for personal reflections.

Therefore, while the analyzed films reflect and focalize official memory narratives about national liberation heroes differently, they consistently construct the same mythologized archetype of a Polish ordinary hero: a courageous patriot willing to die for their country's freedom.

## Conclusions

In view of the findings, the perplexing similarities in the narrative patterns followed by ideologically divergent political regimes of PZPR and PiS in their politics of history discourse can be explained by applying theoretical propositions about the endurance of dominant national myths and their role in shaping collective memory. Due to the myths' fabular simplicity and cultural entrenchment, they become fundamental to collective identity and remain relevant and familiar across generations. Dominant myths function as schematic narrative templates, serving as a lens through which a nation's past is interpreted by the mnemonic community. The myths of heroism and victimhood have been embedded in Polish collective identity and reproduced since the nineteenth century, weaving into the dominant myth of Poland being "Christ Among Nations". Rooted in the traumas of Polish history, the template presents a simplified and adaptable framework that can be re-evoked and tailored to the goals of dominant political regimes.

As evident from the mnemonic narrativization of the Warsaw Uprising, official memory canons have changed to reinforce the ideological agendas of those in power. In their reinterpretation of the Warsaw Uprising—an event that had come to be considered emblematic of the Polish heroism and victimhood of the Polish—the PZPR and PiS memory actors adhered to the core elements of the dominant myth to make the Polish public resonate with and trust in the state-endorsed version of its history. These conclusions reflect the theoretical suggestions that dominant myths as adaptable value systems that can be used to impose preferred interpretations of the past and support new political agendas. For the newly established communist and later right-wing anti-communist regimes, the instrumentalization of the past served as a means to gain popular legitimacy, while the socialization of the public into a state-sponsored collective memory was used to establish a new social order. This was possible precisely because the schematic narrative template according to which Polish public perceives its past and present became part of social consciousness through education and culture, justifying the relevance of analyzing state-endorsed cultural representations of memory.

By conducting a cinematic discourse analysis, this thesis illustrated that state-endorsed historical fiction films produced under two ideologically divergent political regimes—each promoting conflicting memory narratives about the Warsaw Uprising—nevertheless followed the

same schematic narrative template of “heroic victimhood”. While introducing some critical reflections, the analyzed films largely perpetuate the dominant myth by framing the Uprising as a manifestation of Polish exceptional heroism and martyrdom, and affirming the value of personal sacrifice for collective freedom. The empirical research findings substantiate theoretical arguments that cultural artifacts, particularly cinema, are inextricably linked to the construction of collective identity and memory, and are reflective of the politics of history.

This thesis has contributed to the broader academic discourse within the field of European and memory studies in several ways. Firstly, by illustrating how national mythologies, shaped during the nineteenth century nationalism, can continue to define national identities despite the changing political regimes and democratization. Secondly, by illuminating the “subtle” ways in which nationalist political regimes instrumentalize myths to legitimize themselves and justify didactic approaches to constructing collective memory. Additionally, by analyzing Polish cinema from various periods of the PRL, it offered a more nuanced understanding of how cultural productions created under a communist regime might reflect the politics of history and state-sponsored memory in diverse ways.

Building on the findings, a key area for further research would be accounting for potential changes in the politics of history under the newly elected centrist government and their reflection in cultural artifacts. Furthermore, the research of the films’ reception would be a direction to explore in order to determine whether the main messages behind them have reached the intended outcomes. The answer to this questions could help shed light onto what factors account for the audience’s divergent interpretations. Another potential direction for research that could build on this thesis is to conduct a similar comparative analysis of the instrumentalization of national myths in Hungary’s politics of history as reflected in popular culture. Such a study is feasible due to the commonalities between nationalist regimes in power during and after communism, as well as the shared dominant mythologies in Poland and Hungary, which are “linked to the images of the survival of an ever-suffering nation through heroic victories and defeats amid great powers and neighboring nations” (Pató, 2018, p. 206). This would broaden the perspective on how nationalist political regimes in Central and Eastern Europe reconstructed collective identity through culture following significant international and domestic power shifts.

## Bibliography

- Assmann, A., & Assmann, J. (1987). *Schrift und Gedächtnis: Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation*. Fink.
- Assmann, J. (1995). Collective memory and cultural identity (J. Czaplicka, Trans.). *New German Critique*, 65, 125-133. (Originally published in 1988).
- Axelsson, T. (2015). Vernacular meaning making: Examples of narrative impact in fiction film: Questioning the 'banal' notion in mediatization of religion theory. *Nordicom Review*, 36(2), 143–156.
- Barthes, R. (2009). *Mythologies*. London: Vintage Books. (Original work published 1957).
- Bateman, J. A. (2017). *Critical discourse analysis and film*. In J. Flowerdew & J. Richardson (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies* (1st ed.) (pp. 612–625). Routledge.
- Bateman, J. A., & Schmidt, K. (2012). *Multimodal film analysis: How films mean*. Routledge.
- Behr, V. (2022). How historians got involved in memory politics: Patterns of the historiography of the Polish People's Republic before and after 1989. *East European Politics and Societies*, 36(3), 970–991.
- Bell, D. S. A. (2003). Mythscapes: Memory, mythology, and national identity. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 54(1), 63–81.
- Bernhard, M. H., & Kubik, J. (2014). *Twenty years after communism*. Oxford University Press.
- Bogumił, Z. (2015). *The enemy on display: The Second World War in Eastern European museums*. Berghahn.
- Bordwell, D. (2005). *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging*. University of California Press.
- Borkiewicz, A. J. (1957). *Powstanie warszawskie 1944: Zarys działań natury wojskowej* [The Warsaw Uprising of 1944: Outline of military actions]. Pax.

- Breuilly, J. (2016). Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities: A symposium. *Nations and Nationalism*, 22(4), 625–659.
- Carroll, N. (2003). *Engaging The Moving Image*. Yale University Press.
- Ciechanowski, J. M. (1974). *The Warsaw Rising of 1944*. Cambridge Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies. Cambridge University Press.
- Cohen, A. P. (1985). *The symbolic construction of community*. Ellis Horwood Ltd. and Tavistock Publications Ltd.
- Confino, A. (1997). Collective memory and cultural history: Problems of method. *The American Historical Review*, 102(5), 1386–1403.
- Czaja, J. (2018). *Ekranowe życie mitu. Powstanie warszawskie w polskim filmie fabularnym* [The On-Screen Life of a Myth: The Warsaw Uprising in Polish Feature Film]. Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM.
- Czapliński, P. (2009). *Polska do wymiany. Późna nowoczesność i nasze wielkie narracje* [Poland for Exchange. Late Modernity and Our Grand Narratives]. Wydawnictwo WAB
- Czyżewski, A. (2020). Pamięć marginalizowana, niechciana, cicha... – łódzkie getto w polityce pamięci historycznej PRL [Marginalized, unwanted, silent memory... – the Łódź ghetto in the politics of historical memory of the Polish People's Republic]. *Zagłada Żydów: Studia i Materiały*, (16), 118-159.
- Cotes, P. (2005). *The Red and the White: The cinema of People's Poland*. Wallflower Press.
- Dabert, D. (2021). Alternatywy wobec jednowymiarowości. fenomen polskiej kultury niezależnej w PRL [Alternatives to one-dimensionality: The phenomenon of Polish independent culture in the Polish People's Republic]. *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne. Seria Literacka*, (40), 357-384.
- Dancyger, K. (2018). *The technique of film and video editing: History, theory, and practice*. Taylor & Francis Group.

- Darmas, M. (2014). *Obywatel Rycerz: Zarys socjologii filmu* [Citizen Knight: An outline of the sociology of film]. Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.
- Davies, N. (2004). *Rising '44: The battle for Warsaw*. Pan.
- Della Porta, D., & Keating, M. (2008). How many approaches in the social sciences? An epistemological introduction. In D. Della Porta & M. Keating (Eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (pp. 19–39). Cambridge University Press.
- Della Porta, D. (2008). Comparative analysis: case-oriented versus variable-oriented research. In D. Della Porta & M. Keating (Eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (pp. 316–322). Cambridge University Press.
- Desilla, L. (2012). Implicatures in film: Construal and functions in Bridget Jones romantic comedies. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 44, 30–53.
- Do ludności ziem nowo wyzwolonych [To the population of newly liberated lands]. (1945, January 19). *Głos Ludu: Pismo Polskiej Partii Robotniczej*, R. 2, nr 15, p. 3. Mazovian Digital Library.  
<https://mbc.cyfrowemazowsze.pl/dlibra/publication/99507/edition/96208/content>
- European Audiovisual Observatory. (2019). *Mapping of film and audiovisual public funding criteria in the EU*. Council of Europe.
- Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Falkowska, J. (2008). *Andrzej Wajda: History, politics, and nostalgia in Polish Cinema*. Berghahn Books
- Fenny, L. (2020). *The representation of the Second World War in Polish cinema 1945-1970: Directors, the state and the construction of memory* [Doctoral Thesis, University of Oxford]. Oxford University Research Archive.  
<https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:450b9021-b38e-443a-9618-202b5af3eaf7/files/d6w924b989>.

- FilmPolski.pl. (n.d.-a). *Czterej Pancerni i Pies*. FilmPolski, The Leon Schiller Polish National Film, Television and Theatre School in Łódź.  
<https://www.filmpolski.pl/fp/index.php?film=121749>.
- FilmPolski.pl. (n.d.-b). *Janusz Przymanowski*. FilmPolski, The Leon Schiller Polish National Film, Television and Theatre School in Łódź.  
<https://filmpolski.pl/fp/index.php?osoba=115305>
- FilmPolski.pl. (n.d.-c). *Godzina "W"*. FilmPolski, The Leon Schiller Polish National Film, Television and Theatre School in Łódź. <https://filmpolski.pl/fp/index.php?film=123852>
- Filmweb. (n.d.). *Konrad Nałęcki: Ciekawostki [Konrad Nałęcki: Interesting facts]*.  
<https://www.filmweb.pl/person/Konrad+Na%C5%82%C4%99cki-46965/trivia>
- Frey, H. (2014). *Nationalism and the cinema in France: Political mythologies and film events, 1945-1995*. Berghahn.
- Garliński, J. (1964). Decyzja Podjęcia Walki o Warszawę – wywiad z gen. Tadeuszem Borem-Komorowskim [The decision to fight for Warsaw – an interview with General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski]. *Tydzien Polski*, 31(184).
- Gębicka, E. (1994). Obcinanie kantów czyli polityka PZPR i państwa wobec kinematografii lat sześćdziesiątych [Cutting edges or the policy of the Polish United Workers' Party and the state towards the cinematography of the 1960s]. In T. Miczka (Ed.), *Syndrom konformizmu?: Kino polskie lat sześćdziesiątych [Conformism syndrome?: Polish cinema of the 1960s]* (pp. 35–57). Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.
- Habermas, J. (1967) *Erkenntnis und Interesse [Knowledge and interest]*. Suhrkamp.
- Hackmann, J. (2018). Defending the “good name” of the Polish nation: Politics of history as a battlefield in Poland, 2015-18. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 20(4), 587–606. p. 602.
- Halbwachs, M. (1994). *Les cadres sociaux de la memoire [The Social Frameworks of Memory]*. G. Namer (Ed.). Albin Michel. (Originally published in 1925).
- Halbwachs, M., & Coser, L. A. (1992). *On collective memory*. University of Chicago Press.

- Haltorf, M. (2019). *Polish cinema: A history* (2nd ed.). Berghahn.
- Henderson, B. (1980). *A critique of film theory*. E. P. Dutton
- Hendrykowski, M. (2000). *Film Jako Źródło Historyczne* [Film as a Historical Source]. Ars Nova
- Hirsch, M. (1996). Past lives: Postmemories in exile. *Poetics Today*, 17(4), 659–686.
- Hirsch, M. (2008). The generation of postmemory. *Poetics Today*, 29(1), 103–128.
- Hobsbawm, E. (2012). Introduction: Inventing traditions. In E. Hobsbawm, T. O. Ranger (Eds.), *The invention of tradition* (Canto ed.). Cambridge University Press. (Originally published in 1983).
- Hodgkin, K., & Radstone, S. (2003). *Contested pasts: The politics of memory*. Routledge.
- Nowak, S. (2021, July 30). *The most beautiful Polish battle*. Institute of National Remembrance. <https://eng.ipn.gov.pl/en/digital-resources/articles/8492.The-most-beautiful-Polish-battle.html>
- Janney, R. (2012). Pragmatics and cinematic discourse. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, 8(1), 85–113.
- Jerslev, A. (2006). Sacred viewing: Emotional responses to *The Lord of the Rings*. In E. Mathijs (Ed.), *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context* (pp. 206–221). Wallflower
- Kaes, A. (1990). History and film: Public memory in the age of electronic dissemination. *History and Memory*, 2(1), 111–129.
- Kałwa, A. (2017, March 31) *150 lat temu otwarto w Warszawie most Kierbedzia* [The Kierbedź Bridge was opened in Warsaw 150 years ago]. Dzieje.pl. <https://dzieje.pl/dziedzictwo-kulturowe/150-lat-temu-otwarto-w-warszawie-most-kierbedzia>

- Kancelaria Sejmu RP [Chancellery of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland]. (2005, June 30).  
*Ustawa z dnia 30 czerwca 2005 r. o kinematografii*. (U. 2005 nr 132 poz. 1111), ISAP – Internetowy System Aktów Prawnych [Online System of Legal Acts].  
<https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20051321111>
- Kancelaria Sejmu RP [Chancellery of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland]. (2018, November 9).  
*Ustawa z dnia 9 listopada 2018 r. o finansowym wspieraniu produkcji audiowizualnej*  
[Act of November 9, 2018 on financial support for audiovisual production] (Dz.U. 2019 poz. 50), ISAP – Internetowy System Aktów Prawnych [Online System of Legal Acts].  
<https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20190000050>
- Kansteiner, W. (2018). History, memory, and film: A love/hate triangle. *Memory Studies*, 11(2), 131–136.
- Karski, J. (1985). *The Great Powers and Poland, 1919-1945: From Versailles to Yalta*. University Press of America.
- Kasianov, G. (2022). *Memory crash: Politics of History in and around Ukraine, 1980s–2010s*. Central European University Press.
- Kazlauskaitė, R. (2022). Embodying resentimentful victimhood: Virtual reality re-enactment of the Warsaw Uprising in the Second World War Museum in Gdańsk. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 28(6), 699–713.
- Kazlauskaitė, R., & Salmela, M. (2022). Mediated emotions: Shame and pride in Polish right-wing media coverage of the 2019 European Parliament elections. *Innovation (Abingdon, England)*, 35(1), 130–149.
- Keating, M. (2008). Culture and social science. In D. Della Porta & M. Keating (Eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (pp. 99-117). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kersten, K. (1986). *Narodziny systemu władzy. Polska 1943-1948* [The Birth of a System of Power. Poland 1943-1948]. Libella.

- Kersten, K. (1993). *Między wyzwoleniem a zniewoleniem. Polska 1944-1956* [Between liberation and enslavement. Poland 1944-1956]. Aneks.
- Komasa, J. (2011, March 20). *Jan Komasa: Chciałbym, aby widz powiedział: “O rany! Weszli do miasta, którego już nie ma!”* [Jan Komasa: I would like the viewer to say: “Oh my! They entered a city that no longer exists!”] [Interview]. Warszawa Nasze Miasto.  
<https://warszawa.naszemiasto.pl/jan-komasa-chcialbym-aby-widz-powiedzial-o-rany-weszli-do/ar/c13-3201541>
- Komasa, J. (2013, July 29). *Tanec ze śmiercią* [A dance with death][Interview]. Przekrój, 30 (3547), 6–11. [http://mbc.malopolska.pl/Content/91922/przekroj\\_2013\\_030.pdf](http://mbc.malopolska.pl/Content/91922/przekroj_2013_030.pdf)
- Komasa, J. (2014, August 1). *Ten film zmienił moje życie – rozmowa z Janem Komasą* [This film changed my life – interview with Jan Komasa] [Interview]. Rzeczpospolita.  
<https://www.rp.pl/kultura/art12365781-ten-film-zmieni-l-moje-zycie-rozmowa-z-janem-komasa>
- Koszewska, J. (2013, May 11). *Miasto44: Ruszają zdjęcia do najbardziej oczekiwanego filmu o Powstaniu Warszawskim* [Warsaw44: Shooting for the most anticipated film about the Warsaw Uprising begins]. Mazowieckie Nasze Miasto.  
<https://mazowieckie.naszemiasto.pl/miasto44-ruszaja-zdjecia-do-najbardziej-oczekiwane-go-filmu/ar/c13-1847633>
- Konieczna, M. (2007, October 12). *“Kanał” jedzie na festiwal w Cannes* [“Kanał” goes to Cannes Festival]. Dziennik.  
<https://film.dziennik.pl/artykuly/209285.kanal-jedzie-na-festiwal-w-cannes.html>
- Kornacki, K. (2011). *“Popiół i diament” Andrzeja Wajdy* [“Ashes and Diamonds” by Andrzej Wajda]. Gdansk.
- Kress, G., & Bezemer, J. (2023) Multimodal discourse analysis. In M. Handford, J.P. Gee (Eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (2nd ed.) (pp. 139–155). Routledge.

- Kula, M. (2004). *Między przeszłością a przyszłością. O pamięci, zapomnianiu i przewidywaniu* [Between the past and the future. About memory, forgetting and anticipation]. Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk.
- Kunicki, M. (2012). Heroism, raison d'état, and national communism: Red nationalism in the cinema of People's Poland. *Contemporary European History*, 21(2), 235–256.
- Lenin, V. (1933). Directives on the Film Business. *Sovietskoye Kino* 1–2.
- Lubelski, T. (2015). *Historia kina polskiego: Twórcy, filmy, konteksty*. Videograf II.
- Łysakowska-Trzoss, A. (2014, October 16). *Symfonie bohaterkie według Andrzeja Munka* [Heroic Symphonies by Andrzej Munk]. Histmag.org.  
<https://histmag.org/Symfonie-bohaterkie-wedlug-Andrzeja-Munka-10148>
- Machcewicz, P. (2023). When history matters too much: Historians and the politics of history in Poland. *Contemporary European History*, 32(1), 15–20.
- Martin, A. (2014). *Mise en scene and film style: From classical Hollywood to new media art*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- McAdam, D., Tarrow, S., & Tilly, C. (2001). *Dynamics of contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mendel, M., & Szkudlarek, T. (2020). Wychowujące Państwo Prawa I Sprawiedliwości. Od Pedagogiki Wstydu Do Bezwstydney Polityki [The Educating State of the Law and Justice Party: From the Pedagogy of Shame to Shameless Politics]. In J. Kołtan, G. Piotrowski (Eds.) *Kontrrewolucja u bram* [A Counterrevolution at the Gate] (pp. 143–190). Europejskie Centrum Solidarności.
- Mętrak-Ruda, N. (2017, May). *Jerzy Stefan Stawiński*. Culture.pl.  
<https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/jerzy-stefan-stawinski>
- Michalek, B., & Turaj, F. (1988). *Modern Cinema of Poland*. Indiana University Press.
- Miłosz, C. (1983). *The history of Polish literature*. University of California.

- Morgenstern, J. (2007, November 17). *W kinie trzeba wymyślać* [In cinema, one must invent] [Interview]. Rzeczpospolita.  
<https://www.rp.pl/plus-minus/art16461881-w-kinie-trzeba-wymyslac>
- Mroz, M. (2021). *Framing the Holocaust in Polish Aftermath cinema: Posthumous materiality and unwanted knowledge*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mukhina, I. (2006). New revelations from the former Soviet archives: The Kremlin, the Warsaw Uprising, and the coming of the Cold War. *Cold War History*, 6(3), 397-411.
- Munk, A. (1957a). *O filmie „Eroica” i o swoich planach opowiadają scenarzysty i reżyser* [About the film “Eroica” and about their plans are told by the screenwriter and director] [Interview]. Film, 8. Filmopedia, Polish Film Institute.  
<https://www.filmopedia.org/numer/1957/422/Film-1957-8.html>
- Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego [Warsaw Rising Museum]. (n.d.). *Andrzej Munk*.  
 Powstańcze biogramy [Insurgent biographies].  
<https://www.1944.pl/powstancze-biogramy/andrzej-munk.55122.html>
- Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego [Warsaw Rising Museum]. (2016, January 5). *Muzeum i Pasikowski robią film o Janie Nowaku-Jeziorańskim* [The Museum and Pasikowski are making a film about Jan Nowak-Jeziorański].  
<https://www.1944.pl/artukul/muzeum-i-pasikowski-robia-film-o-janie-nowaku-j.4403.html>
- Na pomoc Warszawie [Helping Warsaw]. (1944, August 24.). *Rzeczpospolita: Organ Polskiego Komitetu Wyzwolenia Narodowego*, R. 1, nr 22, p. 1. Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego, Lublin. MCSU Digital Library in Lublin.  
<http://dlibra.umcs.lublin.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=10958>
- Nawój, E. (2005, April). *Andrzej Munk*. Culture.pl. <https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/andrzej-munk>
- Nurczyńska-Fidelska, E., & Batko, Z. (Eds.). (1995). *Polish cinema in ten takes*. Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe.

- Nurczyńska-Fidelska, E. & Stolarska, B. (1998). *Szkoła Polska – powroty* [Polish School – returns]. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.
- Olick, J. K., & Robbins, J. (1998). Social memory studies: From "collective memory" to the historical sociology of mnemonic practices. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24(1), 105–140.
- Orla-Bukowska, A. (2006). New threads in an old loom: National memory and social identity in postwar and post-communist Poland. In Ned Lebow, R. N., Kansteiner, W. & Fogu, C. (Eds.), *The politics of memory in postwar Europe* (pp. 177–209). Duke University Press.
- Pasikowski, W. (2019a, March 1). *Władysław Pasikowski w RMF FM: Jak tylko skończę "Kuriera", zacznę zdjęcia do "Psów 3"* [Władysław Pasikowski on RMF FM: As soon as I finish "The Resistance Fighter", I will start shooting "Pigs 3"] [Interview]. Radio Muzyka Fakty Grupa RMF.  
[https://www.rmfm24.pl/kultura/news-wladyslaw-pasikowski-w-rmf-fm-jak-tylko-skoncze-kuriera-zacz.nId.2861285#crp\\_state=1](https://www.rmfm24.pl/kultura/news-wladyslaw-pasikowski-w-rmf-fm-jak-tylko-skoncze-kuriera-zacz.nId.2861285#crp_state=1)
- Pasikowski, W. (2019b, March 14). *Władysław Pasikowski: robię filmy dla widzów* [WYWIAD] [Władysław Pasikowski: I make films for the audience] [Interview]. Onet Film.  
<https://kultura.onet.pl/film/wywiady-i-artykuly/wladyslaw-pasikowski-robie-filmy-dla-widzow-wywiad/lxkkm4z>
- Pasikowski, W. (2019c, March 13). *Władysław Pasikowski o nowym filmie "Kurier": Jan Nowak-Jeziorański to taka polska mutacja Forresta Gumpa* [Władysław Pasikowski on the new film "The REsistance Fighter": Jan Nowak-Jeziorański is a Polish version of Forrest Gump] [Interview]. Wprost.  
<https://www.wprost.pl/tygodnik/10198760/pasikowski-o-kurierze-najwazniejszy-byl-dla-mnie-zwykly-czlowiek.html>
- Peters, F. (2016). Remaking Polish national history: Reenactment over reflection. *Cultures of History Forum*.
- Pató, A. B. (2018). Nationalism as civil religion: The case of Hungary. In M. Moskalewicz & W. Przybylski (Eds.), *Understanding Central Europe*. Routledge

- Piazza, R., Bednarek, M., & Rossi, F. (2011). *Telecinematic discourse: Approaches to the language of films and television series*. John Benjamins Pub. Company.
- Popowycz, J. (2021, August 23). *Prelude to the Warsaw Uprising: Operation Tempest*. The National WWII Museum New Orleans.  
<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/operation-tempest-eastern-front>
- Prawo i Sprawiedliwość [Law and Justice]. (2005). *IV Rzeczpospolita: Sprawiedliwość dla wszystkich* [Fourth Polish Republic: Justice for all]. Program 2005.
- Przejętka, M. (2016). *Powstańcy warszawscy* [Warsawian insurgents]. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej.
- Rabiński, J. (2002). Powstanie Warszawskie w świetle historiografii i polskiej z lat 1953-1956 [The Warsaw Uprising in the light of Polish and historiography from 1953-1956]. *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, 2.
- Rosenstone, R. A. (2006). *History on film/film and history*. Longman/Pearson.
- Salmela, M., & Capelos, T. (2021). Ressentiment: A complex emotion or an emotional mechanism of psychic defences? *Politics and Governance*, 9(3), 191–203.
- Sawicki, J. Z. (2005). *Bitwa o prawdę. Historia zmagania o pamięć powstania warszawskiego 1944–1989* [A fight for the truth. A history of struggle for the memory of the Warsaw Rising]. Wydawnictwo DiG.
- Schwartz-Shea, P., & Yanow, D. (2011). *Interpretive research design: Concepts and processes*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Sejm of the Republic of Poland. (2015, December 10). *Wypowiedzi na posiedzeniach Sejmu. Posiedzenie nr 4 w dniu 10-12-2015 (2. dzień obrad). Retransmisja wypowiedzi*. [Statements at sessions of the Sejm. Meeting No. 4 on December 10, 2015 (2nd day of the meeting). Retransmission of the statement]. VIII kadencja Archiwum [8th term Archive].  
[https://www.sejm.gov.pl/sejm8.nsf/wypowiedz.xsp?posiedzenie=4&dzien=2&wyp=67&symbol=RWYSTAPIENIA\\_WYP&id=343](https://www.sejm.gov.pl/sejm8.nsf/wypowiedz.xsp?posiedzenie=4&dzien=2&wyp=67&symbol=RWYSTAPIENIA_WYP&id=343).

- Senkowska, N. (2018, September 23). *Trwają zdjęcia do “Kuriera” Władysława Pasikowskiego* [Filming of Władysław Pasikowski's “The Resistance Fighter” is underway]. Dzieje.pl <https://dzieje.pl/wideo/trwaja-zdjecia-do-kuriera-wladyslawa-pasikowskiego>
- Siekierski, M. (2004). Remembering the Warsaw Uprising. *Hoover Digest*, 4.
- Sławiński, J. (2001). Bez przydziału (XV) [Without assignment (XV)]. *Teksty drugie*, 6. 9–23.
- Smith, A. D. (1999). *Myths and memories of the nation*. Oxford University Press.
- Somers, M. R. (1994). The narrative constitution of identity: A relational and network approach. *Theory and Society*, 23(5), 605–649.
- Sorlin, P. (1980). *The film in history: Restaging the past*. Blackwell.
- Sroczyński, R. (2022, September 16). *Tak powstał “Czterej pancerni i pies”*. *Wiedzieliście, że są oparci na prawdziwej historii?* [This is how “Four Tank Men and a Dog” came to be. Did you know that they are based on a true story?]. Telewizja Polska. <https://www.tvp.pl/62789938/tak-powstali-czterej-pancerni-i-pies-wiedzieliscie-ze-sa-oparci-na-prawdziwej-historii>
- Stasiak, M. (2021). *Pamięć i mit powstania warszawskiego. Kontekstowa analiza wybranych wyobrażeń filmowych* [Memory and myth of the Warsaw Uprising. Contextual analysis of selected film images]. Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Filmowa, Telewizyjna i Teatralna im. Leona Schillera w Łodzi.
- Stola, D. (2012). Poland's Institute of National Remembrance: A ministry of memory? In A. Miller, M. Lipman (Eds.), *The convolutions of historical politics* (pp. 45–58). Central European University Press.
- Stawiński, J. S. (1968). *Szkoła Polska – jej twórcy i historia* [The Polish School - its creators and history] [Interview]. *Kino*, 9. 2–5. <https://akademiapolskiegofilmu.pl/pl/historia-polskiego-filmu/artykuly/szkoła-polska-jej-tworecy-i-historia/209/>

- Stawiński, J. S. (2005, August 20). *Jerzy Stefan Stawiński „Lucjan”, „Łącki”* [Interview]. Oral History Archive. Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego.  
<https://www.1944.pl/archiwum-historii-mowionej/jerzy-stefan-stawinski.506.html>
- Stawiński, J. S. (2007, October 13). “*Kanał*” to film o wielkiej klęsce [“Kanał” is a film about a great defeat] [Interview]. *Dziennik*.  
[https://film.dziennik.pl/artykuly/212267\\_kanal-to-film-o-wielkiej-kliesce.html](https://film.dziennik.pl/artykuly/212267_kanal-to-film-o-wielkiej-kliesce.html)
- Szacka, B. (2006). *Czas przeszły, pamięć, mit* [The past, memory, myth]. *Współczesne Społeczeństwo Polskie wobec Przeszłości* (Vol. 3). Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Szczepan, A. (2014). Krajobrazy postpamięci [Landscapes of postmemory]. *Teksty Drugie*, 145(1), 103–126.
- Szostak, J. (1969, 3 August). Dziesięć dni przed wybuchem powstania w Warszawie 1944 r. [Ten Days before the Outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising in 1944]. *Stolica*, 31(1130).
- Szpociński, A. (2015). Polityka historyczna PRL-u w latach 1948 – 1985. Studium przypadku [Politics of history of the Polish People's Republic in the years 1948 – 1985. Case study]. In Skórzyńska, I., Skotarczak, D. & Jankowiak, S. (Eds.). *Społeczeństwo PRL: Historia, kultura, pamięć* [Society of the Polish People's Republic: History, culture, memory]. Instytut Historii UAM
- Taylor, R., & Christie, I. (Eds.). (1988). *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896-1939*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- The Chancellery of the Prime Minister. (2023, August 1) *Honour and glory to the heroes! 79th Anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising*.  
<https://www.gov.pl/web/primeminister/honour-and-glory-to-the-heroes-79th-anniversary-of-the-warsaw-uprising>
- The official website of the President of the Republic of Poland. (2018, July 31). *President: Warsaw Uprising fighters fought for freedom*.  
<https://www.president.pl/news/president-warsaw-uprising-fighters-fought-for-freedom.36763>.

- Todorov, T. (2001). The uses and abuses of memory. In H. Marchitello (Ed.), *What happens to history: The renewal of ethics in contemporary thought* (pp. 11–22). Routledge.
- Vennesson, P. (2008). Case studies and process tracing: theories and practices. In D. Della Porta & M. Keating (Eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (pp. 223–239). Cambridge University Press.
- Wajda, A. (1968). *Szkola Polska – jej twórcy i historia* [The Polish School - its creators and history] [Interview]. *Kino*, 9. 6–10.  
<https://akademiapolskiegofilmu.pl/pl/historia-polskiego-filmu/artykuly/szkola-polska-jej-tworecy-i-historia/209/>
- Wajda, A. (2000). *Kino i reszta świata. Autobiografia* [Cinema and the rest of the world. Autobiography] (1st ed.). Wydawn. Znak.
- Wajda, A. (2014, August 21) *Wajda: History Has Become the Subject of Political Speculation* [Interview]. Culture.pl.  
<https://culture.pl/en/article/wajda-history-has-become-the-subject-of-political-speculation-interview>
- Wajda, A. (2017, October 6). *I Don't Make Films for Myself: An Interview with Andrzej Wajda* [Interview]. Culture.pl.  
<https://culture.pl/en/article/i-dont-make-films-for-myself-an-interview-with-andrzej-wajda>
- Waskiewicz, A. (2010). The Polish Home Army and the politics of memory. *East European Politics and Societies*, 24(1), 44–58.
- Wawrzyniak, J. (2015). Afterword: The long shadow of the communist politics of memory. In Joanna Wawrzyniak (Ed.), *Veterans, Victims, and Memory: The Politics of the Second World War in Communist Poland*. (S. Lewis, Trans.), (Vol. 4, pp. 213–228). Peter Lang AG.
- Wertsch, J. V. (2002). *Voices of collective remembering*. Cambridge University Press.

- Wertsch, J. V. (2008a). Collective memory and narrative templates: Collective memory and collective identity. *Social Research*, 75(1), 133–156.
- Wertsch, J. V. (2008b). The narrative organization of collective memory. *Ethos*, 36(1), 120–135.
- Wertsch, J. V., & Roediger, H. L. (2022). Themes for future research on memory, mind and media. *Memory, Mind & Media*, 1, 1-11.
- White, H. (1980). The value of narrativity in the representation of reality. *Critical Inquiry*, 7(1), 5–27.
- Witek, P. (2016). *Andrzej Wajda jako historyk: Metodologiczne studium z historii wizualnej* [Andrzej Wajda as a Historian: A Methodological Study of Visual History]. Lublin.
- Woodward, E. L. (1962). *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*. H.M. Stationery Office, Abridged Ed edition.
- Zajiček, E. (1985). Aleksander Ford – organizator kinematografii [Alexander Ford – organizer of cinematography]. *Miesięcznik Literacki* 2, 63–73.
- Zaręba, M. (1997). Próba legitymizacji władzy komunistycznej w latach 1944-1947: Poprzez odwołanie się do treści narodowych [Attempt to legitimize communist power in Poland in the years 1944-1947: Through appeal to national content]. *Polska 1944/45-1989: Studia i materiały*, 2, 35–61.
- Zaręba, M. (2001). *Komunizm, legitymacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce* [Communism, legitimacy, nationalism. Nationalist legitimisation of communist power in Poland]. Wydawnictwo Trio/
- Zechenter, K. (2019). The need to suffer: The case of Poland. *The Polish Review*, 64(2), 7–23.
- Zubrzycki, G. (2011). History and the national sensorium: Making sense of Polish mythology. *Qualitative Sociology*, 34(1), 21–57.
- Zwierzchowski, P. (2013). *Kino nowej pamięci: Obraz II wojny światowej w kinie polskim lat 60* [Cinema of new memory: The image of World War II in Polish cinema of the 1960s]. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego.

Żychlińska, M., & Fontana, E. (2016). Museal games and emotional truths: Creating Polish national identity at the Warsaw Rising Museum. *East European Politics and Societies*, 30(2), 235–269.

## Filmography

Wajda, A. (Director). (1956). *Kanał* [Canal] [Film]. Zespół Filmowy Kadr. Retrieved from

<https://easterneuropeanmovies.com/drama/kanal>

Munk, A. (Director). (1957b). *Eroica* [Eroica] [Film]. Zespół Filmowy Kadr. Retrieved from

<https://easterneuropeanmovies.com/comedy/eroica>

Nałęcki, K. (Writer & Director). (1966). Most [Bridge] (Season 1, Episode 6) [TV series episode]. In J. Nitecki (Executive Producer), *Czterej Pancerni i Pies* [Four Tankmen and a Dog]. Zespół Filmowy Syrena. Retrieved from

<https://vod.tvp.pl/seriale.18/czterej-pancerni-i-pies-odcinki.274658/odcinek-6.S01E06.314070>

Morgenstern, J. (Director). (1979). *Godzina "W"* ["W" Hour] [Film]. Zespół Filmowy

Perspektywa. Retrieved from <https://vod.tvp.pl/filmy-fabularne.136/godzina-w.331119>

Komasa, J. (Director). (2014). *Miasto 44* [Warsaw 44] [Film]. Akson Studio. Retrieved from

<https://vod.tvp.pl/filmy-fabularne.136/miasto-44.314539>

Pasikowski, W. (Director). (2019). *Kurier* [The Resistance Fighter] [Film]. Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego; Scorpio Studio. Retrieved from

<https://vod.tvp.pl/filmy-fabularne.136/kurier.317651>