

## **Late Modernist Tendencies in Polish Feature Films**

PhD thesis summary

The main goal of my dissertation is to define and operationalize a category of late modernism in relation to Polish cinema, as seen in works of Tadeusz Konwicki, Wojciech Jerzy Has, Andrzej Żuławski, Grzegorz Królikiewicz, and others. In the course of my analysis I point to the most important textual and extratextual characteristics of this broad cultural and artistic paradigm and its particular examples in Polish cinema of the 70s and 80s.

A conceivably inclusive and interdisciplinary understanding of modernism serves as a point of departure for my dissertation, allowing me to include not only most important theoretical and historical works on the cinematic modernism but also rich tradition of other branches of humanities – especially philosophy, literature and art history, where the term in question is most frequently defined in relations to the ideas of modernity, medium specificity, subjectivity and self-reflexivity. I'm also drawing extensively on the so-called New Modernism Studies, which postulate departure from the canonical, narrow understanding of modernism, limited both temporarily (to the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century) and spatially (to the Western Europe and North America). Instead, its proponents argue for the conception of global (or planetary) modernism, encompassing various local incarnation of modernist aesthetics and poetics as an “expressive dimension of modernity” (Susan Friedman) within “one but uneven world-system” (Franco Moretti).

All those categories can be successfully introduced to the description of post-war art cinema that created its own specific form of high modernism during the 50s and 60s. Polish cinema might be seen as a great example of locally charged reaction to this global movement, encapsulating a cinematic experience of post-war modernity in the Eastern Bloc. It developed since the late 50s, and in the 70s entered into what I call a late or decadent phase, which is of particular interest in my thesis. I examine selected works belonging to Polish late modern cinema, made mostly between 1971 and 1984. They highlight subjectivity, self-reflexivity and drive toward formalism, employing highly authorial, idiosyncratic presence of the maker and non-classical narrative patterns (very often essayistic, non-linear, open) or the idea of time-image, as defined by Gilles Deleuze.

Accordingly to the aims presented above, I decided to divide my dissertation into two main parts. Former, titled *What is Polish modernist cinema?*, deals with various ways and levels of defining modernism. Trying to encapsulate complexity and broad scope of this paradigm, I proceed from the general to more specific issues, starting with philosophical and historical ideas of modernity, then tackling the artistic dimensions of modernism and only then exploring its cinematic incarnation (Chapter 1 – *Cinematic modernism – reconfiguration*). In the second chapter I supplement this description with the social and economic aspect of artistic film production, distribution and reception (Chapter 2 – *Modernism as an institution*). Thanks to this broad approach I can sketch the general outlines of Polish modernist cinema, since it's inception in the late 50s (Chapter 3 – *Local tradition of the New – Polish modernist cinema*).

The latter, somewhat larger part of the dissertation is devoted to the more specific instances and features of late modernist cinema of 70s and 80s. In it I'm identifying the most important elements distinguishing this very multifaceted and internally diversified phenomenon as well as theoretical and philosophical questions generated by it. My focus revolve around the fundamental idea of lateness and late style (Chapter 4 – *Late style, or how modernism experienced its own end?*), common narrative devices and frequently accommodated conventions (Chapter 5 – *Formulas of late modernism*), particular eschatological discourse, expressing deeply entrenched, although usually unconscious sense of decline of cinematic modernism (Chapter 6 – *Facing the end – cinema as eschatology of the modern*) and finally the temporal aspect of the late-modern works, treated both as a trope and a defining dimension of medium (Chapter 7 – *Modernist time is out of joint*). This part is accompanied by epilogue, in which I approach a question of durability of modernist paradigm in contemporary cinema in the light of subsequent categories of postmodernism and neomodernism (Epilogue – *Modernism after modernity?*).

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