

**The Best of All Worlds:
Public, Personal, and Inner Realms in the
Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski**

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the oeuvre of Krzysztof Kieślowski. In particular, I examine claims made by Kieślowski and many critics that in the 1980s the director moved away from filming the public world, which had been crucial to his work since he began filming in the late 1960s and became instead primarily concerned with the inner world. Although I agree that Kieślowski increasingly shifted his emphasis to the inner life, I argue that any attempt to abandon the public world in his later films was in fact of more limited scope than his claims suggest and his focus on the inner sphere neither absolute nor lacking in ambivalence.

I distinguish between three realms of existence in Kieślowski's narratives: the public sphere, namely, public life be it socio-political, economical, or work-related; the personal sphere, consisting of the individual's family and close friends; and the inner sphere, comprising the intimate emotional and mental life of the individual. By extensively examining Kieślowski's treatment of these spheres and how they interact with and inform both one another and the films, I aim to demonstrate that the public and personal realms continued play a significant part in the productions of the 1980s and 1990s, regardless of Kieślowski's claims otherwise, and result in more complex, multi-layered, and ambiguous narratives than is usually recognised.

In distinguishing between the spheres that make up the individual's existence, I discuss the concomitant differences between public and inner realities. I examine the complications and ambiguities that arose from the combined presence of these quite distinct realities in the final works and end by looking at how they influenced Kieślowski's decision to abandon filmmaking in the mid-1990s.

My thesis is also a career-survey of Kieślowski's oeuvre and, in addition to substantiating my arguments, I simultaneously discuss what I believe to be other interesting and important aspects of Kieślowski and his work, including the financing and censorship of his films, his political tendencies, his representation of his male and female characters as well as his distinction between youth and adulthood, his collaborative method, his relationship with his audience, and his critical reception. In doing so I aim to provide a detailed overview of Kieślowski's entire career which can stand alone as a self-contained and comprehensive reference work and thus fill the current gap in English-language studies of Kieślowski.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks go to the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) for funding my course of studies. The Graduate School and Department of English at University College London, combined with the AHRB, largely financed the second of my research trips to Poland, for which I am also grateful. Finally, my thanks go to the Zjednoczenie Polek na Emigracji (Polish Women's Benevolent Association), for providing me with a one-off award at the beginning of my studies.

In Poland, my thanks and wholehearted appreciation go to staff at Film Polski (Polish Film Institute), Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych (Documentary Production Studio), TV Polonia (Polish Television), and Czołówka; thanks to the concerted efforts of individuals from these institutions I was able to trace and watch all of Kieślowski's early documentary and fictional films. I am also grateful to staff at the FilMOTEKA Narodowa (National Film Library) for assisting me in my research with efficacy and good will. On a more personal note, I am indebted to Krzysztof Baran, who kept me up-to-date about Kieślowski-related materials in Poland and thanks to whom I own a copy of an invaluable documentary on Kieślowski. I am also deeply indebted to the Zybała family, without whose generosity and kindness my research trips to Warsaw would have been considerably more arduous and testing. In particular my thanks go to Andrzej for arranging my interview with Krzysztof Piesiewicz, to Beata for tracking down materials on my behalf and making the Zybała home so welcoming, and to the younger Zybałas, Ola and Ewa, who twice gave up their bedroom uncomplainingly so that I might have a room of my own.

Back in England, I am grateful to the Department of English at University College London. I was privileged to study for my first degree in this department and it was a

further privilege to return there for my PhD. Again on a more personal note, I am fortunate to have friends – in particular, Paul and Suzy – who have supported me throughout my course of studies and offered me advice, cheer, and a willingness to listen to my real and imagined problems. I am particularly and profoundly indebted to Amanda, who has not only alternately advised and calmed me for over three years but who also has generously and good-naturedly watched the vast majority of Kieślowski's films with me, suffering my simultaneous Polish translation in most cases, and moreover done so without recourse to justifiable violence. Amanda: I don't know how you managed it but I am awfully grateful that you did.

My family has borne the brunt of my academic commitments and I am frankly amazed at their unwavering patience, support, and love. My father died some time before I began my PhD but it was he who encouraged my love of learning and set me an exceptional example in self-discipline and integrity. My mother has suffered my books and various materials continuously littering her home and aided me in every crisis, be it emotional, financial, or otherwise – and this in addition to taking care of my every need – with remarkable fortitude. Both my mother and my sister, Basia, have tolerated my various bouts of fury, despair, impatience, and self-pity with grace, and the latter has also ceaselessly helped me with my academic task by checking my translations and copy and keeping my spirits high but above all by repeatedly and unwearingly listening to me rant at length about anything and everything. Mama and Basia: *dużo, dużo buzi*. Finally, my thanks and love go to Will: were it not for the good advice you gave me in a lay-by somewhere between Virginia and Baltimore and later your encouragement and continuing guidance, I would never have stuck with this.

PREFACE

I examine Kieślowski's films in an essentially chronological manner, with each chapter referring to a different period in his career. In Chapter 1 I look primarily at Kieślowski's first documentaries but also discuss the early fictional shorts *Tramwaj* (*The Tram*, 1966) and *Koncert życzeń* (*Concert of Requests*, 1967), as it seemed to me that these should be examined alongside Kieślowski's other early films and not postponed until a later chapter dealing with his fictional films alone. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the period 1973 to 1980, the former exploring the documentaries and the latter the fictional films. Although this was a period during which Kieślowski was working on documentaries and fictional films simultaneously, I decided that the most profitable way of discussing them would be to separate them off, though with cross-reference where appropriate. I examine the features made between 1981 and 1984 in chapter 4. *Dekalog* (*The Decalogue*, 1988) is the main focus of chapter 5 but I also include the documentary *Siedem dni w tygodniu* (*Seven Days a Week*, 1988) at this point, again because I feel it to be related thematically as well by its production-date. Chapter 6 deals with *La Double Vie de Véronique*/*Podwójne życie Weroniki* (*The Double Life of Véronique*, 1991), chapter 7 with the *Trois Couleurs* (*Three Colours*, 1993-1994) trilogy, and chapter 8 with Kieślowski's decision to quit filmmaking and the unfinished projects that he left behind following his death in 1996. Every chapter begins with a lengthy discussion of my argument in relation to the period in question, followed by individual analyses of each film, and concludes on a short account in which I summarise the chapter and anticipate the next. As far as the individual discussions are concerned, I allocate between two and three pages to documentaries and to fictional shorts lasting less than thirty minutes, two-and-a-half to three pages to each episode of *The Decalogue*, with extra space assigned to

the episodes relating to *Krótki film o zabijaniu* (*A Short Film about Killing*, 1988) and *Krótki film o miłości* (*A Short Film about Love*, 1988) and approximately five pages to all remaining fictional films. The films are analysed chronologically within their chapters with the exception of the documentaries and fictional shorts: I link these according to theme rather than date in groups of two or three within chapters 1 and 2 for the purpose of highlighting their common features, but nevertheless I evaluate each one separately.

My interview with Krzysztof Piesiewicz, Kiesłowski's co-writer in the 1980s and 1990s, which I had the good fortune to conduct in November 1998, is included as an appendix, first in the original Polish and then in an English translation. I had barely started upon my thesis when the interview took place, and the range of questions asked reflects the breadth of my own exploration of Kiesłowski at that time before I had settled upon the particular aspect of his work that interested me most. Nevertheless, I have included it as it offers Piesiewicz's valuable comments upon Kiesłowski and their collaborative work, as well as fascinating insights into Piesiewicz himself. A comprehensive filmography, including brief descriptions of each film, and a bibliography are located at the end of the thesis.

At this point it is worth briefly commenting upon Polish Romanticism and its effect upon Polish life and thought, given that Kiesłowski's relation to it is discussed in almost every chapter. Romanticism in Poland, as in much of Europe, began in the early nineteenth century but differed from its European counterparts in being less a literary movement than a politically-motivated protest against foreign occupation.¹ Polish Romanticism was not only a celebration of the inner life of the creative, sensitive individual, but, additionally, was concerned with the restoration of Poland to its former

¹ Poland was partitioned and occupied in 1771, 1793, and 1795 by Russia, Prussia (later Germany), and Austria. The final divisions meant Poland ceased to exist as a geo-political state until 1918.

independent status. Its key texts comprise a series of allusions to the contemporary political situation and employ a black-and-white paradigm of heroes and villains, the former being Poles and the latter the foreign oppressors against whom they fought. The artist had a particularly important role in actively using his skills (Polish Romantics tended to be men) to inform, encourage, and lead his people; as one commentator puts it, 'Polish Romanticism's concept of personal experience as the reflection of national (and, by curious extension, universal) history substantially revised the cliché of the conflict between the artist and society, and instead substituted the model of the artist/poet and society in conflict with an alien administration'.² The importance of Polish Romanticism in relation to Kieślowski rests upon the fact that it continues to dominate Poland today, as the Polish historian Norman Davies explains:

Arguably, it [Polish Romanticism] has provided the largest single ingredient of modern Polish culture. Indeed, since the oppressive hothouse conditions which fostered Polish Romanticism in the first place have continued in many aspects to the present day, the Romantic tradition still reigns supreme in the Polish mind.³

Like Polish artists in the nineteenth century, Kieślowski was expected by many to rail against the communist regime and rally Poles once again to the cause of independence. In fact, as I explain, unlike many contemporaries he avoided the tradition of Polish Romanticism, a position that whilst having unhappy personal consequences for him in the early 1980s, led to the avoidance of both simplistic characterisation and a preoccupation with the national question. It also resulted in considerably more complex and interesting

² Donald Pine, 'The Agony in the Garden. Polish Romanticism' in Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (ed), *Romanticism in National Context*, Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1988, p.339. For more details of Polish Romanticism see: *ibid*, pp 320-339; Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, 2nd ed., Berkeley & California. University of California Press, 1983, p.201ff.; & Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland*, rev. ed., Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1986, p.169ff.

³ Davies, *Heart of Europe*, p.169. See also Maria Janion & Maria Zmigrodzka, *Romantyzm i historia*, Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1978, p.567.

films than might otherwise have been the case.

Apart from using a measure of critical theory in defining my theoretical framework of the public, personal, and inner realms, and in explaining the social, historical, political, and economic background against which Kieślowski made his films, I have largely avoided explicit invocations of theory in this thesis. Valuable and productive as I think it is to view Kieślowski's films through different perspectives, I feel that although certain critical theories of literature and cinema, such as feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, and New Historicism, can be applied to the director's oeuvre with extremely rewarding consequences, some cannot be constructively applied to his entire work whilst others, which can be applied to the work as a whole, would entail the writing of an entirely different thesis. Of course, given my choice of Kieślowski as the subject, my dissertation falls by default into the general category of *auteur* studies, but even here I have tried to avoid simplification. Whilst Kieślowski, as is expected of an *auteur*, was undoubtedly the guiding force behind all his films, he consistently collaborated with many individuals including writers, actors, and musicians, and publicly gave them credit for their input; unlike so many *auteurs*, Kieślowski was neither a prima donna, nor so desperate for personal validation or threatened by his co-workers as to ignore or shy away from discussing their contributions to his work. Furthermore, the problem of the *auteur* theory is that at its weakest it sees virtue in the mere fact of consistency, as though the fact that a filmmaker should churn out films reworking the same themes, actors, or style is worthy in itself. Kieślowski certainly revealed a marked tendency to utilise key themes over and over in his films, but it is his ability to examine the most basic questions with great profundity, his enormous emotional and intellectual range, and his extraordinary talent, not his consistency *per se*, that make him worthy of a study.

It is with non-Polish readers in mind that I have referred to English texts where they are available and of equal interest to those written in Polish. Nonetheless, English references do not always exist, especially where Kieślowski's films of the 1960s and 1970s are concerned, and articles, reviews, and interviews written in English are generally fewer, sketchier, and less wide-ranging than their Polish counterparts. Therefore, I have in many areas drawn upon Polish material. English translations are presented alongside all non-English material, and unless otherwise specified are mine. In each chapter every film-title referred to is first cited in the original with an English translation and production-date following in parentheses, and thereafter is cited in that same chapter by its English title. The original names of all non-English cities have been used, with the exceptions of Warszawa and Kraków, for which I have substituted the English 'Warsaw' and 'Cracow' respectively. I have also included foreign-language accents and diacritical marks for non-English names and quotations. Two dots '..' at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a quotation indicate where I have omitted some words or phrases from the original sentence being quoted. Unless otherwise specified, three dots '...' in a quotation indicate a lacuna of one or more sentences from the original text being quoted.

INTRODUCTION

Krzysztof Kieślowski was born in Poland on 27th June 1941. Growing up under a post-war communist system that made life hard for much of Polish society, he had a childhood that was all the more difficult and disrupted for personal reasons: his family moved constantly from place to place as his father underwent treatment in various sanatoria for tuberculosis before eventually dying from the disease in 1956. Although initially interested in the theatre whilst a teenager, Kieślowski's entry upon his third attempt into the Łódź Film School led him to develop a passion for the cinema and decide upon a future in film direction. He would embark upon a career that spanned four decades, took him outside Poland into Western Europe, and resulted in twenty-one extant documentaries and twenty-seven fictional works comprising short, television, and feature films,¹ the majority of which he wrote or co-wrote.

Kieślowski was not only a prolific but also an exceptionally gifted filmmaker whose oeuvre demands and rewards detailed study. In his films of the 1960s and 1970s he charted the specific experience of life in People's Poland, examining the particular impact of socio-political and economic developments upon individuals and their relationship to society, and documenting both the reality of that time and his own critique of it. As he made the transition from documentary to feature films at the turn of the 1980s, a change resulting in part because he desired more intimate access to people's lives than he felt he could demand from his real-life protagonists, so too he

¹ I place *Życiorys (Curriculum Vitae, 1975)*, a semi-fictionalised documentary, amongst Kieślowski's twenty-one documentaries. I reach the figure of twenty-seven fictional films by including *Kłaps (Slate, 1976)*, a film consisting of out-takes from the feature *Blizna (The Scar, 1976)*, in this category and by counting the ten episodes of *Dekalog (The Decalogue, 1988)* and the associated *Krótki film o zabijaniu (A Short Film about Killing, 1988)* and *Krótki film o miłości (A Short Film about Love, 1988)* as twelve distinct films.

began to lose interest in the individual's relation to the world and instead focussed increasingly upon his characters' relations with themselves. Whether making documentaries or fictional films, however, Kieślowski had the rare ability to communicate fully and precisely the emotional and psychological experiences and sufferings of his protagonists. He also had the faculty of conveying his empathy whilst simultaneously invoking that of the viewer for his heroes and heroines. It was this humanity that allowed Kieślowski to form profoundly intimate relationships not only with his documentary subjects, whose trust of the director is evinced by the remarkable extent to which they were prepared to disclose their innermost thoughts, but also with his audience, whom he increasingly invited to a tacit dialogue in his works of the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, it was during these years that his reputation grew in Western Europe and North America, as did his international audience. By the time of his unexpected death due to heart problems in 1996, Kieślowski was internationally considered one of the world's foremost directors and was compared favourably with the earlier leading lights of world cinema including, amongst others, Bergman, Hitchcock, Truffaut, Bresson, and Tarkovsky.

The question of Kieślowski's shift of focus from the public world to the inner life of the individual, mentioned above and often characterised as involving a move from the social to the metaphysical, forms the basis of this thesis. It has become something of a critical commonplace to assume that whereas in his earlier films the director concentrated upon the plight of his protagonists in relation to society, by the 1980s and 1990s he chose instead to make the individual *per se* the focal point of his films. In Poland Janina Koźbiel has contended that whereas Kieślowski had used to look at an individual in his or her social context, by the late 1980s he looked at the person alone, Ryszard Koniczek has commented upon the director's turning away from the individual's social existence in *La*

Double Vie de Véronique *Podwójne życie Weroniki* (*The Double Life of Véronique*, 1991), and Mirosław Przyłipiak has argued that in the late 1980s Kieślowski shifted from politics to a description of human privacy, a move that divided his career into two distinct stages.² Tadeusz Sobolewski, a long-standing commentator upon the director's oeuvre, has also affirmed the distinction between the early and late Kieślowski.³ Non-Polish critics have reached similar conclusions. Christopher Garbowski has remarked that Kieślowski disregarded the Cinema of Moral Anxiety and its political fixations in the 1980s in favour of universal, humanist issues, an opinion shared by Geoff Andrew, who has noted how the Polish experience had decreasing relevance in the films dating from *Dekalog* (*The Decalogue*, 1988) onwards.⁴

Kieślowski made similar remarks about the alteration to his method of filmmaking, also referring to a shift of focus in the 1980s. Speaking in 1979, he was still arguing that the documentary film was needed in order to observe ‘..aktualnych, głęboko ujmowanych problemów kraju, obecnego kształtu i stanu spraw społecznych’ (‘..the current, deeply-felt problems of the country, the present shape and state of social affairs’).⁵ Ten years on, however, even as he confirmed that his early films had been about society and politics, he also stated that politics no longer interested him by the time

² Janina Kozbiel (int.), ‘Krótka rozmowa z Krzysztofem Kieślowskim’, *Odrodzenie*, Warsaw, no. 28, 15-7-1989; Ryszard Koniczek, ‘Cały ten pusty zgiełk’, *Literatura*, Warsaw, no. 3, 3-1992, p 39, & Mirosław Przyłipiak, ‘Filmy fabularne Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego w zwierciadle polskiej krytyki filmowej (Część 1)’ in Tadeusz Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, Cracow: Universitas, 1997, p 242. Cf. Maria Malatyńska, ‘Kieślowski’, *Życie Literackie*, Cracow, no. 48, 27-11-1988.

³ Tadeusz Sobolewski, ‘Peace & Rebellion Some Remarks on the Creative Output of Krzysztof Kieslowski’ trans Witold Liwarowski & Richard Wawro in Ewelina Nurczyńska-Fidelska & Zbigniew Batko (ed.), *Polish Cinema in Ten Takes*, Łódź: Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1995, p.125 & pp 131-133; & Tadeusz Sobolewski, ‘O filmach Kieślowskiego’, *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Magazyn), Warsaw, 13-3-2002. Cf. Maria Kornatowska, ‘Podwójne życie Kieslowskiego’ in Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieslowskiego*, p.117.

⁴ Christopher Garbowski, ‘Krzysztof Kieslowski’s *Decalogue*: Presenting Religious Topics on Television’, *The Polish Review*, vol. XXXVII, no. 3, 1992, p 327; & Geoff Andrew, *The ‘Three Colours’ Trilogy*, London: British Film Institute, 1998, pp 17-19. Cf. Tony Rayns, ‘Kieslowski: Crossing Over’, *Sight & Sound*, vol. 1, issue 11, 3-1992, p 22.

⁵ Lesław Bajer (int.), ‘O sobie samych dla współczesności’, *Literatura*, Warsaw, no. 27, 5-7-1979.

of *The Decalogue*.⁶ It was with regard to this cycle that he applied his comment ‘Coraz mniej interesuje mnie świat, a coraz więcej ludzie’ (‘I’m interested less and less in the world and more and more in people’),⁷ something that he reiterated in the 1990s:

..in *Decalogue* I probably concentrated more on what’s going on inside [my characters] rather than what’s happening on the outside. Before, I often used to deal with the surrounding world, with what’s happening all around, how external circumstances and events influence people, and how people eventually influence external events. Now, in my work, I’ve thrown aside this external world, and more and more frequently, deal with people who come home, lock the door on the inside and remain alone with themselves.⁸

Krzysztof Piesiewicz, Kieślowski’s co-writer since the 1980s, has also confirmed the compelling interest that the inner life had for Kieślowski in the later years of his career, noting that ‘Przestała mu wystarczać obserwacja społeczna. Pragnął sięgnąć głębiej’ (‘Social observation was no longer enough for him. He desired to reach deeper’).⁹ Piesiewicz equally stated that Kieślowski’s shift in focus had taken place in the 1980s, after he and the director had joined forces: ‘Razem szybciej dotarliśmy do świata uczuć intymnych, świata zmysłów, tęsknot, nostalgii. To wszystko w jego wcześniejszych filmach było, ale gdzieś głęboko ukryte’ (‘Together we reached the world

⁶ Stanisław Goszczurny (int.), ‘Jestem przeciw zabijaniu!’, *Rzeczpospolita*, Warsaw, no. 54, 4/5-3-1989, p.3. On another occasion, Kieślowski stated that *Przypadek* (*Blind Chance*, 1981) was no longer concerned with the outer world but the inner; Danusia Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, London: Faber, 1993, p.113. Even earlier still, he had already spoken of the need to film ‘. życie po godzinie czwartej, po pracy.’ (‘..life after four o’clock, after work..’) after making *The Scar*; see Jerzy Biernacki, ‘Trzeba rąbać nowy chodnik’, *Ekran*, Warsaw, no. 37, 12-9-1976, p.18. However, it was not until the 1980s that Kieślowski made a serious effort to move away from a description of the public world and generally he, as well as most critics, regarded *The Decalogue* as his first successful attempt to do so (see chapters 4 and 5).

⁷ Tadeusz Sobolewski (int.), ‘Normalna chwila’, *Kino*, Warsaw, 6-1990, p.22. For Kieślowski’s comments on no longer caring about the mass fate, see Bożena Janicka (int.), ‘Beze mnie’, *Film*, Warsaw, no. 43, 23-10-1988.

⁸ Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p.146. For more comments about his interest in the inner life, see Paul Coates (int.), “‘The inner life is the only thing that interests me’: a conversation with Krzysztof Kieślowski” in Paul Coates (ed.), *Lucid Dreams: The Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski*, Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1999, p.162.

⁹ Piesiewicz interviewed in Barbara Hollender (int.), ‘Nie kreuje fantomów’, *Rzeczpospolita*, no. 111, 14/15-5-1994, p.4

of intimate feelings, the world of senses, longings, nostalgia, more quickly. All of this had been present in his earlier films, but it was hidden deep somewhere').¹⁰

It is my contention, however, that contrary to the claims of Kieślowski and the critics alike, the public world of society and politics and the personal realm of domestic relationships remain visible and important in the later films, despite their focus upon the inner sphere. Kieślowski's attempt to abandon the public world in his later films was in fact of more limited scope than has been recognised and his focus on the inner sphere neither absolute nor lacking in ambivalence. It is not that I disagree about Kieślowski's basic shift of focus; on the contrary, I agree wholeheartedly that his oeuvre progressively redirects itself from the outer world towards the inner, but to read the films in terms of this paradigm alone is simplistic. I identify three distinct realms of existence in Kieślowski's films: the public, personal, and inner. At their simplest, these three worlds can be defined as the work, home, and mind respectively of the individual. More extensively, the public sphere relates to public life be it socio-political, economical, or work-related; the personal sphere, which might alternatively be termed 'domestic', encompasses relationships with family and close friends and leisure time; and the inner sphere is composed of the intimate emotional and mental life of the individual as grounded in explorations of a metaphysical, spiritual, and even transcendental nature. Where this inner realm is concerned, two further points should be noted. First, it is because of the metaphysical and spiritual dimensions and concomitant understanding of love as a union of spirit as well as flesh between two people, apparent in the final films, that the inner domain of the individual is not necessarily solitary but, paradoxically, may encompass highly intimate relationships between two kindred souls, as seen in *The*

¹⁰ Piesiewicz quoted in Barbara Hollender, 'Życie, czyli wszystko', *Rzeczpospolita* (TeleRzeczpospolita), Warsaw, no 45, 27/11-3/12-1993, p 5.

Double Life of Véronique and the *Trois Couleurs (Three Colours, 1993-1994)* trilogy. Nevertheless, although both the personal and inner spheres may involve relationships, those of the latter are visibly, qualitatively different from those of the former. Married couples or lovers and close friends exist in the earlier as well as the final works, but the relationships in the latter are distinguished by their combined intensity, intimacy, and emphases on the spiritual and metaphysical, which place them firmly in the inner realm and clearly differentiate them from the more ordinary, domesticated treatment of relationships of the personal sphere, which feature more strongly in the works of the 1970s and early 1980s. In short, if the relationships of the personal sphere might be defined as domestic, those of the inner realm are decidedly spiritual. Second, the term 'metaphysical' is notoriously difficult to gloss. Kiesłowski and his critics alike have used it variously and often indistinctly as a synonym for 'spiritual', 'religious', 'emotional', and 'mental' or 'psychological', and, indeed, one suspects that in some cases it is simply a conveniently vague umbrella term encompassing all that is hard to understand and define. Certainly, 'emotional' aside, these terms can be linked with 'metaphysical' in that all can refer to the 'unseen'; on the other hand, the metaphysical in Kiesłowski's films, far from being unseen, is presented via very physical phenomena, such as the black dog and question mark in *Bez końca (No End, 1984)*, or the 'young man' who appears in eight episodes of *The Decalogue*. I personally interpret the metaphysical as a concept that can, and indeed often does, happily overlap with the spiritual, mental etc. in Kiesłowski; for example, the cited 'young man' of *The Decalogue* is potentially as spiritual as he is a metaphysical presence. However, in my view the metaphysical is essentially and primarily concerned with ontology, that is, questions of existence and being, and thus has a specific, independent meaning that places it in a distinct, albeit related, category from the spiritual, psychological, and so forth. To wit, the aforementioned phenomena in *No*

End or galloping horses in the earlier *Spokój* (*The Calm*, 1976) are purely metaphysical in meaning, with no corresponding spiritual or emotional dimensions.

By comprehensively examining Kieślowski's treatment of the three realms and how they interact with and inform both one another and the films, my aim is to demonstrate that the public and personal worlds play a relevant part worthy of note in the productions of the 1980s and 1990s, regardless of Kieślowski's claims otherwise, and result in more complex, multi-layered, and ambiguous narratives than is often recognised. These spheres, the public in particular, are often significant not in terms of being key to understanding the films – clearly, the public sphere is not crucial in this sense to these final films – but rather by adding an additional layer of meaning or subtext: for example, the public references in *The Double Life of Véronique* make no difference to the narrative and meaning of the film, but they do necessarily alter the tone, ambience, and final overall impression one has of it, for indeed, why otherwise include them? Conversely, my additional and subsidiary intention is to show that the personal sphere, and sometimes the inner too, already figured strongly in the earlier films of the 1970s. As I argue, the interaction of the public with the personal world, and occasionally the inner, was a key theme in the documentaries and fictional works of the later 1970s. The director looked increasingly inwards in the films of the early 1980s, but the public and personal realms remain crucial to the narratives: it is precisely the tension between the public and personal spheres and private, moral convictions that is epitomised by the heroes of *Krótki dzień pracy* (*A Short Working Day*, 1981), *Przypadek* (*Blind Chance*, 1981), and *No End*. Several years on, Kieślowski and Piesiewicz claimed to have moved away from the Polish public world in *The Decalogue*, in favour of what they termed universality, but although they largely refrained from depicting the queues and ration cards of latter-day Poland, nevertheless the episodes are very firmly rooted in, and moreover derive much

significance from, their contemporary Polish locale. Similarly, despite the undoubted emphasis in *The Double Life of Véronique* on the inner domain, there are notable instances in which the characters, camera, and Kiesłowski show themselves unable to tear their gaze from matters relating to the public sphere. This realm also fails to be eradicated completely from the *Three Colours* trilogy but more interestingly still, although the director focuses on the inner life in these final films, it is the personal sphere that is ultimately posited as the key to a contented existence. Kiesłowski is brutally negative about the personal sphere in *The Decalogue* and somewhat wary of it in *The Double Life of Véronique*, but in his final films he treats it as the most positive, central even, of the spheres, an attitude that is also evident in his unfinished project *Raj, Piekło, Czyściec* (*Heaven, Hell, Purgatory*, 2002 – date unconfirmed). As he illustrates in these final works, it is not enough for his protagonists to be able to live with themselves, nor indeed to rely solely upon the solace offered by intimate relationships of the inner sphere: what Kiesłowski emphasises in the end is the need for them also to be able to live with world as a whole.

To summarise, Kiesłowski's early heroes engage with the public and personal realms in a way the protagonists of the later films do not, but nevertheless neither these later characters nor the director are able to escape these spheres. The public world, whether of Poland or Europe, and the personal sphere continue to play a perceptible and not unimportant part in the narratives of the films of the 1980s and 1990s, regardless of Kiesłowski's claims otherwise, and to disregard this is to ignore the shadings, subtexts, and deeper meanings of these films.

The thematic interplay between public, personal, and inner realms in the films has a particular resonance with the institution of cinema: there is a public in the audience, yet each viewer is individual and must be involved personally if to be affected by a film;

equally, cinema is always, inevitably open to the possibility of intrusion and makes public the personal and inner lives of on-screen characters for the benefit of the viewer. Kieślowski showed a great awareness of these issues throughout his career. Although initially somewhat dismissive of the audience he recognised during the 1970s and 1980s the need to communicate with his audience on an intimate level and increasingly sought to realise this. Ironically, he made his early films, which were concerned principally with the Polish public world, primarily with himself in mind but his later works, which concentrated on the inner life, constitute some of the most compelling invitations made by the director to his audience for an intimate discourse, indeed successful invitations for they received the strongest public reception of all his works. Kieślowski was also highly cognisant that his quest to reach deep into the human psyche left him open to the charge of invasiveness, and this dilemma of desiring to explore deeply yet fearing to intrude upon his protagonists' privacy recurred throughout his career. It was partly his anxiety about harming his real-life documentary subjects that led to his largely abandoning that form of filmmaking by the 1980s. He encapsulated this predicament of the documentary filmmaker in *Amator (Camera Buff, 1979)*, towards the end of which the hero famously throws away his reels of film negative in disgust and looks set to discard his camera. Kieślowski likewise put aside his role as documentarist, but decided instead that the solution to capturing human intimacy was to use actors rather than real people. Nevertheless, even as he perfected his filmic methods of recording the most private emotions and reactions of his characters in the works of the 1990s, his films record his ambivalence about the desirability and morality of doing so: *The Double Life of Véronique* and *Trois Couleurs: Bleu (Three Colours: Blue, 1993)* constitute perhaps Kieślowski's most impressive and successful attempts at filming the inner life, yet simultaneously they reveal his discontent with the manipulations and intrusion of the

filmmaker. Moreover, while Kieślowski sought to depict the profoundest depths of the human soul and mind, nevertheless he shielded his own personal and inner lives as fiercely as ever and refused to comment on the relationship between his fictional narratives and his own life. Similarly, although prepared to give some indication of which of his films he disliked and why, he gave little intimation of which films he liked, why he thought they were good, or why they meant so much to him.

Kieślowski's movement from the public to the inner world went hand in hand with a shift from filming the public or outer reality of broader society to the inner reality of the individual, and the examination of his more or less successful employment of these two distinct forms of reality constitutes a subsidiary part of my argument. 'Reality' had been one of the director's major concerns since the outset of his career. Having stressed its importance as a basis for the documentary film in his MA thesis, he reiterated his dependence on it as a filmmaker over ten years later: when asked why he made films, given that he did not believe filmmaking to be a beautiful or socially useful profession, he replied 'Żeby zarejestrować. Jestem bardzo związany z realną rzeczywistością' ('In order to record things. I am very bound up with real reality [sic]').¹¹ Kieślowski considered it crucial to provide a description of everyday social and public reality in People's Poland in order to address and counteract the fictions propagated by a communist regime that sought to conceal the truth of daily shortages, public unrest, and sheer misery with a veneer of spurious social and economic achievements. As the director pointed out, the authorities described the world not as it was but as it ought to be, hence he reversed this formula in the 1970s with a view to depicting the reality of life in Poland.¹² However, as the communists' grip upon Poland began weakening rapidly in the 1980s, so too

¹¹ Hania Krall (int), 'Zrobiłem i mam', *Polityka*, Warsaw, no 4, 27-1-1979.

¹² Quentin Curtis (int), 'Tell it like it is. Krzysztof Kieślowski', *The Independent on Sunday* (The Sunday Review), London, 3-10-1993, p 20.

Kieślowski lost interest in illustrating public and social reality, perhaps judging that what he saw as his corrective portrayal of reality was no longer needed when the communist version had so little credence. By the time of *The Decalogue*, Kieślowski, who was now making his most serious attempt hitherto to focus on the inner sphere, spoke also of a concomitant need to stop filming outer reality:

‘Uciekam więc od tego, o czym bardzo często opowiadałem w filmach dokumentalnych, z natury swej bliższych obyczajowości, potoczności, opisujących jakąś prawdę naskórkową, zewnętrzną bardzo, choć jednak prawdę. Takiej prawdy w filmach, które teraz robię – nie będzie.’

‘Therefore I am escaping from those things that I very often talked about in my documentaries, from what are by their very nature specific customs, ordinary things that describe some kind of superficial, very outer truth, albeit a truth nevertheless. This kind of truth will no longer be present in the films that I am now making.’¹³

The critics noted this shift from filming public to inner reality, Tadeusz Lubelski suggesting that Kieślowski was still making films about reality but now about the reality of feelings, or what I term inner reality.¹⁴ The director likewise reconfirmed the alteration that his narratives had undergone with regard to outer and inner realities in an interview carried out shortly before his death, saying he had been occupied with the description of Polish reality between 1968 and 1985 and then, having done enough in that vein, decided instead to concentrate on emotions and feelings.¹⁵

The move from filming a public to an inner reality brought with it, however attendant problems for Kieślowski. The realities of the public and personal realms,

¹³ Blanka Danilewicz (int.), ‘Chcę zrobić film o tym, jak trudno jest żyć.’, *Mysł Społeczna*, Warsaw, no. 21, 24-5-1987, p.3.

¹⁴ Tadeusz Lubelski, ‘Podwójne życie Kieślowskiego’, *Kino*, Warsaw, 9-1991, p 4

¹⁵ Agata Otrębska & Jacek Błach (int.), ‘Ponieważ są ciągle ci ludzie...’ in Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, (reprinted from *Incipit*, Katowice, no. 2, 4-1996) p.293.

entailing as they do tangible, visible things and human interaction, are inevitably easier to film than the reality of the inner sphere, which consists of that which is unspoken, abstract, and concealed. Moreover, the problem of filming an inner, metaphysical reality is exacerbated by the medium of film, given how heavily and necessarily it relies upon the concrete, and filmmakers tend to resort to symbolism that too often is clumsy and crude. I will argue that although aware of these limitations and immensely frustrated by them, Kieślowski was only partially successful in overcoming them in productions such as *No End*, which presented him with the complications of filming his heroine's inner life and the ghost of her husband. However, *The Decalogue*, *The Double Life of Véronique*, and the *Three Colours* trilogy show his technical and artistic capacity for capturing an inner reality grew ever stronger, more confident, and accomplished. Indeed, it may have been his determination to achieve the near impossible and transfer the inner life to screen that motivated him to continue working with a medium he considered so restricted and imperfect.

A more challenging problem for the director in his later films, however, was that of how largely to ignore public reality in favour of an inner reality without simultaneously forfeiting credibility. A film lacking the kind of outer reality that locates its protagonists in a recognisable public and social sphere is in danger of becoming a fantasy, of flying off the ground as Kieślowski said of his eponymous heroine Véronique,¹⁶ and this in turn may affect the viewer's willingness to take seriously the inner truths with which the narrative is concerned. Although some Polish critics felt *The Decalogue* was too dislocated from the reality of the contemporary Polish world, I will propose that Kieślowski attained a happy compromise in that cycle, with the allusions to the reality of the public realm complementing and substantiating the inner reality. I also argue that *The*

¹⁶ Stok (ed), *Kieślowska on Kieślowski*, p 186.

Double Life of Véronique works very well in spite of mostly avoiding references to public reality, perhaps because Kieślowski was conscious of and critiqued its elements of fantasy both on and off screen instead of attempting to conceal them. The brief yet highly noticeable intrusions of public reality upon the inner consciousness (or consciousnesses) of the heroines and the intensely self-involved relationship of Véronique and her would-be lover, Alexandre, create a fascinating and stimulating tension.

With the *Three Colours* trilogy, however, I contend that Kieślowski was less successful in his use of public and inner realities. The concentration in *Three Colours: Blue* and *Trois Couleurs: Rouge* (*Three Colours: Red*, 1994) upon inner reality, combined with a broad disregard for outer reality that leaves the characters improbably free of everyday professional and domestic obligations, runs the risk of creating protagonists so distanced as to leave the audience unable to relate to, and consequently sympathise with, their predicaments. The universal quality of Julie's and Valentine's problems, such as the loss of and self-destructive alienation of loved ones in *Three Colours: Blue* and *Three Colours: Red* respectively, allows for ready identification with them, and indeed, the popularity of the films suggests many viewers had no problem in empathising with the characters' concerns. Nevertheless, the protagonists' decidedly affluent and easy material circumstances may have the opposite effect; certainly, several noted film critics were more disaffected by these aspects of the films than they were convinced by the characters' private troubles.¹⁷ To relate *Three Colours: Blue* and *Three Colours: Red* to real life as commonly perceived is dangerous in itself as this might make the leisured classes depicted appear absurdly self-indulgent, but what exacerbates the problem is that Kieślowski's occasional yet specific references to the public sphere result in an uncomfortable friction between the inner and public realities by highlighting the

¹⁷ See chapter 7, below.

incongruity between the characters' supposed pain within and their actual comfortable existences without. To wit, the drug-addicted brother of Valentine in *Three Colours: Red* is intended to illustrate her unhappiness and the rot pervading the ostensibly contented Swiss society alike, but his peripheral presence causes him to feel like little more than a cursory and unsophisticated way of adding depth to Valentine's characterisation and moreover ironically draws attention to her otherwise very pleasant social existence. What is also notable about *Three Colours: Red*, and can be seen in the novellas for the as yet unfilmed trilogy *Heaven, Hell, Purgatory*, which like its predecessors is concerned primarily with the inner realm and reality, is that the characters often feel more symbolic than realistic, as though epitomising certain virtues and ideas rather than existing as rounded individuals. In the light of these problems, I will suggest that the move from filming the public world and reality to documenting the inner life and reality resulted in Kieślowski's sense of having become too engrossed in fictional worlds and influenced his decision to abandon directing altogether in 1994.

I must stress that in analysing the problems Kieślowski faced by choosing to focus primarily but not exclusively on inner reality, and which I consider he did not always resolve successfully, I have no intention of implying that one type of reality, be it public or inner, is preferable or more suitable as a subject for cinema nor, by extension, that Kieślowski's earlier films are automatically and necessarily better than his later work or indeed vice versa. The public and inner types of reality, like the related public, personal, and inner spheres, are equally valid despite their distinctness, and it is credit to Kieślowski's depth and breadth of filmmaking skills that he was able to explore and document all with such extraordinary compassion and perspicacity. What concerns me is that the co-existence of realities in the final films is an uneasy one, but this is not to be confused with the assumption that I believe Kieślowski's final films to be inferior to his

earlier productions because of their flaws; for that matter, Kiesłowski's earlier films also contain defects notwithstanding their depiction of public, rather than inner, reality, and indeed some of these defects stem directly from the director's limited focus upon the public sphere. What is truly remarkable about the final films is that they are so persuasive and involving despite the imperfections underlying them.

I am mindful that in choosing the theoretical framework of the public, personal, and inner realms upon which to base my thesis, I have ventured into an area of much critical debate and contention. The philosopher Jürgen Habermas argues a strong case for separate public and private (or personal, as I would term it) spheres, although it should be noted that his analysis applies mainly to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western Europe.¹⁸ By contrast, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, a noted contributor to queer theory, is concerned that certain binary oppositions, including that of the public and private spheres, promote the hiding away and exclusion of homosexuality in a largely heterosexual world; in her view, such categories are often specious and damaging.¹⁹ Sedgwick undoubtedly has a good point: the spheres are more fluid than strict categorisation allows, with each affecting the others. Certainly, Kiesłowski reveals an acute awareness of this interaction in *Życiorys (Curriculum Vitae, 1975)*, *Z punktu widzenia nocnego portiera (From a Night Porter's Point of View, 1977)*, *Nie wiem (I Don't Know, 1977)*, and *No End*. However, most people prefer to keep certain aspects of life in either the inner, personal, or public realms: most people do not necessarily take matters relating to home and family into the office or vice versa; equally, most people have intimate thoughts and secrets that they would prefer not to share with even their closest loved ones. Correspondingly, although

¹⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989, & William Outhwaite (ed.), *The Habermas Reader*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996

¹⁹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1990, p.11ff.

the films just cited explore the reciprocal relations between the spheres, this mutual influence is shown by Kiesłowski often to be damaging and intrusive, whether the protagonists are aware of it or not. In a very real and practical sense, then, the categories hold true because people generally attempt to live by them.

An even more important reason for my not using the writings of academics such as Sedgwick and Habermas is that whatever the relevance of their theories to their chosen fields, be they in favour of or against the delineation of separate realms, their specifically-located theories do not clearly or immediately apply to the equally specific yet distinct context of socialist Poland in the years following the Second World War. Where a democratic society gives the appearance at least of social and personal freedom, it is easy to ignore or contest the issue of categorising the public, personal, and inner spheres. However, although arguing about the public, personal, and inner spheres therefore has some value in Western-based theory, in practice it becomes inappropriate where totalitarian Poland is concerned. The communist regime governing Poland between 1945 and 1989 addressed itself to the elimination of the boundaries dividing the spheres – in itself proof of their perceived existence – and occupation of its citizens' hearts and minds, the soul being of no concern to the anti-clerical state, at all times. Kiesłowski grew up in a time in which the inner and personal spheres were actively eradicated, as described by the Polish historian Norman Davies: 'People were encouraged to live communally, and to think collectively. They no longer belonged to themselves as individuals, or to their families, but to their workforce, their shock-brigades, or their regiment'.²⁰ The attempt to collectivise society is also evident in the communists' attempt to alter Polish grammar by promoting the use of the second personal plural in conversation, as is common Russian

² Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland*, rev. ed., Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1986, p 8.

usage, in place of the traditional Polish third personal singular. The ensuing result of the government's tactics, however, was to make the categories the more keenly felt and defended by non-compliant individuals, of whom there were literally millions, seeking to preserve a sense of freedom from those values imposed from above by the socialist state. Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński, a sociologist, discusses the division between the public and personal in Poland, distinguishing between the values of small groups, including family, friends, and local communities, and those found in society's highly formalised and ritualised public life, as well as arguing that the difference between matters stemming from the public arena and native cultural traditions led to '...a sharp split – a 'social dimorphism' – between the public and private spheres of life'.²¹ Janine Wedel, also a sociologist, concurs with this latter comment, writing of the social schizophrenia of Poland resulting from highly distinct public and private lives.²² In fact, Kieślowski shows that all too often these spheres did overlap, as demonstrated by, amongst others, the protagonists of *Curriculum Vitae*, *From a Night Porter's Point of View*, and *I Don't Know* but he simultaneously illustrates the dangerous consequences of a cross-over between often opposing realms of life. If distinct inner and personal realms had not already featured strongly in the mindset of Polish society prior to the installation of the communist regime – and that is highly doubtful, given that the circumstances of Poland after the Second World War mirrored those of 1795-1918, the first occasion upon which the country was ruled by the foreign powers at odds with the Polish masses²³ – they swiftly assumed paramount importance after 1945 as a crucial means for individuals to combat the all-encompassing nature of the communist regime in favour of an independent

²¹ Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński, 'Polish society after the communist experiment' in George Blazycy & Ryszard Rapacki (ed), *Poland into the 1990s: Economy and Society in Transition*, London: Pinter Publications, 1991, p 7.

²² Janine Wedel, 'The ties that bind in Polish society' in Stanisław Gomułka & Antony Polonsky (ed), *Polish Paradoxes*, London: Routledge, 1990, p 239ff.

²³ See Preface, footnote 1.

existence in the home and mind, if not in the public arena. What matters for this thesis is that in Poland between 1945 and 1989, and therefore in the context of the greater part of Kieślowski's life and career, the paradigm of public, personal, and inner spheres was not only theoretical but real, not just posited or supposed but actual.

My distinction between the public, personal, and inner spheres is also grounded in Kieślowski's own usage of these or similar terms in relation to his Polish background and his films. In a confirmation of Davies's line of reasoning, Kieślowski said 'Komunizm, jakkolwiek był, organizował ludziom życie zewnętrzne. Próbował też nieudolnie regulować nasze życie wewnętrzne, ale w istocie nie potrafił tego zrobić' ('Communism, in any form, organised people's external life. It also ineptly tried to regulate our internal life but in fact was unable to do so').²⁴ The director used almost the same words when discussing his early short fiction film *Koncert życzeń* (*Concert of Requests*, 1967), stating how he intended to show '...w jak nieudolny i szkodliwy sposób komunistyczne państwo próbowało organizować nie tylko życie zewnętrzne ludzi, ale i wewnętrzne' ('...in how clumsy and harmful a manner the communist state tried to organise not only people's external but also internal life').²⁵ In 1981, Kieślowski acknowledged the presence of these different spheres in his work, saying 'In my films I present two models of life. The private inner one, self-realisation, and objectively existing reality, social conditions and relations'.²⁶ Many years later he maintained that his experiences under communism, which urged people to have a collective viewpoint, taught him that one is completely alone in one's inner world: according to Irène Jacob, when she asked 'Chcesz powiedzieć, że w tym własnym świecie jest się zupełnie samotnym?' ('You mean to say,

²⁴ Stanisław Zawisliński (int), 'Jeden na jednego' in Stanisław Zawisliński *et al*, *Kieślowski bez końca*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1994, p 25.

²⁵ Jadwiga Anna Łużyńska (int), 'Zawsze robiłem filmy romantyczne', *Syrena*, Warsaw, no 20, 24-9-1995, p 3.

²⁶ Gustaw Moszcz (int), 'No heroics, please', *Sight & Sound*, Spring 1981, vol. 50, no. 2, p 90.

that one is completely alone in one's own world?'), Kieślowski replied 'Tak, jest się samotnym' ('Yes, one is alone').²⁷ Given that he had lived under communism for almost fifty years, it is hardly surprising that this mindset should continue into his final five or so years of filming after the collapse of communism. As the interview of 1995 entitled "'The inner life is the only thing that interests me": a conversation with Krzysztof Kieślowski' suggests, the director used the specific terms 'inner life' and 'public life',²⁸ and quotations already cited show that in defining the shift of focus that took place in the 1980s, he again distinguished between different modes of existence using vocabulary broadly mirroring my own.²⁹ Kieślowski did not discuss his films only with regard to the public, personal, and inner spheres, but then he rarely analysed his own work theoretically, so the fact that he discussed the spheres at all, and on various occasions at that, is significant. What matters is that where the subject did arise, whether in connection with Poland or his films, he explicitly engaged with the ideas of distinct public and inner lives, proof of and parallel to his employment of these concepts in his films. The identification of the personal sphere is my own contribution of what I consider a useful critical distinction where Kieślowski's oeuvre is concerned, defining a realm comprising relationships with family and friends that is more private than that of the public world yet not as intimate or self-dependent as that of the inner life.

Although my primary concern is that of exploring and substantiating my argument, this dissertation is also a career-survey in which I aim to provide a detailed overview of Kieślowski's work that stands alone as a comprehensive reference work.

²⁷ Stanisław Zawiśliński (ed), *O Kieślowskim...refleksje, wspomnienia, opinie*, Warsaw. Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p 59. Needless to say, growing up under communism was not the sole explanation for Kieślowski's sense of isolation; his rootless childhood or palpable interest in existentialism are just two other factors worthy of consideration

²⁸ Coates (int), "'The inner life is the only thing that interests me": a conversation with Krzysztof Kieślowski', p 162.

²⁹ See pp 13-14

Consequently, in addition to developing my thesis concerning the significance of the public, personal, and inner realms, I simultaneously discuss what I believe to be other interesting and important aspects of Kieślowski and his work including financing, censorship, his political tendencies, his representation of male and female characters as well as his distinction between youth and adulthood, teamwork, his relationship with his audience, and his critical reception. Just as Kieślowski's work was not produced in a vacuum, so too I consider it essential to refer to the various factors that shaped his work or are to be found within it. In some cases, these elements are vital in providing a context for Kieślowski and his work, elucidating where he was coming from, what he hoped to achieve, and how he was received; in others, they are important because of their impact upon the alteration that his focus upon the public, personal, and inner spheres underwent during his career. An additional but equally firm reason for my analysing and describing these matters secondary to my main argument is that no thesis should focus on itself to the point of excluding all else or it is threatened with being imbalanced, repetitive, and boring even. I believe my thesis to be crucial to a better understanding of Kieślowski's oeuvre, of the changes it underwent, and of the subtlety and complexity of his films, but I certainly do not offer it as the only way of interpreting Kieślowski's films. I have produced it partly so as to correct what I feel to be an erroneous perception of Kieślowski's changes in direction throughout his career and partly to fill a gap in an area that is undersized (and unquestionably, much more work on Kieślowski is still needed). However, I view my dissertation as what I hope is a valuable addition to the current and future body of literature on Kieślowski, and not as a replacement for it.

I hope that I have conveyed some sense of what makes the films of Kieślowski so special. Historians and others curious for a closer look at People's Poland are advised to look at the films of the 1960s through to the 1980s. Major personages and social,

historical, or political events feature rarely but what Kieślowski conveys instead is perhaps more elusive, the state-of-mind of his contemporaries, their hopes and, more often, worries and fears about society, their role within it, and their existence independent of it. Film scholars, not to mention filmmakers, would do well to study the documentaries and fictional works alike in order to grasp how brevity and depth need not be mutually exclusive, how the simplest questions are often the most interesting, and how these factors combined constitute a goal that might be considered unobtainable were it not that Kieślowski achieved it again and again. However, the appeal of Kieślowski's films is not limited to students of humanities; rather, they are open to students of humanity. Few filmmakers can transcend the barriers of time, space, culture, indeed the cinema screen itself, and intimately touch the viewer with experiences and emotions as varied yet invariably persuasive as those of blind ex-soldiers, an aggressive yet pitiable night porter, a naïve young tailor, a Polish widow at odds with the world, a young voyeur motivated by loneliness and love, and another widow, this time French and detached from life. Kieślowski managed all this and more.

CHAPTER 1

The Early Films 1966-1972

Wspaniała, bogata, nieograniczona rzeczywistość, gdzie nic się nie powtarza, gdzie nie można robić dubli. O jej rozwój nie musimy się martwić, dostarczy nam codziennie nowych, niezwykłych ujęć. Właśnie rzeczywistość, i to nie jest paradoks, jest wyjściem dla dokumentu. Trzeba tylko uwierzyć jej do końca, w jej dramaturgię – dramaturgię rzeczywistości.

Wonderful, rich, unrestricted reality, where nothing repeats itself, where one cannot make duplicates. We need not be concerned about its development; it will daily provide us with new, unusual observations. It is precisely reality – and this is not a paradox – which is the solution for the documentary. One must simply believe in it until the end, believe in its dramaturgy: the dramaturgy of reality.¹

Thus wrote a young Krzysztof Kieślowski in the MA thesis he produced whilst studying at the Łódź Film School. The four-year course in film direction that he undertook between 1964 and 1968 provided him with all-round training in filmmaking – this included but was not restricted to film production, lighting, editing, and materials – with which programme the School aimed to produce directors who were at once artists, technicians, and leaders. In addition to such specialist instruction, the film school provided an intellectual and theoretical environment that profoundly influenced Kieślowski. Speaking in the 1990s at the end of a long film career, he maintained that it was at the School, where he began working in his chosen profession, that he was taught to look at the world, to observe the different reactions of people to what was

¹ Kieślowski quoted in Katarzyna Jabłońska, 'Koniec i początek', *Więź*, Warsaw, no. 9, 9-1996, p.114.

around them, and to realise that this could be photographed and thus a story told.² It was also at this stage that he consciously chose documentaries over fictional films,³ and the combination of these factors underlay his formulation of his initial ideas about the relationship between film and the world around him, ideas that would be developed in his film work.

It was in his MA thesis that Kieślowski verbalised these first thoughts on filmmaking, his chosen subject that of reality as a basis for the documentary. Specifically, it was the life of the individual that he considered the essential source for his films, arguing that ‘[t]rzeba dojść do tego, co jest treścią sztuki od początku świata – do życia człowieka’ (‘[o]ne has to get to that which has been the essence of art since the world began: the life of a human being’).⁴ The non-specificity of the human life in question implies that the entire world and its inhabitants were potential sources for Kieślowski’s documentaries but his earliest films show that his initial interest lay expressly in illustrating and investigating the Polish sphere. Indeed, the recurrent theme of the director’s later statements, if not his thesis, concerning his early period was that of the necessity of describing Polish reality of the time.⁵ One of the key intellectual texts for Kieślowski’s generation was *Świat nieprzedstawiony* (*The Unrepresented World*, 1974), in which the poets Julian Kornhauser and Adam Zagajewski call for a depiction of the unrepresented world. Although this book appeared in the mid-1970s, it was as much

² Krzysztof Krubski *et al*, *Filmówka: Powieść o Łódzkiej Szkole filmowej*, 2nd ed., Warsaw: Prószyński & S-ka, 1998, p 239.

³ Jacek Marczyński & Bogdan Moźdzynski (int.) ‘Mocne strony, słabe strony’, *Literatura*, Warsaw, no. 46, 11-11-1976.

⁴ Kieślowski quoted in Jadwiga Anna Łuzynska, ‘Fenomen Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego cz. I’, *Iluzjon*, Warsaw, nos. 1-4, 1995, p.17.

⁵ Krzysztof Kieślowski, ‘Głęboko zamiast szeroko’, *Dialog*, Warsaw, no. 1, 1-1981, p 110; Vincent Ostria, (int.), ‘Przypadek i konieczność’ in Tadeusz Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, Cracow Universitas, 1997, p 283 (trans. Maria Oleksiewicz & Tadeusz Lubelski from *Les Inrockuptibles*, Paris, no. 36, 1992), & Danusia Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, London: Faber, 1993, pp 54-55 & p 58. In each case Kieślowski refers to his films of the 1970s and early 1980s, but his statements are equally applicable to the five short films made in the 1960s

the explicit recognition and articulation of a need that had been long felt by Poles, Kieślowski included, about their country, as the initiation of a new theory.⁶ The world in question here was not an abstract one but that of the physical reality of People's Poland. Accordingly, it was with the aid of his chosen form of the documentary that Kieślowski intended to show the world as it was rather than as it ought to be.⁷

The significance of Kieślowski's proposed purpose and mode of expression becomes clear when considered in the light of contemporary Poland, a state in which the apparently authoritative voice of a government which declared itself to represent the masses made claims that bore no resemblance to the actual life experienced by the overwhelming majority of its citizens. Reality, fiction, truth, and lies are always contentious issues where the documentary film is concerned but these concepts become especially twisted and muddled in the context of People's Poland. The state, frequently if perhaps naïvely supposed to be the source of a basic socio-political and economic reality, in fact propagated falsehood in the case of Poland to both its inhabitants and the rest of the world, which spurred Kieślowski and others on to the aim of countering such fictions by means of documentaries that would accurately depict the country. On the other hand, the highly-evolved and ever-present system of censorship, which became considerably stiffer in 1968, the year of Kieślowski's graduation, meant that these documentarists of reality had often to engage in creative filmmaking and substitute implicit meanings for explicit facts if their work was to be screened. Furthermore, Kieślowski and his like-

⁶ Regarding the connection between the book's main argument and that of Kieślowski in the 1970s, see Tadeusz Sobolewski, 'Ultimate concerns' trans Paul Coates in Paul Coates (ed) *Lucid Dreams: The Films of Krzysztof Kieslowski* Wiltshire Flicks Books, 1999, p 27. Kieślowski was acquainted with the book and Zagajewski see Grazyna Torbicka & Tadeusz Sobolewski (int.), 'Zapis II', *Reżyser*, no. 65, 3-1997, pp 7-8 (transcribed by Piotr Laszkiewicz from TVP programme *Kocham kino*); & Stanisław Zawislinski (ed), *Kieślowski*, 2nd ed, Warsaw Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p.124ff.

⁷ Paul Coates (int.), "'The inner life is the only thing that interests me". a conversation with Krzysztof Kieslowski' in Coates (ed.), *Lucid Dreams*, p 164. For similar comments expressed by Kieślowski closer to the time of the films in question, see Andrzej Kołodyński (int.), 'Wywiad nie do druku (14.XII 1973)', *Kino*, Warsaw, 5-1996, p 4

minded contemporaries had to battle with censors whose function was not merely to repress images considered unsuitable precisely because of their basis in fact, but also to disseminate manufactured information.⁸ Given these censors who, as Kieślowski himself stated, desired to show an ideal, not real, world,⁹ it is a reflection of their function as arbiters of the acceptable if untrue, and of his as self-professed filmmaker of a reality almost inevitably unacceptable to the authorities, that three documentaries made by him between 1966 and 1972 – *Z miasta Łodzi* (*From the City of Łódź*, 1969), *Fabryka* (*The Factory*, 1970), and *Robotnicy '71: nic o nas bez nas* (*Workers '71: Nothing About Us Without Us*, 1972) – were still being withheld in 1973.¹⁰

Even at this early stage, however, Kieślowski was not so naïve as to think that his documentaries of contemporary Polish life, however accurate their representation of reality, corresponded to an objective view. On the contrary, he argued in his MA thesis for the documentarist's essential right to a personal view of reality and a subjective vision¹¹ and he continued to maintain this belief long after he had ceased to make documentaries.¹² This is not an uncommon stance amongst documentarists: Frederick Wiseman, for example, who was making documentaries during roughly the same period as Kieślowski and whose style and subjects often resemble those of the Pole, thinks similarly.¹³ However, Kieślowski's outlook may have been as much influenced by life in People's Poland, as was the case with his chosen form and purpose, as by film theory: a state where the official public truth was so obviously lacking in credibility left one with little option but to fill the vacuum by trusting solely in one's own version of the truth,

⁸ On the role of the censors see Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland*, rev. ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp 37-38

⁹ Krzysztof Kieślowski, 'Krzysztof Kieślowski', *Reżyser*, 11-3-1992

¹⁰ Kołodyński (int.), 'Wywiad nie do druku (14.XII.1973)', p 4.

¹¹ Lużyńska, 'Fenomen Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego cz. I', p 14

¹² Krzysztof Kieślowski, 'Film dokumentalny: co to jest?' (Commissioned for the Documentary Film Festival in Yamagata) *Film*, Warsaw, 3-1998, p 101.

¹³ For Wiseman's thoughts on filmmaking see Kevin Macdonald & Mark Cousins, *Imagining Reality: The Faber Book of the Documentary*, London: Faber, 1996, pp.278-282

even though this potentially resulted in one's isolation.¹⁴ The irony of an apparently socialist state causing its society to fragment suggests that not only did Kieślowski's own self-confessed, perhaps self-sought, seclusion in his final years stem from his having grown up in such conditions,¹⁵ but also that his own necessary self-reliance and thus private isolation in a socialist state inspired his thematic concern with protagonists who are remote from one another and, in the later films, the world in general.

This obvious physical and mental isolation of the individual in Kieślowski's films was not only to develop into a major theme in his work but also increasingly to become his method, his camera literally focussing its gaze on the main protagonist *per se*, rather than in relation to others, in *La Double Vie de Véronique/Podwójne życie Weroniki* (*The Double Life of Véronique*, 1991), *Trois Couleurs: Bleu* (*Three Colours: Blue*, 1993) and parts of *Dekalog* (*The Decalogue*, 1988). Such a development, however, came later. At this early stage the presentation of the individual, mentally isolated or not, is almost inevitably tied up with the outside world, so much so that, of these first documentaries, only *Byłem żołnierzem* (*I was a Soldier*, 1970) and perhaps *Zdjęcie* (*The Photograph*, 1968) are not set and shot in the public sphere.¹⁶ Quite simply, the whole of the running time of the other documentaries of this period is expended upon the public world as seen in bureaux, factories, and managerial and workers' meetings. These films, including *Urząd* (*The Office*, 1966), *From the City of Łódź, The Factory*, *Przed rajdem* (*Before the Rally*, 1971), *Refren* (*Refrain*, 1972), *Workers '71*, and the two commissioned films, *Między Wrocławiem a Zieloną Górą* (*Between Wrocław and Zielona Góra*, 1972) and *Podstawy BHP w kopalni miedzi* (*The Principles of Safety & Hygiene in a Copper Mine*,

¹⁴ Some two decades on Kieślowski told Irene Jacob that his experience under communism, which tried to force too collective a vision of the world, taught him that all are alone, see Irène Jacob, 'Spotkanie z Krzysztofem' trans Tadeusz Lubelski in Lubelski (ed), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, p 197

¹⁵ For Kieślowski's self-confessed loneliness see Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 20

¹⁶ The loss of the accompanying sound-reel to *The Photograph*, the only copy of which is held in the Polish Television archives, makes it difficult to state this with certainty

1972), are less about the individual as such than about the individual as part of a group or situation, about how institutions function (or not) and how people function within them.¹⁷ In this period one gets little sense of the human being behind the role or outside the group, despite Kieślowski's insistence that all of his documentaries except perhaps *Workers '71* are about individuals.¹⁸ The commissioned work aside, there is an impression and awareness of personalities to varying degrees, especially of frustration and dissatisfaction but not of the fully-formed three-dimensional protagonists, let alone a sense of their personal and inner lives, who would appear in later documentary and fictional productions. Kieślowski's lack of individualisation may reflect the state's own view of its citizens as a collective rather than as individuals, as *The Office* and *Workers '71* in particular illustrate, but his focus upon a state that disregards its individual citizens' wants has a detrimental impact upon his own desired exploration of the more intimate aspects of his subjects' lives. He was wise to give the example of *I was a Soldier* when defending his claim that his first as well as final films contemplated the mystery of life and attempted to get close to the main protagonists,¹⁹ as it is undoubtedly in this, notably the sole documentary of this early phase definitely set outside the public realm²⁰ and least related to the contemporary Polish world, that he came closest to filming individuals' intimate thoughts and feelings. However, at this stage in his work this documentary, together with the two short fictional films, *Tramwaj* (*The Tram*, 1966), and *Koncert życzeń* (*Concert of Requests*, 1967), forms the exception and not the rule as he claimed. Indeed, even *I was a Soldier* looks at its protagonists within a group framework, working

¹⁷ Cf. Janina Kozbiel's comment noting Kieślowski's first phase of looking at a person in a factory or a meeting, as opposed to his later style of looking at the person alone, Janina Kozbiel (int), 'Krotka rozmowa z Krzysztofem Kieślowskim' *Odrodzenie*, Warsaw, no. 28, 15-7-1989

¹⁸ Summarised in Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p xiii

¹⁹ Coates (int), "The inner life is the only thing that interests me". a conversation with Krzysztof Kieślowski', p.168.

²⁰ Again, it is difficult to assess *The Photograph* on these grounds (see footnote 16, above)

on the principle that each man's utterances gain meaning and resonance by being compared with those of his fellow ex-combatants.

Although this focus upon large numbers of mostly nameless people results somewhat in a loss of intimacy and a discrepancy between Kieślowski's interest in the life of a human being, acknowledged in his MA thesis, and that which he actually filmed, nonetheless his compassion towards his subjects is already evident. Whereas authors including Nietzsche, Kafka, and Mann consider the plight of the artistic individual in a materialistic and bureaucratic society, in these documentaries Kieślowski looks at the fate of the common man in such a society as a reflection of, but also as reflected by, the fate of the masses, and his conclusions are if anything the more depressing precisely because he shows that suffering is not limited to one but experienced by many. Indeed, in broadening rather than limiting his gaze he was already showing signs of his deviation from the tradition of Polish Romanticism, as beloved by Poles and deeply entrenched now as when it arose in the nineteenth century, that tends to glorify the particular hardships undergone by individuals allegedly rarer and more sensitive than ordinary people. More ironically, this emphasis upon the masses mirrored socialism's own supposed championing of the people, but whereas socialism recognises only harmonious collectivity, Kieślowski with films such as *The Factory*, *Before the Rally*, and *Workers '71* maintains his sympathy for ordinary people precisely by depicting not only how the group failed to function properly but also how it was composed of disparate and frequently conflicting factions.²¹ Moreover, that he so often considers the worthy and less worthy aspects of those on all sides indicates his refusal to fall into the simplistic black-and-white typing of the Polish Romantic tradition. These early documentaries and

²¹ Rafał Marszałek ('Między dokumentem a fikcją' in Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, p.14) argues that *From the City of Łódź*, *The Factory*, and *Workers '71* are almost attempts to convince of the primacy of the group model, but he ignores the fact that in each case there are separate groups of workers and managers/authorities and therein lies their separateness and, at times, opposition.

the short fictional film *Concert of Requests* establish the faultiness of the group ideal, albeit without undermining the common man this group contained, and thus set the scene for Kieślowski's later documentaries and films, which take on the question of the individuality of the common man within the group.

For now, though, most of Kieślowski's protagonists were not individualised and, broadly speaking, were anonymous. Paradoxically, however, they were easily identifiable to the Polish audience at the time, because the director's focus upon the common man meant that the people on screen were the doubles of those off screen. Similarly, the situations portrayed in the films were easily recognisable. Working in order to '..zobaczyć świat w kropli wody' ('..see the world in a drop of water'),²² Kieślowski depicts worlds of factories and offices that were small and specific and yet instantly comprehensible to his contemporary viewers because they formed the basis of daily life in Poland. Moreover, in showing these "worlds" he suggests not only that, aggregated, they made up the larger and comprehensive reality, but also that each individual case portrayed it in the microcosm. Consequently, the critiques of these "worlds" in fact constitute a critique of the broader public realm, and the failure of authority and malfunctioning of the institutions represented in these films is always a reflection of the failure of the ostensibly greatest authority and biggest institution of all, People's Poland. Because of their contemporary settings, Kieślowski's documentaries now function as historical documents (appropriately, the Polish word *dokument* can mean both 'document' and 'documentary film'). They bear witness to certain concrete facts, if rarely to great historical events – only *Workers '71* is based upon an incident relayed in the media and later in history books – but above all they depict the state of mind of a

²² Stanisław Zawiśliński (int.), 'Jeden na jednego' in Stanisław Zawiśliński *et al*, *Kieślowski bez końca*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1994, p.24.

totalitarian state's inhabitants. These films set down history against forgetting.

If these works were particularly pertinent to Kieślowski's fellow-countrymen at the time, they are nevertheless accessible to many non-Poles. There is no doubt that, given his youth and the fact of making documentaries, Polish documentaries at that, at this stage Kieślowski could hardly hope for distribution beyond his native country. Indeed, little is known about these films in the West. Nevertheless, the limited scope of the films does not prevent them from travelling well through time and space. It is the emotions and sentiments captured, but also expressed, by Kieślowski that makes them accessible to all. One's sympathy for the former soldiers of *I was a Soldier* does not depend on one's being a blind, Polish ex-combatant; similarly, the frustration and weariness expressed by managers in *The Factory* is trans-national, even if the reasons for it are localised, giving some credence to Kieślowski's belief, expressed in later years, that basic human emotions are universally appreciable.²³ Ironically, it is the historically-based account, *Workers '71*, that seems most distanced, its attempt to take a broad overview of a specific event making it appear both anonymous and dated. For the most part, however, these early films show how Kieślowski's self-expressed hope in later years to make films allowing the viewer, Polish or not, to cross the boundary of the screen and truly see and understand, if not necessarily find acceptable, that which is being depicted was being realised from the very outset of his filmmaking career.

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²³ See chapter 5.

TRAMWAJ (THE TRAM, 1966)
& *KONCERT ŻYCZEŃ (CONCERT OF REQUESTS, 1967)*

The issue of bounded-off worlds and their potential coming together is present in the first film that Kieślowski made at the Łódź Film School, *The Tram*. Although his early work consists mostly of documentaries, like the slightly longer *Concert of Requests*, this is a fictional short made as part of the director's studies in filmmaking. The story is concerned with the tentative relationship forming between a young man and woman on a tram at night, but the brief shots of tram-workers show the influence of the School or, more accurately, of a certain member of the faculty upon Kieślowski. Kazimierz Karabasz, a filmmaker and lecturer, had previously made the documentary *Muzykanci (The Musicians, 1960)* about a group of tram-workers, and Kieślowski admitted that his setting of his own film inside a tram was a result of this earlier film.²⁴

What, however, is truly significant about the tram-workers is that their literal departure from the tram symbolises the moment at which Kieślowski shows his own movement away from his teachers and the film becomes very much his own, for it coincides with the first expression of a motif that would become progressively more prevalent in his oeuvre. Watching the workers move on, the young man first sees the girl reflected in a window. It is this ethereal apparition on the glass that makes him aware of her existence but the same glass will act as a barrier towards the end of the film when he gets off the tram and sees her but is unable to get her attention through the window, physically close yet worlds apart. The visual conceit of the glass and its concomitant symbolisation of separate worlds would recur in Kieślowski's work, and the climactic

²⁴ Łużyńska, 'Fenomen Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego cz. I', p.10 Kieślowski would also go on to use Lidia Zonn, Karabasz's editor, on the majority of his own documentaries.

motif of his first film would find its greatest expression in the final films.²⁵

Indeed, despite its brevity, *The Tram* encompasses a number of the themes and motifs fundamental to Kieślowski's feature films. The young man is the prototype for so many of Kieślowski's male characters, a loner, somewhat unsure of himself, and prepared to make himself ridiculous for a woman to whom he is in thrall. Even the scene in which he struggles and fails to shut the tram door before helping it along belatedly and fruitlessly as it automatically closes characterises the impotence that would be suffered repeatedly by Kieślowski's Polish males right through until *Trois Couleurs: Blanc (Three Colours: White, 1993)*. The girl who is attractive, distant, and uninterested would likewise be reincarnated in later films and her guise also remained essentially Polish, even if her final incarnation was as the French Dominique in *Three Colours: White*. The unequal balance of power in that film and in many episodes of *The Decalogue* is first found here: it is she who is in authority, having the power to confer a smile or frown upon the young man's antics as he attempts to entertain her and be noticed. Furthermore, his effort to close the distance between them establishes the theme of isolation against communion, linked to the glass imagery, that would underpin *The Decalogue* and the *Trois Couleurs (Three Colours, 1993-1994)* trilogy. *The Tram* was filmed without an accompanying sound-reel and the silence of the main protagonists adds to the challenge of judging if, let alone when, separate individuals can become unified in a mutually experienced personal realm. Despite being transparent and invisible, silence and windows remain barriers to communication and the success of the young man's overtures to the girl remains ultimately ambiguous, thus reflecting the essentially lonely nature of human relations. Whilst it is true that at the end he attempts to overcome this barrier and runs after the departing tram, the gesture, for all its hopefulness, is unlikely to be anything

²⁵ Cf. *Ibid*, p.10.

but futile.

The very fact of making the gesture, however, allows for a more positive reading, as it suggests the potential that active engagement has to overcome the impediments of silence and glass to communication. The lack of sound raises the possibility of this being Kieślowski's joke about his first film echoing (noiselessly of course) the early cinema. More seriously, it highlights the manner in which he aims at connecting non-verbally with the audience, thereby suggesting that the screen which is the window to this fictional world can also be transcended by the viewer who identifies with the characters. This bond between director, protagonists, and audience is at its most potent during the scene in which the young man watches the girl as she sleeps. Whereas the short close-up of his face intimates his intentness, the extreme, lingering close-up of her face shot from his point of view emphasises his adoring gaze. With the camera-eye, behind which stood Kieślowski, and the young man's point-of-view merging, there is a suggestion of a parallel between him and the director, as though both revere the object of their stare; certainly, the intense focus upon the beauty of young women in later films, particularly the *Three Colours* trilogy, indicates that this was a preferred subject of the director. Simultaneously, however, by having the screen project the boy's point of view Kieślowski invites the audience to identify with the protagonist – point-of-view shots are the rare occasions in which a character's view is identical with that of the audience – and thus grasp, if not necessarily share, his feelings. *The Tram* aims not merely to hint at but indeed to intensify the interdependence of the worlds of director, characters, and audience.

A similar interplay is at work in *Concert of Requests*. This short feature allocates most of its time to tracing the shaky relationship between a young couple on a camping trip, intercut with scenes of a nearby group of rowdy workers on a day-trip. The young

man from this group who functions as something of an intermediary between his party and the couple also doubles for Kieślowski: not only is he physically similar to the director, being slight and bespectacled, but they also share the same passion for on-looking. After he leaves the group to watch the strained interaction of the young couple, the camera focuses on the pair to the point of almost forgetting his presence until a cut reveals him still to be watching; like the director, he scarcely reveals himself but is there nonetheless.

The isolation of this boy – when he leaves the group he takes a football with him, despite this being an object associated with team-sports – also reveals how he acts as a representative of Kieślowski's wishes. His wistful observation of another world as represented by the couple, their motorbike symbolising freedom and independence, in particular of groups, and not being left behind or out, is intentionally contrasted with the boorish behaviour of the party of his fellow-workers from whom he distances himself, figuratively and literally, and it is through his independent character that Kieślowski attacks group mentality:

'W Koncercie życzeń chciałem pokazać, w jak nieudolny i szkodliwy sposób komunistyczne państwo próbowało organizować nie tylko życie zewnętrzne ludzi, ale i wewnętrzne. Dlatego obraz zbiorowości jest negatywny.'

*'In Concert of Requests I wanted to show in how clumsy and harmful a manner the communist country tried to organise not only people's external but also internal life. That is why the portrait of the group is negative.'*²⁶

That Kieślowski is stressing an awareness of and longing for alternative, personal and

²⁶ Jadwiga Anna Łużyńska (int), "Zawsze robiłem filmy romantyczne", *Sycyna*, Warsaw, no. 20, 24-9-1995, p.3.

inner worlds, thus implicitly criticising the monolithic public communist state, rather than the necessary fact of their being problem-free is made evident by the tensions existing between the couple. In a reversal of the situation in *The Tram*, here it is the girl who makes the overtures and attempts appeasement whilst the boy is mostly sullen and unresponsive, making a series of requests while fixing the motorbike which are mechanical in both senses of the word. The boy's destructive coolness and its implied derivation from the stultifying effect of totalitarianism upon personal relations is underscored by his refusal to return for a pack his girlfriend wants as a personal memento but willingness to turn back, albeit with grudging fury, once told it apparently contains her identity card. Their seeming rupture when the girl is about to join the group for the sake of her papers reintroduces the bespectacled boy who, standing between the bike and bus as befits his tentative public status, watches the unresponsive boy in wonder and sadness as his girlfriend enters the bus. Like the viewer, he hopes for a positive resolution to this crisis but is unable to force it.

Indeed, his voyeurism indicates that he is the viewer's on-screen stand-in as he is Kieslowski's, he and audience alike having watched the couple through the course of the film. His celebration of their happy reunion is as symbolic of the audience's satisfaction at a happy ending as it is an indication of his having being vindicated in his sense of inner freedom: if the kicking of the football signifies his and the viewer's joy for the couple's sake, his following it through is suggestive of his continuing on his own chosen path. Furthermore, being a guide as well as a substitute for the viewer, his joy is instrumental in convincing the viewer that the ending should seem optimistic. The boyfriend's reconciliation with his girlfriend following his realisation that he has the all-important identity card is clumsy in that it suggests that pragmatism, rather than affection, rules him. Moreover, if their resolved and happy union is prefigured in the shot of the man and

cow, notably the first amiable relationship in the film, the implicit savage irony of happiness consisting of a man and dumb creature led by a string is underscored by it being Kieślowski, rarely noted for his confidence in successful human relations, playing this character.²⁷ Nevertheless, despite this ambivalence, the director does end the piece on a positive note, this being, after all, a film about the individual overcoming group mentality. The hillocks ridden over by the bike may indicate Kieślowski's uncertainty as to the couple's future, but the fade to white augurs well. Such optimism, albeit cautious and qualified, about human relationships was to be in short supply in many of the films that followed in later years.

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ZDJĘCIE (*THE PHOTOGRAPH*, 1968)

& BYŁEM ŻOŁNIERZEM (*I WAS A SOLDIER*, 1970)

Although *The Photograph* marks Kieślowski's professional debut as a documentarist – the film was made for Polish Television – like its predecessor, *The Tram*, it shows the direct influence upon the director of his mentor, Kazimierz Karabasz. The premise of the film follows Karabasz's suggestion that Kieślowski track down two grown men pictured as boys in a photograph given to him by his lecturer, and Karabasz even appears to feature in the film discussing the photograph in question, although the loss of the sound-reel makes it difficult to say so with any certainty.

²⁷ Kieślowski made his debut in his own fictional work in this film (see Tadeusz Sobolewski (int.), 'Nie szukam inspiracji w Europie', *Kino*, Warsaw, 4-1994, p 8) – he had already appeared in several of his colleagues' films at film school – and not in *Dekalog, 10* (*The Decalogue, 10*, 1988) as stated by Christopher Garbowski (*Krzysztof Kieślowski's 'Decalogue' Series: the Problem of the Protagonists & Their Self-Transcendence*, Boulder: East European Monographs no. CDLII, 1996, p 6).

Kieślowski incorporates the form of his given quest into the very structure and look of his film, so that the camera follows him as he walks about a housing estate questioning various people as to the whereabouts of his anticipated protagonists. This is film as a detective story – will Kieślowski and his crew find the men? Would the film still be made if they did not? – with the director utilising the technique of *cinéma vérité* to illustrate how he searches for answers. *The Photograph* is a film about the two boys/adults as known, or not, by others, a film about the finding of them rather than one concerned simply with what happens after the event of their being discovered. Indeed, judging by the proportion of time spent on talking to people other than the two main protagonists, this is a piece that stresses the importance of the search rather than the answer, but also leaves the audience never entirely sure that an answer will be uncovered, that the traditional resolution will transpire. Kieślowski relents and eventually gives a solution, having his protagonists appearing some twenty-two and twenty-five minutes respectively into a film spanning just over thirty minutes, but the process of discovering an individual is not equated here with the discovery of the inner life. For Kieślowski, the discovery of one's self, as opposed to the discovery of one *per se*, would come in the much later feature films. Nonetheless, the search in that direction begins in *The Photograph*, a search completed in Kieślowski's final film, *Trois Couleurs: Rouge (Three Colours: Red, 1994)*, which also opens with a photo that eventually is discovered to be the key to the mystery, its final revelation underpinning the film's meaning and teleological structure alike.

In addition to being the clue at the heart of the plot concerning the discovery of the two men, the photograph is also fundamental to what the documentary has to say about the nature and function of film, as such and as a part of human and cinematic history. The loss of the sound-reel to a film entitled *The Photograph* is a particularly

apposite, if challenging, irony in itself but more ironic still is the consequent benefit this has of serving to highlight the highly self-referential nature of a film about film, that is, about both a photographic-film and the documentary film in which the filmmakers are present (even the cameraman appears courtesy of a second cameraman). If the tint to the black-and-white documentary is not also an unintentional serendipitous result of its having lain in the archives for so many years, it may refer not only to the photograph in question but also to early cinema, thus showing how moving pictures and still-life photographs are all part of the same process of recording human life. Furthermore, the documentary's implicit commentary on film-as-photograph creating more film-as-film finds an illustrated correlative in Kieślowski's use of an example of life in the past to provoke reactions in life in the present, indicating that the static past and photograph alike can be animated. This fertile relationship between the photograph and the film it inspired is developed quite unconsciously by the participants. Several people approach Kieślowski a number of times but it is never clear – and the addition of the soundtrack would not necessarily elucidate this – whether this is because of their fascination with the original photograph or the film being currently made. The fact that, as Kieślowski doubtless intended, the title-word *zdjęcie* can mean either 'photograph' or 'film-shot'/'film-take' reveals the legitimacy of both reactions – to judge that this is a film purely about either a photograph or a film is to limit the possibilities and intelligence at work – whilst further underscoring the fact of the *zdjęcie/Zdjęcie* being both provocation and result.

There is playfulness at work in this documentary, which has the viewer watching Kieślowski's observational moving pictures of people looking at a photo, seemingly removed from the more dangerous aspects of voyeurism to be found in his later films on the theme of observation-as-creation, such as *Amator* (*Camera Buff*, 1979) and *Krótki*

film o miłości (*A Short Film about Love*, 1988). Nevertheless, despite being pleased with his film,²⁸ Kieślowski never again adopted the confrontational and self-participatory role associated with *cinéma vérité*, not that he abstained from pulling the strings in the background, and to increasing effect, in his final feature films. *Cinéma vérité* and Direct Cinema are both styles of documentary that seek immediacy and intimacy but through opposing means. Exponents of the former, such as Marcel Ophuls and Nick Broomfield, engage actively with their subjects before the camera. However, the vast majority of Kieślowski's documentaries exemplify the latter style, that of directors such as D. A. Pennebaker and Frederick Wiseman, who attempted to intrude as little as possible upon their subjects, and observe their subjects as unobtrusively as possible. *The Photograph* does look for intimacy – tellingly, the drawing back of the camera reveals that the boys are actually just two chosen from a group photograph, demonstrating Kieślowski's deliberate narrowing down to find two individuals – but the preoccupation with the search for the protagonists and a multitude of participants suggests the result is essentially skin-deep. By contrast, *I was a Soldier*, made in the style of Direct Cinema, focuses on five protagonists but with such intensity and uninterrupted from outside sources that the resulting film is one of the best examples of Kieślowski's successful filming of the inner sphere of real-life individuals.

This is not to say that *I was a Soldier* and *The Photograph* differ greatly in their aims. Both are concerned with personal histories and their fusion in common memory, and both have Kieślowski observing his protagonists' reactions. Rather it is their utilisation of means and perhaps ultimate success that contrasts greatly. Kieślowski appears on screen in the films but whereas he is clearly visible in *The Photograph*, in *I*

²⁸ In 1973 Kieślowski called it the best of his films to date, Kołodyński (int.), 'Wywiad nie do druku (14 XII 1973)', p 6. It is precisely because Kieślowski rarely rated his own films highly that a positive comment from him is to be noted



was a Soldier he is barely noticeable. As he films the blind ex-combatants in their nursing-home the back of his head is often in the shot; at one point one can even see an ex-soldier through Kiesłowski's own glasses, which is noteworthy less for alluding to his motif of windows onto worlds than for not seeming a self-conscious and precious conceit. Yet despite his partially physically obscuring his subjects they remain the focus of attention. This is in part due to the deeply involving nature of their utterances but it also has much to do with the director's body language, which contrasts starkly with his constant and complete appearance in *The Photograph*. His unobtrusiveness makes him appear almost to be part of the on-screen mise-en-scene, perhaps another patient; alternatively yet simultaneously, his presence is reminiscent of a viewer sitting in a cinema getting just a little in the way of the viewer behind him, a beautiful and elegant metaphor for Kiesłowski's humble admission of his own possibly obstructive hand in the film.²⁹ Thus, his presence shows his solidarity with the soldiers – when one recounts how, following his disablement, he thought 'To po co żyć?' ('So what is there to live for?'), Kiesłowski clasps his hand to his head in a genuinely moving show of sympathy – but also with the audience with whom he is allied, and thus separated from the soldiers, in having the physical ability to see.

Kiesłowski's interviewing technique is as discreet in this film as it is blatant in *The Photograph*. He never utters a word throughout the film but allows instead the answers of the men to elucidate the questions that he clearly posed. The film consists of sections separated off by fades to white on which are transposed quotations from the section to come, and each section itself moves subtly from factual answers to more

²⁹ Only Kiesłowski's hand is visible on screen but off screen the film was co-written by Ryszard Zgorecki. Jadwiga Anna Łużyńska ('Fenomen Krzysztofa Kiesłowskiego cz. II', *Iluzjon*, Warsaw, nos. 1-4, 1995, p 26) also notes that Kiesłowski co-directed it with Andrzej Titkow, although the latter's precise function remains unclear. The credits are of little help, simply stating 'Realizacja' ('Made by') with Kiesłowski's name coming first and Titkow's just below. By contrast, the Kiesłowski filmography compiled by the Polish Film Institute makes no mention of Titkow.

private musings. Thus, the section entitled ‘Nieraz takie się śnią sny’ (‘Sometimes one dreams such dreams’) begins with the men telling of what they dream at night but moves to their telling of their daydreams and hopes. Similarly, ‘Trzeba było wtedy walczyć’ (‘One had to fight then’) opens with them discussing their reasons for fighting in combat but develops into their personal, individual battles with their disability. This technique clearly parallels Kieślowski’s preference for the men’s personal histories and inner thoughts over a broad and impersonal recounting of the Polish history of World War II. Nonetheless, although *I was a Soldier* is cut off from the specifics of contemporary Polish day-to-day reality precisely because this is how blindness affects the protagonists, it is their individual, inner suffering that adds particular depth and poignancy to a nation-wide feeling of defeat. The majority of Poles felt that their so-called liberation in 1945 by the Red Army constituted loss rather than victory in the Second World War but this is doubled for these men who suffered physical injury along with its concomitant psychological damage. Furthermore, if many Poles felt that their totalitarian state cut them off from the non-communist world, these men are the more distanced for not even being full members of their own society.

These ironies of double loss and distancing are added to by the individual ironies that afflict the ex-soldiers: several of them state that in their dreams they can see everything, moreover in colour, and sometimes things never seen before; one of them hoped to be a painter before suffering his injury; another regained a little of his sight before losing it completely. Whereas the paradoxes and ironies presented by *The Photograph* engage the intellect, these men’s utterances address the viewer’s feelings by being deeply involving, at times almost unbearably moving. The stoicism of the three older men is remarkable but Kieślowski also films two younger men who are clearly still

coming to terms with their affliction and bitterly aware of their savagely ironic fates.³⁰ Paradoxically, it is one young man's brutally short remarks that render his feelings so eloquently. Where the others are dressed casually and speak more, he is elegantly attired in a suit, his buttoning-up both literal and figurative. Far from these being metaphors externally imposed upon the men, the film convinces absolutely that they are in fact real and not imagined, that they are based in reality and stem from it. Similarly, if this particular protagonist's dark glasses remind film buffs of Zbigniew Cybulski in Andrzej Wajda's *Popiół i diament* (*Ashes and Diamonds*, 1958), this similarity results in actually highlighting the great discrepancy between the two films, perhaps suggesting reservations about Wajda's. In the earlier film the glasses are emblematic of the enigmatic but attractive personality of the Cybulski character, and his death, though far from heroic and honourable, nevertheless represents the death of heroism and honour. For the real-life ex-combatant in *I was a Soldier*, however, the glasses are not a prop that can be removed when he tires of playing at martyred heroics, and his fate to live on in the world of the sick and defeated is the more ironic because his real experiences will never be as widely known as those of a fictitious character.

The unsurprising Polish obsession with the war was as apparent amongst filmmakers as other people: between 1946 and 1975 one-sixth of all Polish features dealt with World War II or its immediate aftermath,³¹ and the Polish critic Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz noted in 1964 that making a war film was almost a prerequisite for Polish filmmakers.³² Kiesłowski's triumph, however, is to make a film about that war that refers to the past without ever moving from the present, moreover, that forgoes the heroics and

³⁰ The three older men clearly fought in World War II. The remaining two, in their early thirties, may have been injured when serving with the Polish Army post-1945. However, given that very young children did participate in World War II, notably in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, it is just possible that they fought and were injured in the 1940s.

³¹ Stanisław Kuszewski, *Contemporary Polish Film*, Warsaw. Interpress Publisher, 1978, p 40.

³² Frank Bren, *World Cinema 1: Poland*, rev. ed., Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1990, p 91.

martyrdom of fictional heroes in favour of bringing some attention to the plight of those forced to live in a world that is quite literally darkened. The final fade to black, as Paul Coates suggests, underlines the blindness and dashed hopes of these men.³³ Whether it also adds to the empathy of viewer for protagonists – whether in the nursing-home or cinema, all sit in darkness at the film’s end – or serves as a final reminder of the gulf between them and the viewer, who is present by virtue of being able to see and has the good fortune to know that the cinema lights will eventually go up, is the final enigma of a film concerned with the mysteries of fate and the inner life. What is certain, however, is that were it not for Kieślowski’s film, the separate worlds of observers and participants would never have come together for even so short a time.

* * *

URZĄD (THE OFFICE, 1966)

& REFREN (REFRAIN, 1972)

Although Kieślowski made *The Office* whilst studying at the Łódź Film School, this documentary signals the interest in the broader public world of Poland that characterises so many of his professional documentaries, especially the earlier ones. Based in a Social Security office, the film observes the interaction between claimants and workers over an unspecified period of time. At least, that is the seeming premise. In fact, the office is revealed to proffer little security, the social relations between staff and applicants are most notable for their virtual non-existence, and the continuous lack of resolution gives the illusion that the film lasts much longer than its actual six minutes.

³³ Paul Coates, ‘Kieślowski and the crisis of documentary’ in Coates (ed), *Lucid Dreams*, p.41.

The protagonists of this film are immediately presented as falling into the distinct camps of claimants and workers. It is the former who are in the majority, consisting of people all of whom are elderly, poor, downtrodden, and quite unaggressive, so much so that one might infer an ironic hint that they have become so in the course of the endless queuing, were it not that the working title *Renta (Pension)* implies Kieślowski chose such people intentionally. Their lack of energy is the more poignant for contrasting so harshly with the strength of the clerks, the strident timbre and volume of whose voices imply relative youth and vigour, albeit coupled with complete uninterest. This inequality owes less to age than to a system that confers power on those few in authority rather than the majority, a skewed relationship that depicts in the microcosm the unhappy state of People's Poland. A merciless Kafkaesque system rules this office, with applicants and staff falling into obvious and prescribed roles that can be transcended no more than the glass window separating the two groups. Indeed, if in other films Kieślowski suggests the potential to cross the divide, in *The Office* the window remains firmly in place, doubly impenetrable as nobody actually speaks through the hole provided to aid communication. Similarly, there is never a shot in which both clerks and applicants are present in full view, and the occasions on which the latter make the tentative query 'Proszę pani' ('Excuse me, please') only to receive the reply 'Proszę poczekać' ('Please wait'), revealing them to be more supplicants than applicants, emphasises the lack of equality. At best there is the ghostly mirroring of a clerk's face on the window behind which stands a claimant, maybe itself a joke as the clerks are present in body but certainly not spirit.

Kieślowski addresses this imbalance of power with the use of pointed editing to show his clear allegiance with the queuing people, cutting between the replies 'Please wait' and shots of clerks doing no more than sharpening pencils or making tea, chores that are clearly shown to be more important to them than the cases with which they are

faced and further distance them from the claimants who might reasonably expect their affairs to demand the greater part of the clerks' attention. Moreover, although Kieślowski shows the faces of those waiting to be heard, those of the staff are almost always partially obscured. Following the tea-making episode there are no more face-on views, even partial, of the clerks, so that the remaining voices and barely visible, obscured reflections imply the increasingly faceless nature of such bureaucracy with the progression of time. The youth and interchangeability of the staff suggest that this system will long outlive the people whom it is supposed to serve, as is exemplified in the final shots of shelves of documents over which the question 'Co pan(i) robił(a) na przestrzeni całego życia?' ('What have you done during the course of your life?') is repeated. The voice speaking changes but the question and attitude remain the same, whilst the claimants' implicit answer, in light of the endless queues and papers as summations of their lives, could well be 'Waited here'. That this impersonal and brutal bureaucracy takes no account of individuals is further underscored when a claimant's plea about finding it hard to cope unless her claim is accepted is followed by the voice of a new clerk already dealing with a different applicant, leaving the conclusion of the first case disturbingly unresolved.

Kieślowski's active authorial and editorial stance is most marked in his manner of co-ordinating the sound and images in *The Office*. A few brief occasions aside, there is no synchronicity between sound and visuals, the sound being at variance with the picture either because it refers to something contradicted by the image – at one point the clerk is heard talking but the shot shows her mouth to be resolutely closed – or because it refers to something that exists beyond the picture, as when images of queuing people are overlaid with voices of clerks. Such imaginative editing of sound to film is in part a synthesising of events, allowing Kieślowski to present the viewer with more information than would be possible with a sound-reel that concurred absolutely with the on-screen picture and

thus making the film's seeming length reflect the endless waiting and bureaucracy. More crucially, Kieślowski emphasises with this lack of co-ordination the extent to which the worlds of claimants and staff are at odds: any applicant's query is countered by a clerk addressing a different applicant, excluding all possibility of fruitful communication. The uncertainty produced by this method is further magnified by Kieślowski's never showing a completed, let alone successful, case; the viewer can only hope that the claimants have had their applications resolved, successfully or even unsuccessfully. Instead, Kieślowski's focus falls on the machinery of bureaucracy that functions continuously without actually settling anything.

Refrain is the companion-piece to *The Office*, having the similar theme of the effects of bureaucracy upon people and employing the same technique of unsynchronised sound and images to add to the nightmarish tone. Made six years later, it is also a development of the earlier film, being at once a satire on, exposé of, and commentary on society but in no way suggesting that things have progressed. Where *The Office* depicts people trying to eke out a meagre existence, the setting of *Refrain* in a state-run office dealing with deaths and funerals might suggest that this is the resting-place of the claimants of the former documentary. In this bureau staff and customers alike display a matter-of-factness quite incompatible with the expected tone of grief and there is no longer a sharp distinction between paper-pushing officials and sympathetic applicants. The visual presentation of staff and customers is a reversal of that in *The Office* – now it is the masses who are unseen and faceless, whilst those in control have many faces, albeit all representing one god of bureaucracy – and consequently leaves a vacuum for the viewer's sympathy. In particular, the face-on depictions of the clerks in the opening sequences, almost squaring with the points of view of the customers, give the illusion of it being the viewer sitting in their seats, so that only the onlooker's tragi-comic horror at

that on show exists to fill the space left by the clients' unvoiced grief. Kieślowski suggests this totalitarian functionality concerned solely with facts and figures has led to a loss of human and humane values, as the one individual shown to be sorrowing is a woman concerned that she is unable to purchase her grave in advance of her death, a scene at once grim and comic. He appears ambivalent as to whether the fault lies with the administration, continual questions, and forms that allow no place for grieving, or rather whether ordinary Poles no longer have the inclination for it. However, read in the context of *The Office, Refrain* demonstrates that if Poles have been shaped by the constraints of the system such as that portrayed in earlier documentary, their assumption, intentional or not, of its impersonality upholds that very system. Kieślowski's portrayal of the hand the state has in death all the way from registering it to burying the deceased implies that this is no more than an extension of its having caused death-in-life, its malignantly objectifying influence over all aspects of life emphasised by the final moments in which rows of plaques, ribbons, and other funeral accoutrements are followed by shots of tagged new-born babies in hospital. Even the anticipated tranquillity of any next world is undermined by the opening shots of, appropriately, an official's hand destroying the documents of the deceased, the handheld camera adding to the sense of brutality characteristic of a regime that will not permit its former citizens to rest in peace.

Such black humour – it is not as though the passports being destroyed could assist their former holders in travelling to the next world – punctuates the film and literally colours it. The action is mostly set against a highly stylised background of intense darkness that jokingly hints at the underworld but is also a sinister reminder of how this office is indicative of the other-world that is totalitarian, public Poland. Occasional pans to the window revealing the hustle and bustle of life outside the office offer, also literally, some light relief but just as the lives of the passers-by are limited – how long before they

enter the office as customers or corpses? – so too is this respite short-lived. The intermittent snatches of music by Vivaldi also disrupt the action inside the office but at the cost of doing the same to the viewer's expectations. This strident and frenetic music is strikingly inappropriate for a place that ought to feature mourning and elegy but horribly, almost comically apposite in that its incongruity simply echoes the actual behaviour on display. Such satirical black humour is, in a broader sense, no more than an acceptance of the absurdity of human life and endeavour in light of the death that comes to everyone. Nevertheless, in exposing the manner in which the state deals with death and burial in *Refrain*, Kiesłowski shows it to have a particular gruesomeness very much rooted in the specific society of contemporary Poland. As time revealed, old Polish habits die hard. The final irony is that the bureaucracy continuing between *The Office* and *Refrain* refused to stay buried in either the past or films: Kiesłowski's own funeral in 1996, organised only after the undergoing of intricate formalities, took place one hundred yards from the office he had filmed almost a quarter of a century earlier.³⁴

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³⁴ See comments made by Witold Stok, Kiesłowski's colleague and cinematographer on films including *Refrain*, in Geoffrey Macnab & Chris Darke (int), 'Working with Kiesłowski', *Sight & Sound*, vol 6, issue 5, 5-1996, p 16

MIĘDZY WROCŁAWIEM A ZIELONĄ GÓRĄ

(BETWEEN WROCLAW & ZIELONA GÓRA, 1972),

PODSTAWY BHP W KOPALNI MIEDZI

(THE PRINCIPLES OF SAFETY & HYGIENE IN A COPPER MINE, 1972),

& Z MIASTA ŁODZI (FROM THE CITY OF ŁÓDŹ, 1969)

Whether because the film industry in Poland in the early 1970s was undergoing financial difficulties or because Kieślowski was coming to the attention of the censor and having difficulty getting funding, in 1972 he agreed to make two commissioned films.³⁵ As might be expected from films made to order, *Between Wrocław & Zielona Góra* and *The Principles of Safety and Hygiene in a Copper Mine* are fairly anonymous, dull pieces bearing little sign of the director's hand. It is this dissimilarity to Kieślowski's customary technique, however, which renders them interesting in terms of the light they shed upon the rest of his work. Both have an authoritative narrator – in *Between Wrocław & Zielona Góra* a young man narrates a letter in which he describes the many benefits of working and living in Lubin, and in *The Principles of Safety and Hygiene in a Copper Mine* the narrator adds commentary as a young man demonstrates the correct behaviour in a mine – which is unique to these films. Indeed, the director's seeming appearance in the latter as a miner telling a novice what to do is something of an in-joke, given his life-long dislike of assuming the authority to tell people how to behave.³⁶ This sense of faint unreality in an apparently educational film is furthered by the jolly soundtrack, which affects to make

³⁵ Kieślowski thinks that he made four commissioned films (Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, pp.51-54), including one about a Lublin watchmakers' co-op and another for a Warsaw co-op about craftsmen. However, Film Polski (Polish Film Institute, Warsaw), the Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych (Documentary Production Studio, Warsaw), the production company that made his two known commissioned films, and the FilMOTEKA Narodowa (National Film Library, Warsaw) make no reference to these documentaries in any of their catalogues, books, or journals. Presumably, they are lost.

³⁶ It is not entirely clear whether it is Kieślowski playing the miner as the credits fail to list the actors.

one believe that work as a miner is a pleasant and light-hearted affair, and the obviously dressed-up actor playing the novice, whose overabundant clothing and apparel is risible in comparison to that of the genuine miners who are stripped because of the heat and restricted space. Even the comic cartoons illustrating the potential fatal dangers are intentionally fantastic: Kiesłowski could hardly depict a person actually being crushed to death but the alternative is so childish as to constitute a slap in the face of reality.

Between Wrocław & Zielona Góra is also unreliable in the facts it professes to display. The same actor discusses the joys of life in not only the mine but Lublin itself, accompanied by glorious colour images illustrating the attractions of this city to another cheerful soundtrack. A highly-paid job, decent and plentiful accommodation, first-rate schools and nurseries, athletic and swimming facilities, shops brimming with luxury goods on which to spend those generous wages, beautiful young people enjoying themselves, good restaurants and theatres, and all manner of sporting activities are supposedly on offer in this city. However, it is this very litany of attractions, piling up to the point of absurdity, which warns against taking the film's meaning at face value. In fact, this, and to a lesser extent the other commissioned film, are examples of the propaganda so beloved by the recently-formed Gierek regime, desirous of convincing its citizens that they lived in a happy Poland in which the government took good care of society in every respect.³⁷ Even a commissioned film cannot completely avoid the realities of life, and the final moments in which the hitherto carefree narrator takes on an official and hurried tone as he tells applicants to provide five type of official identification when applying to move to Lubin represent the all-important small print.³⁸ Likewise, the falseness of these images becomes the more apparent when compared with the specifics

³⁷ Edward Gierek became leader of Poland after Władysław Gomułka was toppled in December 1970 as a result of riots stemming from intended food-price rises. For further details see Davies, *Heart of Europe*, pp 14-15.

³⁸ Poles had to register in particular cities and were not able to re-settle without official permission

and general bleakness of life portrayed in Kieślowski's other documentaries, the 4000zł monthly wage utterly at odds with that of the factory-workers of *Workers '71: Nothing About Us Without Us* who earn only 36zł for an eight-hour day.

The constraints imposed by the censor – doubly so in the case of such commissioned work – were nothing new to the director whose graduating film, *From the City of Łódź*, had been shelved despite his making changes as asked, but the portrayal of a city and its inhabitants in that earlier film is at once more realistic and successful in engaging the sympathies of the viewer. Work and leisure feature in it as they do in the commissioned films, both often falling into the same sphere of public life in accordance with the intention of the state, as opening shots of a textiles factory in which female workers practise physical exercises during their break indicate. A little later, the same women protest against the threatened disbanding of the Ciuksza workers' mandolin orchestra, demanding their right as workers in a country supposedly governed by the workers to have this music via the radio accompany them in their labours. What is notable, however, is the good humour with which these women present themselves, smiling as they chant 'Chcemy zespół Ciukszy!' ('We want Ciuksza's band!') because they recognise the matter to be at once fun and a little absurd. Indeed, Kieślowski's very willingness to film what seems to be surprisingly most important to these women given their difficult working conditions – an exterior shot of the factory shows its resemblance to stacked cages – reveals his empathy. If he smiles a little at their mock-protest – at the height of the chanting, Kieślowski's cut to a man holding his hands up to request silence eventually reveals this individual to be not a manager impervious to their protests but the Ciuksza conductor waiting for silence before he goes about leading his band – he is also smiling with them. Indeed, he endorses their taking the music as a lighthearted counter to their daily drudgery by employing it himself to overlay images of empty streets and

buildings and half built houses, so that an elderly lady's seemingly exaggerated claim that the music '...po prostu daje nam życie' ('...quite simply gives us life') is borne out by the gentle and poignant melody doing precisely that for an otherwise depressed city.

This witty and good-natured editing by the director is in evidence throughout the film, always accompanied by music that is clearly so close to the hearts of the people of this city. In another example of personal matters being incorporated into the public sphere, the sung farewell of 'Sto lat'³⁹ to a retiring worker merges with the same song now sung by pensioners celebrating their gratitude for being cared for by their former place of employment. When depicting an outdoor concert, Kieślowski cuts from a young man singing a song about the somewhat suspect relationships between soldiers and their girls – 'Żołnierz dziewczynie nie skłamię/ Choć wszystko jej nie powie' ('A soldier won't lie to his girl / Although neither will he tell her everything') – to a soldier looking on guardedly. Perhaps the most notable episode comes at the end when a song performed at the same concert switches from being an internal dialogue to becoming an external commentary as the camera records more images of Łódź houses:

Tego miasta nie ma na świecie,
Lecz przecież gdzieś chyba jest,
Kiedyś dojdziemy wręczcie,
Zacznijemy spokojnie żyć,
W dobrym mieście, łagodnym mieście
Bo taki gdzieś musi być.
Może leży na świata końcu,
To miasto najlepsze z miast,
Może świeci jak diament w słońcu
A może jest tylko blask.

This city is not on the map
But yet it surely must exist somewhere,
Someday we'll get there at last,
We'll begin to live at leisure,
In a good city, a gentle city,

³⁹ This song is the equivalent of 'Happy Birthday, as in the first case, or 'For he's a jolly good fellow', as in the second. The words and tune remain the same whatever the usage.

For one like that must exist somewhere.
 Maybe it lies at the world's end,
 This city above all cities,
 Maybe it shines like a diamond in the sun,
 Or maybe there is only its radiance.

Again, it is the song that, despite its title 'Smutna, szara Łódź' ('Sad, grey Łódź') adds warmth to images of a dilapidated city. Kieślowski originally intended a different ending with tram after tram passing in different directions through the rain-swept streets taking people home from work, whose faces in close-up behind the rain-covered windows, in the opinion of the director, conveyed many meanings. Although forced to change this ending because it was shot in a square containing the statue of Polish revolutionary leader, Tadeusz Kościuszko, which was not to the authorities' liking, he maintained that it would have been in the spirit of a film showing the hard life of the city's inhabitants.⁴⁰ Certainly, there is an irony in so unaggressive and gentle a film being considered potentially inflammatory, not least when the populace have been shown to get most stirred up over a band and not, as would be their prerogative, over the arduous conditions of their daily life. Nevertheless, each version of the ending gives credence to his affectionate and sympathetic portrayal of a town which, described by him in later years as being full of absurdities and eccentricities,⁴¹ seems almost like a world in itself for these very reasons. Like so many of the emotions expressed in *From the City of Łódź* – for the Ciuksza band, by the retiring lady for her factory and co-workers, by a pensioner for the factory and city alike, in fact, for all for things associated with the city – those in this final song might seem almost comically inflated were it not that their very vehemence revealed them to be genuine and touching. In filming them Kieślowski simultaneously captures the spirit of this world and his own fondness for city and people alike.

⁴⁰ Łużyńska, 'Fenomen Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego cz. 1', p.16.

⁴¹ Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p.45.

FABRYKA (THE FACTORY, 1970),
PRZED RAJDEM (BEFORE THE RALLY, 1971),
& ROBOTNICZY '71: NIC O NAS BEZ NAS
(WORKERS '71: NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US, 1972)

Made over three consecutive years, *The Factory*, *Before the Rally*, and *Workers '71* display Kieślowski's growing disillusion with the state of Poland, in particular, the insurmountable rift between workers and those in control, who at the smaller level were the managers of factories but in the macrocosm consisted of the government that made the ultimate proclamations. The broader problems of the impersonality and indifference of the public realm as depicted in *The Office* and *Refrain* are narrowed down, with Kieślowski's focus homing in on the alleged political notion of Poland as the workers' country. What these films reveal is that not only were workers, managers, and governmental authorities in different camps instead of a unified public sphere, with the vast majority dissatisfied but, worse still, that these groups likewise contained rifts and splits starkly contradictory of an ideology which proclaimed all to be united and working towards a single purpose. In short, Kieślowski shows Poland to be a 'state' most clearly in the pejorative sense of the word.

The Factory is the earliest of these films and according to Jacek Petrycki, Kieślowski's cinematographer on other documentaries and feature films, groundbreaking in its manner of showing the Polish reality of the time.⁴² Based in the Ursus tractor factory, the film alternates between workers producing the vehicles and managers at a board meeting discussing the likely future of the plant. Maintaining the same solidarity

⁴² Stanisław Zawisliński (ed), *O Kieślowskim.. refleksje, wspomnienia, opinie*, Warsaw. Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p.45.

with the underclasses (in Kieślowski's terms, those lacking authority) that he shows in *The Office*, *From the City of Łódź*, and other early films, the director opens and closes *The Factory* with shots of the workers doing what they must whilst the management bickers. There is a strict visual and ironic division between the factory floor, its great din and darkness punctuated by the occasional hellish puff of smoke and fire that fail to impede the workers in their labours, and the artificially-lit directors' meeting, the participants of which are utterly unenlightened with regard to the position of each other. The medium-to-long shots of the workers stand in relief to the close-ups of the managers, highlighting the contrast between the doers, who use their entire bodies, and talkers, only whose heads need be in shot. Similarly, the synthesised editing of the workers indicates their getting on with things, whereas Kieślowski's oft-employed technique of having the sound at variance with the picture suggests the internal strife taking place in the board meeting.

Nevertheless, although the lighting may be chiaroscuro, the typification of directors and workers is not so banal. The wandering camera that rests upon the faces of managers as an off-screen person talks depicts literally and figuratively their own disenchantment with the state of affairs. The restless movement from person to person also reflects the lack of authority at this meeting: many are present but no one is in control, even the manager who is most vociferous ultimately lacking the power to alter or correct things. The squabbling of these supervisors initially reveals them to be at fault for abnegating responsibility for the problems at the factory, each one accusing another of not doing his part. What becomes increasingly clear, however, is that they have genuine cause for not accepting all of the blame, these problems at factory-level being not merely reflected but also caused by those at the national level. Suppliers deliver faulty goods and buyers fail to follow-up orders promised in 1969; the regions of Poland fail to co-operate

or co-ordinate their needs, thus inhibiting the factory's supply and demand; a lack of parts initially blamed on the managers' deficient paperwork is in fact the result of a nationwide shortage of supplies; and governmental authorities provide no help in clearing up these problems at either the macro or micro levels. The issues broaden out until suddenly what began as a discussion about a single factory comes to encompass the problems suffered by the entire country.

Kieślowski does not need to hint slyly that the factory's troubles are an allegory for those of Poland, since his protagonists make this correlation between the specific and general explicit for him as they deal with the internal, external, and ultimately nationwide problems. The factory is at once an element of the whole and a copy of it in miniature. With the allegory being played out on screen, the viewer automatically transforms the ostensible question 'how long can the factory function under such conditions?' into 'how long can Poland function like this?'. In practice, the workers manage to build tractors, or maintain the Polish economy, as the final shots of the vehicles being driven out of the plant evince, but the uncertain future of the factory, given the unresolved and unproductive discussions taking place at the table, is troublingly indicative of the unpromising future of People's Poland.

As the shift from tractors to racing-cars suggests, *Before the Rally* is another portrayal, at once allegorical and literal, of the worsening conditions in the country. This depiction of the preparations made for the 1971 Monte Carlo Car Rally by a real-life Fiat team led by the driver Krzysztof Komornicki fulfils the dire prophecy of *The Factory* by revealing even greater rottenness in the state of Poland. Where in *The Factory* the managers and workers desired to make the factory function properly, albeit with only the latter managing this, in *Before the Rally* the aims of those involved diverge so as to prevent any successful co-operation. The managers and workers at the car-plant are at

odds with Komornicki, arguing that the latter can only be given that which they have. This shortage of parts broadens into a shortage of labour and will, with the division between the workers and crew being given an appropriately ironic twist when the latter find that the spare tyres have turned up but that the car-plant mechanics have instead 'pojechali' ('driven off'), which is clearly more than Komornicki will be able to do. In part it is this country-wide scarcity of materials, caused by the national mismanagement already evident in *The Factory*, that is shown to worsen relations between people and cause them to separate off into factions defending their own goals. Alternatively yet concurrently, the workers' indifference towards the car-crew and vice versa implicitly stems from the inability of the socialist system to compensate, let alone reward, the people it proclaims to serve, leading to Poles' complete uninterest in the public sphere and the fulfilment of their roles within it: if the well-paid government cannot perform its duty of governing wisely, why should its people take any interest in their underpaid jobs? The impersonal and bureaucratic totalitarian ideology shown to breed a lack of humanity and mutual understanding in Kiesłowski's other documentaries here results in an apathy, moreover, a lack of national pride, that cannot be overcome even by the promise of Polish success in the international sporting world.

This is not to say that nothing is achieved in *Before the Rally*. Interspersed with the scenes of arguing workers, managers, and crew are lyrical shots of the car driving uninterrupted along blissfully open roads, offering some much needed relief. These short scenes become progressively optimistic, moving from an initial exterior shot of the moving car, to an exterior side-shot showing the driver, with the camera's final interior position in the driving-seat implying a sense of hitherto unprecedented control. In fact, these brief respites and the final moments in which the completed car is presented to a cheering public turn out, in retrospect, to mock cruelly any thought of success. Whereas

Kieślowski makes it implicit that the Ursus plant in *The Factory* faces collapse despite the tractors leaving it at the end, in *Before the Rally* he explicitly states the failure of this enterprise, following the shot of the car speeding towards the rally with a title-card stating that, this being the slowest of the Polish teams in the rally, it withdrew before completing the eleventh stage. Again, where the earlier film suggests the potential for collapse at a national level, this documentary makes plain how Poland's problems cause it to fall behind in the international arena.

This broadening from the national public sphere to the international is most emphatic in *Workers '71*, a documentary about the aftermath of Polish events that made headlines around the entire world. The deposition of Władysław Gomułka following the Baltic Riots of December 1970 over proposed rises in food-prices led to the installation of Edward Gierek as leader of Poland, who visited the workers in the shipyards and factories and promised reforms. *Workers '71* was ordered by the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, which supposedly governed the state on behalf of the workers and was supposed to have implemented reforms, to record a true picture of the working classes, expecting this to vindicate the alleged improvements and the vision of society and authorities united. Kieślowski together with Tomasz Żygadło accepted the commission, utilising resources including seven crews and a helicopter and shooting huge amounts of material, as befitted a project with so broad a scope.⁴³ The result is a sprawling documentary depicting various aspects of the workers' lot divided into demarcated segments, moving from scenes of personnel at their place of work to longer sequences involving a series of meetings concerning a future convention of the Polish United Workers' Party.

The film's movement, however, indicates Poland's regression. This divided state

⁴³ Stok interviewed in Macnab & Darke (int.), 'Working with Kieślowski', p 16.

is characterised by figures of authority who are wordy at every opportunity and employees who have little chance to air their grievances and, moreover, rightly fear reprisal despite the supposed liberalism of this brave new era. The slogans promoting socialism that cover the walls passed by a train-load of silent workers at the film's opening are as meaningless as the endless and confusing debating that takes place as members of the Polish United Workers' Party vote for a delegate to represent them at a future convention. In addition to being in stark contrast to the earlier section in which workers concisely and cogently explain their appalling working conditions, such rambling is even less sympathetic because the workers' supposed representatives take no account of these earlier complaints, proving the subtitle, *Nothing About Us Without Us*, ironic – doubly so as it was the slogan adopted by the Polish gentry in the eighteenth century in their struggle against Absolutism⁴⁴ – and untrue. That mere sound is an untrustworthy guide to the state of affairs, or more broadly, that Gierek's rhetoric has no basis in fact, is emphasised by Kiesłowski and Zygałło at the outset by the pleasant guitar music playing incongruously as tired employees descend from the train that takes them to work. Worse still, the re-employment of this melody to overlay, again jarringly, the final images of a smoke-ridden and ugly place signifies the lack of change, let alone progress, within both the film and Poland.

If the internal picture of *Workers '71* denies the supposed reforms of the Gierek government, so too did the manner in which the final product was handled by the authorities prove the makers right. The kind of reprisals for airing one's grievances that one on-screen worker claim to have suffered in the past were re-demonstrated off screen when a sound-reel for the film was confiscated.⁴⁵ Moreover, having cut controversial

⁴⁴ Davies, *Heart of Europe*, p 407.

⁴⁵ Lothar Kampatzki & Andreas Voigt (dir), *Kiesłowski*, prod. 'a jour' Film in Auftrag des Bayerischen Rundfunks, 1995 (see also transcript in Piotr Łazarkiewicz (int), 'Zapis I' *Reżyser*, no 65, 3-1997, p 3)

scenes and added more optimistic music and commentary, the authorities ordered the filmmakers to keep their names on the new version, now entitled *Gospodarze*,⁴⁶ if they ever hoped to make another film.⁴⁷ Ultimately, neither version ever received an official release but the original clearly had an impact on those Polish filmmakers at the time who somehow managed to see it. By 1980, the slogan ‘nothing about us without us’ would be appropriated by yet a third set of protesters, this time the Gdańsk shipyard workers whose strike would eventually lead to the formation of Solidarity, and although this was not necessarily in homage to *Workers '71*, the film made by Andrzej Chodakowski and Andrzej Zajączkowski about those strikes entitled *Robotnicy '80* (*Workers '80*, 1980) certainly was.

Where Kieślowski was concerned, this experience in filming the public world on so broad a scale led him to forgo any similar attempts, never again utilising the panoramic view displayed in *Workers '71*. The effect of politics upon the Polish public sphere remains a focus of his later films, but it would increasingly give way to that of the effect of the system upon the personal world of the individual.

* * *

With these early films Kieślowski concentrates on depicting and exploring the Polish public world through a series of specific settings. That the sufferers of the problems portrayed are somewhat anonymous and mostly group-based only serves to highlight the extent to which the issues of powerlessness and disenfranchisement pervaded contemporary society. This much established, then, it would be with his later

⁴⁶ In this context this is probably best translated as ‘masters’.

⁴⁷ Jacek Petrycki writing in Zawislinski (ed), *O Kieślowskim*, p 46. Curiously, Witold Stok, one of the cameramen on the film, says the makers did take their names off, Stok interviewed in Macnab & Darke (int), ‘Working with Kieślowski’, p 16

documentaries that Kieślowski focused on the kinds of individuals who made People's Poland but who also were made by it.

CHAPTER 2

The Later Documentaries 1973-1980

Following his unhappy experiences when making *Robotnicy '71: nic o nas bez nas* (*Workers '71: Nothing About Us Without Us*, 1972), Kieślowski never again ventured into the filming of specific political events, even though demonstrations in Poland and social dissatisfaction with the political regime continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Riots that took place in Poznań in 1956 are mentioned in *Murarz* (*The Bricklayer*, 1973) and *Nie wiem* (*I Don't Know*, 1977) only briefly and comparable events contemporaneous to the later documentaries go unmentioned. Instead, Kieślowski continued to film the “small”, that is, commonplace people and events with no broader significance, despite growing in fame and garnering critical acclaim in the second half of the 1970s. As with his earlier work, he continued to focus on life as seen from below and within, and not from above.

However, with his later films the director did show a new tendency. Whereas the early documentaries focus on the group, resulting in little or no individualisation, the subjects of the later documentaries are often particular human beings. Four of the documentaries take individuals as their topic (*The Bricklayer*, *Życiorys* (*Curriculum Vitae*, 1975), *Z punktu widzenia nocnego portiera* (*From a Night Porter's Point of View*, 1977), and *I Don't Know*), *Pierwsza miłość* (*First Love*, 1974) observes the lives of a young couple, and *Prześwietlenie* (*X-Ray*, 1974), like the earlier *Byłem żołnierzem* (*I was a Soldier*, 1970), depicts a handful of men. There is also significant characterisation and individualisation in *Szpital* (*The Hospital*, 1976) and *Gadające głowy* (*Talking Heads*, 1980), and even the seven unidentified participants of *Siedem kobiet w różnym wieku* (*Seven Women of Different Ages*, 1978) are differentiated. Only *Dworzec* (*The Station*,

1980), which is set in Warsaw Central Railway Station, differs substantially, its anonymous station-workers and travellers lacking clear individualisation and unconscious of their participation in the film.¹

Kieślowski's continued interest in reality, now combined with a concentration upon the individual human being, means that the question of 'Jak żyć?' ('How to live?'), acknowledged by him in later years as underlying his oeuvre, first becomes paramount in these documentaries.² With People's Poland still forming the background to his films, he would now look at those who shaped it but also at those shaped by it in their personal and public lives and private convictions alike. Indeed, the uneasy interplay between these, more often resulting in tension and conflict than harmony, is a theme of many of these documentaries and suggests not all Poles suffered the deep split between the public and private realms of life that one Polish sociologist contends.³ The porter in *From a Night Porter's Point of View* is probably the individual whose private and official lives are most manifestly entwined: notably, he is also the most at ease of all of Kieślowski's protagonists with this state of affairs. However, the interdependence of the official roles and private feelings and actions of the protagonists of *The Bricklayer*, *Curriculum Vitae*, and *I Don't Know* is likewise studied in detail. The theme is altered in *X-Ray*, in which isolated tuberculosis patients grieve over their loss of status in the public world, and again in *First Love*, in which a young couple dealing with personal matters of marriage and impending parenthood are persistently made to reckon with public institutions. Finally, this concern finds a more positive expression in *The Hospital*: despite the film's being set

¹ The dancers in *Seven Women of Different Ages* also fail to acknowledge the presence of the camera. However, the relative intimacy of the camerawork implies that they knew they were being filmed.

² Zuzanna Jastrzębska, 'Chwila namysłu', *Filipinka*, Warsaw, no 21 21-10-1979, p 7, Stanisław Zawisliński (int), 'Jeden na jednego' in Stanisław Zawisliński *et al*, *Kieślowska bez konca*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1994, p 44, & Danusia Stok (ed), *Kieślowska on Kieślowski*, London: Faber, 1993, p 79.

³ Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński, 'Polish society after the communist experiment' in George Blazyca & Ryszard Rapacki (ed), *Poland into the 1990s: Economy & Society in Transition*, London: Pinter Publishers, 1991, p 7 (quoted in Introduction, p 27)

in an institution and taking the point of the view of the doctors, namely, those in authority, the doctors' official function is shown not to get in the way of their personal sympathy for their patients.⁴ What, however, remains constant during this period is the prevalence of the public sphere: whether individuals long for it (*X-Ray*), admire its values (*From a Night Porter's Point of View*), have been damaged by it (*Curriculum Vitae* and *I Don't Know*), or hindered (*First Love* and *The Station*), it has an inescapable significance in their lives. Only the abstract *Seven Women a Week* completely ignores this sphere, although notably it also makes no reference to the personal lives of its protagonists though inner feelings are hinted at.

Although his progression from the earlier films means that Kieślowski was now looking at individuals as fully formed protagonists, as mentioned his concentration upon ordinary, unknown people continued. He once explained that he forwent "big heroes" as they could not carry a universal message about life, and certainly, it is his protagonists' status as "everymen" and "everywomen", flaws and all, which arouses the viewer's empathy and gives their fates a broader application.⁵ This unceasing interest in the everyday led the Polish film critic Tadeusz Sobolewski to compare the technique of *First Love* and *The Hospital*, as well as *The Photograph* and *From the City of Łódź*, with the *poezjo-proza* ('poetry-prose') of Miron Białoszewski.⁶ The comparison is an astute one, not least since Kieślowski grew up at the time of Białoszewski's spreading fame, but the director's method may also have resulted from his reaction to the broader influence of his socio-political environment. Whereas the totalitarian system views the individual in terms

⁴ *The Hospital* is one of Kieślowski's very few demonstrations in his documentaries and fictional films alike of those in authority not abusing their power. As explained in the specific analysis of the film below, this perhaps results from the fact of the doctors themselves being low down in the pecking order

⁵ Jerzy Pawlas (int.), 'Zająć się tym, co się dzieje wokół', *Tygodnik Kulturalny*, Warsaw, no 6, 10-2-1980.

⁶ Tadeusz Sobolewski, 'Wszyscy tam byliśmy' in Stanisław Zawiśliński (ed.), *O Kieślowskim ..refleksje, wspomnienia, opinie*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p.14. Miron Białoszewski (1922-1983) was a Polish poet and writer famed for elevating the seemingly mundane and ordinary to the status of literature; see Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, 2nd ed., Berkeley & California: University of California Press, 1983, p 479 & p.534.

of the group model, Kieślowski looks at the individual *per se*, progressively arguing in these and later films that such a specific and intense focus leads to universal truths and application. The further paradox is that not only do the personal and inner experiences of his protagonists become publicly known via the films, but also that the similarity of events and feelings expressed by different people suggests that such things are in fact widespread, and that what is private may be singular and individualised yet not exclusive. As the Polish critic Tomasz Piątek points out, Kieślowski showed that the everyday nature of tragedies made them no less significant.⁷

Yet another exception is that it is precisely the ordinariness of Kieślowski's protagonists and their situations which, as in the work of Białoszewski, makes the films stand out against the prevailing and deeply-rooted tradition of Polish Romanticism, a tradition that likes its heroes and circumstances to be, in a word, heroic. The director's refusal to define his protagonists using the black-and-white paradigm favoured by Polish Romanticism also marks out his work, his protagonists instead demonstrating a variety of emotions and motivations the more complex for stemming directly from the interchange between the public, personal, and inner lives. Kieślowski films the putative villains of his pieces, such as the porter in *From a Night Porter's Point of View* and the Party Control Committee in *Curriculum Vitae*, – in Poland at the time, widespread discontent meant that the term 'villain' referred to those in authority and their supporters – as they wished to be portrayed. Whatever Kieślowski's and the viewer's private feelings about these points of view, he presents their convictions in all sincerity, going so far as to say 'Ja pokazuję porządnych ludzi...Ja pokazuję ludzi, którzy chcą być uczciwi' ('I show decent people...I show people who want to be honourable').⁸ Kieślowski displays a keen sense

⁷ Tomasz Piątek, 'Boska tragedia (o recepcji twórczości Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego we Włoszech)' in Zawislinski (ed.), *O Kieślowskim*, p. 25.

⁸ Kieślowski quoted in *Tygodnik Kulturalny*, Warsaw, no. 40, 5-10-1980

of irony in his documentaries, notably, *From a Night Porter's Point of View*, but his tacit critique of his protagonists does not obstruct his faithful representation of their own convictions. Admittedly, it is in the best interest of documentary makers to treat their subjects respectfully if they do not wish to alienate current or future participants. Nevertheless, given the current political climate in Poland, Kieślowski's is an extraordinary statement given that his protagonists include Party members and government supporters, people ordinarily despised by the majority of Poles. In *The Bricklayer*, *Curriculum Vitae*, *From a Night Porter's Point of View*, and *I Don't Know*, Kieślowski does not accept, reject, nor directly comment upon the oral histories presented in each respective film. Instead, as he later explained, he attempted to understand and clarify, if not necessarily agree with, an individual's truth,⁹ however shaky it might appear to outsiders, and moreover, do so without taking a political stance:

'Nie byłem nigdy w żadnej opozycji. Ani przeciwko komuś, ani przeciwko czemuś. Moje filmy nie wynikały ani z mojej postawy opozycyjnej, ani konformistycznej, czy jakkolwiek by ją nazwać inaczej. Wynikały natomiast z poczucia realności sytuacji.'

'I was never in any opposition to anyone or anything. My films did not stem from my oppositional stance nor from a conformist stance, or however else it might be termed. Instead, they stemmed from a feeling of the reality of the situation.'¹⁰

In not being treated as guilty parties, those who participated in Kieślowski's documentaries can be characterised subjects, not victims. The director's later confession of not approving the release of a film of a major functionary discussing

⁹ Kieślowski explained that, rather than de-mask in his documentaries, he attempted to look close and understand, Stanisław Zawisliński, *Kieślowski*, 2nd ed, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p 48 See also Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 196

¹⁰ Jerzy Domagała (int), 'Co to znaczy?', *ITD Tygodnik Studencki*, Warsaw, no. 51, 18-12-1977.

party matters for fear of wrecking of the man's career was perhaps born out of hindsight.¹¹ after all, in the mid-1970s, he planned to make a lengthy documentary consisting of interviews in which major political figures of recent years, such as Władysław Gomułka and Mieczysław Moczar, explained their actions.¹² Nevertheless, he certainly did not intend to damage any of his actual participants, as his withdrawal of *From a Night Porter's Point of View* and *I Don't Know* indicates,¹³ and worried about the causing them problems through his filmmaking.¹⁴ The intimate revelations made by Kieślowski's subjects likewise point to the trust they reciprocated, a trust born of his painstaking attempts to reach an understanding with them by explaining his own motivations, which process could take far longer than the filming itself.¹⁵

Kieślowski's treatment of his most political-involved protagonists, namely, those in *The Bricklayer*, *Curriculum Vitae*, *From a Night Porter's Point of View*, and *I Don't Know*, questions the Polish Romantic convention of 'us/martyrs' versus 'them/traitors', their foci falling instead upon men who fit neither simplistic category any more than they separate off the personal and private from their public lives. With the possible exception of the bricklayer, the role of public official leaves the men isolated from the Polish

¹¹ François Forestier (int.), 'Przypadek i konieczność', *Film na Świecie*, Warsaw-Lódź, nos 3/4 (388/389), 1992, p 6 (trans. Piotr Szczepański from *Première*, 7-1991, France) It is not clear to which of his documentaries Kieślowski is referring

¹² Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 208 Although Kieślowski could not be accused of wishing to wreck these men's careers as they were no longer politically active and, in any case, he offered to have the documentary shelved in an archive, such a film, even hidden from public view, would almost certainly have worsened their already bad reputations. The politicians in question appeared to think so, as they refused to participate

¹³ Kieślowski stopped *From a Night Porter's Point of View* from being shown on Polish television (see individual analysis below) the Polish channel TVP, however, promptly broadcast it after the director's death in 1996. The issue is more clouded with *I Don't Know* the film premiered in 1981 but Kieślowski claimed also to have withheld this film, Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 74 Possibly he meant that it was not broadcast on television, as opposed to being withdrawn from the cinema

¹⁴ Zawislinski (int.), 'Jeden na jednego', p 19.

¹⁵ Urszula Rój (int.), 'Nie omijać rzeczywistości', *Trybuna Robotnicza (Magazyn niedzielny)*, Katowice, no. 130, 11 12-6-1977 Witold Stok, the cameraman for many of the documentaries, describes how Kieślowski often recorded the sound before shooting the film – this explains the voice-overs of *The Bricklayer* and *From a Night Porter's Point of View*– because the lack of cameras and lights made the process less intimidating and encouraged the participants to disclose things of a personal nature, Stok interviewed in Geoffrey Macnab & Chris Darke (int.), 'Working with Kieślowski', *Sight & Sound*, vol. 6, issue 5, 5-1996, pp.16-18

masses, but more surprisingly, it also alienates them from the regime they serve. This sense of remoteness was a developing concern of Kieślowski, later to be redirected by his increasing interest in the inner life, but at this early stage it is sheer, unsought isolation that permeates the documentaries. Kieślowski's depiction of men who were formerly in positions of authority within the Party after their fall from political grace may suggest the fallibility of human nature and transience of power and humanise the representatives of an impassive regime but in the cases of *Curriculum Vitae* and *I Don't Know* it also indicates the dangerous consequences of having such over-entwined public, personal, and inner lives; a failure in the public role necessarily yields concomitant insecurity in the personal and inner realms. Only the porter is brashly self-confident, but he appears as alienated from his fellow-Poles in his private life as he is insignificant for the state, despite his approval of it, as a non-member of the Party, and even his forthright opinions are shown to contain cracks and doubts.

This refusal by Kieślowski to employ black-and-white categorisation would become troublesome for him, living as he did in a country in which such typification was preferred even if, as his documentaries suggested, it was fallacious. His sympathetic representation of the lives and viewpoints of politically suspect protagonists was not intellectually difficult to grasp but rather morally problematic for the many Poles who wanted to see the status quo and their public world invalidated, not validated. Being presented with Party members and supporters in fact little different from nor more advantaged than ordinary Poles must have at least surprised viewers unused to seeing the gap between the authorities and the populace bridged. Indeed, Poles' insistence upon reading films in political terms led Kieślowski to protest in later years that people asked whether *Curriculum Vitae* was pro- or anti-communist, not if it was a good or bad film, a complaint that sums up the discrepancy he perceived between his and many Poles'

criteria when assessing films.¹⁶ Nevertheless, at this stage Kieślowski's films continued to be received well by audiences and critics alike. The public welcomed his documentaries, as indicated by the famous example of *From a Night Porter's Point of View* which, shown in a barely-accessible cinema in the suburbs of Warsaw and paired with a Mongolian feature, was packed out day after day by audiences who then left before the main film began.¹⁷ The critics were also full of praise for him,¹⁸ and he received prizes from a major national publication and a student newspaper¹⁹ as well as increasing numbers of awards at Polish film festivals and competitions held in Mannheim and Moscow.²⁰

Less straightforward was the attitude of Kieślowski towards his craft and his public. Even at this relatively early stage in his career he cared little for his profession,²¹ claimed to have no illusions about its usefulness or beauty,²² and already considered half of his films to be failures.²³ He would make similar statements far later in his career, but what is surprising is that the feelings expressed by an older and possibly jaded man correspond so closely to those he experienced almost two decades earlier. If in this, however, he showed no change throughout his career, his views about his audience were far more varied and ambiguous. In spite of stating that ‘..film jest przecież też rozmową’ (‘..film is, after all, also a conversation’)²⁴ and articulating similar thoughts concerning

¹⁶ Tadeusz Sobolewski (int.), ‘Normalna chwila’, *Kino*, Warsaw, 6-1990, p.22

¹⁷ Witold Stok interviewed in Macnab & Darke (int.), ‘Working with Kieślowski’, p 18.

¹⁸ SEG, ‘Telewizyjny raptularz Kieślowski nie daj się!’, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, Olsztyn, no. 282, 12-12-1976; & Cezary Prasek, ‘Kieslowski’, *Kobieta i Życie*, Warsaw, no 4, 23-1-1977

¹⁹ *Polityka* gave Kieślowski its annual prize “Drożdże” in 1976; Zygmunt Kałuzynski & Marian Turski (int.), ‘Zagładać ludziom pod czaszkę: Rozmowa z Krzysztofem Kieslowskim’, *Polityka*, Warsaw, no. 10, 6-3-1976, p 1 & p 10. Over a year later, he was celebrated by a student newspaper as one of twenty outstanding Poles, Jan Piasecki, ‘Taki, jak jego filmy’, *Sztandar Młodych*, Warsaw, no. 284, 29-11-1977.

²⁰ Having already received prizes for the earlier *I was a Soldier*, *Fabryka (The Factory, 1970)*, & *Workers '71*, Kieślowski garnered numerous awards for *First Love*, *Curriculum Vitae*, *The Hospital*, *From a Night Porter's Point of View*, and *Seven Women of Different Ages*. For more comprehensive details see Paul Coates (ed.), *Lucid Dreams: The Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski*, Wiltshire. Flicks Books, 1999, pp 175-180

²¹ Domagała (int.), ‘Co to znaczy?’, & Kałuzynski & Turski (int.), ‘Zagładać ludziom pod czaszkę’, p 10.

²² Hania Krall (int.), ‘Zrobiłem i mam’, *Polityka*, Warsaw, no. 4, 27-1-1979.

²³ Grazyna Banaszkiwicz (int.), ‘Z rzeczywistości’, *Tydzień*, Poznań, no 41, 14-10-79.

²⁴ Domagała (int.), ‘Co to znaczy?’.

his positive relationship with the viewer,²⁵ he frequently contradicted himself, going so far as to say that he made films ‘Dla siebie samego’ (‘For myself alone’).²⁶ This seeming declaration of solipsism would haunt Kiesłowski in later years and even after retiring from filmmaking he continued to defend himself, explaining that he had intended to convey that he made films for people like himself, rather than for himself alone.²⁷ Nevertheless, despite these belated explanations, there would be an essential alteration in future years in Kiesłowski’s attitude towards his audience, as observed by a colleague who noted that the young director’s disagreement with Andrzej Wajda in the 1970s over the relationship between film and audience – Kiesłowski, unlike Wajda, believed an unseen film remained, nonetheless, a film – evaporated upon his eventual conclusion that a film exists only in the act of being seen.²⁸

It was not only Kiesłowski’s rapport, or lack of it, with his viewers that began receiving attention during the 1970s but also his relations with his colleagues. The teamwork involved in the making of his films attracted little comment prior to the 1980s and 1990s, which saw the continuous association of Kiesłowski with co-writer Krzysztof Piesiewicz and composer Zbigniew Preisner – even then, it is debatable whether many film critics outside of Poland are fully aware of Piesiewicz’s contribution – but, in fact, collaboration was always a feature of his work. Although Kiesłowski shared a screen credit in only one of the documentaries from this period, and a screenwriting credit at that,²⁹ to judge the influence of others in his work by this alone is to understate their

²⁵ Teresa Krywow (int.), ‘Bliziej tego co dziś’, *Czas*, Warsaw, no. 37, 16-9-1979, p 25, & Jerzy Pawlas (int.), ‘Propozycja wspólnego myślenia’, *Kurier Szczeciński*, Szczecin, no. 78, 5 7-4-1980

²⁶ Andrzej Kołodyński (int.) ‘Wywiad nie do druku (14 XII 1973)’, *Kino*, Warsaw, 5-1996, p 4 This interview was conducted in December 1973 despite remaining unpublished until after Kiesłowski’s death. Nonetheless, he made similar statements in other interviews, for example, Jacek Marczyński & Bogdan Mozdyński (int.), ‘Mocne strony, słabe strony’, *Literatura*, Warsaw, no. 46, 11-11-1976.

²⁷ Paul Coates (int.), “‘The inner life is the only thing that interests me’” a conversation with Krzysztof Kiesłowski’ in Coates (ed), *Lucid Dreams*, p.162 See also Zawislinski (int.), ‘Jeden na jednego’, p 23.

²⁸ See interview with the cinematographer Edward Kłosiński in Mateusz Werner (int.), ‘Ożywić trumienkę ..’ in *Film na Świecie*, Warsaw-Lódź, no. 3 4 (388/389), 1992, p 133

²⁹ The film was *Curriculum Vitae*

importance considerably. The filmmaker Krzysztof Wierzbicki deserves particular consideration, being the man who located the principal figures for *First Love*, *From a Night Porter's Point of View*, and *Talking Heads* and one of Kieślowski's closest professional and personal associates during the 1970s.³⁰ Kieślowski too made no secret of his belief that film was a group art and explained how he always attempted to form a crew, the members of which would understand his intentions.³¹ The man who in the late 1980s and early 1990s came to be seen as the European *auteur par excellence* in fact showed a marked inclination towards collaborative filmwork from the beginning of his career.

Censorship of a political nature continued to dog Kieślowski, with *The Bricklayer* and *I Don't Know* not receiving their premières until 1981, but questions of a pecuniary kind also entered the picture. Although the financing of the film industry by the government meant that for the most part filmmakers did not have to worry about their films paying their way, which perhaps contributed to the indifference that Kieślowski expressed towards the public, the state's resources were far from endless. The lack of government funds prevented the director from completing several cherished documentary projects, although he would ingeniously bring alive unmade films about a dwarf and streetworks outside his house respectively by having his hero, Filip, make them in *Amator* (*Camera Buff*, 1979).³² Alternatively, projects such as the unfinished *Ziemia*

³⁰ It was because they were among the director's closest co-workers that Wierzbicki and the cinematographer Jacek Petrycki, who also discussed Kieślowski's reliance upon colleagues at the Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych (Documentary Production Studio) when editing his work (Maciej Parowski, 'Kieślowski life' in Zawisliński *et al*, *Kieślowski bez końca*, p 81) were commissioned specifically by Dania TV to make a documentary about Kieślowski (*Tak sobie (I'm So-So)*, directed and written by Wierzbicki, 1995).

³¹ Marczyński & Mozdzyński (int), 'Mocne strony, słabe strony'.

³² Vincent Ostria (int), 'Przypadek i konieczność' in Tadeusz Lubelski (ed), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, Cracow Universitas, 1997, (trans. Maria Oleksiewicz & Tadeusz Lubelski from *Les Inrockuptibles*, Paris, no. 36, 1992) p 285; & Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 208.

Żeromskiego (The Land of Żeromski),³³ were never completed for unknown reasons; one can only speculate as to whether the problem lay in political censorship, financial constraints, or Kiesłowski's own decision not to continue.³⁴

Nevertheless, regardless of the limitations of censorship, economics, and even time upon Kiesłowski's output of documentaries during this period – he did, after all, also make five fictional films between 1973 and 1980, several of which were full-length features – the ten documentaries that were completed are in no way inferior to his earlier work. On the contrary, the continued honing of his skills finds both its mirroring and consequence in the sharper and more intimate focus of his camera as he ventured beyond the exploration of the functionality of institutions to that of the lives of individuals in Poland.

* * *

³³ Stefan Żeromski (1864-1925) was a major Polish novelist. It is unknown whether this or any other unfinished documentaries by Kiesłowski survive.

³⁴ Kiesłowski comments on his unmade documentaries (Stok (ed), *Kiesłowski on Kiesłowski*, pp 207-208) but does not give any more specific information.

MURARZ (THE BRICKLAYER, 1973),
ŻYCIORYS (CURRICULUM VITAE, 1975),
 & *NIE WIEM (I DON'T KNOW, 1977)*

The Bricklayer, Curriculum Vitae, and I Don't Know, form a series, albeit one that may be serendipitous as Kieślowski never spoke of any conscious schema linking these three films. Nonetheless, aside from the pleasingly symmetrical two-yearly intervals at which the films were made, it is the subject matter that unites them. In each case, the protagonist's official relationship with People's Poland, specifically the rupture between the individual and the Party, underlies the film. Moreover, all three documentaries observe a unity of time and place, with the respective protagonists recounting their life-stories within the course of a day, so that the day-in-a-life format is simultaneously an exposition of a life in a day. If these parallels of subject and form reveal the protagonists' similarity, there are, however, strong distinctions between them that make these variations upon a theme progressively bleaker in outlook. Whereas the troubled political experiences of the bricklayer lie in the past, permitting him to have come to terms with them, the protagonist of *Curriculum Vitae* is shown at the very moment when his political future lies in question. The most depressing scenario, however, is that faced by the factory manager in the final film, *I Don't Know*: although his fall from grace has already occurred, it is evident that he is fated to continue living with the consequences.

The earliest of these films, *The Bricklayer*, although the least markedly crisis-ridden and gloomy, is no less thought-provoking for that. The relatively unperturbed Józef, the bricklayer in question, relates the events that led to his joining the Polish United Workers' Party in his youth before leaving it in 1956, following the Poznań riots, at the age of twenty-eight (he is aged forty-five at the time of the film's making). In spite

of the highly-charged nature of the events of 1956, Józef never makes a drama out of the reasons for his departure or, indeed, any part of his life history. Punning quite unselfconsciously as he explains that in entering the Party ‘..ja wierzyłem że buduję coś dla pokolenia’ (‘..I believed that I was building something for a generation’), he describes matter-of-factly how the increasingly heavy burden of responsibility as he rose in the ranks and his sense of becoming immured in bureaucracy caused him to request to vacate his position and return to his former occupation of bricklaying. Even his reference to the events of 1956, which shocked many Party functionaries into questioning the government, is brief: he reveals neither much emotion nor bitterness towards a regime that betrayed alike its socialist ideals and him. His voice-overs relating his life-story accompany images of him preparing for and attending the festivities celebrating the workers on May 1st, again without any obvious sense of self-irony at continuing to support a system from which he withdrew as a functionary.³⁵ Consequently, it becomes increasingly difficult to judge whether he is so tranquil about his past because of or despite the gap of almost two decades since he was last in the Party.

This dearth of “big” emotions and dramatics has the effect of making Józef a sympathetic and reliable witness. There is never any suggestion that he is self-promoting, and this ordinary man’s only self-proclaimed distinction, told in the most modest of terms, is to have been a member of the Party. Notably, he is not named until the end, which anonymity prevents the specifics of his life from getting in the way of his ordinariness and “everyman-ness”, and even then, the exclusion of his surname prevents him from being too individualised and thereby losing his broader relevance. Thus, the viewer is forced to pay close attention if the meaning of so seemingly simple a tale is to

³⁵ The socialist government in Poland instituted the public holiday of May 1st, ostensibly to honour the workers, but also as an attempt to make obsolete the traditional Polish holiday of May 3rd, upon which date the Polish Constitution of 1791 is celebrated

be deciphered, it being the apparently innocuous references that hint at the intellectual and ethical problems with which Józef struggled as a young man and which continue to be raised by the contradictory and flawed nature of the socialist state. In particular, his discussion of Coca-Cola, formerly banned in Poland for being Western but now, as he complains albeit mildly as ever, made and sold in Poland as one of the Western fashions aped by the younger generation, holds the key to his personal unhappiness with the system, indeed, to the faults and duplicity of the supposedly faultless and unchanging socialist state. The scene reveals his awareness of a major flaw, namely, that his personal and at first officially endorsed convictions came to clash with the changing public convictions of People's Poland. However, softly spoken and literally diminutive, as well as figuratively so in ego and self-importance, Józef is a prototype for the "small" men who would populate Kieślowski's fictive films. Rather than confronting and resolving this personal paradox born of the state's public inconsistency dramatically, he chooses instead to continue drinking soda water and in doing so, step outside of the issue, a small action that finds its larger parallel in his stepping outside of the system by leaving the party. Similarly, his later statement concerning the need to stick to one's decisions, however faulty, in order not to undermine one's authority highlights his private integrity as it simultaneously, though again understatedly, brings into question the shaky totalitarian public world.

The symbolism of Coca-Cola and its continuing resonance long after the film had been made was probably unforeseen by Józef or Kieślowski, although now it is easy to speculate that socialism stood no chance against the capitalistic might of Coke, McDonalds, and Levi jeans. Certainly, the modern-day viewer benefiting from hindsight can hardly avoid adding an afterword, namely, that, the flavourless carbonated water disregarded by the younger generation, Józef's own daughter included, in favour of Coca-

Cola encapsulated the inevitable submission of People's Poland to the sweet taste of capitalism. What, however, Kieślowski clearly does intend is for Józef himself to have a broader symbolic significance, moreover, a significance going beyond that of a mere conceit because, as with the allegorical connotations of *The Factory*, it is firmly based in reality. A bricklayer and archetypal poor kid who has done well, he is a good metaphor for the much-needed social and public reconstruction of Poland, but in returning to being a literal bricklayer he also signifies the impossibility of one man changing the state of affairs. The film's implication that one can only count upon what one does alone, seen in Józef's return to a form of work in which he answers to himself and thus can have a good conscience, is the more cutting given the alleged socialist spirit of People's Poland. The final shot of him building a wall using chipped, worn bricks to the soundtrack of people cheering the workers during the May Day celebrations is Kieślowski's most emphatically critical statement about the problems of the state: the individual may be good and mean well but he is hampered in his fine intentions by his environment and faulty tools.

The overriding question of *The Bricklayer*, then, is how Józef, indeed, how anyone, can behave decently within the confines of so bad a system. His answer is to return to political inactivity: the official world is so full of contradictions that he reverts to a more independent life and job where he can literally be constructive. Kieślowski underlines Józef's own contentment with this situation with the lyrical overhead shots of streets of houses that he perhaps helped build, creating a sense of freedom, of being outside of his problem-ridden political past. However, this ability to separate off public life and private convictions and live successfully with the result is rare, which fact may have prompted the director to make *Curriculum Vitae*, which is a development of the dilemma of *The Bricklayer*. *Curriculum Vitae* is a remarkable film most obviously for

the sheer fact of having been made.³⁶ Having had the idea for a script showing how the Party was at odds with people's lives and desires, Kieślowski, astonishingly, convinced the Party's own bureaucrats to allow him, an outsider, to make a documentary about the cross-examination of a Party member by a Party Control Committee. Even more surprisingly, he got the real-life members of such a board to participate in his film. An actor played the defendant, Gralak, but his script was based on the actual life histories of Party members called up before Party Control Committees and he himself had suffered similar problems to those experienced by his character.³⁷

It quickly becomes apparent that the frightening bureaucracy via which the state rules over life and death in *The Office* and *Refrain* recurs in this film, but whereas both the masses and officials remain anonymous in the earlier works, here the focus, and consequently tension, is intensified by falling upon a single man and his confrontation with Party functionaries. The form taken by the film adds to the sense of pressure: aside from the syntheses at the beginning and end depicting Gralak arriving at the meeting and awaiting the result respectively, everything is shot in real-time. Equally effective are the camera-shots, the endless close-ups of heads and shoulders unrelieved by any medium or long shots, let alone a view of anything other than the meeting, amplifying the oppressive and claustrophobic atmosphere. Continuing with the Kafkaesque theme – Kafka was one of Kieślowski's favourite authors – the members of the committee are not faceless but nevertheless in their namelessness and inscrutability lies the essence of their authority and the asymmetrical balance-of-power, they having the favourable upper hand of knowing

³⁶ The documentary also exists in a shortened version known as *Krótki życiorys (Short Curriculum Vitae)* Kieślowski rewrote the film as a stage-play – towards the end of the 1970s he would direct several other playwrights' works for television – with a cast that included Jerzy Stuhr, the leading male in several of his later feature films, but neither he nor the critics were impressed by the results

³⁷ Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 60. This blurring of documentary and fiction is also apparent in Kieślowski's fictional film for television of the same year, *Personel (Personnel, 1975)* but the basic veracity of the events and people in *Curriculum Vitae* is such that it is commonly regarded as a documentary

all the details of Gralak's life whilst he knows nothing of theirs.

This alarming lack of equality between two sides serving the same regime (Gralak is still a Party functionary, albeit with his membership under review at this meeting) stems from the discrepancy between their respective views concerning the interdependence of the personal and public spheres. As one of the committee members explains with an unintended and humourless play on words, Gralak is fine as a *człowiek* ('human being') but a troublemaker as a *członek*³⁸ ('member') of the Party, a fatal distinction inevitably condemning him to be at odds with a system that sees distinctions between the personal and official areas of an individual's life as redundant because the Party is – or at least, intends to be – the whole Polish world. Accordingly, everything that Gralak has ever done, whether in an official or private function, is brought into and judged as part of the public sphere. His marital problems, a former mistress, a drinking incident at his factory, and colleagues' strike at the same factory are all treated with equal coldness and no margin is allowed for human fallibility. Even the magic word 'worker', allegedly the embodiment of all virtues in a party ostensibly representing the workers, does Gralak no good: having explained that he had a shot of vodka during the drinking episode, he is admonished that 'Kieliszki są różne' ('Glasses come in various sizes') and has to redefine the article as a 'Robotniczy kieliszek' ('A worker's size glass'), only to provoke the committee's obvious displeasure. This linguistic divide is evident again in the discrepancy between Gralak's use of the standard Polish form of the third person singular when addressing the board members, which individualises them, and their use of the second person plural, a Russian form popular in Party circles, which reflects their perception of him in the context of the public sphere. These are different worlds and his is always the wrong one.

³⁸ *Człowiek* and *członek* sound as well as look very alike

Questioned over every detail, Gralak is repeatedly asked to be more specific and justify his answers, although being always in the wrong, he is of course, with ironic appositeness, admonished when he offers unsolicited justification. Consequently, *Curriculum Vitae* reads like a socialist-Polish adaptation of Kafka's aphorism number 40: 'It is only our conception of time that makes us call the Last Judgement by that name; in fact it is a permanent court-martial'.³⁹ This is indeed the Last Judgement, with Gralak required not merely to state but also to review the whole of his life, and the mirroring of a Christian concept is the more ironic because the reduction of a human life to no more than the details found on a curriculum vitae is as mechanistic and soulless as socialism. Kieślowski's masterstroke in illustrating the dehumanising nature of the Party comes at the very end, when with breathtaking simplicity he presents a series of photographs of Gralak at various stages of his life, evoking more of the private man in a matter of several dozen seconds than has been accomplished in the preceding public enquiry of forty-odd minutes.

Even before the final scene, Kieślowski is quick to make use of the ironic parallel between this earth-bound ruling and the divine Judgement. He waits until Gralak has finished his defence before offering a bitter joke in the form of the first overhead shot of the committee members at the very moment that they confer and play at God. The God-like perspective offered by this angle, however, has consequences not only for the depiction of the functionaries but also for the director and audience alike. *Curriculum Vitae* forces the viewer into the role of a judge: even if one decides to sympathise with Gralak as Kieślowski did – asked where his support lay, the director replied 'Po czyjej jestem stronie podsądnego czy sędziów? Zawsze odpowiadałem, że po jego stronie'

³⁹ Franz Kafka, *The Great Wall of China & Other Short Works*, trans & ed. Malcolm Pasley, London: Penguin Books, 1991, p 85. Inevitably, *The Trial* also springs to mind

(‘On whose side am I, that of the defendant or the judges? I always answered that I am on the side of the defendant’),⁴⁰ an answer pertinent to all of his films – one thereby becomes the judge of his judges. Certainly, viewers are encouraged take the side of Gralak not least because the film also leaves them in the same position of awaiting the verdict of the tribunal, even if Kiesłowski’s omission of this verdict is no more than a feint, a postponement of the inevitable. Nonetheless, although by never showing the resolution of the case the director leaves the final judgement to the viewer, in doing so he leaves the latter as disconcerted as the on-screen protagonist in his perpetual limbo of awaiting his fate.

Such a fate is, nonetheless, preferable to that of the protagonist of *I Don’t Know*. Whereas *Curriculum Vitae* remains inconclusive about Gralak’s future, albeit without offering much hope, the former factory manager of *I Don’t Know* is the logical next step in this series depicting the decline of the individual working within People’s Poland, having already undergone many trials of a literal and a figurative nature and received a neverending punishment. Having joined the Party in 1956 at the same time that his mirror-image counterpart, Józef the bricklayer, resigned, this unnamed individual was assigned to the Renifer glove and leather garment factory in 1966 at a time when it was making a yearly loss of sixty million złoty. Just as *The Factory* depicts the problems of supply and communications breakdown at the micro and macro levels, so too the inefficiency of the leather factory in *I Don’t Know* is attributable to workers, the internal management, and external authorities alike, but here the vice is that of rife, public corruption, involving everyone but the manager himself. He offers an astonishing catalogue of facts and figures: about fifty percent of workers had been sacked at least three times for theft; boxes supposedly containing goods for export had their contents

⁴⁰ Kałużyński & Turski (int.), ‘Zaglądać ludziom pod czaszkę’, p 10.

replaced with sand; a factory official lacking high-school education was allowed to stay on because he had, in the course of his employment, attended a higher education training course; and many of the twelve preceding directors had been informed upon for corruption by their company chauffeurs and consequently sacked. These facts first horrify, then become blackly ironic in their repetitive nature, before eventually wearying the viewer by their interminability, whose sense of exhaustion is of course similar to that felt by the manager himself. The relatively long takes are punctuated by many cuts, but his voice continues unchanging, implying everything, whether cut or shown, is in the same vein. Even when he concludes the relating of a particular episode, there is no sense of emotional climax because the pitch of his voice remains monotonous: the words he uses may reveal just how dramatic his time at the factory was but the overriding feature of his narrative is his emotionless and dispassionate tone of voice, tellingly indicative of how the past has given rise to his present hopelessness.

I Don't Know is a private confession told publicly and though, or perhaps because, the manager's narrative consists mainly of quantitative statements, the qualitative import is easily discernible. His recurrent use of facts and figures in explaining how his attempts to rectify matters at the factory led to his downfall becomes increasingly shocking precisely because he employs them to describe deeply personal matters in so impersonal a manner. Six days after being awarded a silver cross by the Party for having turned the loss into a ten million zloty profit despite the obstacles placed in his path by workers, management, and local militia, he was sacked; while on trial after being falsely accused of theft, he was beaten up three times, shot at twice, and eventually forced to move away from his family for fear of their safety; and after being found innocent of the theft, his applications for all manner of jobs in every region of Poland were turned down in every instance. If Gralak in *Curriculum Vitae* is condemned for the manner in which he

conducts his personal and public lives, the protagonist of *I Don't Know* is attacked literally as well as figuratively in both spheres. Worse still, his unreceptive demeanour and unemotional delivery bears witness to the terrible impact of these public humiliations upon his inner life: having lost status in the public and personal realms, he has suffered his greatest defeat in his inner self.

Kieślowski cleverly reproduces the manager's justifiable sense of paranoia with an inventive use of sound made the more prominent by the uniformity of the protagonist's speech. The alarming clunking of unidentifiable objects at the beginning is revealed to be emitted by the tape recorder used to produce the soundtrack. This magnification of a banal object into something menacing may only startle the viewer temporarily but is nonetheless a telling metaphor for the manager's fear that his speaking publicly may lead to further reprisals.⁴¹ A greater sense of unease is produced by the jarring and intrusive rat-a-tat-tat of a typewriter that drowns out the names of individuals specified by the manager in the course of the film, which never fails to startle the viewer despite being employed regularly. With it being made evident that some of the bearers of those names literally want the speaker dead, it is clearly no coincidence that this noise resembles that of a machine-gun.

The most effective and disheartening use of sound, however, comes in the tango accompanying the opening and closing credits. The music that already seems incongruously lively at the outset becomes transformed by the manager's description of his decline and fall into a brazenly jaunty commentary on the inevitable failure of a man trying to behave justly in an unjust environment, its crude brashness an appalling reflection of the indifference of Polish society – and this includes those inside and outside

⁴¹ Kieslowski admitted that despite being withheld, the film did lead to further problems for the protagonist, which he had very much wanted to avoid, and that the former manager bore him a grudge, Jacek Petrycki, 'Kiedy jeszcze lubiliśmy rejestrować świat' in Lubelski (ed), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieslowskiego*, pp 177-178, & Stok (ed), *Kieslowski on Kieslowski*, p 73-74

of the Party to the tragedy of this man's life. More depressing still, the written statement, presumably composed by Kieślowski, which is accompanied by this music at the beginning and ending of the film – like the tango, its forcefulness becomes most apparent following the manager's narrative – reveals the director's belief that the private misfortune of the manager is a reflection of the broader problems afflicting the public realm:

Pewien człowiek opowie o swoim życiu. Nie zależnie od subiektywizmu i fragmentaryczności relacji ten człowiek i jego stan istnieją obiektywnie. Trzeba liczyć się z tymi faktami bo zwielokrotnione są zjawiskiem społecznym.

A certain person will tell of his life. Regardless of the subjectivity and fragmentary nature of this report, this person and his condition exist objectively. One has to take these facts into account because multiplied, they are a social phenomenon.

In the manager of the Silesian factory, Kieślowski discovered the model for the dilemmas faced by the characters of his features, from *Camera Buff* right through until the *Trois Couleurs (Three Colours)* trilogy of the 1990s. Just as the working title, *żyć czy spać? (Live or Sleep?)*, reflects the moral quandary of the real-life Pole and his future fictional counterparts alike, so too his final words summarise a problem to which Kieślowski would return over and over in the course of his filmmaking:

'Muszę przyznać się że nie wiem jak żyć, jaka jest najlepsza recepta na życie, czy żyć intensywnie, mocno, czy przespać życie... Nie wiem.

'I must admit that I don't know how to live, what is the best prescription for life, whether to live intensively, strongly, or to sleep through life... I don't know.'

* * *

Z PUNKTU WIDZENIA NOCNEGO PORTIERA
 (FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A NIGHT PORTER, 1977)
 & PRZEŚWIETLENIE (X-RAY, 1974)

If *The Bricklayer*, *Curriculum Vitae*, and *I Don't Know* depict men struggling to reconcile their personal views with their official roles, the public and personal lives and private convictions of the protagonist of *From the Point of View of a Night Porter*, Marian Osuch, conjoin in a manner that is farcical, alarming, and finally tragic. Not content with the authority he has over people in his workplace, the porter reprises his official role effortlessly in his personal life, spending his spare time checking up on children playing truant from school and monitoring local fishermen to ensure that they have the correct permits. Kieślowski allows himself one of many moments of comedy in this latter instance by accompanying Osuch's apparently contemplative gazing at the fishermen and reference to having a passion in life with music taken from Wojciech Kilar's soundtrack for Krzysztof Zanussi's film *Iluminacja* (*Illumination*, 1973). The inappropriateness of the sentimental tones, it becoming apparent that Osuch's gazing is in fact spying and his passion is for checking up on people, is matched by the ironic film reference, *Illumination* being about the individual's search for free will, which the porter neither advocates nor represents.

Yet for all the humour, the combination of music and images is perhaps not as purely comic as it initially seems; after all, Osuch may well romantically idealise his own penchant for enforcing rules. His fondness for westerns, films in which self-appointed "good" men battle against lawlessness, fits well with his conception of himself as a marshal. Appropriately for one who dislikes criticism of the government, he is literally a small man playing at Big Brother tactics who believes that 'Regulamin jest ważniejszy

jak człowiek' ('Regulations are more important than a person'). Given the perfect correlation between his behaviour in the public and personal spheres, the documentary is as much a metaphor for the state and its attempt, in this case successful, to govern all areas of an individual's life, as it is a portrait of a man in tune with his socio-political environment: he is simultaneously a representation of the state in miniature and one of the unthinking masses who create and uphold the system. Certainly, he has the dogmatic self-confidence of one who knows that he is on the side of right, in this case People's Poland, so much so that he does not hesitate to expound his forthright opinions on the death penalty (a good thing), reform school (a successful way of transforming truants into ideal children), and modern fashions (flared and narrow trousers alike enrage him). If, however, the authorities were thrilled at the prospect of a documentary publicising beliefs that fitted well with socialist doctrine, Kieślowski, intending criticism of the attitude and the not man *per se*, feared that the screening of such views might cause difficulties for the porter amongst the broader populace and banned the film from being shown on Polish television.⁴² Conversely, Osuch was delighted with the documentary, and the diverging views of the subject and director did not prevent the two from developing a friendship, with the porter playing small parts in two of Kieślowski's later feature films.⁴³

The director's kindness towards the porter was perhaps born out of his recognition of the man's human frailties; for all his rigid assertions, Osuch is surprisingly full of contradictions. Although a fan of violent films who behaves antagonistically by spying upon his fishing acquaintances, he is utterly unconscious of any irony when belligerently castigating young men bearing facial hair – 'Ja takiego człowieka

⁴² Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p.75. Kieślowski had originally intended to film a porter who published a diary in which he expounded views similar to those of Osuch. However, filming this toothless individual with synchronised sound would have made a caricature of him, hence a second porter, Osuch, was sought out, Witold Stok interviewed in Macnab & Darke (int), 'Working with Kieślowski', p 18

⁴³ Stok interviewed in Macnab & Darke (int), 'Working with Kieślowski', p 18. One was *Camera Buff*, the other probably *Blind Chance*.

nienawidzę' ('I hate such people') – for looking aggressive. Disliking youth in general, he is fond of animals. Likewise, his aversion to love films does not prevent him from previously owning a pair of love-birds, which meet a ghastly but comically ludicrous fate. His condemnation of those who criticise the state accompanies a shot of him sitting high up in his flat apparently policing his neighbours and children down below, but the pitiful distancing from the community, his pensive demeanour, and his failure to shout at them as might be expected raises the possibility that he is wistful about his inability to join them. Most remarkably, despite making frequent recourse to the pronouns 'we' and 'they' – although 'they' remain shadowy and are never properly defined, their status of otherness makes it clear that they are both undesirable and wrong in their opinions – and his admiration for the socialist regime, Osuch is unexpectedly uncomfortable in a group. The confidence he displays as a single law-enforcer is reduced into a shrunken, awkward bearing when he is seen as part of the fishing committee or amongst his colleagues. Although he has power on paper, whether at work or as a member of the fishing committee, he has no authority that is actually recognised or respected. Worse still, Osuch implicitly recognises this unsettling inconsistency and his own meaninglessness when, despite having boasted of his authority as a porter, he expresses a desire for a position of responsibility. The final scene in which schoolchildren waveringly and unsuccessfully attempt to identify his official role, a faltering smile playing across Osuch's lips as the teacher talks admiringly of his shiny cap, is Kieślowski's perceptive, eloquent but also humane summation of an individual who ultimately is more to be pitied than feared. In retrospect, the sentimental music gains meaning, given the wretched life on display. Kieślowski never extends his sympathy to the regime which the porter symbolises in being both a product and advocate of it, but his ability to separate the private man from his public role, something which Osuch is himself unable to do, lies at

the heart of the success of a film that rejects the views of the protagonist without ever dismissing the man himself.

The obsession with the public role that characterises Osuch in *From a Night Porter's Point of View* is demonstrated in a markedly different way in *X-Ray*. As introspective and openly insecure as the porter is opinionated and superficially confident, the tuberculosis patients who form the subject of this earlier documentary are continually aware of their psychological distancing from the Polish masses caused by their physical isolation in the sanatorium. Like *I was a Soldier*, *X-Ray* deals with a handful of protagonists cut off from everyday Polish reality, and the bitter and tragic ironies concerning the circumstances of the ex-combatants also find their parallels here, with Kieślowski focussing on patients who include, among others, a musician and builder unable to play and build respectively because of their incapacitating illness.

X-Ray is also comparable in structure to *I was a Soldier*, employing the same technique of presenting sections, separated off by brief interludes composed of exterior shots of the sanatorium, which deal with specific issues concerning the men's illness: they discuss how they first took the news, their former occupations and the effect of the illness upon their capacity to continue in them, and what they would like from the future. Again, Kieślowski's focus upon the personal histories of his subjects leads to intimate and even painful revelations of the debilitating psychological consequences resulting from a physical ailment that affects the public, personal, and inner lives of the patients. The builder particularly exemplifies this multiple loss of identity, and is an early example *par excellence* of the emasculated Polish male who would feature in so much of Kieślowski's work. Feeling betrayed in his personal sphere by family members who encouraged him to enter the clinic, he is equally diminished and humiliated in his inner realm at being removed from his former public role:

‘Tam [na budowni] stanowią coś. Tu jestem wyrwany z tego wszystkiego. Tracę pewność siebie.’

‘There [on the building site] I amount to something. Here I am uprooted from everything. I lose my self-confidence.’

The world of tuberculosis patients had particular resonance for Kieślowski, who spent his childhood travelling between the various sanatoria in which his father was treated for the illness. Indeed, the film is set in Sokołowsk, where the director lived for a while as a child while his father was nursed at the clinic, and Jacek Petrycki, a colleague, suggests Kieślowski wished to transfer his childhood memories and feelings to the screen in the course of making a documentary about tuberculosis sufferers.⁴⁴ Whether because the scenes shot were inadequate or because Kieślowski ultimately balked at the prospect of transferring such intimate revelations about his own life to film and thus the public sphere, the director’s personal reminiscences remain private and only a viewer with some prior knowledge is able to make the connection between the subject matter and the director’s early life; whereas he appears on screen, albeit subtly and silently, in *I was a Soldier*, in *X-Ray* he is unwilling to reveal his hand as he did in the earlier film. Nevertheless, despite his own reticence, Kieślowski is as skilful in this film at getting his subjects to divulge confidences as he was in *I was a Soldier*. What differentiates the tuberculosis patients, however, from the blind ex-combatants is the depth of their longing for the outside world. Whereas the latter for the most part are unperturbed by the isolating effect of their blindness, and content to exist in their inner realms, these patients are horribly aware that despite the minor difference to the naked eye between themselves and ordinary people, their illness is an unseen but insurmountable obstacle to their existence in the public world. Their lives in the sanatorium are constantly measured and

⁴⁴ Petrycki, ‘Kiedy jeszcze lubiliśmy rejestrować świat’, p 180.

usually found wanting against life outside: the musician no longer minds the endless queues when shopping, something ordinary Poles suffer unwillingly, while a bearded patient finds Sundays, ironically the day of rest for the wider population, difficult to bear because the brief visits of guests from the outside world only serve to underline his own confinement. There exists a constant hankering for the public world, with the bearded patient and builder most desirous of a return to work. Their longing, however, is mixed with the fear of no longer succeeding there in the event of being cured, as is demonstrated by the builder's conclusion that even the return of his health will not convince him that he is a fully worthy human being. Being shut away in a clinic would be isolating under ordinary circumstances but it is a terrible irony that the Polish regime's attempt to convince its citizens of the primacy of the public world is most effective amongst those disowned by it – an individual unable to work is redundant in a socialist regime – and relegated to the margins.

Kieślowski deftly highlights both the improbability of the patients returning to the public sphere and the responsibility of the authorities for this fate in the final scene. The departure of the suitcase-laden men to the sound of cheerful accordion music is negated by their coach driving into a brown smoke-ridden and chimney-filled landscape, with the cacophony produced by the factories and industrialised plants supplanting the jaunty melody. Any viewer initially confused as to whether the patients are simply leaving for a short vacation, itself an ironic notion given their confinement is already an unwanted holiday from the public sphere, is fully justified, because the final implication is that the polluted Polish environment, a result of the heavy industrialisation favoured by socialist systems throughout Central and Eastern Europe, will prevent the men's return to the outside world from being anything but a brief sojourn.

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PIERWSZA MIŁOŚĆ (FIRST LOVE, 1974)

First Love is concerned with a young couple, Jadzia and Romek, on the cusp of adulthood, a theme prominent in Kieślowski's fictional films but singular to this documentary as far as his non-fiction work is concerned. Notably, it is Jadzia who dominates both in terms of on-screen time and making decisions about the couple's future despite being female and three years younger than her twenty year-old partner, so although she never displays the aggression demonstrated by so many of Kieślowski's female fictional characters towards their male counterparts, the relationship in this film suggests that the castrated males and empowered females epitomising the director's theory of Polish gender relations were rooted in social reality. Nevertheless, just as this couple's partnership and eventual marriage appears less fraught than those experienced by Kieślowski's imagined characters – the Polish critic Jadwiga Anna Łużyńska points out that *First Love* is one of only three films by Kieślowski depicting fulfilled love based on mutual understanding⁴⁵ – so too do they, unlike their fictional counterparts, manage admirably in their development from teenagers to responsible adults, notwithstanding their struggle against various forms of officialdom. It is this solidity of their personal realm, compellingly demonstrated when they read a baby-book together, paint the intended nursery, or feed their baby and discuss her future, that remains constant throughout the film despite the constant troublesome interference of the public world,

Indeed, one of the main themes of *First Love* is the confrontation between the personal realm – in this case, that of marriage and birth – and the public institutions that are involved in such domestic matters, seldom beneficially. These institutions, apparently

⁴⁵ Jadwiga Anna Łużyńska, 'Fenomen Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego cz. II', *Iluzjon*, Warsaw, nos. 1-4, 1995, p 31, the others are *Concert of Requests* and the third variant of *Przypadek (Blind Chance, 1981)*

socialist and helpful by nature, are in fact chiefly useless and ineffectual, as is illustrated when a housing office official tells Jadzia and Romek that they have little chance of being allocated their own flat before their child's birth. The educational system is worse, being actively obstructive when Jadzia makes enquiries about continuing with her schooling after giving birth; the teachers who reprimand her for having wasted her opportunities by falling pregnant are surely too humourless and unsympathetic to recognise the irony of lecturing her about the improbability of their teaching her in the future. Bureaucracy too makes an unwelcome appearance in the wedding preparations, with a doctor's certificate confirming Jadzia's pregnancy, payment from her and Romek, and written declarations of their intention to marry all being required before the frill-free ceremony can be performed – where else? – in a registry office. The couple's personal realm is even actively invaded by the public sphere in the form of the policeman who walks in as they paint the room intended for themselves and their baby and quizzes them about their living arrangements. These trials are part and parcel of entering the adult world, and Kieślowski underscores this transition from childhood to adulthood by cutting from Romek looking the typical student whilst attending a school class to the marriage ceremony, at which his newfound moustache and suit speak volumes about his attempt to appear grown-up in the public eye. That Jadzia and Romek are successful in maintaining some measure of intimacy in their personal relations comes about despite the intrusion of the outside world. Unable to visit Jadzia immediately after the birth, Romek's conversation with her conducted through an open hospital window is audible to anyone within earshot, but Kieślowski dubs it with music, allowing the couple some measure of privacy even if their public surroundings do not

Nonetheless, the blatant contradiction of Kieślowski's shielding his protagonists' privacy at the same moment that he brings it to the attention of the documentary-viewing

public is unmistakable. The intense close-up of Jadzia as she weeps at her own wedding is highly disquieting, not least as the reason for her tears, happy or otherwise, is undefined. Similarly, there is something uncomfortably perverse about Kieślowski's camera being allowed to witness the intimate scenes of Jadzia's labour while Romek is not. This uneasy intrusion of the publicising camera upon the personal, or even inner, realm was not lost upon Kieślowski, and filming the interfering and obstructive nature of exterior forces upon the lives of Jadzia and Romek caused him to question his own right to impose upon their domestic sphere, but his reactions at the time were nevertheless ambivalent. On the one hand, Kieślowski made no secret of his active manipulation and provocation, but insisted that the situations he engineered, such as the appearance of the policeman, were ones in which the couple would find themselves in any case, so that the resulting scenes were grounded not in verisimilitude but actuality.⁴⁶ By contrast, he worried about interfering in their lives and purposefully chose Jadzia as he felt that she would remain unaltered by the experience.⁴⁷ A similar tension underlay Kieślowski's desire to explore the most intimate aspects of individuals' existence: having filmed Romek's tears after the birth of Ewa he concluded that he had no right to do so, but this did not prevent him from including the scene in the final cut of the documentary.⁴⁸

Nonetheless, these justified concerns about the right of the documentarist to film and make public personal lives eventually bore fruit when Kieślowski abandoned the documentary in favour of fictional feature films. Some six years would pass before he made this decision – and even then, he retained many stylistic features learnt from

⁴⁶ Stok, (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 64 Kieślowski also used his influence to improve their material situation. his proposal for a documentary entitled *Ewa Ewunia* about the baby as she grew up convinced the authorities to give the family their own flat lest the infant's future in People's Poland appear depressing.

⁴⁷ Jerzy Biernacki, 'Trzeba rąbać nowy chodnik', *Ekran*, Warsaw, no 37, 12-9-1976, p 19, & Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 66.

⁴⁸ Marek Hendrykowski & Mikołaj Jazdon (int), 'Fragmenty spotkania z Krzysztofem Kieślowskim (24 II.1996)', *Kino*, Warsaw, 5-1996, p 10.

documentary-making and made one final such film in the mid-1980s – but it was *First Love* that, despite being one of Kieślowski's preferred pieces,⁴⁹ initiated his gradual movement away from documentaries.

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SZPITAL (THE HOSPITAL, 1976)
& *DWORZEC (THE STATION, 1980)*

The preoccupation with form that characterises Kieślowski's later non-fiction and fiction films alike – *Seven Women of Different Ages*, *Dekalog (The Decalogue, 1988)*, and the *Three Colours* trilogy, to name a few, are based around archetypal precepts and numerical structures – first appears in *The Hospital*, which punctuates the doctors' thirty-two hour shift with title-cards giving the time of day, e.g., 8.00, 9.00, and 10.00. However, just as Kieślowski would use formal structuring in later films only to test and subvert its definitions, so too he avoided being too rigid in this documentary, sensibly recognising that filming on the hour when in fact something more interesting had occurred at, say, 12.05pm, was disadvantageous.⁵⁰ This decision resulted from the director's own reasoning, but the events internal to the film and continual references to the time also bring the viewer to question the linear progression of time: although it continues literally to move forward for the woman brought in after a failed suicide attempt, her fate is set at 9.00am, if not earlier when she jumped out of a window, by the surgeons who determine that they will be unable to reconstruct her legs and spine

⁴⁹ Tadeusz Szyma (int), 'Pomóc samemu sobie', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Cracow, no. 46, 12-11-1989, p 6.

⁵⁰ Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 69.

sufficiently for her to walk. Kiesłowski also disrupts his own self-imposed time-scheme at the very end when, having meticulously recorded the passing of every hour for twenty-four hours, he includes a final title-card that reads '8.00 and the next seven hours', even though the film shows only what occurs at 8.00am. If the implication is that the following seven hours will be exactly the same, additionally Kiesłowski succinctly conveys and parallels the surgeons' being overstretched by having his own film run out of time to show each individual hour. This use of synthesis in order to reflect the doctors' overloaded working life is employed elsewhere in *The Hospital*. Whereas the disjunction of sound and images is exploited by Kiesłowski in earlier films to create a sense of uneasiness and irresolution, the effect is different in this case. Here, the simultaneous focus of the camera upon one event whilst the soundtrack refers to something or someone beyond the frame is a way of getting maximum information into a minimal amount of space and time; equally, it reminds of the busy and cramped conditions under which the doctors operate.

Although Kiesłowski's earlier documentaries reveal his scepticism about the successful functioning of the group model, with *The Hospital* he films a group of people who achieve something in the mess that is contemporary Poland. The director's normally suspicious view of those in authority also undergoes a transformation here, and his focus upon the surgeons, interspersed with few shots of the patients, is favourable. This novel depiction of authority-figure perhaps reflects Kiesłowski's recognition that the doctors are also the underdogs in the public system, regardless of their education and professional status. Far from pontificating about the nobility of their profession or revelling in medical achievements, they appear as ordinary individuals, in particular in a remarkable if understated scene in which they humbly queue up to receive their noticeably low wages. This blatant lack of privileges magnifies the surgeons' blue-collar worker-status,

something that finds an apposite correlative in the hammers and drills they employ in scenes in which one plainly sees the nuts and bolts of surgery. Whether the viewer chooses to read such scenes literally or as a metaphor for reconstructing the body corporate, the equipment is as faulty and unavailable here as in *The Factory*: lights are in short supply, a surgical probe is unobtainable, a drill is faulty, surgical thread is described as being suitable for stitching shoes, and, in the most famous episode, a hammer breaks in the middle of an operation. There is, however, also a marked contrast between the mechanics in *The Factory* and the doctors: these latter men are extraordinary because they manage to restore their patients to full health despite their inadequate working circumstances. Furthermore, whereas Kieślowski had previously shown in *Before the Rally* how mismanagement at macro and micro levels led to the workers' complete loss of interest in the public sphere and half-hearted fulfilment of their occupations, here his protagonists maintain their professionalism but also compassion regardless of their shoddy working conditions and financially unrewarding jobs. It is the doctors' personal humanity, as evident in their sympathy for the suicidal woman or one doctor's concern for a blind, elderly patient as when they snatch some sleep or convivially eat an unappetising supper, that makes this example of the malfunctioning public sphere bearable.

The smallness of the subject – no cures for cancer are discovered nor are there any miraculous recoveries – is thus a reflection of the modest egos of the surgeons as well as of the everyday nature of their profession. This reduction of scale to an obscure hospital with equally anonymous, albeit distinctive, protagonists, does not prevent one from drawing a broader conclusion, namely, that socialist Poland is sick. Nevertheless, *The Hospital* concludes on a note that is positive if not quite optimistic in that it shows how, regardless of the ailing political system under which they operate, the surgeons

nevertheless succeed in humanising an institution and, moreover, making it work.

This relatively encouraging tone is, however, limited to *The Hospital*. *The Station*, Kiesłowski's final film to be set in a public institution, is a far bleaker affair that holds out as little hope for Poland as did his earlier documentaries. Whereas in *The Hospital* the surgeons humanise their workplace and are instrumental in its functioning well despite the many shortcomings, the unwelcoming utilitarian nature of the railway station stems from a preponderance of machines taking the place of people. Faceless voices blare over loudspeakers that strip them of all vestiges of humanity, the presenter of the internal TV travel news is insipid and, as befits one shown on elevated monitors, remote, and the Left Luggage area has been replaced with attendant-less lockers. Even those employees who are present in person are unconcerned and lethargic, the ticket sellers apathetic in the face of enormous queues and railway workers smoking indifferently. Machines and workers conjoin to create an actively hostile environment as is illustrated when a human-operated floor-cleaner tears a woman's stocking. It is not just everything but everyone that functions badly in this station.⁵¹

Unsurprisingly, the environment is not conducive to happy customers. The station is characterised by miscommunication – the Polish viewer will spot the fitting pun, with *komunikacja* meaning both 'system of transportation' and 'communication'⁵² – with a man finding himself in the wrong queue, ticket-sellers inaudible and information transmitted via the loudspeakers indecipherable, and luggage-locker instructions baffling

⁵¹ Cf. Tadeusz Sobolewski, 'Brzydkie podwórko', *Film*, Warsaw, no. 30, 28-9-1980, p 5.

⁵² This play on words was particularly close to Kiesłowski's heart, as it marked his entry into filmmaking. Taking the entrance exam to the Łódź Film School for the third time, his mistaken interpretation of a question concerning the mass means of communication – his answer was 'Tram, bus, trolley-bus, aeroplane' – won him favour with the examiners who erroneously took his answer for wit, Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 31. Since then, transportation has, as the director complained, featured regularly in his work.

the passengers. This defective and dulling milieu takes its toll on the customers, the vivacious tones of the TV presenter contrasting gruesomely with the sluggish, low-key, and mostly silent passengers, who remain anonymous and form a dismally uniform group. The only sudden burst of energy comes when people run to board a train but the stagnancy remains ultimately unrelieved as this train, already behind schedule, is not shown to leave the platform. Despite the station's supposed facilitation of movement, no one arrives or departs.

Communication may fail, requiring as it does two-way interaction, but one-way observation is not limited to the viewer and film crew of the documentary. It is also internal to the subject, taking the form of the closed-circuit television cameras in the station, the presence of which is signalled by the ominous roll of timpani. The disquieting robotic movements of the impersonal cameras are eventually relieved by the final shot of a security guard watching the images in the surveillance room; at least, one is thankful to note, there is a human presence operating these machines. Nevertheless, Kieślowski plays up the perturbing similarity between the off-screen and on-screen voyeurism at work in his film. The resemblance between the security room and an editing suite, combined with the portentous kettledrums, suggests all forms of observation in which the subjects are unaware of being under surveillance are potentially threatening, regardless of who is doing the watching, security guard, director, or viewer. Certainly, Kieślowski's doubts about the documentarist's right to film people which first disquieted him during the making of *First Love* were crystallised by his experiences when making *The Station*: police hoping to find footage of a murderer temporarily seized his film, to the dismay of the director who had no desire to be a cog in somebody else's wheel.⁵³

Kieślowski's concern about the fine line between observation and intrusion

⁵³ Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 79ff .

continued throughout his later career, featuring in fictional feature films including *Krótki film o miłości* (*A Short Film about Love*, 1988), *Trois Couleurs: Bleu* (*Three Colours: Blue*, 1993), and *Trois Couleurs: Rouge* (*Three Colours: Red*, 1994). Where the documentary, however, was concerned, he chose to resolve his personal and ethical dilemma by abandoning the form: when he next filmed a railway-station surveillance room almost a decade on in the fictional *Dekalog 3*, (*The Decalogue: 3*, 1988), both it and his chair in the editing suite of the Documentary Production Studio were empty.

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SIEDEM KOBIET W RÓŻNYM WIEKU

(*SEVEN WOMEN OF DIFFERENT AGES*, 1978)

& *GADAJĄCE GŁOWY* (*TALKING HEADS*, 1980)

Seven Women of Different Ages is something of an anomaly in the documentary works of Kieślowski. This is the sole non-fiction film made by him for which the setting of People's Poland has absolutely no relevance of a direct or indirect nature, most of the documentaries falling into the former category and *I was a Soldier* and *X-Ray* into the latter. Indeed, the more universally applicable musings upon life to be found in this film find a happy parallel in the form it takes: although accompanied by a soundtrack, it would work just as well as a silent film, having little dialogue and being primarily concerned with visual images. Interestingly, then, the one documentary film by Kieślowski that can be easily watched by a non-Polish and contemporary audience without recourse to subtitles and explanatory notes was disliked by the director at the time of its making. Although in later years he actively sought to make films that he described as "universal",

a term applicable to *Seven Women of Different Ages*, it is an indication of the genuine fascination and significance which the Polish public world held for him at this earlier stage in his career that he considered it an irrelevance and waste of money to make this documentary at a time when subjects he felt were more important, and presumably narrower in scope, than beautiful humanistic ideals needed to be filmed.⁵⁴

Where the film does fit into Kieślowski's oeuvre is in its use and subversion of form. Playfully feminising the seven ages of man, Kieślowski subsequently matches each stage in a woman's life with a day of the week. Rather than going for the obvious and having the youngest participant appear on a Monday, instead the film begins with Thursday. Notions of life as an eternal performance are raised by the protagonists being ballerinas at various stages of their career, and the clever pairing of this with the days of the week results in a suitably youthful and vivacious young woman starring in the Saturday segment. The impassioned performance of the ballet stars in the Sunday section is a witty play on the idea of the creator using the day of rest to watch his creations at work, and it goes without saying that on Monday the next incarnation of the ballerina finds herself faced with the prospect of sheer hard work, a prospect familiar to all working adults. The features of the seven protagonists are intentionally strikingly similar and the final scene neatly ties up this loop, its focus now falling upon the woman who in the first section was the somewhat indistinct teacher instructing the little girl representing that segment. As one critic pointed out, the seven biographies are, when taken as a whole, the analysis of one biological fate.⁵⁵

This relationship of the individual to the masses lies also at the centre of *Talking Heads*, as do issues of form and structure, but it is altogether a more satisfying and

⁵⁴ Grazyna Banaszkiwicz (int.), 'Z rzeczywistości', *Tydzień*, Poznań, no 41, 14-10-1979.

⁵⁵ Rafał Marszałek, 'Między dokumentem a fikcją' in Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, p 18.

thought-provoking piece than the lyrical but slight *Seven Women of Different Ages*. A total of seventy-nine individuals appear in ascending order of age, each stating their year of birth, who they are, what is most important to them, and what they desire. If the firing off of questions at the beginning is reminiscent of *Refren* (*Refrain*, 1972), unlike the clerks of that earlier film Kieślowski accesses his subjects' private, and in some cases deeply intimate, thoughts. Again, his ability to gain his speakers' confidence is attested to by the frequency with which they define themselves not by their professional public roles but instead in terms of their domestic roles or by even more private criteria.

The prominence of the series of people, underlined repeatedly as each fresh speaker is designated by his or her birth-year, compels the viewer to look for patterns and parallels, only to be wrongfooted. The witty inverse correlation between the protagonists and their birth-years, the former ageing as the latter diminish, is complemented by other jokes: getting the series off to an ironically unproductive start by opening on a baby unable to answer the questions, Kieślowski ends his film with another gag in the form of an old lady who mishears the final question and thus ruins the cycle at the very moment of its closure. *Talking Heads* resembles a game, inviting the viewer to see if he or she agrees with the feelings of the corresponding birth-year partner – Tadeusz Lubelski notes that the speaker of 1941, Kieślowski's own birth-year, who wants something more out of life is typical of the kind of people with whom the director sympathised strongly⁵⁶ – but it is neither self-consciously clever nor posturing. Even as Kieślowski plays with his form, altering and manipulating it, the result is less that of highlighting his own cleverness than of showing how the individuals he presents outstrip common preconceptions. With some years being ignored, either 1966 represented by two speakers or 1965 not indicated, 1934

⁵⁶ Tadeusz Lubelski, 'Od „Personelu” do „Bez konca”, czyli siedem faz odwracania kamery' in Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, p 35.

and 1935 misplaced, and the length of time allotted to each speaker corresponding to how much he or she has to say rather than to a set limit, what again becomes clear is that Kieślowski values the individual above form, adapting the latter to the former and not vice versa. The irregularity is a conscious warning against oversimplification: Kieślowski stated that some two hundred of the original three hundred or so interviewees said that they desired freedom and justice rather than a car or beautifully-furnished flat,⁵⁷ and yet even he admits the exceptions to the rule by including the female of 1945, whose revelation of being most desirous of her own home seems startlingly selfish in the light of her description of herself as a Catholic.

Talking Heads can be read, like *Seven Women of Different Ages*, as a contemplation of the changes undergone by a human being in the course of a single life, contradictions, similarities, and so forth.⁵⁸ Certainly, the desperately unhappy young girl of 1961 who is unable to accommodate her hopes with the likelihood of realising them and lacks certainty about what is good and bad – like so many of Kieślowski's real-life protagonists in this and other documentaries, she would be a fitting heroine for one of his fictional films – becomes more bearable in the context of older and more content speakers. On the other hand, by juxtaposing her viewpoint with that of the carefree boy of 1962, Kieślowski suggests that a year on the male adolescent too may experience her doubts and troubled mind. *Plus ça change*. An alternative yet nonetheless complementary reading is of the film as a portrait of its time, representative of the people living in Poland at the time. Such an interpretation assumes that Kieślowski's speakers are characteristic of the wider contemporary populace and also that they do not self-censor or self-edit their answers: certainly, the presence of only one self-confessed

⁵⁷ *Tygodnik Kulturalny*.

⁵⁸ Cf. Geoff Andrew, *The 'Three Colours' Trilogy*, London. British Film Institute, 1998, p.13.

drinker (the man of 1935) among seventy-nine people is questionable, considering that by 1980 one million Poles, out of a population of under forty million, were classified as alcoholics.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, generally speaking the film is persuasive and no Polish commentators have contradicted Kieślowski's conviction that it presents an accurate depiction of Poles in the late 1970s.⁶⁰

However one chooses to interpret *Talking Heads*, whether as a philosophical musing upon the progress of life or a socio-political commentary upon the state of mind in Poland – and both readings can be maintained simultaneously – its greatest success lies in expressing the humanity common to all people whilst simultaneously allowing each contributor his or her own voice. Each speaker is filmed independently of the others, and some of these individuals certainly indicate a profound sense of isolation. However, by putting all these personal and sometimes intimate statements together into a film for public screening, Kieślowski offers not only the viewer the benefit of the broader picture but also allows his participants the opportunity to spot the connections between themselves. *Talking Heads* is a cinematic coup for Kieślowski; more importantly, it is a gesture of great generosity to its participants and audience alike.

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The beginning of the 1980s coincided with the end of Kieślowski's career as a documentarist, and he would complete only one more non-fiction project, *Siedem dni w tygodniu* (*Seven Days a Week*, 1988), in the following years of filmmaking. What was surprising was not the choice of fiction over non-fiction films – after all, the director had

⁵⁹ Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, rev ed., London. Granta Books, 1991, p 30

⁶⁰ Grazyna Torbicka & Tadeusz Sobolewski (int), 'Zapis II', *Rezyser*, no. 65, 3-1997, p 5 (transcribed by Piotr Lazarkiewicz from TVP programme *Kocham kano*)

already made five fictional films during the 1970s – but rather the near-finality of the rupture with documentaries.

Kieślowski offered several explanations over the years for his abandonment of this form of filmmaking, his unease over documentaries apparently triggered by *First Love* and acted upon several years later after the making of *The Station*, but nonetheless, these include many discrepancies and contradictions. Although he claimed in 1992 to have quickly perceived the limitations of the format and sought to extricate himself from it,⁶¹ his documentary-making career spanned the not inconsiderable period of almost fifteen years. He worried about causing harm to his participants,⁶² but this perhaps owed much to his fear of having to accept responsibility for them. Most inconsistently of all, he claimed in one interview that he lacked the patience to wait for real tears when he could give an actor glycerine, but stated in his authorised autobiographical reminiscences, *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, that, once he had access to glycerine, he consequently feared real tears and doubted his own right to film them.⁶³

If the varied and contradictory statements made by Kieślowski about his departure from documentary-making are confusing, what they do reveal is his genuine and profound discontent with this form of filmmaking. Whatever the ultimate reason for his choice – and who is to say that all of the explanations, however inconsistent, do not hold true? – he would henceforth concentrate upon making fictional feature films, in which he had evinced his first serious interest in the early 1970s with *Przejście podziemne* (*Pedestrian Subway*, 1973). Allowing him greater access to tears, albeit of glycerine, fictional films would also permit him a more intense focus upon the personal and inner spheres.

⁶¹ Ostria (int.), 'Przypadek i konieczność', p 283.

⁶² Valérie Duponcheile & Marie Nöelle Tranchant (int), 'Kolor czarny', *Forum*, Warsaw, no. 12, 24-3-1996 (trans. let from *Le Figaro*, 14-3-1996), & Zawislinski, *Kieślowski*, p 50.

⁶³ Torbicka & Sobolewski (int), 'Zapis II', p 7, & Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p.86

CHAPTER 3

The Fictional Films 1973-1979

Commenting upon the difference between making documentaries and fictional films, veteran maker of the former, Frederick Wiseman pointed out that '[i]f you are interested in telling people how to act, then you should work with actors'.¹ Like other noted directors including Alain Resnais, Lindsay Anderson, Tony Richardson, and, in Poland, Andrzej Munk, Kieślowski made the shift from documentaries to fictional films. Indeed, his growing reputation in the 1980s and 1990s in the West, if not Poland, would be based firmly upon his work in the latter mode. However, Kieślowski's development from making documentaries to fiction was not as straightforward as Wiseman's statement suggests such a change must be. Far from immediately abandoning one form for another, Kieślowski in fact spent the greater part of the decade moving with apparent ease between both, making a total of ten documentaries² and five fictional films³ between 1973 and 1980. This crossover between film modes found its way into the works themselves, as consciously intended by the director who explained that '..tak naprawdę interesuje mnie właśnie to, co znajduje się bezpośrednio na ich [tzn. dokumentów i filmów fabularnych] styku' ('..what really interests me is precisely that which is found directly at their [i.e., documentary and feature films'] intersection.').⁴ Accordingly, if the documentary *Życiorys (Curriculum Vitae)*, 1975) was in part fictionalised, then its counterpart is to be found in the television drama of the same year, *Personel (Personnel)*, 1975), which relies

¹ Fred Wiseman quoted in Carl R. Plantinga, *Rhetoric & Representation in Nonfiction Film*, Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1997, p 37.

² Eleven, if one counts as a separate item *Krótki życiorys (Short Curriculum Vitae)*, 1975), which was a shortened version of *Życiorys (Curriculum Vitae)*, 1975).

³ Six, if one counts as a separate item *Klaps (The Slate)*, 1976), which is a short film of outtakes from *Blizna (The Scar)*, 1976).

⁴ Andrzej Piątek (int), 'Życiorys na wszystkich i każdego z osobna', *Nowiny*, Rzeszów, no. 29, 7-2-1977.

in great part upon the observational and discreet camera associated with the documentary style. Challenging the widely-held conception that documentaries and features are discrete categories, Kieślowski consciously strove to combine the advantages of the two in the 1970s:

‘Szukając wyjścia, chcąc odejść od moralnej dwuznaczności, zacząłem łączyć oba gatunki filmu – dokumentalny i fabularny – biorąc z dokumentu prawdę zachowań, wygląd rzeczy i ludzi, z fabuły głębie przeżycia i siłę napędową tego gatunku – akcję.’

‘Searching for a way out, wishing to get away from moral ambiguity, I began to combine both modes of film, documentary and fictional, taking from the documentary the truth of behaviour, the appearance of things and people, and from the fictional feature the depth of experience and the driving force of that film mode, namely, action.’⁵

What is most striking is that Kieślowski believed mixing documentary and fiction resulted, conversely, in less moral ambiguity. Specifically, the benefit he believed he gained through this blurring of factual and fictive elements was ‘[p]rzede wszystkim większą wiarygodność’ (‘[a]bove all, greater accuracy’),⁶ a matter of particular relevance for a director attempting to record the reality of People’s Poland in the face of state-sanctioned propaganda and fabrication. It being easier to adapt the observational perspective and style of the documentary to a fictional work than to impose the demands of plot and action, most commonly associated with features, upon a documentary, the

⁵ Kieślowski quoted in Jerzy Biernacki, ‘Trzeba rąbać nowy chodnik’, *Ekran*, Warsaw, no. 37, 12-9-1976, p 19. Kieślowski commented on several occasions about the filmic and structural resemblances between his factual and fictional works, Zygmunt Kałużyński & Marian Turski (int), ‘Zagładać ludziom pod czaszkę Rozmowa z Krzysztofem Kieślowskim’, *Polityka*, Warsaw, no. 10, 6-3-1976, p 10; Urszula Rój (int), ‘Nie omijać rzeczywistości’, *Trybuna Robotnicza* (Magazyn niedzielny), Katowice, no. 130, 11/12-6-1977, & Gustaw Moszcz (int), ‘No heroics, please’, *Sight & Sound*, Spring 1981, vol. 50, no. 2, p.90.

⁶ Jerzy Pawlas (int), ‘Propozycja wspólnego myślenia’, *Kurier Szczeciński*, Szczecin, no. 78, 5/7-4-1980.

director's blending of these modes perhaps inevitably found greater expression in his fictional films of the period than in his documentaries.⁷

The advantages of drawing upon his experience of documentaries when making fictional films were not lost upon Kieślowski where other aspects of his work were concerned. His earlier and contemporary documentary work provided him with the opportunity to explore feature filmmaking through an alternative perspective but equally it allowed him the prospect of a safe retreat into known territory during his initial venturings into the profession of fictional films. Notably, he used amateurs playing themselves, as well as actors creating roles, in *Personnel*, *Spokój* (*The Calm*, 1976), and *Amator* (*Camera Buff*, 1979). His continuing search for authenticity is one explanation: he may have considered the amateurs a means by which to encourage his professionals into a naturalistic style of acting, although in later years as he became more assured of his ability to direct actors, he may have felt able to capture this mode of realism without employing real people. One can also attribute to his growing confidence the inventive wittiness that led him to cast Krzysztof Zanussi and others as themselves in *Camera Buff*. Nevertheless, one close colleague implies that initially at least it was Kieślowski's familiarity with engaging with real people, thanks to his documentaries, and fear of employing actors due to his relative inexperience of using them that led him to utilise the former alongside the latter in *Personnel*.⁸

In other respects Kieślowski also experienced few differences in crossing between two forms of filmmaking. The censors continued to dog his fictional works as they had

⁷ Kieślowski and several filmmakers, subsequently termed the 'Cracow Group', presented a manifesto at the 1971 Cracow Film Festival of Short Films calling for the use of the knowledge gained in the course of documentary-making in feature films. For what little information is available about this group and Kieślowski's involvement in it see Frank Bren, *World Cinema 1: Poland*, rev ed, Wiltshire Flicks Books, 1990, p 135.

⁸ Witold Stok interviewed in Geoffrey Macnab & Chris Darke (int), 'Working with Kieślowski', *Sight & Sound*, vol. 6, issue 5, 5-1996, p.18.

his documentaries, with the director having to agree to certain restrictions in *Blizna (The Scar, 1976)*⁹ and *The Calm*, the latter film having its première delayed until 1980 in any case.¹⁰ On a more positive note, the critical reception remained, for the most part, equally good: *The Scar*, despite receiving some cool reviews from television and film critics,¹¹ *The Calm*, and *Personnel* all won their maker prizes at home and, in the case of *Camera Buff*, abroad as well.¹² Kieślowski's tendency towards collaborating with colleagues on his documentaries also continued into his fictional productions, with his close associates from the former continuing to work with him on the latter: Krzysztof Wierzbicki was second director on *The Calm* and credited as co-worker on *Camera Buff*, and Jacek Petrycki and Witold Stok acted as cinematographer on two films and *Personnel* respectively. Moreover, in contrast to the single shared screenwriting credit in his documentaries,¹³ Kieślowski made frequent use of authorial collaboration in his fictional pieces, co-authoring the screenplay for *Przejście podziemne (Pedestrian Subway, 1973)* with Ireneusz Iredyński, writing the dialogue for *The Scar* with Romuald Karaś, the author of the story upon which the film was based, and, according to Tadeusz Lubelski, enlisting his closest co-workers in the writing of the dialogue for *The Calm* and *Camera*

⁹ Stanisław Zawisliński (int), 'Jeden na jednego' in Stanisław Zawisliński *et al*, *Kieślowski bez końca*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1994, p 24. The film-poster advertising *The Scar* was also censored before being allowed release, Andrzej Krauze interviewed in Macnab & Darke (int), 'Working with Kieślowski', p 19

¹⁰ In a potent example of the truly absurd nature of censorship in Poland at the time, the vice-president of the censors told Kieślowski to cut a scene showing prisoners working on a building-site, i e., outside prison, as this was against international law, this conversation taking place whilst through the window of the censor's office both men could see prisoners who were indeed working on a building-site; Stanisław Zawisliński (ed), *Kieślowski*, 2nd ed, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, pp 68-69. Nevertheless, this scene is still present in *The Scar*, perhaps because, occurring as a flashback, it was deemed to be less realistic and thus less damaging

¹¹ Hania Krall (int), 'Zrobiłem i mam', *Połyka*, Warsaw, no 4, 27-1-1979; & Wojciech Roszewski, 'Sekcja „Blizny”', *Ekran*, Warsaw, no. 4, 23-1-1977. For better reviews see: Bożena Janicka, 'Idź sam', *Film*, Warsaw, no 50, 12-12-1976; & Tomasz Zalewski, 'Anty-bajka', *Literatura*, Warsaw, no 1, 6-1-1977

¹² For more comprehensive details on prizes awarded to all four films, see Paul Coates (ed), *Lucid Dreams: The Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski*, Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1999, pp 178-180

¹³ Notably, this was for the semi-fictionalised *Curriculum Vitae*

Buff.¹⁴ Jerzy Stuhr was the most important of Kieślowski's new colleagues, and his off-screen work on the dialogue for *The Calm* and *Camera Buff*, which earned him co-screenwriting credits, was complemented by his on-screen performances as the main protagonists in these films and a secondary character in *The Scar*. Kieślowski used the word *partnerstwo* ('partnership') of their working relationship and Stuhr, already clearly an actor favoured by the director, would go on to play in *Dekalog 10 (The Decalogue: 10, 1988)* and *Trois Couleurs: Blanc (Three Colours: White, 1993)*.¹⁵

Kieślowski's foremost thematic concerns and main protagonists in these early fictional films mirror those found in the contemporaneous documentaries, and his preoccupation with filming everyday reality, in particular that of life in Poland at the time, and interest in the interplay between the public, personal, and inner realms of individuals are evident in all of the fictional films of this period apart from *Pedestrian Subway*, an anomalous piece in many ways when compared with other productions of this time. What feature films offered him, however, was the opportunity to augment and broaden the exploration he had begun with his documentaries. Having decided in the 1970s to examine individuals whose existence in People's Poland forced them to make a choice with regard to their lives, with documentaries Kieślowski was only able to show his protagonists after they had undertaken their decisions, as in *Murarz (The Bricklayer, 1973)*, *Curriculum Vitae*, and *Nie wiem (I Don't Know, 1977)*. Successful as he was in adapting the day-in-a-life format to the recounting of his protagonists' lives in the course of one day, nevertheless, the affairs discussed are necessarily retrospective and in consequence comparatively static.¹⁶ With fiction, however, Kieślowski is able to show

¹⁴ Tadeusz Lubelski, 'Osobny świat', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Warsaw, 22-10-1998, p.12. Lubelski doesn't specify which colleagues.

¹⁵ Grazyna Banaszkiwicz (int), 'Z rzeczywistości', *Tydzień*, Poznań, no 41, 14-10-1979.

¹⁶ *Z punktu widzenia nocnego portiera (From a Night Porter's Point of View, 1977)* is not strictly retrospective, However, it is because the porter has faced no juncture and does not recognise that he might make a decision to live differently that there is no need to film the whole of an adult life that is stagnant.

his heroes at the moment of choice, to examine matters leading up to, and not only resulting from, their decisions: the Gralak who could only recount his past life up to the point of his downfall in *Curriculum Vitae* is reborn and simultaneously reworked a year later in his namesake, Antek Gralak, in *The Calm*, whose actual undergoing of a pivotal section of his adult life during the course of the film means that the viewers witness the entire sequence of his ruin at first-hand, not simply its conclusion. The dramatic impact of the protagonists' experience is also increased, and the overview of his characters' lives enables Kieślowski to suggest that whereas the heroes' tragedy in *Personnel* and *The Calm* is that there is no crucial moment at which they could have averted their respective impending doomed decisions, the tragedy of Filip Mosh in *Camera Buff* is that he spots too late the key moments that have passed him by.

Although Kieślowski continued his exploration of the interaction between the individual and society that found a counterpart in many of his documentaries, the opportunity allowed him by fiction to depict his characters' lives in the process of being lived means that he was able to venture further afield and begin his examination of the relationship – more often, struggle – between the individual will and the external and uncontrollable forces of fate and chance, a concern that would be increasingly evident in his subsequent films. With *Personnel*, *The Scar*, *The Calm*, and *Camera Buff* he does not show decent men caught up in abysmal circumstances as an excuse for abandoning self-responsibility: one still recognises that they ought to behave well, however unprovoked or undeserved the problems with which they are faced. Rather, he demonstrates how little influence individuals have over external factors, how beings are not independent of one another, and how a person's good will is not enough to ensure a good result. These films warn against one's becoming compromised in the manner of their heroes, the main protagonists being Kieślowski's archetypal "small" men, or everymen, and the pressures

faced are depicted as everyday and common to all. Although this is less true of *The Scar*, *Personnel*, *The Calm*, and *Camera Buff* can be easily appreciated by latter-day viewers, Polish or otherwise, outside the communist context because they depict the dilemmas of life present the world over: People's Poland may be beyond the experience of most but tensions with one's family, colleagues, boss, society at large, and even providence are not.¹⁷ This broad applicability, which makes these films accessible now, was appreciated also at the time: certainly, Kieślowski believed his international film awards for *Camera Buff* indicated that non-Poles understood his films, something of particular note as he recognised that ‘..zagadnienia, które film ponosi wydawały się sprawami specyficznymi polskimi’ (‘..the issues that the film raises had seemed to be specifically Polish matters’).¹⁸

Nevertheless, the problem of ‘how to live?’ as represented by the characters of *Personnel*, *The Scar*, *The Calm*, and *Camera Buff* is one particularly pertinent to the inhabitants of People's Poland. It was not about finding an abstract, albeit necessary, philosophy of life independent of socio-political and economic circumstances – this would come in *Przypadek* (*Blind Chance*, 1981) and *Bez końca* (*No End*, 1984), and later with greater emphasis in parts of *Dekalog* (*The Decalogue*, 1988), *La Double Vie de Véronique* (*Podwójne życie Weroniki* (*The Double Life of Véronique*, 1991), and the *Trois Couleurs* (*Three Colours*, 1993-1994) trilogy – but a genuine daily struggle between bad and less bad ways of living. That such a struggle existed was, as the historian Norman Davies points out, a direct result of the Polish situation where the difference between the values of society and those of the state was so extreme that ‘..it [was] not easy for an

¹⁷ Katarzyna Jabłońska notes that *Personnel* and *Camera Buff* discuss the immorality of the political system in which their protagonists live but also the primary evil, human nature; Katarzyna Jabłońska, ‘Koniec i początek’, *Więź*, Warsaw, no. 9, 9-1996, p.118.

¹⁸ Kieślowski quoted in “‘Interesuje mnie połączenie fabuły z dokumentem.’”, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, Olsztyn, no. 238, 21-10-1979.

honest person to know where his loyalties should lie', which statement neatly sums up Kieślowski's fictitious heroes of this period and the moral conflict undergone by them.¹⁹ With the true-life protagonists of *The Bricklayer*, *Curriculum Vitae*, and *I Don't Know* having revealed the grim results of the conflict between public and private values, it is unsurprising that in *Personnel*, *The Calm*, and *Camera Buff*, the fictitious main characters of which are forced first to recognise and then confront such a reality of life in People's Poland, Kieślowski reached at best ambiguous and at worst utterly bleak conclusions. Kieślowski was himself loath to announce publicly his private loyalties towards any particular group, be it film-related, political, or otherwise, and in later films his characters display a similar tendency. However, although it was not until the 1980s that he increasingly explicitly revealed his disinclination towards socio-political categorisation by having his characters dismissing such notions in favour of their private convictions, already at this earlier stage in exposing the conflicting groups within Polish society he suggests the impossibility of there being a correct side to take. The main protagonists in *Personnel*, *The Calm*, *Camera Buff*, and, to a lesser extent, *The Scar*, are compelled to recognise that different factions exist and that they must choose one to support and a face to wear if they are to survive – as Antek's boss points out in *The Calm*, 'Trzeba się z kimś trzymać' ('You have to stick with somebody') – but all choices lead to damnation, be it political, moral, or both.

Fictional films also enabled Kieślowski to make a more detailed examination of the personal and public areas of life in Poland and their constituent different social groupings. Having depicted the demands of the public sphere upon individuals' personal lives and private convictions in *The Bricklayer*, *Curriculum Vitae*, *Z punktu widzenia*

¹⁹ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland*, rev. ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp 60-61.

nocnego portiera (*From A Night Porter's Point of View*, 1977), and *I Don't Know*, the director could now maintain that theme whilst also altering the perspective and studying to greater effect the different pressures brought to bear by family and friends upon his protagonists. Personal matters had been hinted at in the aforementioned films, but whereas with documentaries it was considerably more difficult to show the ‘..życie po godzinie czwartej, po pracy... głosy i zachowanie nieoficjalne..’ (‘..life after 4pm, after work...off-the-record voices and behaviour..’), not least because people might be justifiably unwilling to have their privacy invaded thus, with fiction the director could illustrate this side of his characters’ lives without fear of causing harm.²⁰ Consequently, the conflicts Kieślowski is able to show are no longer limited to those between the public and personal spheres but extended to include the friction that exists within the personal realm itself between the various and opposing individual claims made upon his protagonists by close relatives and acquaintances. In *The Scar*, *The Calm*, and *Camera Buff*, the heroes’ desire to lead contented lives is doomed to failure precisely because, in being beset upon all sides by public, personal, and sometimes inner pressures alike and trying to please all by reconciling these many demands, they please no one, themselves included. Again, although it was not until the films of the late 1980s that Kieślowski suggested that it was not to the personal realm, much less the public sphere, but the inner self that individuals must turn, harmony coming from within and not from the reconciliation of outside forces, nevertheless, the concern with the inner life that dominates later productions can be traced back to the fictional films of the 1970s, with the horses seen by Antek in *The Calm* and the hawk-dream of Filip’s wife in *Camera Buff* illustrating Kieślowski’s characters’ emotional and mental processes. Similarly,

²⁰ Kieślowski quoted in Biernacki, ‘Trzeba rąbać nowy chodnik’ Kieślowski made these comments following *The Scar* and they can perhaps be applied more easily to his fictional works than his documentaries

Kieślowski's shift to fiction was instrumental in allowing him recourse to symbolism as a means of representing the inner states of his characters, symbolism that, rightly or not, given the inevitable manipulation that takes place in all filmmaking irrespective of its mode, would be viewed with far greater suspicion if presented in a documentary.²¹

The fictional form also allowed Kieślowski to elaborate upon the difficulty of making choices in such a society with the introduction of a both complementary and supplementary theme. Already made powerless and emasculated by an omnipotent, omniscient, and threatening totalitarian system, Romek (*Personnel*), Antek (*The Calm*), and Filip (*Camera Buff*) are implicitly further destabilised in their selves by being fatherless, a motif that reappears in Kieślowski's later films.²² With the biological father dead, the substitute earthly father, namely, the state, corrupt and morally lifeless, and no sign of the heavenly Father, these men lack all the forms of guiding moral authority normally available. Fittingly, given his belief that his fictional and documentary films alike are essentially authentic depictions of life, Kieślowski himself was the best proof that his invented characters are as authentic and valid as any of his documentary subjects: anyone doubting in the possibility of such individuals existing in real life need only look

²¹ Kieślowski's colleagues remained suspicious of this symbolism despite its being presented in the more digestible format of fiction and he had to defend it to them on both films, Jacek Petrycki, 'Kiedy jeszcze lubiliśmy rejestrować świat' in Tadeusz Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, Cracow: Universitas, 1997, p 183.

²² Specifically, these characters are parentless but it is always the absence of the father that is emphasised. Romek has a mother-substitute in his aunt but no father figure. The situation in *The Calm* is more complicated according to Kieślowski's novella, having already lost both parents in the war and been fostered, Antek is denied a father for a second time after leaving jail when he is turned away by his foster-father, Krzysztof Kieślowski, *Przypadek i inne teksty*, ed Hanna Krall, Cracow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1998, p.50, p 58, & p 64. Again, the novella for *Camera Buff* gives a clearer idea of Kieślowski's perception of Filip. Although the deaths of his supposed father, also called Filip Mosh, prior to Filip's birth and mother whilst he was young caused him to be raised in a children's home, in fact Filip is not his mother's husband's son and so his naming after his alleged father is both ironic and incorrect – appropriately, the misspelling of his surname upon documents in the children's home further underlines his fatherless state – and he is doubly fatherless, *ibid*, pp 85-85. Though made mainly in reference to *Blind Chance*, Paul Coates's observation that the father is castrated and powerless for the Pole applies equally to these films; Paul Coates, 'Exile & Identity. Kieślowski & his Contemporaries' in Graham Petrie & Ruth Dwyer (ed.), *Before the Wall Came Down: Soviet & East European Filmmakers Working In the West*, London & Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 1990, p 113.

to the director himself.²³

Kieślowski was not alone in portraying the sense of crisis that he felt was present in Poland, this being a theme taken up by his Polish contemporaries and resulting in films that came to be termed collectively as *kino moralnego niepokoju* ('the Cinema of Moral Concern'). Spanning the years between 1976 and 1981, the Cinema of Moral Concern is exemplified by works that examine the uneasy and often disastrous relationship between the political and moral states of socialist Poland and its citizens. Andrzej Wajda was the most internationally renowned of the directors to contribute to this theme, having enormous successes both at home and abroad with *Człowiek z marmuru* (*Man of Marble*, 1976) and *Człowiek z żelaza* (*Man of Iron*, 1981), while in Poland films by, amongst others, Krzysztof Zanussi, Agnieszka Holland, Ryszard Bugajski, Feliks Falk, and, of course, Kieślowski himself, are viewed as representative of the same style.²⁴ Kieślowski expressed an aversion to being categorised in this manner²⁵ but conceded that he felt some sympathy with certain contemporary filmmakers – he named, amongst others, Zanussi, Marcel Łoziński, Marek Piwowski, and Edward Żebrowski, all contributors to the Cinema of Moral Concern – whom he regarded as having a vision similar to his own.²⁶

Nevertheless, although the idea of utilising experiences gained from documentaries, which is viewed as a governing principle of the Cinema of Moral

²³ Fatherless since the age of twelve and brought up in People's Poland, Kieślowski was also profoundly sceptical of organised religion, although he expressed a belief in the existence of a higher being in his final years.

²⁴ For more details concerning the Cinema of Moral Concern, known also as the Cinema of Moral Anxiety, see Bren, *World Cinema 1: Poland*, p 133ff.

²⁵ Rafał Marszałek, 'Między dokumentem a fikcją' in Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, p 13. Probably Kieślowski's dislike was less of being seen as part of the Cinema of Moral Concern *per se* than generally of being pigeonholed or allied with a particular group ethos, something probably too akin to taking sides for his liking

²⁶ Jacek Marczyński & Bogdan Moźdzynski (int.), 'Mocne strony, słabe strony', *Literatura*, Warsaw, no. 46, 11-11-1976.

Concern, was expressed by Kiesłowski and several colleagues back in 1971²⁷ and characterises his own films during this period, in other respects he differs from several of his better-known contemporaries. Wajda's *Man of Marble* and *Man of Iron*, the most famous of the films of this school, focus on dramatic historical events and revolutionary leaders of great significance, both being only semi-fictionalised in the latter film. Similarly, a considerable number of the other best-known works of this time also deal with highly-charged situations, including, amongst other things, imprisonment and torture in Bugajski's *Przesłuchanie* (*The Interrogation*, 1981/1982), crime and punishment in Piwowski's *Przepraszam czy tu biją?* (*Excuse me, is this where they beat you up?*, 1976), and a terrorist bomb-plot in Holland's *Gorączka* (*The Fever*, 1981). Kiesłowski's films, however, feature no impressive political protests, tragic deaths, or heroic acts, and his deliberate avoidance of such palpable drama is neatly illustrated by his decision in *The Calm* to concentrate not upon the events leading up to and including Antek's jailing – notably, no reference is made to the supposed injustice of the sentence or to brutalities inside the jail, as might be expected – but rather upon the re-commencement of his life back in society. Even Filip Mosz's intentional exposure of film-negative at the end of *Camera Buff*, the most dramatic gesture to be made by any Kiesłowski protagonist of this period, is ironically a futile and unproductive act with respect to all but perhaps himself. It is also striking that *The Interrogation*, *The Fever*, Feliks Falk's *Był jazz* (*And There was Jazz*, 1981), Wojciech Marczewski's *Dreszcze* (*Shivers*, 1981), and to some extent *Man of Marble* are situated in the past and only allude to current-day life, no doubt in part because this distancing from the present made their dramatic contents more acceptable to the censor. By contrast, all Kiesłowski's works of this period, except *The Scar* which is set in the none-too-distant past of the late sixties up until the strikes of 1970, are located

²⁷ See footnote 7, above

in contemporary Poland and thus commented upon the present by their very focusing upon it.

There is also a marked lack of black-and-white stereotyping in Kieślowski's films, in contrast to the tendency of other contemporary Polish directors of this school to adhere the Polish Romantic principle of clearly demarcated villains and heroes.²⁸ The dishonest and unscrupulous boss in *The Calm* and devious Roman of *Personnel* are portrayed as utterly without virtue but by contrast, the main protagonist of *The Scar* is a Party functionary whose fault is naïveté, not willed evil, and Filip's manager-cum-producer in *Camera Buff* may be a communist but is proved decent for all that. Similarly, there are no heroes worthy of such an appellation: as in his documentaries, Kieślowski deals in undistinguished characters and mundane lives, with Józef, the archetypal "small" man of *The Bricklayer*, finding his fictional counterparts in *Personnel*, *The Calm*, and *Camera Buff*. What concerned Kieślowski during this period was the insidious manner in which ordinary, not exceptional, people, when faced with daily existence in a morally ambivalent system, become complicit and eventually, perhaps inevitably, are crushed. Furthermore, his protagonists repeatedly discover to their cost that life ends not with a bang but, far worse, continues with a whimper: whether tragic, heroic, or ironic, the physical deaths that feature so heavily in the Cinema of Moral Concern carry with them at least a sense of closure and thus respite from the complications and sufferings of life, but the tragedy of Kieślowski's characters is that they participate in their own moral demise, however unwittingly, and are then forced to live with the consequences. It is unimportant that one does not see what Romek writes about his colleague at the end of *Personnel*, what Antek does after his beating in *The Calm*, or how Filip will cope with his new-found

²⁸ Bolesław Michałek, the first critic to note Kieślowski's avoidance of the paradigm of Polish Romanticism, points out the difference between the visibly differentiated characters in films of the period made by Wajda, Falk, and Holland, and those of *The Calm*, *Camera Buff*, and *Blind Chance*; Bolesław Michałek, 'Kieślowski' rysy odrębne', *Kino*, Warsaw, no. 2, 1990, p 2

self-knowledge in *Camera Buff*: what matters is that these characters are afforded no easy way out of their dilemmas.

Nevertheless, although Kiesłowski's earliest fictional protagonists fare badly, the director himself was highly successful in his transition to making fictional films from the outset. Just as his later documentaries are more precisely focused on the life of individuals in People's Poland than the earlier ones, so too his past experience combined with the opportunities afforded him by the fictional mode meant that with his non-documentary films his camera's gaze both broadened and became more penetrating.

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PRZEJŚCIE PODZIEMNE
(*PEDESTRIAN SUBWAY*, 1973)

Although Kiesłowski's fictional films of the 1970s are similar in their themes to the contemporaneous documentaries, the first short feature that he made since leaving film school, *Pedestrian Subway*, proves the rule by being the exception. The everyday reality of People's Poland and its effect upon the public, personal, or inner lives of its citizens are of little relevance to this film, and despite its being set in the easily-recognisable subway housing a variety of small shops and businesses in the centre of Warsaw, the location of the production in Poland is of small significance. Rather, it is the concept of the subway itself and its relationship with the outside world in the eyes of its protagonists, the male in particular, that is key to the film's meaning. The subway is in part a self-contained mini-world, a microcosm of existence above ground replete with representatives of the church, law, and commerce that offer the viewer and the main male protagonist tantalising glimpses into a wide spectrum of lives. More importantly, it is an otherworld, the literal descent into which correlates to the figurative journey made by the male character into his personal sphere: it is his conscious abandonment of his role as a teacher, and thus his public identity, that enables him to enter the subway in which he hopes to resolve the problems of his domestic life. With his focus set so firmly upon his quest, he is only momentarily distracted by the various little dramas taking place around him, largely limiting his interaction with others to that of getting information necessary for his mission and showing his active antipathy towards outside distractions with his peremptory dismissal of a tourist, as lost in the subway as the main protagonist is metaphorically adrift in his personal life. Initially the photography and editing appear to favour this character's solipsistic state of mind, the handheld camera that constantly roves

and shifts so that it, like he, takes in no more than brief glimpses of his surroundings reflecting his disinclination towards anything other than his personal affairs. However, this solipsistic and fragmented perception of others' lives rebounds upon the protagonist following his reunion with his wife. The frequent cutting and ellipses highlight both the couple's disintegrating personal sphere and the sense of time slipping away inexorably, most notably in the scene of barely-shown lovemaking that is edited so brutally, the camera lingering only over its unhappy conclusion, as to allow no sense of emotional fulfilment.

The relationship between this couple harks back to that in Kieślowski's first fictional short film, *Tramwaj* (*The Tram*, 1966), the dominant figure being once again that of the female to whom the male is in thrall, but it also develops it. In *Pedestrian Subway* the wife is vulnerable and on display to males in the public world, whether in the form of the stranger who stares at her legs as she adjusts the window-display or her husband who, unbeknownst to her, watches her at her work just prior to his entry into the shop. When husband and wife are together in their personal sphere, however, it is she who is in control from the outset, the simultaneity of his knocking and her hammering symbolising not only the marriage linking them but also that she wields the power in the relationship. His ineffectuality is immediately apparent, his loving gesture of a gift of a flower ridiculous in light of the fact that she is surrounded by blossoms; and that his flower is real but wilted whilst hers are artificial but plentiful is, it goes almost without saying, a commentary on their individual stances towards their marriage and the resultant incompatibility of the relationship itself alike. Shortly afterwards the empty cigarette packet she offers him serves as another ironic comment upon his figurative castration, with the missing phallic symbol being small at that. Even his claim of making the journey to Warsaw purely for her sake is belied by the school trip and in being committed

wholly neither as a husband nor as a teacher, he fails in both roles; certainly, she implies his obsession with his position in the public realm, especially at school, lies at the root of the tension in their domestic sphere. It is the wife who is the driving force throughout, providing the impetus for her husband's journey, deducing his motives, proffering the information that explains their failed marriage, and finally making the decision to end it; although the film nominally begins and ends with him, it is she who is at the centre of events.

Her importance goes beyond the film itself for, although her husband is a reworking of Kieślowski's impotent Polish male first seen in *The Tram*, she is considerably more dynamic than her female counterpart in that film, being the first of the Polish bitch-goddesses, authoritative, alarmingly forceful, and contemptuous of the powerlessness of the men who surround them, who are later hinted at in *The Scar* and *Camera Buff* and prevail in *The Decalogue*. That these bitch-figures are almost always Polish, as opposed to the non-Polish heroines of *The Double Life of Véronique* and the first and third parts of the *Three Colours* trilogy who are positive agents of change, is perhaps, as with Kieślowski's castrated males, a reflection of their socio-political Polish surroundings: men's emasculation through the communist state causes women's frustration, which in turn further destabilises the authority of the former and so forth.²⁹ If so, what is interesting about *Pedestrian Subway* is that Kieślowski's conception of Polish gender relations should feature so strongly in a film otherwise little concerned with Poland. The unequal balance of power between the couple in this film does not need to be read in the context of contemporary Poland to be understood, dominant wives and weak husbands not being peculiar to any time or culture. Nonetheless, the recurrence of

²⁹ Alternatively, Paul Coates suggests Polish women may have strength of character because their distancing from the public sphere protected them from conformism, Paul Coates, 'Usuwanie się w cieniu wcielenia Kieślowskiego' trans Magdalena Loska in Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, p 135.

this paradigm in films of the 1970s and 1980s which are specific to Poland at the time suggests that in this respect *Pedestrian Subway* too reflects Kieślowski's perception of gender relations in the personal realms of many Poles.

With the husband having already largely ignored the public world as he seeks his wife in the subway, as a couple they too close themselves off in the shop for the purpose of privacy. However, this personal sphere is a realistic extension of, and not an idyllic substitute for, their fragile relationship, and it is shown to be as vulnerable to external and internal pressures as is their marriage. Reminders of the outside world come knocking, metaphorically in form of telephone calls and literally in the case of the stranger whose intrusion into the shop after the door has been locked to create a semblance of privacy anticipates the wife's revelation of her lovers who have been invasive third parties to the marriage. Although the subway is already a miniaturisation of life outside, the husband reduces the scale further still, covering the windows with wrapping-paper and newspapers – incidentally, by ignoring the function of the latter to purvey information from the broader world in the process, he demonstrates yet again his disinclination towards external distractions – to create a self-enclosed space personal to the couple. The personal sphere, however, can not be physically constructed and although they crouch side by side as they both peek through the paper, their mental and emotional separation remains unaltered for all the attempts at creating an area of privacy. Clearly their desires are compatible, the husband's glimpse of a young couple as he wanders the tunnels matched by his wife's gazing upon a woman and child, but in being experienced separately and moreover not mutually communicated their realisation is impossible. Again, *Pedestrian Subway* contains the germ of things to come in Kieślowski's oeuvre, with the themes of isolation and communion in his final works, in particular *The*

Decalogue and the *Three Colours* trilogy, being foreshadowed in the depiction of this couple's inability to transform their individual states of solitude into a mutual haven.

If the pedestrian subway is both a microcosm reflecting the larger world and an alternative to it, so too is the film a thirty-minute miniature of a full-length feature allowing the viewer to become immersed in another world different from his or her own. However, like cinema itself and the limited nature of escapism that it affords, the world of the subway too is only a temporary respite from real life. The fate of the husband and wife to return to life above ground, to harsh daylight dispelling the underground fantasy, – if the subway is interpreted a third way as the underworld, the final scene in which they leave the tunnels together only to part at the exit is an ironic updating of the conclusion of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice – and to public life is also that of the audience. Were *Pedestrian Subway* not a television drama but a film made for the cinema, one could point to the further correspondence between the experiences of those off and on the screen, with the viewer's entrance into and exit from the darkened auditorium paralleling the husband's descent into and couple's emergence from the subway. Nevertheless, read in the light of Kieślowski's belief that cinema audiences are communities and television viewers lonely³⁰ – admittedly, this seems a slightly perverse view given that cinemas are filled by strangers separated by darkness whereas family and friends watch television together – the analogy between viewers and characters of *Pedestrian Subway* holds true, for all are left alone at its end.

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³⁰ Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 154.

PERSONEL (PERSONNEL, 1975)

Made within two years of *Pedestrian Subway*, *Personnel* also deals with a world-within-a-world, but here the opera-house setting acts not as an alternative to the broader world but rather as a miniaturisation of People's Poland, its way of life, and the moral issues it engenders in its inhabitants; stripped of its illusions, the opera-house instead of offering respite from daily existence actually reproduces it. Taking its lead from the institutions focused upon in the early documentaries that are simultaneously studies of individualised problems and allegories upon Poland, this television drama too is open to literal and figurative readings, exposing as it does the grim reality behind the false allure of both the performing arts and the public state. Kieślowski eschews the comic and whimsical effect to which the centuries-old notion of the world of dramatic art as a metaphor for life is more commonly used and instead revitalises this idea by both using it in a tragi-serious context and astutely perceiving its peculiar relevance to a contemporary Poland of public mask-wearing and covert politicking. It is precisely because life in the opera-house corresponds so neatly to that in the broader state that the parallels are never artificial or strained; rather, the exposé of life in the wings as one of social inequality, behind-the-scenes intriguing, corruption, and denunciations operates effortlessly as an allegorical critique of People's Poland, with every fictional scene and event finding its correlative in the real world. Public image as performance is also shown to be as much a feature of the totalitarian state – all the communist world is truly a stage – as of the dramatic arts: the various superiors of Romek, the novice tailor, make verbal claims to great authority but teach him nothing of any worth, and the artists' private conversations that he unintentionally overhears reveal the malicious and petty undercurrents beneath the role-playing. Nevertheless, the directness and simplicity of these parallels between the

literal and the metaphorical does not make them simplistic. The antagonism between the put-upon technicians and elitist artists is a commentary on the discrepancy existing between the status of the people and that of the authorities, but alternatively and not incompatibly it is suggestive also of the in-fighting existing in a country where the oppressors, like the oppressed, are natives and not foreign occupiers.

The process of moving from enchantment to disillusionment with opera life and, by extension, Poland, is undergone by the central character of Romek, in whom the transition from a combination of naïveté and inner certainty to an unhappy awareness of the pressures placed by the public world upon the individual's private convictions parallels his growth from youth to maturity. With this nineteen-year old Kiesłowski first evinces his concern with young people on the cusp of adulthood and the cost at which they come of age, a theme to which he returns repeatedly in *The Decalogue*. Later re-worked in the character of Tomek in *Krótki film o miłości/Dekalog 6 (A Short Film about Love/The Decalogue: 6, 1988)* – the similarity of these two youths' names may be just a coincidence, but it is a happy one – Romek too is a constant onlooker whose fresh-eyed innocence protects him from charges of voyeurism and, notably, without whose childlike eavesdropping there would be no film. *Personnel* is full of so-called irrelevancies to the plot, such as the tailors' conversations or the preparations of the female dancers, precisely because it directly proceeds through the indiscriminate gaze of Romek who is eager to see and hear all. However, for the same reason it is not only a film of great charm, but also in not distinguishing between matters of greater or lesser relevance to the plot and in giving the characters precedence over the action, it gives an impression of the documentary mode and thus greater authenticity.

In his tentative overtures to his colleagues, whether telling a story only to have a joke-cigarette explode in his face or hesitantly proposing a cabaret at the technicians'

meeting, Romek is also an extension of Kieślowski himself, watching the world a little fearfully and timidly hoping to connect. Both on and off the screen there are teasing similarities between director, actor, and fictional character: not only is Juliusz Machulski, who plays Romek, similar in countenance to Kieślowski and also studied direction at the Łódź Film School, but so too do Romek's experiences draw in part upon those of the latter, who at one stage worked as a wardrobe assistant in the Contemporary Theatre in Warsaw. However, if Romek perhaps resembles the younger naïve Kieślowski, it is his fellow-tailor Sowa who unequivocally shares with the older director a profound disenchantment with the triviality of life in the opera, which compares so unfavourably with the excitement and creativity found earlier at the school for theatre technicians.³¹ In having himself undergone disillusionment with his surroundings, reflecting perhaps the post-war Polish intelligentsia whose initial belief in the communist experiment disappeared in the course of the 1950s and 1960s, Sowa epitomises one of the futures potentially open to Romek but although clearly intended by Kieślowski as an oracle of wisdom – *sowa* means 'owl' in Polish – he finds his competitor as a model for Romek's moral and intellectual progression in Roman, also a tailor. Initially the similarity of names between Roman and Romek seems ironic, the former as loud, brash, and well-versed at getting ahead in the world as the latter is timorous, apprehensive, and self-effacing. Nevertheless, the marked relationship between the names of two apparently opposing individuals is disquieting. With 'Romek' being the Polish diminutive of 'Roman' and used in the tailors' workshop in accordance with popular Polish usage to distinguish between the younger and older man, correspondingly the unspoken and disquieting suggestion is that in growing up Romek's inevitable taking of the name may

³¹ Kieślowski acknowledged that the theatre in practice did not measure up to what he learned at the best school that he ever attended, the College for Theatre Technicians in Warsaw, Stanisław Zawisłinski, *Kieślowski*, 2nd ed., Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p.24; & Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowska*, pp.22-23.

also result in his taking on the nature of Roman. Still an ingenuous child who closes his eyes as he takes part in a draw, at this stage Romek is blissfully unaware that the ticket he wins apparently bears his name not through chance but the machinations of Roman, who evidently rigs the lottery to favour himself, and that his fruits result from his mistaken appropriation of the product of the older man's dishonesty. By the end of the film, however, when Romek is forced to cross from youth to adulthood by being asked to denounce Sowa and thus choose between two ways of life, the presence of Roman in the office, contrasting with the absence of the already-defeated Sowa, his new-found awareness of the world makes it clear to him which way success in the public arena lies.

Earlier in the film there are also other disturbing signs of the potential moral downfall of Romek. Trying on a pair of glasses may be a fine attempt to correct his blurry-eyed vision of the world, but given that they belong to the secretary of the technicians' committee, a thinly-veiled allegorical representation of the Party Secretary, in amending his poor sight Romek might simply distort it in another fashion. Equally worrying is the sudden alteration in his behaviour and appearance after his night at the opera when in addition to wearing spectacles as did the secretary, he also imitates his speciously authoritative manner as he overcomes his former shyness towards a female tram-passenger and makes somewhat sententious pronouncements about art to her. The high-necked jumper and dark jacket in which he dresses following his night out are items he has worn before, but in conjunction with his newly-acquired spectacles they further heighten his transformation into a sinister clone of the secretary. What is most troubling is that Romek is not undergoing a self-willed conversion but that he is utterly unaware of having slipped into the ready-to-wear conventions preferred by the public sphere; by being so naïve throughout the film, he is all the more dumbfounded in the final scene when he finally realises the difficulty of freeing himself of his unsought and previously-

unrecognised predicament.

By the time of the denunciation, then, it is not at all self-evident that Romek will be able to extricate himself from his unwitting complicity with his corrupt superiors, and the tendency of some critics to assume that he will not denounce Sowa is indicative more of their own vision, as rosy-coloured as that of the young protagonist, than of the clearer and darker perception displayed by Kieślowski in his script and direction.³² The final shots of Romek variously toying with his pen, turning over the paper, and writing are, as Kieślowski intended, tormentingly brief and inconclusive, the more so for the decision-making that could foster a full-length feature in itself being played out in fragments over the credits.³³ Equally, the certainty that Romek will fill the blank page – after all, it represents his own adult life – is nullified by the remaining ambiguity of how he will do so. In any case, having been compelled to sin either against himself or in the eyes of the public world, the future is hardly optimistic for Romek. Perhaps most disheartening of all is the glaring absence not of a heroic protest or happy ending *per se* but of their very possibility, not least as this means the audience is afforded little more escapism via the dramatic arts than is Romek. The lack of an uplifting conclusion underlines the authenticity of Kieślowski's depiction of life – he recognises that the grand and heroic fictional gestures common to other Polish films of this period have no place in the reality of People's Poland – but it simultaneously shows that just as Romek has been stripped of his false enchantment with the opera, so too with *Personnel* the director leaves the viewer ultimately bereft of almost all illusions about the comforting and reaffirming nature of film; the only small consolation lies in knowing that a medium exists where such truth can be told. If the impact of the film's message about contemporary Poland has been

³² Jadwiga Anna Łużyńska, 'Fenomen Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego cz II' *Iluzjon*, Warsaw, nos 1-4, 1995, p 33; & Tadeusz Sobolewski, 'Ultimate concerns' trans. Paul Coates in Coates (ed) *Lucid Dreams*, p.26.

³³ Kałużyński & Turski (int), 'Zaglądać ludziom pod czaszkę', p 10.

lessened by the passing of time, its warning, echoed again and again in Kieślowski's later works, against expecting art to provide the storybook endings often denied in real life is ageless.

* * *

BLIZNA (THE SCAR, 1976)

Having already portrayed in his documentaries the divergence between the people of Poland and the political authorities ostensibly representing them, in *The Scar* Kieślowski produces another variation upon this theme in the form of the clash between the Party committee that instigates the building of a chemical factory in the town of Olecko and the townspeople who are violently opposed to the project. The personification of this tension in the main protagonist, Bednarz, a Party member and the manager charged with the construction of the plant who suffers a conflict between his commitment to his political superiors and his work for the public good, however, allows Kieślowski to examine its manifestations and consequences at a more detailed and intimate level than that afforded him by the anonymously-populated dramas of documentaries such as *Fabryka (The Factory, 1970)* and *Robotnicy '71: nic o nas bez nas (Workers '71: Nothing About Us Without Us, 1972)*. Bednarz suffers not only a split between his personal and public lives and private convictions, suffering an initially uneasy conscience over his work as well as having his wife and daughter questioning the effects of his professional commitments upon his relations with them, but furthermore a public role schismatic in itself that takes on different dimensions according to the demands of the factions surrounding him.

Bednarz's dilemma is neatly encapsulated by the working title of the film, *Nasz człowiek* (*Our Man*), as this is the role the people and the Party independently expect Bednarz to perform. Unable in fact to fulfil the needs of either of these sides, he succeeds instead in uniting them only in mutual condemnation of his methods. Ironically, it is following his increasing abandonment by his Party colleagues that Bednarz begins to resemble them, as the honesty which initially distinguishes him from his peers decays under the pressures which he is left to face alone. Having coldly ignored the suggestion of his young assistant to exploit the sociologists monitoring the factory-building project for personal financial gain, later it is Bednarz himself who exhibits a far greater abuse of them and his own integrity by suggesting they withhold their damning findings. Similarly, the scene in which a contractor gives three radically differing estimates of a distance according to his reckoning of the gullibility of his audience – unsurprisingly, it is to Bednarz's equally duplicitous assistant that the contractor tells the actual figure – is striking not only as a elegant summation of the Polish system in which supposed facts are in reality utterly fictitious, but also for revealing that both subordinates' contempt for Bednarz's authority is matched by his own indifference to being treated so. The final scene depicting Bednarz with his grandson is no easy, optimistic metaphor for society's rebirth, as the baby's stumbling movements and wily scheming displayed by Bednarz's assistant indicate that the future generations are themselves beset with problems. However, Bednarz's reconciliation with his family and implicit exit from public life suggests his ultimate comprehension that his own future lies in the personal sphere where he is able to be his own man, a conclusion that contains a hint of things to come in Kieślowski's films of the early 1980s.

In view of the genuinely complicated and morally challenging conditions under which, as the film shows, individuals must live in People's Poland, Kieślowski's

portrayal of his main protagonist as a man whose own considerable defects and shortcomings combine fatally with the circumstances in which he lives and the faults of others to bring about his downfall, rather than as flawless crusader against injustice or blameless victim of outside pressures, is the more remarkable, revealing that the director's evident sympathy for Poles' predicament does not blind him to the issue of self-responsibility. A builder by trade, Bednarz is destructive in his public role and personal life. Although an amateur photographer, far from being imbued with a profounder vision he sees only surface details and is blind to deeper meanings and consequences: he stops a bulldozer from wrecking a man's house but lacks the foresight to halt the entire project; he complains about his daughter's lifestyle but is oblivious to his own influence upon her development; and at the celebrations he magnanimously offers an ex-logger a job but neither follows this up with practical help nor notices the latter being thrown out on his assistant's command. Bednarz's ignorance of the world around him stems from his lack of self-knowledge: complacent and self-satisfied at the celebratory opening of the plant, autocratic in his dismissal of the transport manager, and increasingly distant as the state of affairs deteriorates, he repeatedly misjudges both the situation around him and his reaction to it. He may comment on the difference between blueprint ideals and brutal reality, but his actual behaviour illustrates his inability to act upon this distinction.

Michał Tarkowski, who played Sowa in *Personnel*, acts once again as the mouthpiece of Kiesłowski in this film in his role as Michał Gałeczki, a television journalist who records several interviews with Bednarz and is the only character with whom the manager is shown to maintain good relations. Unaggressive but nevertheless persistent in his search for genuine answers, supportive of the townspeople's anger but equally no less mindful of Bednarz's unenviable position, Gałeczki implicitly duplicates Kiesłowski's own manner of filmmaking and behaviour towards his subjects in *The Scar* and

anticipates the director's mode of filmmaking found in later documentaries such as *From a Night Porter's Point of View* and *I Don't Know*. If Gałęcki's cameraman's injunction, 'Nie ma powtórek' ('No re-takes'), during a filmed interview with Bednarz is a somewhat heavy-handed reflection of Kiesłowski's own paramount pursuit of authenticity in his films,³⁴ the director provides witty compensation with *Klaps* (*Slate*,³⁵ 1976), a short and often comic compilation of out-takes from *The Scar* that self-mockingly belies the on-screen statement by proving that, on the contrary, off screen in real life there are indeed re-takes. Then again, the parallel between the fictional and real-life filmmakers is at its most succinct when at its simplest, as with Gałęcki's reply to Bednarz's question as to whether the journalist's film is to be critical of him, his method, or his idea, which could just as easily emanate from Kiesłowski's own mouth as from his pen:

'Wie pan, myślałem o czymś raczej wieloznacznym... Miał być ten film o panu jaki pan jest, tak jak pana widzę. [Bednarz przygotowuje kolację] I taki jak też w tej chwili, no.'

('You know, I was thinking of something rather more open to multiple meanings... This film was to be about you as you are, how I see you. [As Bednarz prepares supper] Well, and also as you are at this moment')

As ever, Kiesłowski's imaginative filmmaking is evident in his inventive coordination of images and sound. By presenting shots of Party officials discussing Bednarz's appointment and of the plane that will bring him to them in Warsaw that precede by some seconds the voice of Bednarz on the soundtrack only gradually revealing his intention of making the trip, the director skilfully constructs a deterministic scenario in which matters seem already to be out of the would-be manager's hands. Similarly, the

³⁴ Cf. Annette Insdorf, *Double Lives, Second Chances: The Cinema of Krzysztof Kiesłowski*, New York: Hyperion (Talk Miramax Books), 1999, p 38.

³⁵ The work *klaps* can also be translated as 'clapperboard' or 'take'.

sped-up images of Bednarz being driven to the officials' meeting reinforce the impression of urgency and of his being ominously hurried along. The editing is even more ingenious in the shots of a forest being cut down to make way for the factory, with the artificial acceleration of these images simultaneously an observation of the unnatural felling of these trees and an ironic commentary on the so-called progress taking place.

What works well as an editing technique, however, is less successful when incorporated into the plot itself. Although *The Scar* takes place between 1970 and 1976, the time-scheme is vague and often mystifying, particularly in the latter part of the film in which the indeterminate lapses in time make it difficult to follow the progression of events. Equally, the ambiguity that works well at the outset – it is quite intentional, in view of their subsequent behaviour, that the Party bureaucrats meeting secretly in the forest initially resemble criminals – becomes self-defeating as the viewer struggles to decipher the obscure relationships and guarded comments of Bednarz's family and colleagues. The problems of over-complicated obliqueness are exemplified by the patchy characterisation of Staś Lech, the man who, despite the disparagement of Bednarz and his wife, eventually succeeds to the post of the former. With a name that asks to be read symbolically but yields no hidden meaning when done so,³⁶ a past history that leaves it unclear as to whether he or Bednarz's wife was the victim of political intrigue in 1956, and an understated presence that may be indicative of either genuine unobtrusiveness or silent deviousness, Lech's professional success at the end of the film is open to differing interpretations that frustrate by their multiplicity, rather than enrich the narrative.

Kieślowski did not like *The Scar*, considering it one of his worst films.³⁷ Being about a complicated and even messy subject, the film is indeed often confused and

³⁶ According to popular Polish legend, the founder of Poland was named Lech

³⁷ Kieślowski was already manifesting his dislike of the film shortly after its release as well as in later years, Krall (int.), 'Zrobiłem i mam'; & Stok (ed.), *Kieślowska on Kieślowska*, p 99 & p 208

confusing, and in failing to cover any one of its many bases to good effect, it loses its own meaning and way. Kieślowski's attempt to present a complex, many-sided argument and a fully-rounded portrait of Bednarz in *The Scar* is admirable, but for once the director, albeit by no means as comprehensively as his leading character, is unable to successfully realise his project.

* * *

SPOKÓJ (*THE CALM*,³⁸ 1976)

Having already taken a minor role in *The Scar*, in *The Calm* Jerzy Stuhr plays the main protagonist, Antek Gralak, who is released from prison in the opening minutes of the film. The censors insisted upon Antek's having been jailed: no doubt aware that the film was another of Kieślowski's broad allegories upon Poland, they thought to limit the parallels by having him make Antek a criminal and thus not a typical representative of the working classes.³⁹ However, Kieślowski resourcefully makes a virtue of the imposed necessity: the re-entry into society becomes a re-birth, and Antek's fresh start finds its analogue in the *tabula rasa* that is the innocent and uninformed mind with which he greets the outside world. Leaving the prison with a religious medallion and a watch which, like he, has lain dormant but is revealed to start up afresh, Antek appears to have both faith and time on his side. His first unfavourable moments back in society immediately contrast with his optimistic disposition, the pouring rain and the grit that

³⁸ Although this title is commonly rendered in English as *The Calm*, the Polish word *spokój* can also be translated as 'peace' or 'quiet'. As used by Antek, most notably at the end of the film, the word indicates his desire for a peaceful life.

³⁹ Mirosław Przyłipiak, 'Filmy fabularne Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego w zwierciadle polskiej krytyki filmowej (Część I)' in Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, p.224.

falls into the eye of his companion who puts his head out of a train window hinting ominously at the hostile environment into which he emerges and perhaps anticipating that the mote in his friend's eye is as nothing compared with the beam in his own. Nevertheless, if the prison-like railings against which Antek talks with a fickle lover and the encaged housing estate of his parents are menacingly reminiscent of the jail that he has just left, the severing of these unfavourable personal ties leaves him all the more unbound and able to re-begin his life. Notably, the building site at which Antek finds a job is bare, corresponding to his own life that he will attempt to re-create anew.

The building site, however, carries also a more sinister meaning, symbolising by its continuous barrenness upon which nothing is built to even near-completion the failed construction of People's Poland, and the boss in turn represents the cynicism lying beneath the socialist veneer of the Polish system. In giving Antek money, directions to lodgings, employment, and the promise of good working conditions, the boss may initially reflect the alleged benignity of a totalitarian state that guarantees comprehensive benefits but he is soon shown to have the same harsh requirements of his new worker as the state does of its recipients, demanding Antek's personal commitment, compromising his virtue, and revealing that nothing is given for free. Inveigling Antek ever further into his underhand affairs by first reminding him of his generosity and later, following a theft from the site, threatening him with allusions to his criminal record, the boss finds his rival in Mietek, Antek's fellow-worker and friend who leads the increasingly aggrieved builders and insists, again with friendliness that turns into pressurisation, that Antek join them. It is no coincidence that Mietek and the boss resemble one another physically, for, although on opposite sides, they behave similarly in making unconditional claims upon Antek's loyalty, and if the boss is particularised by dishonesty, he and Mietek are nevertheless identical in their intransigent refusals to co-operate with one another. As

envisioned by Kiesłowski, this scaled-down example of the dichotomised Polish society of workers and authorities does not accord with a simplistic paradigm of heroes and villains. Rather, regardless of their differing objectives, both factions behave in a strikingly similar fashion, insofar as their paramount belief in their respective causes makes them intolerant not simply of one another but of anyone who fails wholly to ally himself with them. Ironically united by their adherence to the unspoken slogan 'if you are not with us, you are against us', both sides also interpret Antek's imprisonment according to their own system of moral values, Mietek and the builders regarding it as a sign of his credibility and the boss believing it indicates a criminal tendency that can be twisted to his own corrupt purposes, and assume immediately to have his support. Despite having begun his new life free of personal obligations to any individual, Antek finds that new attachments which uneasily span the public and personal realms are formed quickly even if he is neither cognisant nor desirous of them, and his rebirth as an individual of innocence and virtue is worth little in view of his newfound society's expectations.

What separates and eventually alienates Antek from the people about him is his desire for his 'własny kąt' ('own corner' or 'private space'). Although his aspirations towards having a wife, children, and food on the table are modest and legitimate, it is his hope for a private space, slipped in almost unobtrusively amongst the wishes recounted to Mietek, that is so badly at odds with not only a state regime whose dominance of public life necessarily comprises an intolerance of the personal sphere but also the divided society in which the possibilities of openly joining one side or another exclude the option of going one's own private way. Antek's relationship with Bożena, his eventual wife, is characterised by the consistent lack of intimacy afforded them: he makes love to her and she announces her pregnancy in a marshy field and a graveyard respectively, both public

areas. At the wedding, even as Antek celebrates the latest development in his personal life he is not allowed to forget his public obligations, having to forgo his heart-to-heart with Bożena and instead be torn between thanking his boss for taking part in the ceremony and acknowledging his friends' throwing of confetti. Indeed, having already interfered in Antek's private affairs by suggesting he choose someone other than Mietek as the second witness, the boss's physical invasion of his subordinate's own space – and even that is barely extant, consisting as it does of a two-roomed house shared with Bożena's family – when he enters his home is paralleled by his compromising of Antek's personal integrity by demanding his assistance in replacing the stolen building materials. The distinction between personal and public spaces becomes lessened further still when Bożena turns up at the building-site and by the end of the film Antek suffers a three-way pull at the hands of his wife, colleagues, and boss that renders him unable to find his much-desired peace in either sphere.

It is only in his inner life, denoted by his occasional visions of galloping horses, that Antek comes closest to expressing this craving for peace and having what could truly be termed his own space. This equine symbol of freedom makes its first appearance on a television watched by Antek and another man, and if the faulty signal resulting in a flickering test card shows how state-sponsored information is neither properly transmitted nor received, so too these sporadic images of horses that inexplicably interrupt the transmission correspond to the inner realm of the individual that can escape the state's attempted monopoly. What is most intimate, however, is also that which is most difficult to share with another individual: although Antek experiences his first vision of the horses with a near stranger, Bożena's bafflement at the wedding when her husband mimics the sound of galloping shows that his innermost life and wishes are his alone and unable to be conveyed to, let alone experienced together with, even those closest to him. The driver

who accompanies Antek on the trip to pick up replacement building materials also shows no awareness of the horses seen by the latter, suggesting again that the images correspond to secretly-held dreams which the driver, unlike Antek who has still not fully come to terms with the harsh reality of life in People's Poland, either refuses to entertain or simply does not share. However, although Kieślowski is purposefully ambiguous as to whether the horses seen by Antek through the lorry-window are real or a manifestation of his imagination, the animals that appear in the final shots following the beating of the main protagonist are purely symbolic, their disappearance into the shadows signifying the vanishing of his hopes for peace even as he mutters the word to himself.

Although made relatively early on in Kieślowski's career in fictional filmmaking, in charting the tragic fall of Antek, a good man who becomes drawn into the machinations of society and consequently is unable to realise his innermost wish, *The Calm* incorporates essential hopes and fears that remained with its director throughout his life. Revealing Kieślowski's apprehension of complicity, of his concern with being forced to take one side or another that characterises his films made during this period and later in his career, *The Calm* also first indicates his belief in the potential refuge that the inner life offered from not only the public but also the domestic sphere. The pessimism shown in this early piece contrasts greatly with the far more positive conclusions of Kieślowski's final films of the 1990s, in which the protagonists resolve their dilemmas and attain contentment in both the personal and inner realms. Nevertheless, it is the decidedly unhopeful *The Calm* that best expresses the filmmaker's self-confessed and unrelenting pessimism towards himself: although Kieślowski never lost the desire for *spokój* or peace that was as much his as Antek's,⁴⁰ so too did his belief in its

⁴⁰ Asked in 1994, in a conscious evocation of one of the questions posed in *Gadające głowy* (*Talking Heads*, 1980), what he would like in life, Kieślowski gave the one-worded answer of 'Spokój' ('Peace'), Sobolewski, 'Ultimate concerns', p 20). See also Krzysztof Piesiewicz, 'Skupienie i przenikliwość' in Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieslowskiego*, p.199.

unobtainability remain with him until the end of his life.⁴¹

* * *

AMATOR (CAMERA BUFF, 1979)

In creating the role of Filip Mosh in *Camera Buff*, Jerzy Stuhr not only once again plays the main protagonist as he did in *The Calm* but indeed Kieślowski takes advantage of his casting, using the character of Filip deliberately to evoke Antek and develop upon him. Although Filip initially shares with Antek the desire for a wife, child, and home, his preoccupation with his newfound hobby of filmmaking and the fresh experiences and potential insights to which it exposes him causes his needs to alter and diverge radically from those of the earlier character, as he explains in a speech to Irena, his wife:

‘..i zobaczyłem że to wszystko [tzn. film] może być ważniejsze niż spokój mieć, wiesz że człowiek potrzebuje, że ja potrzebuje czegoś więcej niż tylko spokoju.’

(‘..and I saw that all this [i.e., filmmaking] can be more important than having peace, you know that a person needs, that I need something more than just peace.’)

As this conscious reference to *The Calm* makes clear, Filip has gone further than Antek and found peace wanting. However, in choosing instead the active life in the public arena that results from being a filmmaker, he is nevertheless, like his fictional predecessor, still unfulfilled; after all, when Irena asks what it is that he needs, he is unable to provide an answer.

⁴¹ Tadeusz Sobolewski (int), ‘Te same pytania’, *Film*, Warsaw, 5-1995, p 68

Although Filip speedily decides upon filmmaking as his true vocation, in actuality he displays from the outset a profound ignorance of his craft and its implications. When first employing his camera for the benefit of his colleagues he demonstrates a complete misunderstanding of its purpose, his filming of a televised concert being utterly futile in that it simply reproduces at second-hand a programme already recorded on film and, moreover, ludicrous as he employs a visual medium to record an event that relates primarily to the aural senses. Likewise, having apparently filmed his baby daughter and even suggested to Irena that she re-stage the baby's arrival at home for the benefit of his camera, his admission to his manager that he possesses no film-stock not only renders his earlier posturing with the camera even more absurd but furthermore raises the question of his basic understanding of his apparatus and its functions. What becomes increasingly apparent is that in spite of being the man behind the camera, Filip does not direct but rather is directed by others. Having no sound inner judgment, indeed no real sense of self, he is easy prey to the political and personal machinations of others. Whether filming the jubilee celebrations at work, presenting his first documentary at a film festival, or making a programme for television, Filip always does so on the suggestion of others. Equally, the apparent originality of his first film which establishes his reputation as a creative *auteur* in film circles, in which shots of a business-meeting are interposed with those of pigeons, is in fact purely serendipitous, deriving as it does not from his careful reasoning but from a lack of discrimination as to the relative value of the different scenes that he films. Even the tentative romance with Ania Włodarczyk, one of the festival judges, founders less out of Filip's willed adherence to his marriage vows than because of his inability to take the initiative.

Far from Filip's passion for film intensifying his perception, instead it highlights his inability to see beyond superficial realities, and although obsessed by images, he is

utterly unequipped to interpret their unseen or unspoken import. While he has the camera and the passion for filmmaking, it is his wife who has the necessary qualities of an investigative documentary-maker. He lacks good judgement and begins to film his daughter having her nappy changed before being stopped by Irena, who immediately spots the invasion of privacy; he can only see appearances, stating simply the fact of his neighbour going into hospital whilst she, aware of the underlying complexity of the situation, draws the conclusion of the lady's impending death; and he can only look at a still taken from *Kes* in a book whereas she actually experiences the hawk in her nightmares. Physically gauche, clumsy, and unimposing, Filip, like Antek in *The Calm*, is childlike also in the naïveté he displays in relation to the world around him, and his fundamental inability to recognise, let alone decipher, the actions and motivations of those around him – he is as baffled by his wife's growing coldness as he is surprised to learn that his first documentary has been entered in the festival competition by his manager – stems from his own self-ignorance. What becomes increasingly clear is that the film's title refers more to his being an amateur in life than in filmmaking.⁴² This innocence adds greatly to his appeal by differentiating him from the cynical world in which he lives, as is recognised by Ania who is charmed to discover in Filip a director who does not make his films with a view to winning prizes, but it leaves him dangerously at odds with the choices and responsibilities of the adult world and indeed that of People's Poland. Certain that good intentions suffice until almost the very end, his passionate defence on the grounds of disseminating necessary truths of his final misguided, misinformed, and damaging documentary is nevertheless damningly countered by his boss's quiet response, 'Nie wszyscy do tego dorośli' ('Not everyone is grown up enough for that'). Only after causing considerable damage to himself and

⁴² *Amator* translates literally as 'amateur'

others, as a direct result of his ingenuousness, is Filip able to recognise that he has been awakened not so much to film as to life.

A film about the integrity of its protagonist, *Camera Buff* is also to some extent a film concerned with the integrity of filmmaking, and Kieślowski openly reveals the many moral pitfalls of the profession. Filip's boss, who in both employing him and funding his films already underlines the fact that in contemporary Poland the authoritarian state and controlling producer are literally one and the same, represents a further allegory, with his request that Filip remove scenes depicting a specific individual from the film of the factory's jubilee corresponding to the sinister totalitarian propensity for "disappearing" unwelcome persons. Such allusions function specifically in the context of the communist bloc, but neither is Kieślowski averse to poking a sly dig at filmmakers' own manipulation of their material, doing so in a manner that transcends time and national boundaries: although Filip films a midget who admits on-camera to rarely going to the cinema, these few seconds have been cut by the time the documentary is aired on national television, presumably not being to the taste of whichever aficionado of film, Filip or Jurga, a critic for Polish Television, edited it for transmission. Again, however, *Camera Buff* is primarily about the integrity of Filip as an individual, rather than the integrity of filmmaking. As a filmmaker he has trouble in sticking to one persona: having begun as a humble amateur, he becomes in turn avant-garde filmmaker, semi-professional documentarist, and social commentator, altering his style and personality whenever he sees somebody fresh to emulate but unable to stick to each successive role precisely because it is untrue to his own nature. Worse still, he is increasingly incapable of reconciling this role with the other parts that are required of him: in trying to be at once a husband, father, worker, and filmmaker, Filip is unable to maintain simultaneously the responsibilities of each position. Floundering between his public and personal roles, he

eventually fails in all of them, losing his family, ruining the career of his factory supervisor, and finally betraying the hopes of his assistant and friend when he turns his back upon filmmaking. He does eventually become his own person, making his first conscious and constructive act that is uninfluenced by anyone else when he exposes his film-negative shortly before the film's conclusion, but this comes at the cost of his complete isolation, alienating as it does his remaining friend.

Filip's newly-attained comprehension of himself and the world around him led Kieślowski to state that *Camera Buff* does not end pessimistically,⁴³ but nevertheless the final scene in which Filip stares into the gun-barrel-like lens of his camera and nervously begins recounting his recent life only for the film abruptly to come to an end is troublingly suggestive of his figurative, if not literal, death as a filmmaker. Off screen, the correct solution to interpreting the ending perhaps lies in a rare, albeit tacit, admission made by Kieślowski of a direct connection between himself and one of his fictional characters: having originally intended to end *Camera Buff* with Filip destroying the film-negative, Kieślowski rang Stuhr and said the proposed ending was unsuitable as he, the real-life director, would never stop making films, thus implying that neither would Filip.⁴⁴ Given his vision of his main protagonist's continuing life in film, then, it is possible that Kieślowski would approve of the project planned by several of his colleagues, including Stuhr reprising his role, to film a sequel to *Camera Buff*.⁴⁵ Kieślowski had no involvement in this proposed sequel, the idea for which appears to have arisen after his

⁴³ Paweł Kwiatkowski, 'Powrót kina', *Nowa Wieś*, Warsaw, no. 50, 16-12-1979. Kieślowski would go so far as to call *Camera Buff* the most optimistic of his films; Jean A. Gili, 'Kraj ponury i smutny', *Film na Świecie*, Warsaw-Lódź, nos 3 4 (388/389), 1992, p 16 (trans. Piotr Kopanski from *Posttf*, 12-1988) Viewers of his final films may beg to differ.

⁴⁴ Jerzy Stuhr, 'O Kieślowskim' in Stanisław Zawiśliński (ed), *O Kieślowskim...refleksje, wspomnienia, opime*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p.42.

⁴⁵ For further details see chapter 8.

death. However, given his openness both to collaboration and, as his later films reveal, to others' speculation about his works and their characters, he might well have welcomed the plan of Stuhr, himself an essential contributor to *Camera Buff* as actor and writer, to provide his own version of an on-screen answer as to the continuing adventures of Filip.

* * *

By the end of the 1970s, Kieślowski had established himself as a successful filmmaker of fiction as well as documentaries, producing high-quality work for television and cinema audiences alike. However, in the following years of political upheaval in Poland he would find the dilemma of taking sides that faced his fictional characters of the 1970s becoming realised in his own life during the early 1980s, as the pressure mounted for Poles to choose between the authorities and the increasingly vocal opposition movement. Unhappy to find that he, like his characters of the late 1970s, was increasingly expected to take a stand with one group or another, Kieślowski would seek to find a constructive way out of becoming allied with any of the factions dividing the public sphere not only for himself but also for the main protagonists of his films of the early 1980s.

CHAPTER 4

The Feature Films 1980-1985

In the opinion of Jerzy Stuhr, it was when Kieślowski had the character of Filip Mosz turn the camera on himself at the end of *Amator* (*Camera Buff*, 1979) that the director decided to enter ‘..w głąb człowieka’ (‘..deep into the human being’).¹ In speaking shortly after the death of Kieślowski in 1996, Stuhr had the benefit of hindsight when he made his comment but nevertheless, it is true that the beginning of the 1980s marked a defining moment in the director’s career. In January 1981 Kieślowski published what amounted to a short artistic statement, ‘Głęboko zamiast szeroko’, in which, in addition to reviewing his work to date and commenting on contemporary Polish cinema, he set forth his opinions and objectives concerning the manner in which he wished filmmaking, his own in particular, to develop. He expressed his belief in the need for filmmakers to broaden their focus, implicitly beyond Poland and domestic concerns:

Trzeba szukać sytuacji bardziej dramatycznych, wniosków wybiegających poza codzienne doświadczenia, diagnoz bardziej uniwersalnych i mądrzejszych. Trzeba naturalnie opisywać te tereny, których kiedyś opisać nie byliśmy w stanie, ale trzeba to robić w perspektywie szerszej, bardziej jaskrawie zaznaczając swoje stanowisko.

It is necessary to seek more dramatic situations, conclusions extending beyond daily experiences, more universal and wiser diagnoses. One must describe naturally those areas which at one time we were in no state to describe, but this must be done with a broader perspective, indicating one’s position more clearly.²

¹ Jerzy Armata & Katarzyna Śliwińska ‘Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego portret z okrucichów wspomnień’, *Gazeta w Krakowie*, Cracow, no 76, 29-3-1996.

² Krzysztof Kieślowski, ‘Głęboko zamiast szeroko’, *Dialog*, Warsaw, no. 1, 1-1981, p 111.

Simultaneously, and consistently with thoughts expressed in his MA thesis over a decade earlier,³ he desired that people, more than their surrounding circumstances, be at the centre of films – ‘Trzeba szukać sposobów, żeby filmy o problemach stały się przede wszystkim filmami o ludziach.’ (‘One must seek ways for films about problems to become, above all, films about people..’)⁴ – and to this end formulated a philosophy for the form he wanted the cinema of realism to adopt:

[G]łęboko zamiast szeroko, do środka nie na zewnątrz.

[D]eeply instead of broadly, inwardly and not outwardly.⁵

There is a slight confusion in this statement, given its verbal inconsistency with the ‘broader perspective’ of the earlier citation. Nevertheless, these ideas do not correspond to a radical departure from Kieślowski’s position thus far: after all, he had already been making films which, whilst referring to specific situations in People’s Poland, pertained also to wider issues, and in documentary and fictional work alike had striven towards penetrating and depicting the emotional and psychological depths of his protagonists. The importance of his statement rests upon the fact that in writing it he made a conscious decision that these elements were no longer to be the underlying but the primary goals towards which he strove in his films; in short, he set his future path. Furthermore, given his tendency to avoid grandiose pronouncements about his craft – ‘Głęboko zamiast szeroko’ was the only declaration of artistic intent that Kieślowski published under his own name alone during a career spanning over two decades⁶ – this public announcement

³ As discussed in chapter 1.

⁴ Kieślowski, ‘Głęboko zamiast szeroko’, p 111.

⁵ Ibid , p.111

⁶ Kieślowski was part of the so-called Cracow Group, which presented a filmmaking manifesto in 1971 (see chapter 3, footnote 7). As very little information is available about the group and statement, it is impossible to judge the extent of Kieślowski’s involvement or his personal influence upon and adherence to the latter.

is all the more noteworthy.

Contrary to the popular belief that it was with *Dekalog* (*The Decalogue*, 1988) that Kieślowski first began moving away from films deeply rooted in the socio-political public sphere of Poland, he also articulated this tendency considerably earlier in his statement of 1981: '[t]rzeba szukać sposobów..żeby to, co w filmie – z konieczności – zewnętrzne, stanowiło oprawę, a nie treść utworów' ('[o]ne must seek ways..so that that which, out of necessity, is external in a film constitutes the setting and not the content of the work').⁷ However, although he began immediately to translate this theory into practice in *Krótki dzień pracy* (*A Short Working Day*, 1981), *Przypadek* (*Blind Chance*, 1981), and *Bez końca* (*No End*, 1984), the first films he made following the publication of his statement, his initial success was only relative. All three films rely significantly upon their socio-political settings as a means of engendering moral conflict in their protagonists, and the frequent domination of contemporary politics over the foregrounds as well as backgrounds of the plots highlights their importance, if not the predominance that so troubled Kieślowski, in Polish life. Witek and Ula, the main protagonists of *Blind Chance* and *No End* respectively, attempt to lead ways of life unconstrained by socio-political and economic circumstances, as do the central characters of later films including parts of *The Decalogue*, *La Double Vie de Véronique/Podwójne życie Weroniki* (*The Double Life of Véronique*, 1991), and the *Trois Couleurs* (*Three Colours*, 1993-1994) trilogy, but the public world is far more intrusive and its presence more inescapable in the films of the early 1980s than in Kieślowski's later and final works.

Nevertheless, even whilst the public realm and politics continue to form such an integral part of Kieślowski's films of this period, what separates them from those of the 1970s is the degree of success with which the director exploits the public sphere to his

⁷ Kieślowski, 'Głęboko zamiast szeroko', p 111.

end of exploring and commenting upon individuals more than the general circumstances of life. The political crisis in *A Short Working Day* and the reaction of the Party Secretary to it acts primarily as a revelation of his inner human weakness; Witek in *Blind Chance*, whether joining the Party or the opposition, overcomes superficial labelling by remaining his own man in both cases and, indeed, in the final variant of the film chooses a life free of all political activity; and in *No End*, Ula's involvement in the struggles of those suffering as a direct result of martial law is continually restricted and relegated to second place by the devastation she feels at her private tragedy. From *A Short Working Day* to *Blind Chance* progressively, the leading characters consciously retreat less and less behind their public and politically-related functions – in the case of the latter film, the progression is also internal, as the third, apolitical incarnation of Witek demonstrates – becoming instead their own men. Similarly, in *No End* Ula is the first of Kieślowski's protagonists who, being a translator, has neither a position of public importance nor a job involving social interaction, and thus is never constrained in her private motivation and behaviour by an official stance or position.⁸ Perhaps most significantly of all, the observation of Krzysztof Piesiewicz that *No End*, which he co-wrote with Kieślowski, is not directly about politics but about attitudes can also be applied to the earlier two films of the 1980s.⁹ It is enough to understand that they depict two opposing sides for these films' significance to survive the political divisions in question, because the dilemma of the protagonists being pressurised into choosing a stance continues to resonate, even if the specific circumstances in which they are located no longer apply. With the riots of 1976, the growth of the opposition, and the subsequent crackdown under the martial law imposed in 1981 featuring heavily in the films, they can be viewed as historical

⁸ Notably, she is also the first protagonist produced jointly by Kieślowski and Krzysztof Piesiewicz; see below for a discussion of their collaboration

⁹ Krzysztof Piesiewicz, 'Skupienie i przenikliwość' in Tadeusz Lubelski (ed), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, Cracow: Universitas, 1997, p 201.

documents of the period but equally, one can ignore the particulars of the political situation without losing sight of the essential conflict faced by the leading characters. Certainly, it is the adoption of the more abstract perspective that makes the films easily accessible to the modern-day non-Polish viewer, as appears to be demonstrated by the considerable sales of both *Blind Chance* and *No End* worldwide in the late 1980s, despite non-Polish audiences being considerably less conscious of the details of Polish history and politics, especially several years on, than their Polish counterparts.¹⁰

As had occasionally been the case with the documentaries and earlier fictional films, in the early 1980s Kieślowski examines more intently the interplay between the inner, personal, and public lives of his protagonists, paying particular attention to his characters' ability to maintain private integrity in the light of the various demands made upon them in the public sphere. If the Party Secretary of *A Short Working Day* reveals a notable lack of this quality as he wavers interminably between the opposing sides of his political superiors and the workers, by contrast Ula in *No End* holds steadfastly to her own course despite claims made upon her by others representing public causes, like Joasia, the wife of a political prisoner, or personal requests, like Tomek, a friend and aspiring lover. Most inventive of all is *Blind Chance*, in which Witek's integrity is proved, paradoxically, via his consistent behaviour as he undergoes three different versions of his life. Like the characters of Kieślowski's earlier documentary and fictional films, these protagonists are also searching for the answer to the question of 'how to live?' but they signal a development in the director's thinking in that they are cognisant

¹⁰ *Blind Chance* was sold to Israel, Sweden, Hungary, Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, and France, whilst *No End* was sold to America, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Yugoslavia, Great Britain, and France; Mariusz Miodek (int.), 'Kieślowski eksportowany. Rozmowa z Jerzym Bochenkiem, zastępcą dyrektora generalnego „Filmu Polskiego”', *Film*, Warsaw, no. 51, 18-12-1988. The sales of *Blind Chance* from 1987 onwards, six years after it was made and almost as long after the struggle between the Party and opposition had been topical, were so successful that Kieślowski was the first director to be awarded a new Polish prize for the film with the best international distribution in 1987.

from the outset of the conflict between public, personal, and inner lives. No longer the innocents of *Personel* (*Personnel*, 1975), *Spokój* (*The Calm*, 1976), or *Camera Buff*, the Party Secretary, Witek, and Ula discover not that choices exist – choices between public groups, between the public, domestic, and inner loyalties, and between private causes – but rather the consequences of making any given choice. Equally, what is implicit in *The Scar* and *The Calm*, namely, that by withdrawing inwards one can evade the tensions of the public world and remain one's own person, becomes explicit in the films of the early 1980s as each main protagonist retreats from the outer world. What differentiates the characters, however, is that the Party Secretary does so whilst wishing to maintain a reputation for integrity in the public eye, whereas Witek in his third incarnation and Ula simply ignore public opinion. The true precursor of Witek and Ula is not the Party Secretary, who vacillates until the very end between the public and private decisions that face him, but rather his secretary who, in making a willed decision to leave her office and be allied with neither the authorities nor the protestors, foreshadows the central characters of *Blind Chance* and *No End* who also renounce both sides and turn homewards instead.

Indeed, *Blind Chance* and *No End* have the distinction of being films in which Kieślowski offers the family, in particular the perfect partner, as a source of refuge, Witek in his third incarnation experiencing harmony between his inner and domestic spheres, and Ula able to find contentment only when reunited with her dead husband, Antek. Likewise, the physically and morally absent father-figures in the films of the 1970s are replaced in *Blind Chance* and *No End* by trustworthy fathers, respectively Witek's and Antek himself. This is not to say that Kieślowski's more optimistic depiction of his protagonists' family relationships in these films comes without caveats. The untimely deaths of the fathers in *Blind Chance* and *No End* suggests that even as Kieślowski conceived of a genuine moral authority, his hope of this remained firmly tempered by his

pessimism. Similarly, although Witek and Ula have the opportunity for a happy home-life, the abysmal situation of secondary characters such as Joasia in *No End* hints at Kiesłowski's bleaker vision of the family unit, which would emerge to its most devastating effect in *The Decalogue*. Moreover, the various demands of friends upon one's personal life means that, as Ula discovers when beset by Joasia and Tomek and Witek realises to his distress in his first two incarnations, the personal realm is no guaranteed haven from the outside world. Nevertheless, if *Blind Chance* and *No End* are not completely free from the pessimistic view of the personal realm evident in the films of the 1970s as well as later in *The Decalogue* and to some extent *The Double Life of Véronique*, in nonetheless depicting the potential joys and satisfaction stemming from the personal sphere, they share with Kiesłowski's final work, the *Three Colours* trilogy, a recognition of its positive and necessary role in the individual's life.

Kiesłowski's protagonists have some success in turning to their personal and inner lives as a means of circumventing the need to make a choice between the factions dividing the public sphere, although admittedly limited success, given that Ula finds peace in death and, by contrast, Witek has his contented life denied by the same. The director however, underwent a considerably harsher ordeal when he too put his inner convictions above public expectations and consequently faced sudden, widespread hostility, of which *No End* became the focus, in Poland in the early-to-mid 1980s. The films of the 1970s made it clear that he had long been against taking any particular political or other kind of public stance. However, whilst his worldview continued unchanged, the socio-political climate underwent a radical alteration, what with the birth in 1980 of *Solidarność* (Solidarity), the main party representing the opposition, its eventual quashing, and the onset of martial law in December 1981. Poles were expected, and in most cases willing, to make their allegiances known. Now, when Poland was

undergoing the longest and most heated political strife since the communists came to power in 1945, Kieślowski, for whom the theme of the individual torn between the needs of society and his or her personal or inner needs held a career-long appeal, found himself experiencing the predicament of his protagonists most acutely. With Polish society so polarised, his continuing refusal to take sides,¹¹ whether implicitly via his cinematic work or explicitly in the form of a public statement, resulted in his being damned by those of all political persuasions.¹² As one critic has since noted, it was because he took no stance, not because he adopted the so-called wrong one, that Kieślowski was ostracised¹³

Moreover, the standing of the director in the eyes of the opposition and its millions of supporters,¹⁴ previously sympathetic to his work, suffered all the more damage because of the widely-held Polish belief, rooted in Polish Romanticism, in the artist as moral leader in times of nationwide crisis. Ever since the early nineteenth century, when Poland underwent its first foreign occupation, artists were expected to guide and encourage the nation to campaign against an alien administration. Kieślowski, however, never one to adhere to the principles of Polish Romanticism and preferring to direct films instead of the masses, had already insisted upon the separateness of art and politics. Implicit in his films of the 1970s, this belief had been overtly stated by him in

¹¹ Over a decade later, Kieslowski was prepared to state that 'I hated the communists [i e., in the 1980s] and still hate them'; Simon Hattenstone (int.), 'Auteur of his own destruction', *The Guardian* (G2T), London, 8-11-1994, p 4. Notably, however, he made this definitive statement to an English newspaper and not to a Polish publication, holding to his resolve to not take sides publicly in Poland upon that country's public sphere. Similarly, he refused to have the autobiographical book *Kieślowski on Kieślowski* (translated and edited by Danusia Stok as *O Sobie*) published in Poland before he died.

¹² As Norman Davies points out, a significant number of Poles set themselves apart from both sides and were similarly castigated by their peers. '[t]o their enemies on both sides, these 'conciliators' or compromisers were two-faced trimmers of the worst sort'; Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland*, rev ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, p 396. Artists who reacted similarly to Kieślowski include Adam Zagajewski, the poet and philosopher who inspired Kieślowski in the 1970s (see chapter 1), and the author Janusz Anderman whose initially pro-Solidarity writings were followed by a collection of short stories, *Kraj świata (The Country of the World)*, 1988), in which he expresses his despair at the state of society under martial law.

¹³ Tadeusz Sobolewski, 'Droga Kieślowskiego', *Odra*, Wrocław, no. 10, 10-1986, p 29.

¹⁴ Solidarity had a membership of ten million, constituting around thirty percent of the Polish population.

‘Głęboko zamiast szeroko’,¹⁵ but his reiteration of it in the mid-1980s was badly received.¹⁶ Accordingly, his perceived abnegation of what was regarded by a great many Poles as his historically ascribed responsibility led further condemnation of him.¹⁷

Similarly, Kieślowski’s vision of Polish society as a whole as severely damaged, rather than the authorities and conformists alone, had already been apparent in works such as *Blizna* (*The Scar*, 1976) and *The Calm*. However, its recurrence in the 1980s, in particular in *No End*, the only film made by Kieślowski to be released during this period, was no longer tolerated: many Poles simply found it too difficult to see their own sins, and not just those of their enemies, exposed. Undoubtedly, the authorities and their followers receive the harshest treatment at Kieślowski’s hands, the Party and its members in *A Short Working Day* lacking any redeeming qualities, and the character of Werner, the noble communist in *Blind Chance*, more than offset by that of Adam, the wily and self-promoting high-ranking Party official; even the faceless authorities in *No End* are the more menacing for being unseen and yet clearly controlling and monitoring the populace. On the other hand, Kieślowski’s continuing avoidance of black-and-white stereotyping is demonstrated by his denying the opposition a hagiographic treatment. On the contrary, they too are portrayed as prey to the vice of dogmatism, as seen in *Blind Chance*, and to that of blind fanaticism willing to sacrifice an individual for the cause, as Mietek, a lawyer’s assistant, proposes to do with Darek, the political prisoner, in *No End*. Furthermore, in keeping with the philosophy of his earlier films, Kieślowski maintains his position that the greatest hindrance to the individual’s independent personal and inner

¹⁵ Kieślowski, ‘Głęboko zamiast szeroko’, p 109.

¹⁶ When Kieślowski restated his view that politics and art do not converge (Zdzisław Pietrasik (int.), ‘Średnia przyjemność’, *Polityka*, Warsaw, no. 27, 6-7-1985, p 6), he received a stinging reply to that and other comments in Wit Stankusz, ‘Kręcenie zegara’, *Kino*, Warsaw, 10-1985, p 16. See also Krzysztof Piesiewicz, ‘Odszedł człowiek prawy’, *Prawo i Życie*, Warsaw, no. 12, 23-3-1996, p.36, & Stanisław Zawisliński (ed.), *Kieślowski*, 2nd ed, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p.130-132.

¹⁷ Cf. Tadeusz Sobolewski, ‘Ultimate concerns’ trans Paul Coates in Paul Coates (ed) *Lucid Dreams: The Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski*, Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1999, pp 19-20.

lives is the intrusive nature of a public world comprised of both the authorities and the opposition. In *Blind Chance*, Witek in his first two incarnations gets into difficulties with his political superiors, whether the Party or underground movement, because of personal commitments they deem obstructive to their respective causes. Similarly, in *No End* the domestic life of Joasia, wife of Darek, is destroyed by the rival political allegiances of her closest family members, and the authorities and opposition alike would publicly exploit Darek for their purposes, regardless of his private convictions.

With Kieślowski refusing publicly to join either the opposition or the authorities, each side construed this behaviour as a sign of his favouring the other, resulting in the director's meeting with increasing antagonism, which reached a peak in 1985 with the release of *No End*, from all political quarters throughout the early-to-mid 1980s. The authorities tried to win Kieślowski's allegiance by offering him a production house of his own.¹⁸ At the same time, they distorted comments made by him about the legal system in Poland so as to favour themselves, using a letter he wrote to his production company explaining that he was unable to complete a documentary about the courts because the judges refused to pass harsh judgments whilst being filmed, as evidence of the leniency of sentences passed under martial law.¹⁹ Ultimately, they found it easiest to gag him. *Blind Chance*, which had already reached the unwelcome attention of the authorities whilst still in its production stages,²⁰ was forbidden a release upon its completion in 1981 and became one of the so-called 'missing ten' films banned under martial law.²¹ The censors

¹⁸ Danusia Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, London: Faber, p. 129.

¹⁹ Quentin Curtis (int.), 'Tell it like it is. Krzysztof Kieślowski', *The Independent on Sunday* (The Sunday Review), London, 3-10-1993, p. 20; & Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, pp. 126-129.

²⁰ According to a notice from a department of the Home Office, *Blind Chance* was supposed to be forbidden production because it was of little artistic value, had a negative story line, and falsified reality, details published in Zawisliński (ed.), *Kieślowski*, p. 67.

²¹ The 'missing ten' consist of films deemed by the authorities to be too politically dangerous in the climate of the time to be released. The banned works include, amongst others, Ryszard Bugajski's *Przesłuchanie* (*The Interrogation*, 1981/1982), Agnieszka Holland's *Gorączka* (*The Fever*, 1981) and Andrzej Wajda's *Człowiek z żelaza* (*Man of Iron*, 1981). For further details see Frank Bren, *World Cinema 1: Poland*, rev. ed., Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1990, p. 151.

also shelved *A Short Working Day* in 1981 because of objections to its politics, although in following years the authorities no longer needed to uphold the ban as Kieślowski himself forbade the televisation of the film on the grounds of its artistic shortcomings as he saw them.²² Only *No End* was permitted a release in 1985 after having been held back by the censors for several months, but its extremely poor distribution within Poland – it was shown at one cinema in Warsaw and had only one performance in Cracow²³ – and pairing with Roman Wionczek’s pro-party *Godność* (*Dignity*, 1985) for the purpose of its screening abroad points to the authorities’ continuing suppression of Kieślowski. Nonetheless, the antipathy of the establishment towards him was matched by that of the opposition. Already angered at his refusal openly to take their side, many Poles were convinced of Kieślowski’s pro-Party tendencies by the manipulation of his letter concerning the juridical system, and his attendance at a New Year’s meeting with General Jaruzelski, along with the fact that his films were made with the state’s money and thus approval,²⁴ were interpreted as further signs of his conformity.²⁵

Accordingly, *No End* was comprehensively vilified upon its première in 1985 by critics of all political hues,²⁶ the situation it portrayed too recent and the political antagonisms too deeply rooted for many Poles to stomach its ambivalent position towards

²² Catherine Wimphen (int), ‘O wolności i nowych regułach gry’, *Kino*, Warsaw, 9-1991, p 8 (trans. Wanda Wertenstein from *Studio*, Paris, 1991); & Maria Kornatowska, ‘Krótki dzień pracy. wypadnie z ról’, *Film*, Warsaw, 5-1996, pp 115-116. Never one to regard his own work highly, Kieślowski judged *A Short Working Day* to be his worst film next to *The Scar*. Polish Television, who produced the former, withheld the film according to his wishes until his death, following which they televised it in June 1996.

²³ Mirosław Przyłipiak, ‘Filmy fabularne Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego w zwiernicadle polskiej krytyki filmowej (Część I)’ in Lubelski (ed), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, p 228

²⁴ Given that all Polish films were financed and authorised by the authorities, this charge is absurd

²⁵ Przyłipiak, ‘Filmy fabularne Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego’, p.228

²⁶ Anna Tatarkiewicz, ‘Łabędzi śpiew czy CDN?...’, *Polityka*, Warsaw, no. 30, 27-7-1985, & Maciej Chranowski, ‘Bez konca’, *Kultura*, Warsaw, no 9, 31-7-1985. The bad reviews are assessed in Sobolewski, ‘Droga Kieślowskiego’, p 29; Hanna Karelak (int), ‘Dwie nagrody dla Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego w Cannes’, *Przekrój*, Cracow, no. 2244, 12-6-1988, & Przyłipiak, ‘Filmy fabularne Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego’, pp 228-232. Przyłipiak analyses the Polish critical reception of Kieślowski’s fictional work and concludes that *No End* received the worst reviews of all of the director’s films; *ibid.*, p 233. Interestingly, the Polish émigré reaction when *No End* was shown in London at the National Film Theatre in 1986 was apparently positive, Edward Rogerson, ‘Polish perspectives’, *Sight & Sound*, Autumn 1986, vol. 55, no. 4, pp.224-225.

martial law and its effects upon the populace. By contrast, *Blind Chance* received positive reviews, in spite of its also having illustrated Kieślowski's wariness of the parties on both sides of the political divide. The crucial, and decidedly ironic, difference, however, in the case of *Blind Chance* is that having been shelved in 1981 and thus already possessing what many Poles would see as the cachet of being one of the 'Missing Ten' – that this merit was not enough to save Kieślowski from the critical mauling he received over *No End* is unsurprising, it being easier for reviewers to note the apparent vices of the available work than the potential virtues of an unseen film – its eventual release in 1987 came at a period sufficiently distanced from the intense political strife of earlier years to render its critique of Polish society less painfully immediate. Although it is possible that *Blind Chance* might too have suffered the fate of *No End* had it been released in 1981 as originally intended, its delayed première is the more ironic since Kieślowski's critics of the early 1980s would have done well to question, as the film does, how far a political stance determines one's morality.

The extent of Kieślowski's differing and sinning with *No End*, as much in the eyes of the authorities as those of the opposition, is underscored when the film is compared with Andrzej Wajda's *Człowiek z marmuru* (*Man of Marble*, 1981), the seminal work of its time according to many Poles and Westerners, and as such representative of the more typical cinematic response to contemporary events. Whereas *No End* is history told from below, *Man of Marble* shows history in the making, and while *No End* documents the sense of defeat that permeated Poland after the introduction of martial law, *Man of Marble* attests to the moral triumph and hints at the future political success of the opposition. Wajda's heroes suffer for the greater societal good, whereas *Ula* simply suffers alone. Moreover, in keeping with Polish Romanticism's obsession with Polish martyrdom and victory in death, Wajda turns death into a morality play, resurrecting

Mateusz Birkut, who is killed in the riots at the end of *Człowiek z żelaza* (*Man of Iron*, 1976), in the form of his son Maciej Tomasz, who takes on his father's mantle in *Man of Marble*. By contrast, Ula's death is anti-heroic and intensely private. Her death makes no impact upon the broader public world, as do those written in accordance with Polish Romanticism, and is not even strictly Romantic – Ula is no Juliet committing suicide solely out of impassioned love, much as she longs for Antek – but instead suggests the impossibility of her existing in such a world. It is not that Kieślowski had the benefit of hindsight over Wajda when he filmed *No End*: after all, Kieślowski did not make a pro-Solidarity film in 1981 any more than Wajda charted the loss and disillusionment felt by many Poles following the introduction of martial law. Rather, these directors epitomise two radically diverging ways of approaching the events of the time, with Kieślowski suffering for his alternative vision. Given the bitterness and strife experienced by Kieślowski during the years of the early-to-mid 1980s for filming his own non-aligned version of events, it was generous, if ironic, that Wajda, who gained such national and international acclaim for his work of the same period, should have concluded in later years that his younger colleague chose the better path:

‘When we were all lost and confused during martial law, he [Kieślowski] alone knew which path to follow...He actually went against the mainstream of the Polish film-making tradition. Many of our films were in one way or another political – we were trying to relate to society and history. He chose a completely different way – a psychological, metaphysical way – of dealing with contemporary life. As events have shown, it was the right way.’²⁷

This is a stage of Kieślowski's career characterised by disappointments and

²⁷ Andrzej Wajda interviewed in Geoffrey Macnab (int.), ‘Endgame’, *The Independent* (Film), London, 20-3-1997, p 9.

failure but his one notable and lasting success came in the partnerships he formed with Krzysztof Piesiewicz and Zbigniew Preisner, his co-writer and composer respectively on *No End* and all of his subsequent films. The influence of Zbigniew Preisner would be greatest in the 1990s, with his music for *The Double Life of Véronique* and *Trois Couleurs: Bleu (Three Colours: Blue, 1993)* forming an integral part of the films' narrative and meaning. However, the impact of Piesiewicz, a lawyer who during the early 1980s specialised in defending individuals prosecuted under martial law, is immediately apparent in the legal drama found at the heart of *No End*. It was the Polish journalist and filmmaker Hanna Krall, Kieślowski's co-writer on *A Short Working Day*, who introduced the two when the director was in need of assistance in making the aforementioned documentary about the Polish courts. Although Kieślowski apparently abandoned that project at the suggestion of Piesiewicz,²⁸ henceforth their collaboration was conspicuously prolific and produced the screenplays of every single fictional film that Kieślowski directed from *No End* onwards. Given the dominance of the *auteur* theory in film studies, despite the fact that no artist and especially no filmmaker works in a vacuum, it is all the more significant that two names should continuously share a screenwriting credit, as did those of Piesiewicz and Kieślowski between 1984 and 1994.²⁹ Moreover, Kieślowski's readiness to emphasise Piesiewicz's importance in their creative relationship – according to the director, it was Piesiewicz who most often had the basic ideas for their films,³⁰ and although the Kieślowski appears to have done the actual writing, he did so whilst continually turning to his colleague for input³¹ – whilst a

²⁸ Piesiewicz, 'Skupienie i przenikliwość', p 203.

²⁹ They also share a writing credit on the forthcoming *Raj (Heaven, 2002)*; see chapter 8.

³⁰ Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p.143. Piesiewicz makes a similar comment in his interview with the author, Appendix, p 302 & p.315.

³¹ For a description of the collaborative writing process of Kieślowski and Piesiewicz, see: Paul Kerr (int), 'A revolution that's turned full circle', *The Observer (Rev)*, London, 15-5-1994, p 14, & Hiroshi Takahashi (int), 'Piękne hasła i tajemnica', *Kino*, Warsaw, 9-1993, p 12 (shortened version of article produced with the help of Ewa Misiewicz for the Japanese *Switch*).

continuation of his generosity towards earlier collaborators, is a surprising and refreshing deviation from the norm where filmmakers is concerned.

In the light of the Kieślowski-Piesiewicz partnership, *Blind Chance* gains special prominence by being the last film to be written solely by the director. As such, what is notable is that its themes of multiple lives, fate, chance, and coincidence, and the marked turning away from the public sphere into the personal and inner realms, all prefigure their more extensive employment in the works of the later 1980s and 1990s. Clearly, Kieślowski was already venturing in this direction prior to his meeting with Piesiewicz, but the continuation and increasing dominance of these themes in the jointly-written productions suggests that they fascinate the lawyer as much as they did the director and, consequently, that the partnership was a marriage of similarly-inclined minds. Inevitably, the very nature of a successful collaboration makes it difficult to ascribe anything to one or another writer precisely because of the integrity of the finished product. Nevertheless, when compared with Kieślowski's earlier work, *No End* contains several new features that hint at the influence of Piesiewicz. The main protagonist is a female, unlike Kieślowski's central characters hitherto, a choice for which Piesiewicz clearly states a preference.³² Similarly, Ula is a member of the intelligentsia, as indeed are most of the main protagonists in the subsequent films; although Witek in *Blind Chance* shows some signs of belonging to this class, it is Ula who, being wealthy, attractive, and seemingly free of the daily grind, denotes the most radical departure from the "small men" who predominate in Kieślowski's documentaries and earlier fictional films. These features show a divergence from Kieślowski's earlier style suggesting that they may have originated with Piesiewicz; equally, however, as the latter himself proposes, they may be

³² Piesiewicz interviewed by the author, Appendix, p 302 & p 315. Kieślowski went only so far as to admit that he had previously written badly-drawn female characters and thus perhaps for this reason had a female heroine in *No End*; Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p.174.

indicative of Kieślowski's concurrent growth in this direction hastened, rather than prompted, by his co-writer.³³ The discrete influence of either writer upon their projects ultimately cannot be ascertained precisely, but the longstanding nature of the collaboration is a telling gauge of both men's satisfaction that the mutually-written screenplays adhered to their individual tastes.

The darker aspect of the partnership of Kieślowski and Piesiewicz is that the isolation that features so heavily in *No End*, which although not the first of Kieślowski's films to explore the theme of loneliness, accentuates and makes the seclusion of the individual central to the narrative as never before, contrasts sharply with the collaborative process underlying the production of the screenplay itself. Indeed, this disjunction between harmonious relations of the two writers and the solitude of the characters they created is evident again and again in the films of the late 1980s and 1990s. However, even as Kieślowski, by himself or aided by Piesiewicz, created protagonists who manifest a growing inclination towards withdrawing into themselves, a further, more auspicious paradox is the director's newfound willingness in the 1980s to establish an affinity with his audience. Having already professed in 1981 the desire that his viewers share his emotions at what he portrayed on screen,³⁴ Kieślowski's increasing disavowal in subsequent films of tidy conclusions compels the viewer to participate in the provision of solutions to the issues raised and thereby enter into a dialogue with, and become the tacit collaborator of, the director. Kieślowski had long made the endings to his films ambiguous but the three conclusions of *Blind Chance* comprise his most overt gesture to date of allowing the audience the freedom to decide upon the protagonist's fate and the film's meaning, thus anticipating the strikingly open-ended character of *The Decalogue*.

³³ Piesiewicz interviewed in Barbara Hollender (int.), 'Nie kreuje fantomów', *Rzeczpospolita*, Warsaw, no. 111, 14 15-5-1994, p 4.

³⁴ Kieślowski, 'Głęboko zamiast szeroko' p.111.

Although the 1970s had seen Kieślowski expressing a decidedly ambivalent attitude towards his viewers, despite the considerable disfavour that his reputation underwent in the opening years of the following decade it was at this stage that he began the process of engaging more profoundly with his public.

* * *

*KRÓTKI DZIEŃ PRACY**(A SHORT WORKING DAY, 1981)*

Based upon a report by Hanna Krall, 'Widok z okna na pierwszym piętrze' ('The View from a First-Floor Window'),³⁵ *A Short Working Day* recounts the political unrest in Poland in 1976, when the proposals of the Gierek-led government to raise food prices led to workers' riots in Radom and Ursus. Kieślowski's depiction of these events centres upon the Party Secretary of a town outside Warsaw, who becomes the focal point of the townspeople's anger following the announcement of the anticipated price rises, but although he has a public bureaucrat as his main protagonist the director does not correspondingly take the official Party line about the disturbances. On the contrary, the situating of the perspective within the Party system allows Kieślowski a critique of the dehumanisation resulting from that same system. The Party Secretary typifies the subordination of the human being to the public role from the outset, offering his perception of the events of 1976 during a television interview, only immediately to qualify the personal aspect of his viewpoint by adding '..to znaczy, punkt widzenia pierwszego sekretarza komitetu wojewódzkiego' ('..that is, the point of view of the First Secretary of the Provincial Committee'). Whether intentional or the serendipitous result of either careless editing or an imperfect transferral of the film to videotape, the perceptibly unsynchronised images and the soundtrack at this point, a slight time-lapse occurring between the movements of the Party Secretary's lips and the sounds emanating from them, further illustrate the main protagonist's lack of integrity.³⁶ Later,

³⁵ The working title of the film was 'Widok z okna' ('The View from a Window').

³⁶ A similarly fitting disjunction between the images and soundtrack occurs in *Camera Buff* when Filip's manager asks him to compromise the integrity of his film about the factory by excising scenes deemed detrimental by the manager. Again, it is unclear whether the lack of synchronicity is deliberate or due to the film's or videotape's technical imperfections.

having sent out a subordinate to deal with the crowd gathering outside the town's Party headquarters, the Secretary's retreat behind his function is mirrored in his concealment of himself behind a curtain as he watches his assistant's dangerous reception by the crowd; only when the return of the assistant to the office lessens the physical distance does the Secretary overcome his earlier mental detachment and concern himself with the beaten man. Later, in a reversal of fortunes, the Secretary himself suffers from the dehumanising effects of officialdom: the aloof and unsympathetic manner in which Warsaw headquarters and the militia instruct him to leave his offices demonstrates that their primary concern is with preserving the official organs of authority in Poland, rather than protecting the man himself.

As in his earlier documentary and fictional works, Kieślowski underscores how problems at the micro level both correspond to and derive from those at the national level of governmental authority. If the translation of the physical distance separating the Party Secretary from his subordinate on the ground into mental distancing reduces his concern at seeing the latter beaten, ironically, no different is the dismissive attitude expressed by Party officials situated miles away in Warsaw towards the problems of the Secretary, who plays the role of dispensable underling to their authority in a duplication of the asymmetrical relationship existing between his assistant and himself. Such replication of the authorities' behaviour further down the political hierarchy is revealed to be as inevitable as it is insidious when in a similar incident, the Party Secretary, himself a puppet of the Party, exploits in turn the workers sent to his office as unwitting mouthpieces for the lies with which he wishes to calm the demonstrators. If his revenge-fantasies about the rioters indicate his contempt for those lacking in political authority, conversely his inability to retaliate in this imaginative manner against the faceless Warsaw officials emphasises their power over him. It is this alternation between the

abuses suffered by the Secretary and those inflicted by him that creates a tension precluding an easy assessment of his character: any deserved sympathy for the abysmal position of a man largely abandoned by his mendacious and unreliable superiors is constantly checked by the recurring evidence of his simultaneous upholding and furthering of the corrupt Party system by repeating their sins. The irony, then, is that this lack of integrity is the sole quality uniting Party members. When the Secretary's unspoken ruminations about joining the protesting workers are interrupted by a colleague in Warsaw who asks him abrasively via the telephone if he is considering abandoning his post – as befits the authorities' detachment from its subordinates, Warsaw requires the open telephone line not so as to involve itself but in order to listen in – the Party official's apparent facility for reading the thoughts of the former is suggestive less of a Big Brotherly omniscience than of his recognising the main protagonist's deviousness and instinct for self-preservation because he too is capable of such duplicity.

As befits a film concerned with the imbalance of power between the authorities and the masses, there is much talking in *A Short Working Day* but a dearth of dialogue. According to Krzysztof Piesiewicz, Kieslowski believed the abundance of speech to be one of the main failings of the film, but in fact the modes of expression used throughout the film illuminate the uneven nature of the relationship between those speaking and those spoken to.³⁷ Anonymous and as disembodied in person as they are detached mentally, the officials in Warsaw respond to the Party Secretary's requests for help not with discussion or solutions but blank commands scarce in information, causing him to observe, 'Żeby coś wiedzieć. Cokolwiek' ('To only know something. Anything'). Meanwhile, the telephone and megaphone through which the Secretary speaks to his

³⁷ Piesiewicz, 'Skupienie i przenikliwość', p 201. Kieslowski felt he had failed by using too many words, as opposed to images, to depict the experiences of the Party Secretary.

superiors and the demonstrators respectively are themselves distancing devices that prohibit direct communication and underline that the gap existing between the Secretary and both sides is as much mental, given the private opinions about the Party and the people that he conceals from both, as it is physical. Indeed, the man who ought to facilitate public discourse by fulfilling his duties as go-between between the opposing sides instead hinders it with the obfuscatory tactics of a turncoat, appeasing and vacillating between both factions precisely because he is privately allied to neither. This depersonalisation stemming from the officialdom underpinning daily life in Poland is additionally stressed by the manner in which personal names are rarely used, being instead replaced by titles in the exchanges between functionaries. The Secretary, himself nameless, addresses only one of the Warsaw officials by name, and his personal sphere is so subsidiary to his public life that even in his telephone conversation with his wife, uncommunicative and futile in itself, their names go unuttered. Likewise, the crowd views the Secretary in terms of his public role rather than as an individual, chanting 'Sekretarz!' ('Secretary!') instead of calling for him by name. By contrast, when he says 'Towarzysze!..Obywatele!..Proszę państwa!' ('Comrades!..Citizens!..Ladies and Gentlemen!') to test out the megaphone, the correction to the appeals addressing first the people's supposed Party affiliation and then their sense of public duty signifies his awareness that the demonstrators will not tolerate being addressed in the official idiom given their disenfranchised status within People's Poland.

Although *A Short Working Day* is ostensibly set in the past, Kieślowski consciously exploits the parallels between the events of 1976 that it portrays and those of 1981, the year of its production, in order to comment upon contemporary Poland, and utilises the increasingly complex fantasy sequences depicting the innermost thoughts of his main protagonist about the fates of various demonstrators in 1976 to reveal his own

doubts as to the successful resolution of the comparable conflict between the authorities and opposition taking place at the beginning of the 1980s. The first two visualisations are straightforward childish revenge-fantasies, as befits the boyish-faced, sweet-eating Secretary. When with the third and fourth fantasies he projects further forward, anticipating the burgeoning influence of the underground movement and later envisaging the eventual success of the opposition, it initially seems that his prediction of the triumph of Solidarity between 1980 and 1981 owes less to his uncanny foresight than to Kieślowski's own optimistic commentary upon latter-day Poland, the fantasies suggesting the happy ending which eluded the people in 1976 is merely deferred until 1981. In the final fantasy sequence, however, the Secretary's fantasies are interspersed with genuine footage of protests in 1970: an earlier proposal by then leader Władysław Gomułka to raise food prices led to his overthrow and replacement by Edward Gierek whom the footage shows making promises to the workers which, as *A Short Working Day* has just detailed, he subsequently broke in 1976 by repeating his predecessor's mistake. What becomes apparent is that the intended harmfulness of the Secretary's revenge-fantasies is, like all else, a small-scale version of those dangerous fictions spun out by politicians at the highest levels: the inventions of the former may remain unrealised, but those of the latter have already been used to dupe the entire population. However, in thus illustrating the moral fallibility of those in authority, Kieślowski also questions the people's responsibility: if politicians show an endless capacity for fabrication, their populace's willingness to be so deceived contributes to the problem. Ending on the Secretary's former aides watching his appearance on television in 1981 in a shot almost identical to that shown at the beginning of the film of them viewing the announcement of proposed price-rises in 1976, Kieślowski concludes *A Short Working Day* by underscoring the political and moral torpor characterising contemporary politicians but perhaps also the

entire nation.

* * *

PRZYPADEK (BLIND CHANCE, 1981)

The motif of repetition underlying *A Short Working Day* dominates the narrative of *Blind Chance*, in which Witek Długosz, the main protagonist, undergoes three versions of his life. As regards the public world, repetition is once again a sign of its moral stagnancy and Kieślowski's delineation of the dogmatic ruthlessness of the authorities finds its twin in his portrayal of the ruthless dogmatism of the opposition. However, the director's negative diagnosis of the public sphere is itself offset by his more positive conclusion about the significance of repetition within the inner life of the individual: with Witek maintaining his decency and honesty in each of his three incarnations, the recurrence of these qualities in the face of the shifting circumstances within which he finds himself illustrates his inner constancy. Narratives consisting of multiple viewpoints converging to recreate a single life were nothing new for cinema viewers in 1981, Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941) being the most famous example and Andrzej Munk's *Człowiek na torze* (*Man on a Track*, 1957) providing a somewhat more recent treatment for Polish audiences, but the freshness of *Blind Chance* lies in its offering not three individuals' interpretations of Witek, but instead, through a philosophical sleight-of-hand, three interpretations of him *per se*. In an implicit criticism of conventional linear biographies, Kieślowski explores his central character through a multi-layered narrative, with the repeated alteration from version to version of key aspects of Witek's life amplifying the richness and depth of its analysis and suggesting that a truer impression of

an individual's inner life can be achieved, paradoxically, by imagining the alternative directions he or she may take in the public and personal realms. Witek's inner integrity is persuasive precisely because it is viewed through the diverse perspectives of his stints as Party functionary, political agitator, and ordinary doctor. Similarly, presented successively as a linear sequence of events, Witek's three love affairs, although not atypical in reality, would appear extravagant and risible within the confines of a two-hour film. However, Kieślowski's manipulation of time entails that the three relationships are at once unobjectionable and inform the characterisation of Witek by underscoring the versatility of a disposition with the potential to be drawn to three quite different women.

Kieślowski's interpretation of the question 'what if?' around which the plot of *Blind Chance* is based is as original as is his reworking of the standard biographical narrative. To hypothesise one way of life for Witek and then balance this with an opposing situation would bring about conceptual closure to the question, but in examining the thesis and antithesis and then suggesting yet a third option Kieślowski in fact opens up the number of alternative scenarios to infinity, and therein lies his masterstroke. If the first two portrayals of Witek's life correspond to the two sides of a coin – perhaps the coin picked up twice, naturally, by the man in the railway station – the third version symbolises not merely one but all the possibilities available beyond the coin. Read in political terms, the third option represents Kieślowski's unspoken warning against one's becoming limited to the 'us versus them' paradigm that dominated public thinking in Poland at the time. Philosophically speaking, however, it confirms the director's open-mindedness, already attested to by the non-judgmental stance he takes in earlier documentaries and fictional films, and his genuine concern with the boundless possibilities of life and film alike, such that in later years he considered making over a dozen distinct versions of *The Double Life of Véronique*, itself a film in which a single

character is presented in two incarnations.³⁸

Time may have rendered the political implication of *Blind Chance* and its pertinence to contemporary Poland less immediate but the riddling aspect of a film with three heroes, albeit consisting of one man, and three endings lives on for audiences of all ages and nationalities. The film is a philosophical puzzle, a game of interpretation that forces the viewer to make what he or she will, as Witek must do in each life, of the signs, symbols, and parallels that multiply throughout. What, however, differentiates the audience from the main protagonist is the measure of control afforded each. Although Witek has the potential to undergo numerous lives, at no point do the first two incarnations reveal an awareness of the potential for making choices different to their own; even if, as suggested by one reviewer,³⁹ the alternative versions of his life are imagined and thus recognised by the third Witek just before he dies, his impending death negates any practical use this newfound perception might afford him. Conversely, the viewer is aware of these alternative existences and thereby has the power to decide upon their relationship to one another and ultimate meaning. In being privy to information denied the leading character, the audience is offered the opportunity to play God, as Kieślowski has done earlier in creating and devising several destinies for Witek, and decide upon which of his fates is the definitive one.

And yet, the decision-making of the viewer is fraught with problems. *Blind Chance* may be the most structured film by Kieślowski to date – the director had already evinced his fascination with form with the time-scheme of *Szpital*, (*The Hospital*, 1976) and the organisation around weekdays of *Siedem kobiet w różnym wieku* (*Seven Women of Different Ages*, 1978) – but its director-writer repeatedly challenges the rules and

³⁸ Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p.187.

³⁹ Christopher Garbowski, *Krzysztof Kieślowski's 'Decalogue' Series: the Problem of the Protagonists & their Self-Transcendence*, Boulder: East European Monographs no. CDLII, 1996, p.26.

boundaries of his own schema. By drawing attention to Witek's dead twin, Kieślowski only serves to highlight the disparity between this one potential double for his main protagonist and the actual number of other selves who appear – for the parallel to function properly, Witek should have been a surviving triplet – as though teasing the audience by hinting at a metaphor only in order to show his avoidance of it. Similarly, when attempting to read a meaning into Witek's name – 'Witek' bears more than a passing phonetic resemblance to the Latin *vita* or 'life', and 'Długosz' takes as its root the Polish *dlugo* or 'long' – one is simply confronted by the irony and perversity of a writer who would give his protagonist a name with a symbolic subtext that is utterly inappropriate given the actual relative brevity of his lifespan. Seemingly obvious interpretations turn out, upon closer investigation, to be flawed. One critic argues that the failure of the third Witek to reach Warsaw by train corresponds to his remaining '...in the antechamber of political awareness', but despite the subtlety of the analysis, his reading ignores the fact that the second Witek's unsuccessful attempt to catch the Warsaw train does not prevent him from becoming politically active.⁴⁰ Likewise, it may be tempting to agree with Tadeusz Szczepański that the film shows only death is certain, but although this is broadly true in that all humans are mortal, in fact death does not come to the first and second Witek in the course of the film and therefore one must acknowledge the director's conscious differentiation of them from their fatally-inclined counterpart.⁴¹ Indeed, not content with wrong-footing the viewer on screen, off screen Kieślowski adds to the confusion, admitting to a preference for the third part of *Blind Chance* only to then

⁴⁰ Paul Coates, 'Exile & Identity: Kieślowski & his Contemporaries' in Graham Petrie & Ruth Dwyer (ed), *Before the Wall Came Down: Soviet & East European Filmmakers Working In the West*, London & Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 1990, p.110.

⁴¹ Tadeusz Szczepański, 'Kieślowski wobec Bergmana, czyli Tam, gdzie spotykają się równoległe' in Tadeusz Lubelski (ed), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, Cracow: Universitas, 1997, p.169. Tadeusz Sobolewski, who argues against reading the third Witek's death as his punishment for choosing an apolitical life because the plane is ready to explode in every case, similarly ignores how this simply underlines Kieślowski's decision not to send the first two Witeks to their deaths by having them board it; Tadeusz Sobolewski, '„Przypadek” – post scriptum', *Kino*, Warsaw, 6-1987, p.8.

contradict his own argument against mixing politics and art by berating the third apolitical Witek for failing to engage with the problems of the public world and thus justifying his protagonist's deserved death.⁴² Although he recognised the value of one's doing what one is best suited to instead of being politically involved, Kieślowski's comment that '[n]iestety, nie można tym zmienić świata i dlatego Witek wsiada do samolotu, który czekał na niego we wszystkich trzech wariantach' ('[u]nfortunately, you can't change the world with this and this is why Witek gets onto the aeroplane that waited for him in all three variants'),⁴³ makes it seem almost as if he were punishing his protagonist for attaining the peaceful and apolitical life that he himself struggled unsuccessfully to realise at the time of the making of the film.

Blind Chance is a perfect puzzle precisely because it has no definitive solution. Every seemingly authoritative statement about its contents is negated by an alternative possibility, just as each Witek is negated, although simultaneously complemented, by his other incarnations. The film abounds with markers and symbols but Kieślowski refuses to yield a key explaining how best to read these signs, thereby continually frustrating the attempts of the viewer to deduce the superior version of Witek or find the perfect solution that could assimilate and elucidate the discrepancies and variances at play. Kieślowski may, like Witek's father, be telling the viewer 'Nic nie musisz' ('You don't have to do anything'); alternatively, in an imitation of Werner's advice to Witek, he may be saying 'Zrób jak chcesz' ('Do as you please'). By refusing to indulge the audience with either a completely unpenetrable enigma or a textbook answer that resolves the inconsistencies and understatement, Kieślowski reveals his profound scepticism about the restrictive nature of form and systematic storytelling to which both artists and critics subject art.

⁴² Maria Marszałek (int.), 'O mnie, o tobie, o wszystkich', *Kino*, Warsaw, 8-1987, p 10; & Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 113. Kieślowski also specified a preference for the third Witek, Karelak (int.), 'Dwie nagrody dla Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego w Cannes'.

⁴³ Marszałek, 'O mnie, o tobie, o wszystkich', p 10

However, by refuting the idea of anyone, himself included, having access to the absolute truth, he also admits the possibility of every interpretation and conclusion having its own significance and veracity, and thus ensures that *Blind Chance* remains open to its viewers' assessments for infinity.

* * *

BEZ KOŃCA (NO END, 1984)

It is perhaps something of a surprise to learn that Kieślowski discarded the original title of *No End*, 'Szczęśliwy koniec' ('Happy Ending'),⁴⁴ since a narrative about martial law that kills off its most virtuous character, Antek, off screen even before the film begins, in which the most successful example of human interaction is that between his unseen ghost and Ula, his living wife, and which ends with Ula preferring to chance a life in the next world than continue an unbearable existence in this, is already replete with savage irony. Kieślowski plunges the viewer into the disquieting atmosphere of life under martial law at the film's very outset, the first spoken phrase being 'Rozmowa kontrolowana' ('The conversation is being monitored'); that so ominous a warning should apply to something as innocuous as an automated speaking clock is absurd and ironic, but, above all, intensely disturbing. Indeed, this unsettling and chilling initial absence of human discourse extends into the opening minutes of the film: only after the pre-recorded telephone announcements have been heard and Antek's ghost has spoken does a human conversation, inauspicious in itself given it involves a prematurely-woken Ula telling Tomek, Antek's friend, of her husband's death, finally take place. This conscious

⁴⁴ Kieślowski decided the irony was unnecessary; Pietrasik (int.), 'Średnia przyjemność', p 1.

emphasis upon the absence of productive human relations sets the tone for the alienation largely characterising the relationships, whether official or personal, in *No End*. Telephones proliferate, but as in Kieślowski's later films they serve only to hinder communication whether the individual intends it, as when Ula cuts short an unwelcome call by having her son, Jacek, create the illusion of crossed lines, or, more distressingly, not, as she herself experiences when a telephone call prevents her from being at the side of her husband as he died.

Kieślowski's focus upon the inner life, his most intense thus far in his oeuvre, of Ula is augmented by his introduction of a metaphysical element, centring on the ghostly presence of Antek, to the narrative. In the case of the former, the director attains a quality and standard comparable to that which he achieved almost a decade later in *Three Colours: Blue*, a film also concerned with a widow's immersion in her inner realm. Although faced with the difficulty of playing a character so isolated within herself that she rarely convey her feelings verbally, Grażyna Szapałowska performs the role of Ula with such sensitivity and expressive body language, whether storming around her apartment in search of photographs of her husband as a youth, hurrying past a man stuck in a lift when she visits her hypnotist, or preparing in a manner-of-fact way for her suicide, that the accompanying music at times detracts from the emotional force of her acting instead of complementing it. With the metaphysical strand, however, Kieślowski must resort to symbols and metaphors in order to illustrate that which is by definition abstract and incorporeal, and he does so with only relative success. Although the director had already made some attempts at illustrating the inner life in *The Calm* and *Camera Buff*, and even earlier in his documentaries had captured the inner beliefs and sufferings of his protagonists, it is *No End* that truly signals the start of the long-term challenge of filming the metaphysical and spiritual. The most telling references to Antek tend to be

the most indirect: what appears at first to be a rather blundering reference to the stagnation of the lawyer Labrador in the past, when he discovers his watch has stopped within moments of his explaining to Joasia that he last defended a political case thirty years ago, is in fact an allusion to the demise not of his ability – it soon transpires that he is completely *au fait* with the contemporary legal tactics used in defence under martial law – but of Antek, the watch-giver, and the ethical position he represented whilst alive. There is, however, a palpable crudeness to Antek's dying of a heart ailment,⁴⁵ the black dog, the question mark, and Ula's supernaturally prevented car accident, which symbolise his continuing, albeit unseen, and benevolent existence. That Kieślowski's attempts at filming the presence of an intangible ghost should yield such overstated results is perhaps inevitable given the conflict between the medium and the message: film, which operates predominantly by recording physical reality, does not readily accommodate the depiction of that which is unsaid and unseen. Indeed, ruefully conceding the materialism of film, the director admitted that 'I'm frustrated by the literalism of film; I'd like to escape that' in an interview conducted a decade later.⁴⁶ However, if this problem of literalism and self-consciousness somewhat weakens the effectiveness of the metaphysical strand in *No End*, although it would continue to dog his later works as his focus turned ever inward to the inner life and the abstractions of the mind and soul, it was also one to which Kieślowski found increasingly inspired and thought-provoking solutions.

The extended exploration of the inner and personal realms in *No End* serves only to emphasise the repeated intrusion of the public world upon them. As the situation of Joasia, torn between a dissident husband and a father who supports the authorities,

⁴⁵ Although the Polish phrase 'umarł na serce', as used by an acquaintance of Ula questioning her about Antek's death, is commonly translated as 'he had a heart attack', its literal meaning, 'he died of his heart', further accentuates the dead man's compassion and integrity, which the film implies is equally dead in Polish society.

⁴⁶ Geoff Andrew, *The 'Three Colours' Trilogy*, London: British Film Institute, 1998, p.82.

reveals, the personal sphere is not free of the divisions present in public life but instead replicates them. Ula's one-night affair with an American tourist, although quintessentially an intimate act committed out of her innermost convictions, begins and ends in the public realm: the American, mistaking her emotionally-motivated behaviour for the professional instincts of a prostitute, assumes a business transaction where none exists and although she, in turn, gives the payment she receives to Joasia out of personal friendship, in doing so she indirectly supports the cause of the opposition, on behalf of whom Darek is imprisoned and his family reduced to such meagre home circumstances. Similarly, it is tempting to read the American's immediate fascination with Ula as a metaphorical commentary on the West's perception of and relations with Poland at the time, the affluent West being attracted to the sexy, beautiful, and doomed cause of Poland, a reading which extends far beyond the personal attraction between the tourist and Ula into an illustration of international relations in the public arena. Unfortunately, it is impossible to judge whether this interpretation is intended, as the man's foreignness, anonymity, and short time on-screen necessarily reduces him into little more than a cipher whether of the outside world or personal realm. As Kieślowski admitted, the domination of the personal and inner spheres by the public world is primarily a fault of a script in which the political and legal story line is elaborated at the cost of the development of Ula's ostensibly primary narrative.⁴⁷ Certainly, the film's thematic concern with the imposition of the public sphere upon the personal and inner lives is ironically if inadvertently replicated by the structure of *No End*.

Nevertheless, incidents such as the three-fingered salute shared between Ula and Antek as she lies hypnotised testify to the potential existence of a personal sphere in

⁴⁷ Although this was the stage at which Kieślowski was making his first move away from filming the public life in People's Poland, nevertheless he felt the emphasis on politics in *No End* was too great, Stanisław Zawiśliński (int.), 'Jeden na jednego' in Stanisław Zawiśliński *et al*, *Kieślowski bez końca*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1994, p 25.

which all outside influence is eluded. Tempting though it is to draw a connection between the number of fingers raised by Antek and then Ula and the three stances between which Darek must choose when his case is defended, as though Antek were subliminally instructing his wife as to which option Darek should accept, it simply cannot be done. The gesture has a hidden meaning, clearly comprehensible to Antek and Ula, but Kieślowski quite rightly refuses to include a convenient scene providing an explanation of its origins for the benefit of the viewer: it is precisely by maintaining the gesture's indecipherability that the director underscores how personal a symbol it is to the couple and thus subtly illustrates the boundaries of a shared marital life which no outsider can penetrate. It is also because, lacking Antek to act as the conduit between the outside world and herself, Ula's sole ability to live in her inner realm causes her, ironically, to choose death, and her absolute estrangement from and contempt for the public world and even her domestic life with her son is illustrated with devastating effect not just by the fact of but indeed the form taken by her suicide. If the taking of one's life already indicates a feeling of incompatibility with the world, Ula goes a step further by turning on the gas-oven and moreover binding her mouth fast with tape, a gesture with which she barricades herself off one final time from the outside world even as she simultaneously effectively denies herself the chance of making any final appeal for help to that same world. It is in having so troubled and troubling an inner life, as well as having it focused upon, that Ula anticipates the main protagonists who would appear almost a decade later in *Three Colours: Blue* and *Trois Couleurs: Rouge (Three Colours: Red, 1994)* and intimates how Kieślowski already recognised the depths, as well as heights, the inner realm comprises.

When compared with the remarkable industriousness of Kiesłowski as a filmmaker during the 1970s, his output in the early-to-mid 1980s was notably diminished. Martial law undoubtedly affected his ability to maintain high productivity in the early years of that decade. The authorities' restriction of all filmmaking placed a direct restraint upon him, whilst general hostility towards the director and his own disillusionment with the unrewarding fruits of his labours served as an indirect curb. Other professional commitments, including his vice-chairmanship of the Polish Filmmakers' Association between 1978 and 1981, his co-supervision of the "Tor" production unit beginning in 1984 after Zanussi, the official head of its production, left Poland, and the teaching of film studies in Berlin, Helsinki, and Switzerland between 1984 and 1988, also took their toll upon his schedule.⁴⁸ Moreover, following the completion of *No End* in 1984, the task of writing over a dozen screenplays resulted in another hiatus in his film production.⁴⁹

This break, however, would be purely temporary. In contrast to the meagre output and negative critical reception of the earlier part of the decade, in the late 1980s Kiesłowski would not only release thirteen feature, television, and documentary films, but also receive the rapturous plaudits of the Western reviewers upon whom *The Decalogue* made such a profound impact. Although the increasing retreat into the personal and inner worlds of his main protagonists that marked his films of the early 1980s led to such public castigation of Kiesłowski in Poland, what was then viewed as a vice would just a few years later be evaluated by critics worldwide as a virtue.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of Kiesłowski's teaching commitments and methods see Edward Żebrowski interviewed in Katarzyna Bielas & Jacek Szczerba (int.), 'Padło na mnie', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Warsaw, 13-3-2002

⁴⁹ These consist of *The Decalogue*, the two episodes extended for cinematic release, and that for the documentary *Siedem dni w tygodniu* (*Seven Days a Week*, 1988).

CHAPTER 5

The Films 1985-1989

In 1988 Kieślowski made a film that marked both a culmination and a starting point in his career: it was his final work in the field of documentary filmmaking,¹ and it was the first time that a production of his was financed by a foreign – that is, non-Polish – backer. *Siedem dni w tygodniu* (*Seven Days a Week*, 1988), part of a cycle of films collectively known as *City Life*,² made by various directors about different cities, was, however, to be wholly overshadowed by a ten-part television cycle entitled *Dekalog* (*The Decalogue*, 1988) made in the same year. Also representing a conclusion and a fresh beginning in Kieślowski's career, *The Decalogue* and the related feature films, *Krótki film o zabijaniu* (*A Short Film about Killing*, 1988) and *Krótki film o miłości* (*A Short Film about Love*, 1988), were the first productions which, according to Kieślowski at least, marked an end to his examination of the Polish public world, as well as the first of his fictional films to be financed by non-Polish producers.³ What, however, distinguishes *The Decalogue* from *Seven Days a Week* is the international acclaim and reputation enjoyed by the former. Indeed, the worldwide success may in part have resulted from the decision of Kieślowski and his co-writer Krzysztof Piesiewicz to base this cycle upon the biblical Ten Commandments and yet eschew strict religious dogma and preaching, thereby making a

¹ Earlier in the decade Kieślowski had considered making a documentary about the visit of Pope John Paul II to Poland in 1983. However this project, like that of filming the law courts, ultimately proved abortive, with pressures applied by the Church authorities – Kieślowski was asked if he had a church marriage and instructed to film particular members of the Church hierarchy – leading him to abandon it; Tadeusz Sobolewski 'Twarze Kieślowskiego', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Warsaw, no. 57, 8 9-3-1997.

² Also the name of the Dutch production company that financed this cycle.

³ *The Decalogue* was co-produced by the Polish Studio „Tor” and Sender Freies Berlin, a German company that supplied Kieślowski with 35mm film. Kieślowski had previously sought but failed to receive German backing in the early 1970s for his unfinished script *Duże zwierzę* (*Big Animal*). For more details of *Big Animal* see chapter 8.

spiritual subject palatable to secular and Christian audiences alike.⁴ Although a sequence of parables, *The Decalogue* gives no firm decrees on how to live but instead suggests how not to. Equally, the structure around which the cycle is based may originate in the Old Testament and the seeming wrath of God in certain episodes hints that He too is of that Testament, but the ethos of *The Decalogue* accords more with the mercy found in the New Testament, and its underlying message echoes Christ's commandment, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (Mt.22.39), the literal relevance of which, given the apartment block in which the protagonists live, doubtless tickled the ironic sensibility of Kieślowski.⁵

The task of loving one's neighbour, however, is largely overshadowed during this period by Kieślowski's concern with that of loving one's kin. Although the director proffered some affirmative treatments of the family unit and marital relations earlier in the decade in *Przypadek* (*Blind Chance*, 1981) and *Bez końca* (*No End*, 1984), the films made at the end of the 1980s reveal this optimism to have changed into a profound disenchantment with and distrust of the personal sphere of contemporary family life as a positive alternative to life in the public world. Initially portrayed in terms of their individual professional roles, the six protagonists in *Seven Days a Week* are eventually revealed to form an extended family but the fact that they are shown in this capacity only in the final scene suggests that such moments of domestic unity are the exception rather than the rule. Of course, Kieślowski might be implying that this dislocation results from a modern lifestyle that leaves little time for personal relations, or even intend to show

⁴ This corresponds to the viewpoint of Kieślowski, who, unlike the more traditional Catholic Piesiewicz, admitted to a belief in God whilst expressing his aversion to institutionalised Catholicism; Tadeusz Sobolewski (int.), 'Normalna chwila', *Kino*, Warsaw, 6-1990, p.20.

⁵ Kieślowski said he tended to think of an Old Testament God, who is 'a demanding, cruel God, a God who doesn't forgive..'; Danusia Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, London: Faber, 1993, p.149. Notably, *The Decalogue* was originally supposed to end with the flats, and presumably their inhabitants, being destroyed by a gas explosion, a conclusion suggestive of Kieślowski's wrathful God.

how the people one encounters at large in fact belong to families, the broadest family being humankind, but the more pessimistic interpretation is equally valid. Certainly, he is explicitly negative in *The Decalogue*: families break down over and over again, not a single successful example is depicted on screen, and only a retrospective reference can be made to the well-adjusted family of the Doctor in *The Decalogue: 2*, the destruction of which during World War II further suggests that they represent a unit that is figuratively and literally a thing of the past. Other than the two nuclear families of *The Decalogue: 3* and *The Decalogue: 10*, both of which are in any event riven with tensions as a result of the itinerant husbands-cum-fathers, all the families are incomplete to some degree, between them lacking wives, husbands, fathers, mothers, and children who are dead, absent, or estranged.⁶

The moral framework and issues of sin underpinning *The Decalogue* make it almost inevitable that at least some of the episodes should involve unhappy families – after all, the fourth commandment refers explicitly to the treatment of kin⁷ – but even a dramatisation of the Ten Commandments does not necessitate so relentless and comprehensive a portrayal of the ruptured personal sphere as that offered by Kieślowski and Piesiewicz. Family conflict is invoked in the illustration of commandments, such as third and seventh, that could just as easily be demonstrated using non-family-related events, and those episodes in which strained family relationships are not at the foreground of the action, such as *The Decalogue: 5*, *The Decalogue: 6*,⁸ and *The Decalogue: 8*, nevertheless reiterate with their references to defective families the wretched state of

⁶ Véronique Campan observes that all the families in *The Decalogue* are asymmetric; Véronique Campan, 'Dziesięć krótkich filmów' od pojedynku do dialogu' trans. Maria Żurowska in Tadeusz Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, Cracow: Universitas, 1997, p 69

⁷ 'Honour thy father and thy mother' (Ex 20.12). Please note that all references are to the Catholic version of the Commandments, the version upon which the cycle is based, of which the first is 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me' (Ex.20 3).

⁸ Unless otherwise specified, all references to and comments upon *The Decalogue: 5* and *The Decalogue: 6* are equally applicable to their related feature films, *A Short Film about Killing* and *A Short Film about Love* respectively

domestic life in the personal realm. Moreover, the strict methodology employed in the rendering of family members furthers the sense that the negative portrayal of the family arose out of the conscious deliberations of the authors. Fathers and husbands are passive or impotent, whilst in a complementary reversal of roles, wives and mothers are for the most part aggressive and cruel. These features are almost invariably linked to the women's sexuality and hark back to the heroines of *Przejšcie podziemne* (*Pedestrian Subway*, 1973) and *No End*; certainly, the only stable and benign females are Irena (*The Decalogue: 1*) and Zofia (*The Decalogue: 8*), both of whom are aged and lacking in sexual threat.⁹ Kieřłowski also emphasises the innocence of children and uncertainty of adolescence, which latter theme was first seen in *Tramwaj* (*The Tram*, 1966), *Koncert zycień* (*Concert of Requests*, 1967), and *Personel* (*Personnel*, 1975), and explores the danger of transition from childhood to adulthood in *The Decalogue: 4-7*. So intense is the pinpointing of the flaws of the family in *The Decalogue* as to give the impression that Kieřłowski examines life in the personal sphere with the very intention of showing its defects and thus laying the groundwork for the noticeable amplification of his focus upon the individual's inner life, the most private of spheres, in this cycle, *La Double Vie de Véronique*/*Podwójne zycie Weroniki* (*The Double Life of Véronique*, 1991), and the *Trois Couleurs* (*Three Colours*, 1993-1994) trilogy, although personal, albeit not necessarily family, relations, receive considerably more positive treatment in the latter.

The turning in of Kieřłowski's protagonists upon themselves and away from the public and personal spheres reflects the director's desire to concentrate on people rather

⁹ Christopher Garbowski notes that 'Irena' and 'Zofia' mean 'peace' and 'wisdom' respectively; Christopher Garbowski *Krzysztof Kieřłowski's 'Decalogue' Series: the Problem of the Protagonists & their Self-Transcendence*, Boulder: East European Monographs no CDLII, 1996 p 80 & p 96. For a detailed discussion of the female characters in *The Decalogue* see Alicja Helman, 'Women in Kieřłowski's late films' trans Paul Coates in Paul Coates (ed), *Lucid Dreams: The Films of Krzysztof Kieřłowski*, Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1999, pp 118-124. See also Annette Insdorf, *Double Lives, Second Chances: The Cinema of Krzysztof Kieřłowski*, New York: Hyperion (Talk Miramax Books), 1999, p 113, & Slavoj Žižek, *The Fright of Real Tears: Krzysztof Kieřłowski between Theory & Post-Theory*, London: British Film Institute, 2001, p 156.

than social problems – having established this in his artistic statement of 1981, ‘Głęboko zamiast szeroko’,¹⁰ Kieślowski re-emphasised the point seven years on: asked about his opinion on the ‘..los zbiorowy..’ (‘..collective fate..’), he replied ‘Nic mnie to nie obchodzi’ (‘I couldn’t care less’)¹¹ – but though it has the potential of yielding freedom from the cares and tribulations of the public and personal realms, as *The Decalogue* proves it too is far from positively portrayed, frequently leading to isolation and loneliness for the characters. Silence reigns in *Seven Days a Week* and *The Decalogue*, as in the earlier *No End*, with many of the scenes revolving around a sole character and few involving the interaction of more than two people. Moreover, the sense of seclusion is heightened in *The Decalogue* by the structuring of the vast majority of the episodes around two protagonists in direct ideological opposition to one another.¹² ‘Only connect’ is the implicit slogan of these films, and although the instances of communion reached in *The Decalogue: 3* and *The Decalogue: 8-10* demonstrate the fulfilment of this precept, equally *The Decalogue: 4-7* illustrate the alienation that ensues when it remains unrealised. What *The Decalogue*, like the later *Three Colours* trilogy, reveals is that Kieślowski’s increasing preference for filming the inner sphere is not to be equated with his perception of it as necessarily happier or less troubled than the other realms.

The growing dominance of this theme of isolation in the works of the late 1980s is in some measure related to Kieślowski’s observation of alienation as a societal phenomenon in contemporary Poland:

‘Ludzie w ogóle nie lubią ze sobą obcować w tej chwili. Właściwie wszyscy żyją samotnie, samodzielnie, czy inaczej – osobno.’

¹⁰ See chapter 4.

¹¹ Bożena Janicka (int.), ‘Beze mnie’, *Film*, Warsaw, no. 43, 23-10-1988 See also Sobolewski (int.), ‘Normalna chwila’, p 22.

¹² Cf. Campan, ‘Dziesięć krótkich filmów’, p 62

‘People generally do not like mixing with one another at present. In fact, everyone lives alone, independently, or, put another way, separately.’¹³

Nevertheless, the director’s continued exploration of isolation in *The Double Life of Véronique* and the *Three Colours* trilogy, which were filmed in the 1990s and utilise non-Polish locations, indicates that, far from regarding loneliness a phenomenon restricted to a particular society and time, he considered it a marked feature of both modern European life and communist Poland. What it also suggests, however, is that Kieślowski’s particular preoccupation with the isolation of the individual, whilst perhaps stemming from his experience of life in post-war Poland, was so personal a concern that it prevailed even when the socio-political and economic conditions that may have initially generated it no longer applied.¹⁴ Indeed, although his absorption in this theme is predominantly evident in *The Decalogue* and his final films, the emphasis on silence and employment of glass objects as symbols of the mental barriers to successful communication in these works replicates that found in his earliest fictional and documentary works, namely, *The Tram* and *Urząd (The Office, 1966)*. Thus the emergence of the solitary protagonist in *The Decalogue*, signalled in *No End* and to be sustained in *The Double Life of Véronique* and the *Three Colours* trilogy, stems from Kieślowski’s earliest personal experiences and films.

The significant change that Kieślowski believed his filmmaking to have undergone at this stage was that of the turning away of his focus from the Polish public world and elimination of references to the socio-political scene. Beginning with *The Decalogue*, he and Piesiewicz decided to cease writing screenplays concerned with issues of national politics and Polish society. Even as Kieślowski acknowledged that he had

¹³ Urszula Bielous (int), ‘Żyjemy osobno’, *Kultura*, Warsaw, no. 38, 21-9-88.

¹⁴ See Introduction, pp 28-29.

been occupied with describing the Polish public world in his films to date, he declared that he was now no longer interested in depicting the political affairs and specifics of daily life in People's Poland.¹⁵ More interesting still is his and Piesiewicz's claim that by eradicating Polish references they could maintain the universal character of the matters explored and moreover be able to market the television series abroad.¹⁶ As the director and his co-writer saw it, *The Decalogue* marks the juncture at which Kieślowski consciously forwent an old style of films made chiefly about and for contemporary Poles instead to explore henceforth issues that, being fundamental to humanity, transcended temporal and national barriers – to wit, Kieślowski decided upon filming the Ten Commandments as he believed them to be norms understood by all¹⁷ – with the intention of producing films both applicable and appealing to audiences worldwide.

What neither Kieślowski nor Piesiewicz mentioned but ought not be overlooked is that, given *The Decalogue* was part-financed by a foreign producer and consequently expected to attract a large international audience, it was in their best interest to stress the unimportance of the Polish context. Certainly, those interested in seeing '...queues, meat ration cards, petrol shortages, a bureaucracy which reared its ugly head in even the most trivial of matters, the noisy public on the buses, the price increases as a constant topic of conversation, the ill dying in hospital corridors and so on' of which they deliberately eschew mention in *The Decalogue* would do better to watch *Seven Days a Week*, which fills in the gaps of the television cycle with its depiction of the everyday particulars of

¹⁵ Stanisław Goszczurny (int.), 'Jestem przeciw zabijaniu!', *Rzeczpospolita*, Warsaw, no. 54, 4/5-3-1989, p 3; Blanka Danilewicz (int.), 'Chcę robić film o tym, jak trudno jest żyć', *Mysł Społeczna*, Warsaw, no 21, 24-5-1987, p 3; Krzysztof Kieślowski, 'Introduction' in Krzysztof Kieślowski & Krzysztof Piesiewicz, *Decalogue. The Ten Commandments*, trans Phil Cavendish & Suzannah Bluh, London. Faber, 1991, p xii; & Agata Otrębska & Jacek Błach (int.), 'Ponieważ są ciągle ci ludzie ..' in Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, (reprinted from *Incipit*, Katowice, no 2, 4-1996) p.293.

¹⁶ Kieślowski said this on his own and Piesiewicz's behalf: Janicka (int.), 'Beze mnie'; Kieślowski, 'Introduction', p xii; & Stok, *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 145.

¹⁷ Danilewicz (int.), 'Chcę robić filmy o tym, jak trudno jest żyć ..', p.3.

Polish life in the later 1980s.¹⁸ Nevertheless, for all the so-called avoidance of the Polish public world in *The Decalogue*, many aspects of it remain. The unprofessionalism and indifference of state employees, the contempt and aversion of people towards another, and the sheer physical and moral ugliness of Warsaw that recur throughout the cycle are, as Kieślowski himself conceded, all identifiable with the weary and disillusioned society of contemporary communist Poland.¹⁹ In a more specific instance, *The Decalogue: 3* contains numerous references to Polish cultural traditions that are integral to the meaning of the episode, yet these are not perceptible to, let alone easily deciphered by, the non-Polish viewer.²⁰ Indeed, although at the time of production Kieślowski and Piesiewicz claimed to set little by the elements of daily Polish life that peppered *The Decalogue*,²¹ almost a decade on the director admitted that though the cycle was applicable beyond Poland, ‘..przede wszystkim odnosił się do polskiej rzeczywistości’ (‘..it related to Polish reality above all’).²²

Similarly, although *The Decalogue* is clearly sufficiently broad in meaning and scope to be comprehensible to non-Polish viewers, Kieślowski and Piesiewicz are only relatively successful in achieving the “universality” they desired, not least because they were hindered from the outset by their choice of subject. Kieślowski may have believed the Ten Commandments to be commonly recognisable norms but the call made by an Italian communist to the Vatican requiring assistance in locating the biblical reference for

¹⁸ Kieślowski, ‘Introduction’, p.xii

¹⁹ Kieślowski admitted that the state-of-mind of contemporary Poland is shown: Janicka, ‘Beze mnie’. Similarly, Paul Coates identifies the public mask-wearing as a totalitarian-bred habit, Paul Coates, ‘Metaphysical Love in Two Films by Krzysztof Kieślowski’, *The Polish Review*, vol. XXXVII, no. 3, 1992, p. 336.

²⁰ See below for the analysis of *The Decalogue: 3*. Christopher Garbowski also notes details of Polish life in the 1980s sneaking into the cycle; Garbowski, *Krzysztof Kieślowski's 'Decalogue' Series*, p.57.

²¹ Michel Ciment & Hubert Niogret (int.), ‘Pańskie filmy są rentgenogramami duszy...’ in *Film na Świecie*, Warsaw-Lódź, nos. 3 4 (388/389), 1992, p. 27 (trans. Jozef Podgórski from *Posiuf*, 10-1989)

²² Jadwiga Anna Łużyńska (int.), ‘Zawsze robiłem filmy romantyczne’, *Sycyna*, Warsaw, no. 20, 24-9-1995, p.4.

the Decalogue suggests otherwise.²³ Certainly, the organisers of the Venice Festival of 1989 had no illusions as to the theological erudition of their audiences and ensured that copies of the text of the Ten Commandments were handed out prior to screenings of *The Decalogue*. Moreover, the seemingly universal standard of the Decalogue exists in fact in two variants, Catholic and Protestant, with the result that numerous critics evidently employing the latter have mused over the apparent discrepancy between the episodes and their respective commandments.²⁴ Likewise, *A Short Film about Killing* enjoyed immense international success, engaging audiences worldwide with its graphic and unrelenting depictions of a murder and execution, but nevertheless its 1980s Polish locale is crucial to its narrative, impact, and, indeed, existence as it was specifically against Poland's death penalty, a punitive measure not found in Western Europe nor many American states, that Kieślowski made his protest.²⁵ Simply, a Western European director could not make *A Short Film about Killing* in 1988 other than as a retrospective piece.²⁶ Kieślowski's belief that certain fundamental emotions and experiences are common to all humanity – he argued a toothache is the same for an anarchist, communist, fifteenth-century Englishman, and latter-day Indian, itself a flawed line of reasoning given that individuals experience a toothache differently according to their respective access to treatment²⁷ – also falls short when applied to *A Short Film about Killing*. True,

²³ Phil Cavendish (int), 'Kieślowski's Decalogue', *Sight & Sound*, Summer 1990, vol. 59, no. 3, p 162

²⁴ Christopher Dunkley, 'Rules for life, Polish style', *The Financial Times*, London, 13-6-1990, Žižek, *The Fright of Real Tears*, p.111ff; & Insdorf, *Double Lives, Second Chances*, p.71 & p 192 (footnote 28). The same mistake recurs in the British edition of the screenplay (Kieślowski & Piesiewicz, *Decalogue. The Ten Commandments*), which includes the text of the Protestant version of the Commandments. This confusion has also been noted in Emma Wilson, *Memory & Survival: The French Cinema of Krzysztof Kieslowski*, Oxford Legenda, 2000, p 4.

²⁵ Kieślowski stressed that although unfair sentences exist in other countries, only the Polish death sentence affected him as it was carried out in his name, thereby implying that there would be no film were the death sentence extant only outside Poland; Goszczurny (int), 'Jestem przeciw zabijaniu!', p 3.

²⁶ Changes to Polish law – the government of 1989 suspended executions for several years, a further moratorium followed in 1995, and the death penalty was eventually revoked in 1998 – mean that, a decade on, the same would be true of Kieślowski.

²⁷ Stanisław Zawiślinski (ed), *Kieślowski*, 2nd ed., Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p 85.

the film affirms the basic truth that all can kill and be killed but, as Kieślowski intended, its express purpose is to show that Polish citizens were afforded two possibilities of killing and being killed, namely the lawful and unlawful, the former of which does not apply to citizens of all other countries. In short, all experiences are not open to the whole of humanity.

The critical reaction to *The Decalogue* also differed substantially, largely according to whether the reviewer was a Pole or non-Pole.²⁸ In Poland, Kieślowski did not suffer a repetition of the mauling he received earlier in the decade for *No End*, but generally the response continued to fall short of the admiring tone of Polish reviews in the 1970s. Despite the repeated insistence of Kieślowski and Piesiewicz that the dilemmas presented in the cycle are quite commonplace, the latter going so far as to say that every episode is based upon a real story,²⁹ a considerable number of their compatriots demurred, claiming the situations are contrived and the characters, mostly intelligentsia and apparently blessed with leisure time and no financial fears, absurd.³⁰ Unsurprisingly, many of those undergoing considerable hardship as the communist regime crumbled and the country made the painful transition to a capitalist economy were unsympathetic to even Kieślowski's partial shift of focus away from the reality of Polish public world and preference for protagonists who were professionals and thus free from the social-economic problems which his earlier "small" men cannot avoid.

The censure in Poland was far from widespread: at least one critic has argued that, given the tenor of the times, Polish audiences were surprisingly receptive to *The*

²⁸ Judging by how little reference is made to it, *Seven Days a Week*, which only received its Polish cinema premiere in 1998, has gone largely unnoticed since its release.

²⁹ Piesiewicz interviewed in Ewa Piasecka (int.), 'Ludzie powinni być sobie bliscy', *Nowa Wieś*, Warsaw, no 1, 1-1-1989, p 17. See also: Danilewicz (int.), 'Chcę robić filmy o tym, jak trudno jest żyć...', p 3, & Piesiewicz interviewed in Michel Ciment (int.), 'Wyzbyć się polonocentryzmu...' in *Film na Świecie*, pp 23-4 (trans. Witold Zakrota from *Positif*, 10-1989).

³⁰ Zygmunt Kałużyński, 'Pan z fortepianem', *Polityka*, Warsaw, no. 16, 21-4-1990; Małgorzata Szpakowska, 'Kieślowski: jedenaste jest tajemnicą', *Dialog*, Warsaw, no. 12, 12-1990, p.115ff.; & Anna Bojarska, 'Kieślowski biało-czerwony', *Wiadomości Kulturalne*, Warsaw, no. 12, 24-3-1996.

*Decalogue*³¹ and Kieślowski himself declared pleasure at the television ratings.³² However, even those Polish critics who praised the cycle admitted that the home-grown reaction was far less positive than that found abroad.³³ *The Decalogue* found enormous favour amongst the international community of film critics who had hitherto shown relatively little appreciation of Kieślowski's works,³⁴ with the director being positively compared with masters of cinema including Bergman and Hitchcock³⁵ and both the cycle and related feature films winning numerous prizes from all quarters, including major awards at the Cannes and Venice Film Festivals in 1988 and 1989 respectively.³⁶ Furthermore, the prolific sales of *A Short Film about Killing* and *A Short Film about Love* worldwide,³⁷ considerable financial success,³⁸ and repeated broadcasts of the cycle

³¹ Mirosław Przyłipiak, 'Monter i studentka', *Kino*, Warsaw, 3-1997, p 9

³² Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p.159

³³ Sobolewski (int.), 'Normalna chwila', p.19; & Marzenna Wiśniewska, 'Krzysztof Kieślowski – od dokumentu do tajemnych znaków', *Polska Zbrojna*, Warsaw, no.45, 5/7-3-1993.

³⁴ For a summary of the extremely enthusiastic French reviews see: René Prédal, 'Recepcja krytyczna filmów Kieślowskiego we Francji' trans. Maria Żurowska in Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, pp.255-259.; & Maria Rajczuk-Żukowska, 'Feliks dla Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego', *Ekran*, no. 1, 5-1-1989, Warsaw, pp.10-11. For a handful of the enthusiastic American and English reviews see: Annette Insdorf, 'Film: 'The Decalogue' re-examines God's commands', *The New York Times* (Sec. 2 Arts & Leisure Desk), New York, 28-10-1990, p.28, p.6; Paul Coates, 'Anatomy of a Murder: A Short Film about Killing', *Sight & Sound*, Winter 1988/1989, vol. 58, no. 1, pp.63-64; Jonathan Keates, 'Heartburn: A Short Film about Love', *Sight & Sound*, Spring 1990, vol. 59, no. 2, p.132; John Pym, 'Krótki Film o Zabijaniu (A Short Film About Killing)', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 12-1989, vol. 56, no. 671, pp 371-372; David Robinson, 'Rites & wrongs of killing', *The Times* (The Arts), London, 16-11-1989; Dunkley, 'Rules for life, Polish style'; Sheila Johnston, 'The Pole position', *The Independent* (Listings), London, 4-5-1990, p.27; & Derek Malcolm, 'Screen Dollar thrills', *The Guardian* (FEA), London, 10-5-1990, p.24. For rare examples of dissenting voices amongst French and English critics see, respectively: Prédal, 'Recepcja krytyczna filmów Kieślowskiego we Francji', pp 258-259; & Natasha Synessios, 'A short film about killing A short film about love', *The Slavonic & East European Review*, vol. 73, no. 2, 4-1995, pp 393-396.

³⁵ Elizabeth Ayre, 'Kieślowski: The Cinema of Moral Anxiety', *The International Herald Tribune*, International ed., Paris, 11-11-88; & Edward Behr, 'Poland's 'Enfant Terrible'', *Newsweek*, New York, 23-10-1989, p 63. The Polish critic Kazimierz Młynarz also compared Kieślowski's style in *A Short Film about Love* with that of Bergman, see Kazimierz Młynarz, 'Dekalog według Kieślowskiego', *Nurt*, Poznań, no. 1, 1-1989.

³⁶ For comprehensive details on prizes awarded to *The Decalogue*, *A Short Film about Killing*, and *A Short Film about Love* see Coates (ed), *Lucid Dreams*, pp 182-183.

³⁷ By the close of 1988, *A Short Film about Killing* had been sold to over ten countries, including France, Britain, and Japan, and *A Short Film about Love* to Canada, America, Spain, and West Germany; Jerzy Bochenek interviewed in Mariusz Miodek (int), 'Kieślowski eksportowany: Rozmowa z Jerzym Bochenkiem, zastępcą dyrektora generalnego „Filmu Polskiego”', *Film*, Warsaw, no. 51, 18-12-1988. As both films continued to be sold abroad in 1989, these figures understate the final sales worldwide.

³⁸ According to Kieślowski, *The Decalogue* cost \$100,000 to make (it is unclear whether this includes the cost of the two related feature films) and made a profit of \$3,000,000; Eileen Anipare (dir), *A Short Film about 'Decalogue'*. *An interview with Krzysztof Kieślowski*, Copyright: Black & White Productions, London, 1995 (p 10 in transcript of filmed interview).

indicate that it was enjoyed not just by the critics but the broader public too.³⁹ The foreign critics, unlike their Polish counterparts, found no fault with Kieślowski's attempt to move away from filming the public reality of his homeland; on the contrary, even whilst they acknowledged the supposed universality of the cycle, one journalist remarking that the narratives could as easily be set in Wendover as Warsaw,⁴⁰ simultaneously they were attracted specifically by its depiction of totalitarian Poland. Ironically, then, given Kieślowski's striving for a more universal idiom, reviewers failed to spot that the peeping Tom(ek) and visual conceit of the heroine crying over spilt milk in *A Short Film about Love* read like the director's humorous nods in the direction of his Anglophone audience. Alternatively if equally ironically, given Kieślowski's inability to completely ignore the Polish public world, reviewers failed to notice the Polish specifics of, say, *The Decalogue: 3*, but several critics' reading of a political subtext into *A Short Film about Love* by relating Tomek's spying to life under the constant gaze of Big Brother, whilst not unfeasible, perhaps owes more to their subjective perceptions than to what the film actually implies or intends.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the Polish critics' complaint that *The Decalogue* suffered when compared with Kieślowski's earlier works because of being too distanced from the reality of contemporary Poland would be taken up almost verbatim several years on by foreign reviewers who argued the same about the *Three Colours* trilogy in relation to *The Decalogue*.⁴² As these later reactions showed, Kieślowski's increasing shift from public to inner reality in later films alienated more and more critics.

The paradox, albeit one less surprising to viewers familiar with Kieślowski's style

³⁹ By early 1994, *The Decalogue* had been shown six times in Sweden, five times in Germany, thrice in Finland, and continued to play in French cinemas, Bogusław Kunach (int), 'Tworca przypadku', *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Gazeta Regionalna), Bydgoszcz, no 83, 9-4-1994, p 3.

⁴⁰ Dunkley, 'Rules for life, Polish style'.

⁴¹ John Orr, *Contemporary Cinema*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 1998, p 147, & Nigel Andrew, of *The Financial Times*, quoted in 'Critical Review of the Week', *The Independent* (Weekend listings), London 31-3-1990, p 57.

⁴² See chapter 7.

of filmmaking, is that the cycle that launched the director worldwide as an European *auteur* repeatedly undermines its arthouse roots. The form and theme of *The Decalogue* are decidedly highbrow, recalling similar cycles based around weighty subjects by arthouse directors such as Bergman, Rohmer, Wajda, and Edgar Reitz.⁴³ However, Kieślowski marries these concepts to a television cycle, incorporating them into a medium widely considered intellectually inferior to its cinematic counterpart, even if directors including Rossellini, Mike Leigh, and David Lynch have, like Kieślowski, utilised it for their own ambitious projects. Indeed, it is a measure of the director's success in meeting his own challenge of making a television audience concentrate as much as a cinematic one that reviews and articles of the primarily televised *The Decalogue*, and not just the related features *A Short Film about Killing* and *A Short Film about Love*, occupied the pages of eminent film publications including, amongst others, the Polish *Film* and *Ekran*, British *Sight & Sound*, French *Positif*, and American *Variety*.⁴⁴ Moreover, Kieślowski continued to shy away from simplistic definitions of himself as an *auteur* by his ever-broadening collaborative tendencies. As with *No End*, he co-wrote *The Decalogue* and related features with Krzysztof Piesiewicz, who provided the idea for the cycle,⁴⁵ and once again used the music of Zbigniew Preisner. Furthermore, although he decided against giving the episodes to ten young Polish directors as originally planned, Kieślowski instead relinquished a remarkable amount of control to the nine⁴⁶ cinematographers whom he engaged on the cycle, imposing no

⁴³ Kieślowski admitted to being strongly influenced by Rohmer, if not by the latter's use of series; Insdorf, *Double Lives, Second Chances*, p 84 (Insdorf citing interview in Vincent Amiel, *Krzysztof Kieślowski: Testes réunis et présentés par Vincent Amiel*, Paris Positif/Jean-Michel Place, 1997, p.100). He also considered Bergman the best director in the world; Valerie Duponcheile & Marie-Noëlle Tranchant (int), 'Kolor czarny', *Forum*, Warsaw, no. 12, 24-3-1996 (trans let from *Le Figaro*, 14-3-1996)

⁴⁴ Kieślowski's comments in Behr, 'Poland's *Enfant Terrible*', p 63

⁴⁵ See the comments of Kieślowski and Piesiewicz respectively in Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 143; & Ciment (int), 'Wyzbyć się polonocentryzmu . ', p.23.

⁴⁶ Piotr Sobociński worked on two episodes (*The Decalogue: 3* and *The Decalogue: 9*)

storyboards or strictures regarding the lighting or camera set-up upon them.⁴⁷ As Kieślowski freely admitted, the green filters used to transform the Varsovian landscape in *The Decalogue: 5/A Short Film about Killing* were the brainwave of the cinematographer Sławomir Idziak,⁴⁸ and the cinematographers of other episodes testified to the autonomy allowed them by the director.⁴⁹ Kieślowski also regularly screened episodes for most of his crew and asked their opinion,⁵⁰ thus further substantiating his oft-reiterated belief in film as a group art by his practice of it.⁵¹

The collaboration between Kieślowski and his colleagues underlying the production of *The Decalogue* is also extended by the two co-authors to the audience. By always satisfying the need for teleological resolution and yet simultaneously leaving the films' conclusions open-ended, Piesiewicz and Kieślowski invite the viewer to furnish the meaning of the narratives and thus collaborate in the authorial process.⁵² Even as they interpret the Ten Commandments, they tacitly insist that their version is not definitive by opening the cycle with an episode in which they implicitly renounce their own authority and closing it by encouraging the audience to construct their own version.⁵³ In its rejection of any claim to being the gospel truth, *The Decalogue* constitutes Kieślowski's most open-handed filmic gesture to his audience to date.

⁴⁷ Anipare (dir.), *A Short Film about 'Decalogue'* (p.4 in transcript of filmed interview). See also: Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 156, Cavendish (int.), 'Kieślowski's Decalogue', p 165, & Stanisław Zawisliński (ed.), *Kieślowski: varia*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p 65.

⁴⁸ Paul Coates, 'The curse of the law: *The Decalogue*' in Coates (ed.), *Lucid Dreams*, p 104

⁴⁹ Wiesław Zdort (*The Decalogue: 1*) interviewed in Grzegorz Gazda (int.), 'Nie chcę realizować formy poza świadomością reżysera...' in *Film na Świecie*, p.128, & Witold Adamek (*The Decalogue: 6 and A Short Film about Love*) interviewed in Mateusz Werner (int.), 'Profesjonalizm i poezja' in *Film na Świecie*, p 139.

⁵⁰ Ewa Smal (editor of *The Decalogue, A Short Film about Killing*, and *A Short Film about Love*) interviewed in Mateusz Werner (int.), 'Wspólny rytm' in *Film na Świecie*, p 142.

⁵¹ For a restatement of Kieślowski's opinions about the collaborative nature of filmmaking with particular regard to *The Decalogue*, see Sarah Gristwood (int.), 'The reluctant auteur', *The Guardian* (FEA), 17-5-1991, London, p 37

⁵² Cf. Katarzyna Jabłńska, 'Koniec i początek', *Więź*, Warsaw, no. 9, 9-1996, p.113.

⁵³ See below for detailed analyses

SIEDEM DNI TYGODNIA
(*SEVEN DAYS A WEEK*, 1988)

Almost a decade after he effectively abandoned the documentary mode of filmmaking, Kieślowski returned to it with *Seven Days a Week*, a short film observing life in Warsaw as experienced by six protagonists. It is unknown whether or not Kieślowski made this film in the conscious knowledge that it would represent his last foray as a director into the field of documentaries: certainly, the eight-year hiatus since his last completed documentary had been punctuated by at least two attempts to make non-fictional pieces.⁵⁴ Still, intentionally or serendipitously, the piece functions as a witty summation of its predecessors. Referring implicitly to the highly formal structures of *Szpital* (*The Hospital*, 1976) and *Siedem kobiet w różnym wieku* (*Seven Women of Different Ages*, 1978) with its own regimented organisation around the days of the week, in addition *Seven Days a Week* includes scenes of incessant mass queuing, arduous engineering work, and harried medical staff that could have been taken straight from *Urząd* (*The Office*, 1966), *Fabryka* (*The Factory*, 1970), and *The Hospital* respectively. The public sphere dominates in this film as it did in Kieślowski's earliest documentaries: the protagonists' onerous daily duties monopolise the narrative and what little dialogue is heard consists largely of the formal exchanges of the public world.

Little is said but nevertheless, much is implied. Just as Kieślowski's documentaries from the 1960s and 1970s, when combined, form a comprehensive portrait of life in contemporary People's Poland, so too the different experiences of the six protagonists featured in *Seven Days a Week* taken together create a broad picture of everyday existence in Warsaw of the 1980s. Direct and indirect references are made to

⁵⁴ See footnote 1, above, and chapter 4.

the difficult living conditions: the food and petrol shortages are voiced; the housing scarcity implied by the protagonists' cramped living conditions and potential menace of the authorities alluded to with the shot of Jerzy Popiełuszko's memorial;⁵⁵ and the poor wages easily inferred from the two protagonists obliged to maintain two forms of employment. The result is a documentary that, like the protagonist of Thursday who directs her entourage of foreign visitors around Warsaw, acts as a guide to public Poland for its non-Polish viewers. As the closing shot of apartment-blocks suggests, *Seven Days a Week* is the complementary companion-piece to *The Decalogue*, concentrating on the social terms of existence in Poland while largely omitting the moral and ethical problems at the fore in the latter.

However, although there is a veneer of lightheartedness to *Seven Days a Week*, especially when compared with the bleakness of *The Decalogue*, nonetheless it too has potentially dark overtones where the personal sphere is concerned. There is something touchingly comic about the father being interrupted in his morning ablutions on Sunday as he is on Monday, but the similarly repeated shot of the mother tidying the flat on Sunday as she did on Tuesday is simply disturbing: already a cleaner in a public and personal capacity, she is allowed no respite from this role even on Sunday, the supposed day of rest. Likewise, only the young musician, apparently jobless and therefore without status or obligations in the public sphere, is seen relaxing with friends; the older people who have had to put away childish things have no such respite in the personal sphere. And the revelation that the protagonists constitute a single family is a pleasing gag pulling the six segments together, but for all its wit, the very ingenuity of the closure draws attention to itself and demands a closer look at the subtext. Viewed in the light of what

⁵⁵ Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, an outspoken critic of the communist authorities, was abducted and murdered by the police in 1984. Venerated by many Poles, he is currently undergoing beatification by the Vatican.

has gone before, especially the lack of personal communication hitherto, as well as in that of the contemporary *The Decalogue*, the conclusion is open to an alternative reading as Kieślowski's critique of a personal sphere so fragmented that its members only unite once a week, and the reassuring tone of the final shot of the family together is implicitly negated by the preceding scenes which show that the protagonists' lives are characterised for the far greater part by isolation from one another. The implication is less that this particular family is in trouble than that the public Poland is anti-family, undermining instead of supporting the formation and maintenance of healthy personal relationships. In ending thus, *Seven Days a Week* perhaps not only anticipates the major theme of *The Decalogue* but moreover concludes upon an ambivalent note foreshadowing that which a similarly fictional device produces in the final moments of the *Three Colours* trilogy.⁵⁶

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DEKALOG 1 (THE DECALOGUE: 1, 1988)

The Decalogue: 1 explores the First Commandment, which establishes God as the ultimate authority, from a reverse angle, examining the restrictions of rationalism, the alternative power that has held sway over the Western mind since the Age of Enlightenment. In observing the consequences of the challenge to God's authority posed by the computer idolised by Krzysztof and, to a lesser extent, his son, Paweł, the film pits man against God, limited human reason against divine omniscience, the known against the unknown and unknowable. Bound by rationalism, Krzysztof is unable to comprehend

⁵⁶ Tadeusz Sobolewski similarly speculates whether the idea for *Trois Couleurs: Rouge (Three Colours: Red, 1994)* was born while Kieślowski was making *Seven Days a Week*; Tadeusz Sobolewski, 'Niepokój Kieślowskiego', *Kino*, Warsaw, 6-1995, p 9.

properly let alone respond convincingly to his son's inquiries, his perplexing of the boy with his misguided answer of quantitative facts to a qualitative question about death contrasting with the success with which Irena, his sister and Paweł's aunt, explains the complex metaphysical nature of God to her nephew using the simple example of love. Equally, the weak 'Prawdę mówiąc, nie wiem' ('To tell the truth, I don't know') with which Krzysztof replies to Paweł's query concerning the soul demonstrates the inevitable failure that results from an over-reliance upon the intellect. Irena notwithstanding, Kieślowski distinguishes between the blinkered view of the adult and the open-mindedness of the child, in what is the first of the many contrasts found in episodes of *The Decalogue* between the flawed world of adults and the innocence of children. His emotional maturity evinced by his overtures to a girl and unrestricted use of the informal to adults,⁵⁷ Paweł recognises the limits of reason early in the film with his tearful recognition that solving a mathematical puzzle is as nothing compared to the death of a dog, and whereas the chess game confirms his realisation that intellectual systems fail – people cannot impose logic without heeding chance – it presents Krzysztof with his first baffling example of rationalism's failure.

Indeed, although a lecturer in semantics, Krzysztof's dependence upon logic leaves him singularly unable to read the signs of what might be either the divine presence or fate. In being devised by the limited human mind, the arithmetical puzzles, chess games, and computer-controlled doors and taps by which he lives can neither anticipate nor defeat the unknown. So tied is he to his self-conceived system of rationalism that the spreading ink-blot which alerts the subtext-friendly viewer, especially one aware of a similar device used in Nicolas Roeg's *Don't Look Now* (1973), to Paweł's impending

⁵⁷ There is a strict division in Polish between formal (used with adults, strangers, and one's superiors) and informal (used between close friends) modes of speech. As a child, Paweł would be expected to use the formal when conversing with his father and aunt

death by its resemblance to a bloodstain in Krzysztof's case simply shocks him with its seeming illogicality. In attempting to illustrate the existence of God, who by His very nature is invisible, Kieślowski is, as already seen in *No End*, faced with the dual problems of filming the metaphysical using a materially-oriented medium and doing so without resorting to formulaic symbolism; understandably, Piesiewicz said that *The Decalogue: I* was the hardest episode to write because it necessitated a certain literalness.⁵⁸ Indeed, Kieślowski's claim not to use symbols may be less an accurate self-analysis, given the waxen tears and Communion-host-shaped ice that feature in this episode, and more a reflection of his unhappiness with the results.⁵⁹ However, while the picture of the weeping Black Madonna certainly raises troublesome issues – the significance of an image must be recognisable if the symbol is to function, and yet if too obvious the symbolism feels clichéd – nonetheless it represents a more inventive metaphor than is immediately apparent to non-Polish viewers. Famed for having bled when slashed by the swords of Hussite invaders in the fifteenth century, the picture of the Black Madonna has its legend updated, reanimated, and made more personal by the waxen tears, in this case flowing for a single boy instead of a nation.

Perhaps the most significant feature of *The Decalogue: I* is the manner in which Kieślowski and Piesiewicz renounce any claim to authority even as they play at God. Any freedom allowed the protagonists, however realistic the semblance of free will, corresponds exactly to that conferred by the writers, and the instances of coincidence and chance in this and other episodes are due entirely to the string-pulling of Kieślowski and

⁵⁸ Krzysztof Piesiewicz, 'Skupienie i przenikliwość' in Lubelski (ed), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, p 205.

⁵⁹ T K., 'Nos Kieślowskiego', *Kurier Poranny*, Białystok, no. 91, 13/15-5-1994. Whilst reiterating his avoidance of symbols in his films, Kieślowski conceded that in the hands of Welles, Tarkovsky, and other masters of the cinema, an object could achieve symbolic resonance, an interesting distinction suggesting that he did not so much steer clear of symbolism as consider his attempts at it unsuccessful; Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 195.

Piesiewicz. Yet even as they imitate God's governance of human affairs with their created, self-contained, albeit fictional, world of their characters, the authors lay bare their own uncertainty about emulating Him by presenting a failed authority-figure bearing their name in the opening episode of the cycle. Via their namesake, the naming of whom suggests they have formed him in their own image,⁶⁰ the two Krzysztofs implicitly admit to their own authoritative and even authorial fallibility. It is a gesture of remarkable solidarity with their characters, indicating that the weaknesses portrayed in front of the camera are shared by those behind it. More important, it is a gesture of remarkable solidarity with their audience, because by thus belittling their own authority, they offer the viewer the freedom to accept or reject it in this and future episodes.

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DEKALOG 2 (THE DECALOGUE: 2, 1988)

Whatever Kieślowski's misgivings about documentary work, the opening scenes of *The Decalogue: 2* reveal his continued mastery of this medium. Shades of the director's earliest works are evoked by the camera that follows the Doctor about his daily routine at home. His frailty as he gasps over his bath and weekly chats with the cleaning lady – inevitably, his soap-within-a-soap mimics on a smaller scale the workings of chance and fate, not to mention that bleakness, underlying the human dramas to come in subsequent episodes of *The Decalogue* – humanise the man who otherwise suffers over-identification with his professional role by Dorota, the woman wishing to be delivered from the choice between the life of her unborn baby and that of her husband, Andrzej.

⁶⁰ Piesiewicz confirmed this in the interview with the author, Appendix, p 308 & p 322.

Known only by his title, it is the Doctor's public position of authority, not his humanness, that is stressed, and like God, he is known by a name that refers to a figurehead, not an individual. Indeed, although Dorota initiates their relationship with an ostensible appeal to his humanity, her desire that the Doctor emulate God is evident from her treatment of his office and home as a confessional, even though he, recognising his limitations and insistent that he '..nie mogę wydawać wyroku' ('..I cannot pass a sentence') over her husband's chances, objects to her demands that he behave as the ultimate authority arbitrating over life and death. On a more earthly level, Dorota's attempt at establishing a personal relationship with the Doctor by appealing to him as her neighbour is also belied by her underlying expectation that he act not subjectively as a friend but objectively in his public capacity as a doctor.

The first of many women in *The Decalogue* who endlessly provoke and challenge the authority of men around them almost as though punishing them, Dorota also shares with her successors considerable sexual allure. Yet even as she displays a cool indifference to the various men patently entranced by her, she evinces a desperate willingness to put herself in the hands of the Doctor, ironically the only able-bodied man other than the postman and the so-called Young Man⁶¹ who shows no awareness of her sexual charm. Nevertheless, in swearing to the certainty of Andrzej's impending death, the Doctor shows himself to have been ultimately as emasculated by Dorota's determination and pursuit of him as other men are rendered helpless by her physical attractions. Perhaps also Kiesłowski's ironic nod to the lines of *quid pro quo* along which contemporary Polish society ran, the Doctor's subsequent request to hear her play with the Philharmonic orchestra is more significant as an indication of the reversal of power in

⁶¹ Alternatively interpreted by crewmembers as angel, Devil, or God (Adam Low, (producer), 'The Ten Commandments of Krzysztof Kieslowski', *Arena*, BBC2, televised 4-5-1990), Kiesłowski described the character who appears in eight episodes of *The Decalogue* as '..facet, który sobie stoi I patrzy Nic poza tym' ('..a guy who just stands there And watches That's all '), T K., 'Nos Kiesłowskiego'.

their relationship; with all advances hitherto having been made by Dorota, his appeal to her demonstrates the loss of moral high ground he suffers in pronouncing a verdict on Andrzej. Certainly, irrespective of whether the Doctor actually attends the concert or merely dreams of it, Dorota's half-smile as she plays signifies her triumph over yet another man.

The Doctor's play on words when delivering his verdict – 'on umrze' ('he will die') although true of the long term, does not apply to the immediate future as Dorota understandably assumes it to do – is one of a sequence of cumulative ironies. Although *The Decalogue* warns repeatedly of the dire consequences resulting from Poles' mutual antipathy, most notably in fifth episode, in this film it is the Doctor's mastery of his initial hostility towards Dorota that causes his downfall; 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', the second greatest commandment according to Christ, becomes sinful when opposing rather than complementing the most important, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God' (Mt.22.37-39). Moreover, the insect struggling on Andrzej's bedside glass parallels the patient in more than its miraculous avoidance of death: male worker bees are sterile. Finally, having revealed Himself in *The Decalogue: 1* with a sudden death, here God does so by granting life, a gesture shocking for seemingly owing more to His mockery of the Doctor's puny arbitration over life than to His benevolence. Having hitherto avoided the Polish tradition of solving dilemmas with a grand gesture, Kieślowski employs it in the closing minutes of *The Decalogue: 2* to devastating effect, providing a life-affirming ending which nonetheless in no way mitigates the moral defeat undergone by the Doctor in bringing it about.

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DEKALOG 3 (THE DECALOGUE: 3, 1988)

Although ostensibly concerned with the last of the Commandments pertaining to human relations with God, *The Decalogue: 3* contains no direct allusions to Him aside from a brief scene inside a church full of worshippers attending Midnight Mass, despite being set on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Piesiewicz interprets the Third Commandment to mean that holy days should connect people and act as occasions for meeting and talking⁶² – by implication, the Commandment is broken when individuals are excluded from the personal sphere of family and friends – and yet this too is visible only by its absence. Foregoing communion as sacrament and social intercourse alike by her early departure from Mass, Ewa, the protagonist supposedly searching for her missing husband, has pitifully few personal relationships, and they are, moreover, dysfunctional, her intimates consisting of a senile aunt, understandably wary ex-lover Janusz, and a husband whom it transpires repudiated her three years earlier. Moreover, her exclusion from society already emphasised by a name that associates her with the archetypal temptress, Ewa's sharing of her Christmas Eve saint's day with Christ's birthday⁶³ underscores the paucity of a personal life that allows her to celebrate neither. As for Janusz, his extension of a helping hand to his former mistress entails the desertion of his wife and family, so that even this unwilling act of charity towards Ewa comes at the cost of his other domestic relationships, and their notional lovers' tryst is in any case almost wholly lacking in romantic and erotic features.

The unspoken and unseen are, paradoxically, fundamental to this episode. The unmentioned model for the couple's search throughout Warsaw is the hunt for shelter in

⁶² Piesiewicz interviewed in Ciment (int.), 'Wyzbyć się polonocentryzmu...', p.23.

⁶³ December 24th marks Saint Eve's day, Garbowski, *Krzysztof Kieślowski's 'Decalogue' Series*, p 82. At the time of the cycle, saint's days, or name-days, tended to be celebrated by Poles more than birthdays, although the latter are now beginning to catch up in importance

Bethlehem two thousand years ago. This is echoed in turn in the Polish tradition of laying an extra place for any stranger seeking sanctuary on Christmas Eve, a custom that also fails to get a mention within the film precisely because it is not upheld, Janusz's concern being with getting Ewa away from his home rather than inviting her in. Ewa's mockery of her ex-lover's timidity and weakness in ending the affair gains ironic resonance through Kieślowski's astute casting of Daniel Olbrychski, an actor best known to Polish audiences for the gallant romantic heroes he played in his younger days, as the ageing and weary Janusz. Equally, Kieślowski displays more self-reflective and even self-mocking wit, which though understated would be grasped by many contemporary Poles, by having Ewa use the alias of 'Anna Tatarkiewicz', the name of a real journalist who reviewed films for the Polish newspaper *Polityka* and, as Kieślowski doubtless knew, reviled *No End*, when filing a false report about an accident. Even the empty streets, which suggest that most Varsovians are at home celebrating with their families, serve to emphasise that which is actually shown, namely, Ewa and Janusz out in the literal and figurative cold.

The ineffective communication characterising the film, another example of the unspoken, is most obviously illustrated by the abortive conversations of Janusz and Ewa, consisting of accusations and recriminations that fail to explain fully the truth of their break-up. Their verbal exchanges with family and friends are ironically inappropriate – Janusz offers the grieving Krzysztof from *The Decalogue: 1* Christmas greetings and wishes his own family well only to abandon them for Ewa – or redundant, as when Ewa's greeting to her aunt goes unrecognised. Similarly, aside from the brief revelry introduced by the carol-singers, children and therefore untouched by adult ills, the encounters in the public world between the couple and various state officials are also singularly lacking in warmth. Having to work on Christmas Eve is hardly conducive to ebullience, but it is

scarcely surprising that Ewa contemplates suicide in a world in which people fail to exchange even season's greetings.

Indeed, despite the authors' avowed intention to avoid politics in *The Decalogue*, the limited and indifferent responses of officials representing a broad range of public services are simultaneously a commentary on and reflection of the wider totalitarian state they inhabit. The mortician aside, all abuse their authority, veering between unconcern – even Janusz's reprieve from the police appears to owe more to their apathy, upon discovery that the car is not stolen, than actual goodwill – and the over-zealous, unnecessary harshness of the man in charge of the drunks. Ewa's lies preclude the possibility of her learning anything of value about her missing husband, but Kieślowski's depiction of a Warsaw populated by uncooperative and unsympathetic inhabitants suggests this would be the case even if her search were genuine. The empty security room in the railway epitomises the dearth of authority characteristic of individuals and the state alike, and whether the absence of anyone at the helm refers to the moral or political turmoil of contemporary Poland, either way it is a final damning indictment of a country in which people simply no longer care.

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DEKALOG 4 (THE DECALOGUE: 4, 1988)

The opening scene of *The Decalogue: 4*, showing Anka and Michał looking out of the windows of their separate rooms, poses several questions in the aftermath of the film. When this is scene set – is it a flash-forward to the troubling ending? – and how it should be read are queries especially pertinent to a film concerned with subtexts. Anka's

allegation that she and her father share incestuous feelings affects not only their present-day relationship, but also necessitates recasting the whole of their life, past and future, in the light of her claim. The viewer in turn, faced by the troubling and almost unbearably long night scene in which the protagonists confront their apparent feelings and each other, is likewise forced to re-consider the opening scenes in which the ambiguous nature of the relationship between the two is eventually resolved but not before a disquieting shot of Michał watching a near-naked Anka, her voluminous night-dress transformed by his bowl of water into a revealing second skin, is shown. Nevertheless, although several critics praise Anka's perspicacity and willingness to confront her and Michał's mutual incestuous feelings, her version of this truth is neither as shocking nor as artless as she initially suggests.⁶⁴ Such feelings are standard from a Freudian perspective – certainly, the absence of mother and sibling for Anka explains the closeness of her relationship with Michał and suggests why that which is arguably latent in many father-daughter relationships comes to the fore in this case – and even the most disturbing admissions of jealousy made by father and daughter are often routine in psychoanalysis. More importantly, as Paul Coates remarks, ‘..she is, after all, a student of acting’,⁶⁵ and in retrospect, the scene in which she recounts to her father the fabricated contents of a letter proves her gift for invention and performance. If Anka's claim mid-way through the film to incestuous feelings necessitates a re-reading of the preceding scenes, so too does her final admission of lying demand a more critical examination of her earlier behaviour.⁶⁶

Indeed, Anka does not simply act, but moreover forces Michał to react and interact. Beginning with her assertion that he is not her biological father, her words and

⁶⁴ Garbowski, *Krzysztof Kieślowski's 'Decalogue' Series*, p.29; & Helman, ‘Women in Kieślowski's late films’, p 126.

⁶⁵ Coates, ‘Metaphysical Love in Two Films by Krzysztof Kieślowski’, p.336.

⁶⁶ The screenplay makes it clear that Anka is indeed lying about the apparent contents of her mother's letter; Kieślowski & Piesiewicz, *Decalogue. The Ten Commandments*, p 96

gestures are designed to provoke him, and her power over him, most keenly felt when she mockingly invites him to question her not because of his parental prerogative but because he won a game, obliterates the natural distinction between parent and child. Indeed, *The Decalogue: 4* might easily be renamed 'A Short Film about Equality', it illustrating the various attempts of Anka, fast approaching adulthood, to have Michał accept her as a peer by obliterating their vertical child-parent relationship and replacing it with a horizontal relationship in which the power is evenly balanced. Having destroyed the basis of Michał's parental authority by denying that he is her biological father, she tries but fails to replace the father-daughter relationship with platonic companionship: although she introduces herself to her father as his equal with the word 'Anka', the untimely entrance of Adam, Michał's actual peer, who treats her as a child, reveals her shortcomings in this role. Instead, Anka now endeavours to recast her father as a lover, her change in tactics signalled by an ironically childish flood of tears. Incestuous love is thus less a subtext than a pretext for Anka to re-figure the dynamics of her and Michał's relationship in such a way as to give her equal status within their personal realm, and her revelations are dishonest not in being necessarily groundless but because she misleadingly employs them in the promotion of an alternative interest.

Unable to initiate a sexual relationship with Michał, Anka's increasingly babyish idiom as she calls out 'Tato! Tato! Tatusiu!' ('Dad! Dad! Daddy!') after her departing father reveals her attempt to re-instate their earlier relationship and revert to the status of a child, evidently preferable to that of an independent but orphaned adult. Michał accordingly seemingly re-acknowledges his parental role by comforting her with a lie fit only to appease a child – popping out for a bottle of milk does not necessitate taking a hold-all along – but the successful rehabilitation of the *status ante* is surely impossible given Anka's destructive falsifications from the night before. With reality having been

blurred by Anka's playing out of her adult fantasies and the boundaries distinguishing parent and child muddled, the most likely conclusion to *The Decalogue: 4* is the shot upon which it opened, depicting Michał and Anka isolated by the very experience they have just shared.

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DEKALOG 5 KRÓTKI FILM O ZABIJANIU

*(THE DECALOGUE: 5 A SHORT FILM ABOUT KILLING, 1988)*⁶⁷

The unresponsiveness and hostility expressed by Poles toward one another in *The Decalogue: 2-3* find an extreme, if not inconceivable, conclusion in Jacek's murder of a taxi-driver, followed by his own execution at the hands of the state, in *The Decalogue: 5*. Warsaw is depicted as a loveless wilderness in which the driver watches a young girl lasciviously before ignoring his waiting neighbours, Jacek stands by as two men beat a third, and a cinema-attendant's apathetic description of a film as being 'O miłości, ale nudny' ('About love, but boring') underscores the city's inhabitants' indifference to that emotion.⁶⁸ The sole fruitful personal relationship between the lawyer, Piotr, and his girlfriend has no place in this world and can only be alluded to briefly in a telephone-call and a short exchange with a fellow-lawyer.⁶⁹ 'We must love one another or die' wrote W. H. Auden, and although the death of humanity is not literally illustrated until Jacek's

⁶⁷ As before, unless otherwise specified all references to and comments upon *The Decalogue: 5* are equally applicable to the related feature, *A Short Film about Killing*.

⁶⁸ The film-set was not free from the malignant atmosphere depicted in the film when Kieślowski had technical problems with the driver's murder, his crew suggested he kill the actor, whom they disliked, for real, Stok, (ed), *Kieślowska on Kieślowska*, p 162

⁶⁹ More is shown of this relationship in *A Short Film about Killing*, but the result is a loss of the tautness that makes *The Decalogue: 5* so effective; see below for further comments about Piotr.

murder of the taxi-driver halfway through the film, it is visible from the outset.

As with *The Decalogue: 3*, the alienation is shown to stem directly from the environment of People's Poland, Kiesłowski emphasising the connection between the rooting of his characters in the social system and their concomitant absence of humanity. Whereas in the earlier episode the subsidiary characters alone hold official positions, Janusz and Ewa providing some semblance of a personal relationship on screen, in *The Decalogue: 5* main protagonists and lesser characters alike relate to one another by their functions of taxi-driver, lawyer, judge, killer, hangman, and so forth, the sole exception occurring when Jacek clowns around for the benefit of a couple of little girls watching him through the café window. Personal names are rarely mentioned in this world and even then only in official situations, Piotr's being heard when he is called in for his exam and the full names of Jacek and his victim only stated when the death sentence is read out just prior to the execution, the young murderer having his identity affirmed only for it to be terminated. The lawyer's attempt to escape the confines of his public role by calling out to his client by name, the first freely-given gesture of humanity to be made by any adult towards another in this film, comes too late but judging by Jacek's emotional reaction, Piotr's belief that an act of friendliness a year earlier when both were in the café may have averted the double tragedy is credible.

The much-noted yellowish fog evoking a vision of despair and malevolence, which results from green filters used by Kiesłowski's cinematographer, hints as much about the impending fate of the protagonists as it comments on the dismal and jaundiced environment of Warsaw. Evoking the old-fashioned photographs of people long dead, the sepia-coloured light of *The Decalogue: 5* augurs the doom awaiting the driver and Jacek—contrary to what the assistant in the photographic shop tells the latter, photographic film does in this case indicate whether its subjects are living or not – who although alive on-

screen for at least half of the film, are both dead men.⁷⁰ In detailing both a murder and a state execution, Kieślowski whilst distinguishing between their individual atrociousness also uses the contrasts between each to highlight that which is intolerable about the other: although the murder of the taxi-driver is prolonged almost unbearably, the truncated death-scene of Jacek that follows comes not as a relief but a hideous outrage. After the horrendous noise and activity made by the hangman's assistant in tightening the rope, the moment itself of Jacek's death is indescribably bathetic and unceremonious, indeed, capable almost of being overlooked by the viewer anticipating a forewarning roll of drums or at least a respectful pause. The contrast between the bustle of life and nothingness that is death could not be more hard-hitting.

Nevertheless, *The Decalogue: 5* suffers from marked flaws, most notably that of the sentimental portrayal of Piotr. Described in the screenplay as looking ‘..a sympathetic, sensitive and perhaps even slightly too delicate sort of person’,⁷¹ the goodness and righteousness of this character is over-emphasised, especially in the extended scenes with his girlfriend in *A Short Film about Killing*, to the extent that he approaches sanctimoniousness and leads one reviewer to suggest that he would be more effective if ‘..more thoughtful and less of a stereotypical bleeding heart..’⁷² Moreover, by being so palpably a standard of morality, Piotr jars badly with the cycle's other protagonists, whose collective faults make it difficult to distinguish between the sinful and the virtuous. Equally, by making Piotr so faultless, the authors come close to obliterating the ethical dilemma he supposedly suffers. Conversely, the executioner and his subordinate are as demonised as Piotr is absurdly saintly, resulting in an

⁷⁰ The tone is yellowish in *The Decalogue: 5*, in contrast to the greener shade of *A Short Film about Killing*, presumably due to distortion caused by the transfer of film to videotape.

⁷¹ Kieślowski and Piesiewicz, *Decalogue. The Ten Commandments*, p.115.

⁷² Caryn James, ‘Film Review: A case against capital punishment’, *The New York Times* (Sec: 1 Cultural Desk), New York, 23-12-1995, p.21.

unpleasant displacement between the sympathy understandably extended by Kieślowski and Piesiewicz to their youthful murderer – the many allusions to children make it clear that Jacek longs for childlike innocence even as he irrevocably forfeits it by committing an act that propels him into the sinful adult world – and that unfairly denied the state-sanctioned killers. If Piotr is the most overly sweet of Kieślowski's heroes, the executioner and assistant, being grotesque and utterly lacking in human values or fuller characterisation, are the director's most typecast and unremitting villains. It is a pity that the black-and-white stereotyping Kieślowski avoids to such striking effect in the majority of his works should afflict this film, as it diminishes what otherwise continues to be a forceful indictment of murder in all its forms.

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DEKALOG 6 / KRÓTKI FILM O MIŁOŚCI

*(THE DECALOGUE, 6 / A SHORT FILM ABOUT LOVE, 1988)*⁷³

The Decalogue: 6, which more than any other episode in the cycle other than *The Decalogue: 9* can be summed up by the phrase 'Only connect', contains a profusion of means of communication, yet for all the methods and devices on offer the characters display a remarkable inability to relate to one another successfully. Public channels are misused – Tomek uses his position in the post office to hinder the delivery of letters with one hand whilst sending out false money-notices with the other – or break down, as when Magda's attempted apology to Tomek is delivered to a silent telephone line, and one not

⁷³ As before, unless otherwise specified all references to and comments upon *The Decalogue: 6* are equally applicable to the related feature, *A Short Film about Love*.

dialled by him at that. More simply, they fail to make an impact. When Tomek holds out a milk bottle to Magda, she denies his overture by neither taking it nor handing him her empty bottle, which instead she places on the ground. Her thoughtless mistaking of his public function for his person later rebounds upon her when Tomek's landlady mutely puts down a milk-bottle in full view of Magda who is expecting some word of the injured Tomek, intentionally closing off communication by hiding behind her official capacity as milk-deliverer. More intimate contact, be it physical or emotional, is equally unsatisfactory. Having heard Tomek's declaration of love, Magda can only imagine that he desires her physically; in the event, sex takes place at an emotional and literal distance. As for the orphaned and friendless Tomek, although proficient in many languages he is paralysed by the absence of anyone with whom to converse.

Only optical gadgets remain, but although these devices prove the greatest aid to reducing physical distance, even here the very act of gazing from afar precludes communion between the observer and observed. However close he looks, Tomek lacks full control over that which he sees and his continued interference in Magda's life belies the actual insignificance he has for her; to Magda's mind the troublesome incidents that dog her are a matter of bad luck rather than an indication of another person's machinations. Love must ultimately fail where it is one-way, as it depends upon being requited by another party for its successful existence. Nevertheless, Tomek's voyeurism bears fruit in a unexpected fashion: Magda is an artist but of greater importance is Tomek, the metaphorical creator, who through his incessant peeping not only creates an object worthy of veneration but moreover provides a narrative for the film and is thus himself transformed into art. Accordingly, his termination of the voyeurism – 'Ja już pani więcej nie podglądam' ('I no longer spy on you'), Tomek tells Magda – coincides with the end of the television episode.

As with any film concerned with the act of watching, the voyeurism in *The Decalogue: 6* inevitably refers back to the process of filmmaking itself, and the exposure of the artist to the public gaze, seen both in Tomek's spying and the viewers' subsequent observation of him, mirrors Kieślowski's own position as filmmaker laid open to the judgement of his audience. However, the episode's pertinence to filmmaking in general is counterbalanced by the significance that Kieślowski's professional experiences have for the film, and the workings of fate and coincidence discernible in every episode of *The Decalogue* are of particular, peculiar even, relevance to this film. The limitation of the documentarist experienced by Kieślowski, who recognised that what interested him most is that which is hidden from the camera, is overcome in the character of Tomek, who watches those intimate scenes ordinarily hidden from the eyes of outsiders. Furthermore, Tomek's objectification of a female, comprising the adultery of the film (Mt. 5.27-28),⁷⁴ is surely repeated by Kieślowski in his later films: the difference between the women on display in the 'Miss Polonia' contest watched by Tomek's landlady and the array of French and Swiss beauties on view in the *Three Colours* trilogy seems at times to be one of nationality alone. Indeed, the Kieślowski who stood by a camera focussed on a window and shouted directions through a megaphone at Grażyna Szapołowska, playing Magda, is virtually interchangeable with Tomek, who likewise has his telephone and camera lens to hand as he watches her playing out a love scene for his benefit. Eagle-eyed viewers will spot the final sublime instance of art imitating life and vice versa in the credits of *The Decalogue: 1-3* and *The Decalogue: 10*, which indicate that Olaf Lubaszenko, who plays Tomek, was – what else? – a director's assistant on these episodes.

The parallels between the film's internal narrative and off-screen reality may seem

⁷⁴ Noted by Campan, 'Dziesięć krótkich filmów', p 65.

like the playful manifestations of a grand intellectual conceit, but the similarities between the fictional characters' eventual fates are grounded firmly in Kieślowski's dour perception of real life. With the television version, preferred by Kieślowski, suggesting that Tomek is left as hardened and disillusioned as Magda initially was – conceivably, she hurts him as she was herself formerly hurt – it is probable that he will go on to reprise her cynical role.⁷⁵ Likewise, Magda's likely fate of living out her life alone is that feared by Tomek's landlady: her claim of wanting nothing, itself a reiteration of a statement made by Tomek to Magda, fails to disguise the need all three have for love. The coincidences between Kieślowski's life and his art inspire the intellect, but the symmetries internal to this film involve the emotions with their bleak visualisation of human life as an endless repetition of these events by future individuals, generating a perpetual cycle of dashed hopes, cynicism, and loneliness. Lovelessness, paradoxically, breeds lovelessness. Whereas *The Decalogue: 5* verified the truth of the earlier Auden, *The Decalogue: 6* can be read as a grim confirmation of his later reworking 'We must love one another and die'.

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DEKALOG 7 (THE DECALOGUE: 7, 1988)

Opening on the screams of Ania, a young girl, having a nightmare, *The Decalogue: 7* centres around the fantasy of her supposed sister/biological mother, Majka, that she may re-appropriate her from the putative mother actual grandmother, Ewa.

⁷⁵ Kieślowski preferred the ending of the television episode to that of the feature film as it corresponded more closely to his view of life, Stok (ed.), *Kieslowki on Kieslowki*, p.170. Nevertheless, although *A Short Film about Love* ends on a potentially optimistic sequence, Magda's vision of herself united with Tomek is no more necessarily an accurate prediction of the future than it is a projection of her hopes.

Majka's failure to rouse her daughter prefigures her inability to make Ania accept her as her true mother but equally, Ewa's success in waking the little girl from her bad dream will be negated by the nightmarish reality about to unfold. The interplay between illusion and reality becomes pronounced when Majka, having distracted a theatre attendant with the staple golden ball of fairy stories, steals the red-riding-hood-coated Ania away to a woodland idyll, where she can play on a merry-go-round before coming to where her father awaits in a little girl's teddy-bear paradise and her true mother can finally be revealed to her. Nevertheless, the sinister connotations of the ostensibly fairytale elements continually undermine the fantasy and point towards the unhappy-ever-after conclusion. Although open to poetic interpretation as a changeling's escape from false imprisonment and inheritance of a true identity, in prosaic terms the taking of Ania is kidnap. Wojtek's joking description of himself as a sorcerer to Ania, his daughter, has a decidedly adult subtext that refers to the sexual power he exercised over Majka – moreover, judging by the biting and suggestive comments of Ewa, he, like Ania, has possibly also been shared by Majka and her mother – and the suburban cottage and teddy-bears are proof of his professional bankruptcy, rather than a chosen lifestyle.

Contrary to its idyllic appearance, the cottage is in fact a veritable stronghold of reality, the place from which Majka forces her mother and father to admit to the actual circumstances of Ania's birth, but also where she herself, through Wojtek's intercession, is forced to confront the consequences of her actions. The first character to demonstrate disillusionment in both senses of the word, Wojtek through his very existence exposes the pretence hitherto maintained by Ewa, but equally he has little time for Majka's heady dreams of recovering her daughter. Recognising that switched babies, dashing rescuers, and wicked mothers are the stuff of make-believe, he not only reminds Majka of her original acquiescence in her mother's plan, but moreover in doing so suggests that a

reassessment of the characters of Majka and her mother is due: if the latter is not the Wicked Witch, then neither can the former be Snow White. Naturally, nor is Wojtek Majka's Prince Charming, losing favour in her eyes for his understandable refusal to play along with her current plans, but also, as Ewa hints, because of his past indiscretions, be they a penchant for schoolgirls in general or perhaps also for headmistresses.

Less important than the subjectively ascribed roles of heroes and villains are the parts the protagonists assume as family members. In contrast to the incomplete families of the cycle's other episodes, the family in *The Decalogue: 7* abounds in members, yet far from rectifying the problem of the dysfunctional personal realm, it lies at its very root. Both women wish to play the part of mother but Ewa does so with the wrong child, whilst Majka can only do so to the detriment of her role as daughter. Milk, a recurring motif in so many of the other episodes, is absent here, a fact underlined by Majka's semi-mocking, semi-horrified description of her mother's grotesque attempt at breastfeeding Ania, as are its symbolic properties of human kindness and mothering. Meanwhile, never are the fathers more emasculated than in this episode, Wojtek's father being dead, Stefan passive, and Wojtek himself hitherto absent, as he is likely to remain, from his daughter's life. Equally, the ease with which fathers and daughters bond emphasises the problematical relations between mothers and daughters but ironically also points to the characteristics both women share, Majka being as frosty when observing Wojtek playing with Ania as is Ewa with regard to the relationship between her own husband and child. The comforting appearance of the teddy-bears, so named after Roosevelt who spared the life of a bear-cub whose mother he had killed, is likewise an illusion belying their true significance which is to highlight the orphanage, despite the many parents on offer, that is approaching Ania, that Majka has embraced, and that Wojtek already suffers. Every relationship, vertical and horizontal, eventually fails: no exemplars of healthy parent-child relations survive

until the final credits and the dearth of any loving couples attests to the impossibility of future regeneration. Concluding on a final scene in which Majka, Ania, Ewa, and Stefan stand apart, the composition acting as a visual illustration of the permanent fracturing of the family that has just occurred, *The Decalogue: 7* contains what is possibly Kieślowski's bleakest vision of the personal sphere.

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DEKALOG 8 (THE DECALOGUE: 8, 1988)

Of all the episodes, *The Decalogue: 8* is the most overtly concerned with moral principles and despite its deceptive simplicity poses a number of ethical and philosophical problems, the most prominent of which is the question of why Zosia, now a professor of ethics, decided against assisting a six-year old Jewish girl, Elżbieta, during the Second World War. Having played a cat-and-mouse game some forty years on with Zosia in the lecture theatre, Elżbieta subsequently leads her on a wild chase inside the apartments where they first met in 1943, where her second vanishing into the night leaves the professor with a new philosophical enigma to partner, parody even, the moral quandary she suffered after the first disappearance. By neither exiting nor apparently remaining inside a building to which there is only one entrance and forcing Zosia to ask 'Czy tu jest drugie wyjście z tej bramy?' ('Is there a second way out from this gate?'), Elżbieta demonstrates that an alternative solution to a dilemma is indeed possible, her proof of it in the latter-day suggesting the same holds true for the original problem of 1943. The crooked picture requiring repeated straightening is another mystery, although here Kieślowski leaves the solution in the hands of the viewer. Zosia is unable to correct the

picture, as befits a symbol of her earlier weakness, and neither can Elżbieta, but by refusing to disclose the results of the older woman's final over-compensating straightening of the picture on the day after she and Elżbieta have been reconciled, the director forces the audience to guess at what happens and furthermore what it signifies. As with *Blind Chance*, the three possible scenarios – the picture tilts once more, indicating that Zosia can never undo her earlier mistake; the picture stays straight, signifying that Zosia has finished being punished for the past; or, simply, the picture is not shown because, like the past, it is no longer an issue for either woman – constitute a game of interpretation to which the viewer must find his or her own preferred answer.

In accordance with the commandment prohibiting falsehood, Kieślowski goes to unusual lengths to confirm the authenticity of this film. The avoidance of stylised lighting, abnormal camera-angles, or visual conceits, combined with the silent observance of Zosia's daily rituals, heightens the sense of immediacy and mimics the look and feel of a documentary. This is the one film in which Kieślowski favours what are very nearly point-of-view shots, producing the impression in several scenes that Zosia and Elżbieta are speaking not so much to each other as to the camera and thereby communicating directly with the audience. Likewise, Zosia is singularly favoured and privileged by the director: just as Kieślowski admitted to sharing her conception of God,⁷⁶ so too is she afforded something of the authors' God-like omniscience towards her fellow protagonists in knowing the conclusion to *The Decalogue: 2* and witnessing the prologue to *The Decalogue: 10*. Hers is the greatest authority in the cycle and her morality the least suspect not despite but because of her decades of agonising. In presenting so virtuous a protagonist in so straightforward a style of filmmaking, it seems Kieślowski is

⁷⁶ Cavendish (int.), 'Kieślowski's Decalogue', *Sight & Sound*, p.164.

emphasising that the film is essentially true and therefore so too by association are the dilemma and conclusion drawn in it.

Yet there is something disquieting about a film that ultimately glosses over what is in fact the highly complicated problem of Polish-Jewish relations during the Second World War. The issue of anti-Semitism is conspicuous only by its absence, yet there is the sense that Elzbieta's continued existence is intended somehow as an implicit refutation of Polish anti-Semitism, as though the survival of a single Jew somehow disproves any accusations of Polish hostility towards Jews. Piesiewicz's explanation that *The Decalogue: 8* is about some Poles' '..wina niezarzucalna..' ('..blameless guilt..') in the matter of atrocities committed against Jews during the Second World War and how the former '..powinni mówić, że nie mogli nic zrobić; ale powinni też mówić, że w sensie ludzkim ból tej winy w nich istnieje' ('..ought to say that they could do nothing; yet they ought also to say how, as humans, they cannot help but feel the pain of that guilt')⁷⁷ is open to interpretation as a defensive half-truth which conveniently overlooks the fact that in more than one case this guilt, if at all felt, is well-deserved. Likewise, Zosia asserts that 'Nie ma idei, nie ma myśli, nie ma niczego co byłoby ważniejsze od życia dziecka' ('There is no idea, there is no thought, there is nothing that is more important than the life of a child'), but this is a glibly virtuous statement, rendered hollow by the fact that she can make it in the sound knowledge that neither her wartime fellow-conspirators nor the child Elzbieta were ultimately sacrificed. How much more interesting it would be to see Zosia maintain this argument, and how much darker and more complex the moral dilemma, had the providing of sanctuary to the young Elzbieta indeed led to the deaths of several adult resistance fighters.

In a departure from his career-long commitment to filming reality, Kieslowski

⁷⁷ Piesiewicz, 'Skupienie i przenikliwość', p.204.

significantly altered a true story told him by Hanna Krall: unable to believe either that a couple could turn away a child for fear of bearing false witness or that an audience would accept this, he added another dimension to Zosia's motivation.⁷⁸ However, in doing so he is in danger of bearing false witness to the past. Whatever the limited truth of his narrative – and undoubtedly there were Poles who suffered such dilemmas as Zosia's – it is not the whole truth of Polish-Jewish relations during the war. An account striving for accuracy must at least acknowledge the full range of behaviour displayed by all involved if it is to be credible. Conversely, a film that is selective and excludes mention of less palatable facts inevitably compromises itself and its claim to honesty. In the case of *The Decalogue: 8*, the episode concerned with the eighth commandment comes uncomfortably close to committing the very sin it purports to denounce.

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DEKALOG 9 (THE DECALOGUE: 9, 1988)

Centring on the impotent Roman and his adulterous wife, Hanka, *The Decalogue: 9* is a film replete with sexual ironies. At first glance, the episode appears to be concerned with Hanka's flouting of the sixth commandment; far from the ninth commandment being immediately relevant to Roman, the irony is that his impotence prevents him from desiring his own wife, let alone coveting another woman. However, the authors ingeniously interpret the commandment by developing its tacit meaning, namely, that not coveting the wife of one's neighbour means one must desire one's own

⁷⁸ Hanna Krall, 'Jakiś czas' in Stanisław Zawisliński (ed), *O Kieślowskim...refleksje, wspomnienia, opinie*, Warsaw Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p 39.

spouse.⁷⁹ Consequently, it is the absence of Roman's sexual passion that leads him to break the ninth commandment, albeit inadvertently. With Roman already suffering impotence, it seems unduly harsh that his sexual problems should also be the breeding-ground of sin, yet the instances of mockery aimed at him multiply. His medical condition is swiftly complemented by the fresh afflictions of jealousy and possessiveness. Moreover, he is surrounded by sexual imagery: pipes are slotted into funnels; the glove-compartment, a cruelly apposite illustration of Roman's wife's sexuality, falls open when he does not want it to and will not open easily when he does; his panting and physical exertions on his bicycle mimic the act of sex they are intended to replace; and there is a pleasing inverse symmetry between the intercourse ending in *le petit mort* denied him and his climactic leap of death. The irony of such imagery, given Roman's actual deficiency in the area of sex, grows as these instances of symbolism accumulate. Indeed, even his failed suicide, while marking the parallel between sex and death, discreetly yet with a hint of gentle mockery reflects his impotence in both areas.

Roman's sexual dysfunction leads to a breakdown in the emotional connection between himself and his wife. Where before a dialogue existed between the two, now their personal realm is characterised by Hanka's secrets and lies and Roman's spying – in yet another example of irony, the intimacies upon which he gazes are precisely those that should include him – all of which are anathema to mutual communication. His voyeurism, another manifestation of the sterility afflicting him, is combined with his eavesdropping upon Hanka's telephone conversations. Kieslowski suggested that *The Decalogue: 9* could be subtitled 'A Short Film about Telephones',⁸⁰ and indeed, telephones proliferate in this episode, as they have done throughout the entire cycle, their

⁷⁹ Ciment & Niogret (int.), 'Panskie filmy są rentgenogramami duszy', p.33.

⁸⁰ Campan, 'Dziesięć krótkich filmów', p 65.

hindrance to genuine communication belying their ostensible function and repeatedly illustrating the director's pessimistic view, later taken up in *Three Colours: Red* along with the related themes of eavesdropping and adultery, that they foster the moral and social dislocation of contemporary life.⁸¹

However, it ought to be acknowledged that the telephone does eventually aid the reconciliation of Roman and Hanka in the final scenes of the episode because their personal sphere, for all its seeming problems, is founded in true love. Frustrating and limiting though Roman's voyeurism necessarily is, it is nonetheless an expression, however negative, of his love for Hanka. Equally, her near-telepathic awareness of the moments of crisis undergone by her husband illustrates the continued existence of her bond with her husband, albeit one temporarily forgotten by both in the wake of Roman's impotence. After eight relentless episodes detailing family crises and breakdowns in relationships, Kieślowski and Piesiewicz finally depict the more positive potential of the personal sphere in this penultimate episode. Closing the film with a scene in which Hanka exclaims 'Jesteś! Boże jesteś!' ('You're there! God, you're there!'), the authors' play on words simply but nevertheless effectively suggests that genuine human love doubles as an earthly sign of the divine presence, the secular precept 'Only connect' finding its spiritual counterpart in St John's declaration 'God is love' (1 John 4.16), and brings the cycle full circle from the first demonstration of this principle by Irena in *The Decalogue: 1*.

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⁸¹ See chapter 7.

DEKALOG 10 (THE DECALOGUE: 10, 1988)

Opening upon a song that boldly enjoins the viewer to break those same commandments that have had their credentials as moral principles examined and established in preceding episodes, *The Decalogue: 10* represents a dramatic departure from the style of its forerunners. The film is rich in comic detail, moving swiftly from the self-satirising spectacle of the rock-singer Artur advocating murder, adultery, and theft, to the more ironically humorous scene in which his dead stamp-collecting father is eulogised in the kind of grandiose terms normally reserved for elder statesmen. One suspects that the authors are quite conscious of the welcome relief provided by this episode's humour for the viewer who has sat through the largely cheerless instalments preceding it, given the spirit of self-mockery pervading the film. The obsession of Artur and his brother Jerzy with completing their father's stamp-collection is mimicked to a lesser degree by the writers' self-prescribed task of tackling the Decalogue, the finishing of a series being at once the subject and the object of *The Decalogue: 10*. In a similar vein, the three Zeppelin stamps lost and later recovered by the brothers are more proof of Kieślowski's self-reflexivity, their colours of red, green, and blue corresponding to the pixels making up the television screen. And when a stamp connoisseur says of a stamp-set 'Ta seria wystarczy panu na wykupienie mieszkania' ('This series will give you enough to buy a flat'), the temptation to read this as the authors' witty allusion to the contribution of their own series to their material wellbeing is near-unavoidable.

The self-mockery is not always quite so playful. The darker consequences for personal relationships of an obsession as seemingly harmless as philately are both experienced by Jerzy, who remembers the poverty and misery his family suffered for his father's passion, and instigated by him, as his own growing excitement for stamps finds

an inverse correlation in his disintegrating relationship with his wife.⁸² Judging by articles and photographs published in Poland after his death, Kieślowski had good relationships with his wife and his daughter. Nevertheless, these examples of fathers absent as a consequence of their private manias in *The Decalogue: 10*, like the inadequate patriarchs who recur throughout the cycle, perhaps reflect in some measure the director's self-reproach at dedicating so much of his life to his craft and thereby being absent from his family's life as his own father, who died in Krzysztof's youth, was from his.⁸³ The scene in which a hospital nurse is overawed by Artur, a rock-singer of mediocre if hilarious songs and dubious fame, again involves an element of self-commentary, the teasing critique of society's transformation of artists into idols and veneration of their message, whatever its actual value, suggestive of Kieślowski's own unease at being falsely taken for a god by his own audience.

This of course reiterates the distrust with which the director and his co-writer regard their own authority in *The Decalogue 1*, but although by recapitulating the moral of the opening episode they complete the symmetry and thus *The Decalogue*, they add to it with a new point which opens up the cycle at the very moment of its closure.⁸⁴ In a testimony to the virtue of independent thought, Artur and Jerzy each buy stamps with which to begin a new collection, thus transforming the loss of their inheritance into the reward of becoming creators themselves. Likewise, the opening song and the manner in which its message alters at the end of the episode demonstrates the simultaneous completion and open-endedness of the cycle. Although the first stanza, like the first episode, testifies to the dangers of usurping and abusing the divine prerogative, the final

⁸² The screenplay is even more explicit about the family breakdown, with Jerzy's wife requesting a divorce; Kieślowski & Piesiewicz, *Decalogue. The Ten Commandments*, p.312.

⁸³ Among the reasons Kieślowski gave for retiring from filmmaking after *Three Colours: Red*, was his desire to live a normal life in which his work no longer took precedence over other things, Geoff Andrew, *The 'Three Colours' Trilogy*, London British Film Institute, pp 85-86 See also chapter 7.

⁸⁴ Cf. Olivier Curchod, 'Dekalog, Dziewięć: Pod prąd' trans. Ewa Błaszczuk in *Film na Świecie*, p.57.

stanza and film alike reveal that the human capacity for moral corruption is counterbalanced by the potential for creative good; 'Wszystko jest Twoje!' ('Everything is yours!') is transformed into 'Wszystko jest w Tobie!' ('Everything is inside you!').

The patient viewer who has watched each episode from beginning to end is thus rewarded amply by the authors. Urging the audience against coveting the opinions and interpretations expressed in their own series, Kiesłowski and Piesiewicz instead remind them that *The Decalogue* and *Ten Commandments* alike remain open to the individual's own consideration, reading, and even re-working: the cycle is not the viewers' to take but, rather, to make.

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The attempts of Kiesłowski and Piesiewicz to distance *The Decalogue* from the reality of the Polish public world and thereby broaden its universal character were in fact of limited success, with close examination revealing that a considerable number of specifically Polish references remains in the films and informs the narratives. Nevertheless, whether because of its supposedly universal nature or its depiction of contemporary Polish society, the cycle attracted extensive critical acclaim and audiences worldwide. Kiesłowski too found his profile and marketability as a filmmaker rising enormously in the international arena, with the result that a significant portion of the financing for his next production, *The Double Life of Véronique*, came from non-Polish sources. Filmed in France as well as Poland, *The Double Life of Véronique* was the first of the director's films to feature a setting and language other than those native to him. This introduction of a foreign element would be exploited by Kiesłowski and Piesiewicz in their continued attempts to broaden the camera's focus beyond homegrown issues and

problems to those affecting humanity the world over, but, as in *The Decalogue*, the retreat from the public sphere in the forthcoming production would be neither absolute nor lacking in ambivalence.

CHAPTER 6

The Move Abroad 1990-1992

There can be no doubt that a clear difference exists between Kieślowski the student of cinema, who in 1968 wrote of '[w]spaniała, bogata, nieograniczona rzeczywistość, gdzie nic się nie powtarza, gdzie nie można robić dubli' ('[w]onderful, rich, unrestricted reality, where nothing repeats itself, where one cannot make duplicates'),¹ and Kieślowski the professional filmmaker, who more than twenty years after graduating from film school made *La Double Vie de Véronique* *Podwójne życie Weroniki* (*The Double Life of Véronique*, 1991), a film concerned with the physical and metaphysical doubling of the eponymous heroines. It is true of many filmmakers that particular themes are reiterated within their oeuvres: certainly, the continual replication of situations, conditions, and attitudes across Polish society seen as early as in documentaries such as *Urząd* (*The Office*, 1966), *Fabryka* (*The Factory*, 1970), and *Refren* (*Refrain*, 1972) not only shows how Kieślowski persistently revisited the same themes but also suggests he discovered early in his filmmaking career that repetition is an authentic aspect of life. However, Kieślowski went a step further with *The Double Life of Véronique* in that his preoccupation with doubling and more broadly speaking repetition is built into the very form the work takes, the characters, significant events, and even the film itself existing in two versions.² Doubling, in addition to being one of the primary concerns of the internal narrative, is the key to understanding the film's special place in Kieślowski's filmography as a project that reiterates the imagery and themes of the director's earlier works, such as

¹ Extract from Kieślowski's MA thesis quoted in Katarzyna Jabłońska, 'Koniec i początek', *Więź*, Warsaw, no. 9, 9-1996, p.114. See chapter 1

² Kieślowski made a second version of *The Double Life of Véronique* for the U.S. market, concluding upon Véronique embracing her father rather than merely touching a tree in the grounds of her family home, believing that the latter ending would leave the American audience baffled.

the ninth episode of *Dekalog* (*The Decalogue*, 1988), and prefigures elements from his final film, *Trois Couleurs: Rouge* (*Three Colours: Red*, 1994).³

The Double Life of Véronique contains other signs suggesting that Kieślowski had changed considerably in his approach to filming reality, as presumably had his co-writer, Piesiewicz. The heady and stylised cinematography that forgoes the more straightforward, documentary-like camerawork of the director's earlier feature films, the conscious beautification of the world through the use of filters that not so long ago had been used to the opposite effect in *The Decalogue: 5* and *Krótki film o zabijaniu* (*A Short Film about Killing*, 1988), and the heroine whose stylishness and attractiveness contrast as greatly with the decidedly less physically appealing attributes of Kieślowski's past protagonists as does her youthful optimism with their mostly weary hopelessness – unsurprisingly, she is also economically independent, as few of them are – led many critics to see a sharp division between the depiction of reality in this film and in those that preceded it.⁴ Never one to accept automatically the opinions of his reviewers, Kieślowski acknowledged the idea that he had changed direction only in order to refute it outright:

A lot of people don't understand the direction in which I'm going. They think I'm going the wrong way, that I've betrayed my own way of thinking, that I've betrayed my way of looking at the world. I really don't have any sense of having betrayed my own point of view, or even of having deviated from it, for whatever reason – comfort,

³ Tony Rayns notes references made in *The Double Life of Véronique* to *Krótki film o miłości* (*A Short Film about Love*, 1988), (*The Decalogue: 9*, 1988), and *Bez końca* (*No End*, 1984), Tony Rayns, 'Kieślowski: Crossing Over', *Sight & Sound*, vol. 1, issue 11, 3-1992, p.23. Similarly, Paul Coates comments that if *Three Colours: Red* draws upon *The Double Life of Véronique*, so too does the latter make use of *The Decalogue: 9*; Paul Coates, 'Usuwanie się w cień: wcielenia Kieślowskiego' trans. Magdalena Loska in Tadeusz Lubelski (ed), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, Cracow Universitas, 1997, p.131.

⁴ For discussion of Kieślowski's increasingly stylised camerawork and lighting see. Maria Kornatowska, 'Podwójne życie Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego' in Lubelski (ed), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, pp 119-120; & Geoff Andrew, *The 'Three Colours' Trilogy*, London: British Film Institute, 1998, p.19. For discussion of the changes in Kieślowski's physical and psychological depiction of his main protagonist, see: Kornatowska, 'Podwójne życie Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego', pp 120-121; Anna Kaplinska, 'Uciekinier z kina', *Film*, Warsaw, 3-1998, p.104, & Alicja Helman, 'Women in Kieślowski's late films' trans Paul Coates in Paul Coates (ed), *Lucid Dreams: The Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski*, Flicks Books Wiltshire, 1999, p.116ff.

money or career. I don't feel that. I don't have any sense of having betrayed anything whatsoever within myself by making *Véronique*..⁵

A few critics concur to some extent with his opinion, such as Tadeusz Lubelski whose ingenious suggestion that the director was continuing to make films about reality but now about the reality of feelings not only balances an awareness of the change of focus in this film with a recognition of its underlying continuity within the oeuvre but is also broadly consistent with Kieślowski's own claim to have been concentrating upon the inner life since the early 1980s.⁶ Nevertheless, the fact remains that Kieślowski's previous films are based around a description of concrete, objective, public reality in a way that *The Double Life of Véronique* is not; even *The Decalogue*, considered by some Poles to have eschewed the socio-economic and political reality of the films of the 1970s, was intended by its makers to portray scenarios and dilemmas taken from real life, even if not always accepted as such. Perhaps inevitably, some longstanding viewers found it difficult to accept the loss of public reality at the expense of the dominating metaphysical reality of inner feelings and intuitions in this film, a critical reaction reiterated and intensified with the later *Trois Couleurs* (*Three Colours*, 1993-1994) trilogy. However, that Kieślowski managed this dramatic shift from public to inner reality without alienating more of his audience, indeed, by attracting new viewers, makes *The Double Life of Véronique* the more remarkable, for it illustrates the extent to which the credibility of his portrayal of inner reality in this film outweighs any consequent loss of public reality.

The Double Life of Véronique and *The Decalogue* share a concern with the inner

⁵ Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, pp 193-194

⁶ Tadeusz Lubelski, 'Podwójne życie Kieślowskiego', *Kino*, Warsaw, 9-1991, p 4. For a similar judgment that also extends to the *Three Colours* trilogy see Tadeusz Sobolewski, 'Peace & Rebellion: Some Remarks on the Creative Output of Krzysztof Kieślowski' trans. Witold Liwarowski & Richard Wawro in Ewelina Nurczyńska-Fidelska & Zbigniew Batko (ed), *Polish Cinema in Ten Takes*, Łódź: Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1995, p 123.

life but the depiction in the former of silence that is not coupled with isolation, of manipulation and control that is mostly portrayed as neither disturbing nor unwelcomed by its object, and of families that are incomplete but not consequently defective, exemplifies how with the later film Kieślowski inverts the norms that he and Piesiewicz had established in the television cycle, again signalling the changes to his filmmaking method in the early 1990s as well as suggesting that his outlook was becoming more positive. Whereas in *The Decalogue* silence signifies alienation, in *The Double Life of Véronique* it indicates the existence of a benign tacit dialogue with oneself and others. This paradox of unspoken discourse, already demonstrated by the mysterious connection between the Polish Weronika and the French Véronique, is succinctly illustrated when the latter listens to the tape sent by Alexandre, her would-be lover, and suddenly asks of the silent room ‘Qui est là?’ (‘Who is there?’): so potent is the unvoiced communication, and hence so immediate the presence, of Alexandre that it is not Véronique’s outburst but rather his failure to materialise physically, given his seeming mental and emotional proximity to her, that is the surprise. The ease with which they fall asleep together when finally reconciled in a Parisian hotel likewise reflects their harmonious, joint inner domain, despite their earlier disastrous meeting. Family relations, especially those of fathers and daughters, are also extremely good.⁷ Although the personal sphere is not perfect, Weronika’s emotional capriciousness upsetting her boyfriend, it is far more positively portrayed than in *The Decalogue*, and the inner realm, as represented by Weronika and Véronique to one another – that of Alexandre and Véronique is shown to

⁷ As the discarded working title *Krótką historią dla córek* (*A Short Story for Daughters*) suggests and Kieślowski stated, father-daughter relations are another key theme in this film; Catherine Wimphen (int.), ‘O wolności i nowych regułach gry’, *Kino*, Warsaw, 9-1991, p.8 (trans. Wanda Wertenstein from *Studio*, Paris, 1991). Whether the good relationships of fathers and daughters in *The Double Life of Véronique* in any way mirror Kieślowski’s relationship with his own daughter, just as the unhappy father-son relationships in his earlier films perhaps stem from his own feelings of paternal absence, is of course a matter of speculation.

be false, with his manipulations ultimately shattering their happy ending – is better still.

Indeed, the main focus of Kieślowski and Piesiewicz in *The Double Life of Véronique* is unquestionably the inner lives – or should that read ‘life’? – of the twinned heroines, who are turned in upon themselves, as indeed the camera and narrative are fixated upon them, almost to the point of solipsism. Very little reference is made to the broader public world. Weronika has virtually no social existence, untroubled by ties of study or work that might otherwise prevent her from travelling across Poland and accepting an impromptu offer to sing professionally, and although Véronique’s job situates her within the public sphere, the depiction of her working life is sketchy – she apparently has no difficulty in taking time off to visit her father – and moreover referred to in the main when it has some bearing upon her personal life. Indeed, the personal sphere is also highly inward-looking, the protagonists’ significant relationships being limited to those of family and lovers. Friends of Weronika and Véronique barely register in the narrative and furthermore are purely functional, the sole purpose of her Polish friend being to bring Weronika to both Cracow and the attention of a singing teacher, and that of the French fellow-schoolteacher whom Véronique offers to assist in her divorce Kieślowski’s way of preventing the latter from appearing too self-involved.⁸

Nevertheless, if little reference is made to the public world, that which is shown is striking in and of itself, as well as by contrast with the film’s overriding concern with the inner life. The turning away of Kieślowski’s camera from the political demonstration taking place while Weronika is in Cracow may be intended as a metaphor for the director’s own dwindling interest in filming the public world.⁹ Yet if this so, given the many striking references to the socio-political, including the dismantled statue of Lenin

⁸ Although Kieślowski reduced the divorce plot substantially, he explained he did not cut it completely because it was needed ‘..to pull Véronique down to earth..’; Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowska*, p.186.

⁹ Cf Zdzisław Pietrasik, ‘Odwrócona kamera’, *Polityka*, Warsaw, no. 13, 30-3-96, p 45.

past which Weronika runs, her whistling of the 'International' into a telephone, and the bombed Sawad Air offices outside the Parisian railway station in which Véronique meets Alexandre, he seems to be protesting too much. Although the characters in *The Double Life of Véronique* are not politically engaged, both they and the camera register surrounding social and political events with a seriousness that renders ambivalent Kiesłowski's so-called avoidance of filming the public world.¹⁰ The distinctive framing of Weronika against a background of riot-police during the Cracow demonstration is a startling, remarkable image, simultaneously hinting at the fragile existence of the individual within the broader world and suggesting the impossibility of the inner life's offering an untouchable refuge from outer concerns. Likewise, when Véronique meets Alexandre in the railway-station café in Paris, they and the camera alike turn several times to look through the window at the bombed car outside the Sawad Air offices, punctuating their self-enclosing intimacy with glances outwards at the inescapable public world as though unable to tear themselves completely away from it. For Kiesłowski to turn the camera away once from such socio-political events is to make a point but for him to do so repeatedly is to undermine it by his constantly referring to that which he purports to avoid. Kiesłowski may take a dim view of the public world in *The Double Life of Véronique* – the incidents are predominantly brutal in tone, the statue of Lenin and communist anthem having unhappy associations for most contemporary Poles and the demonstration and terrorist bombing explicitly violent, although ironically this makes them all the more noticeable against the otherwise golden-filtered lives of Weronika and Véronique – but neither he nor his characters are able to escape or dismiss it.¹¹

¹⁰ Tadeusz Lubelski points out that the Cracow demonstrators are Kiesłowski's former protagonists now depicted negatively; Lubelski, 'Podwójne życie Kiesłowskiego', p.5.

¹¹ Adam Mars-Jones makes a similar point, noting that '[t]he film's direction of travel is undoubtedly inwards, but it still can't leave the outer world alone', Adam Mars-Jones, 'You only live twice: The Double Life of Véronique', *The Independent* (Arts), London, 28-2-1992, p.18. See also Paul Coates, 'Metaphysical Love in Two Films by Krzysztof Kiesłowski', *The Polish Review*, vol. XXXVII, no. 3, 1992, p 343.

The hard-edged note of realism underlying Kiesłowski's off-screen remarks about *The Double Life of Véronique* acts as another disconcerting counter to the golden light permeating the on-screen frames; if, as the director admitted, the heroine comes close to walking in the clouds,¹² he was ardently, mercilessly even, down-to-earth about his film. Asked about his reasons for setting the narrative in Poland and France, Kiesłowski offered the decidedly prosaic explanation that he shot in Poland because he was Polish and in France because the production was financed in France¹³ and repeatedly dismissed attempts to read figurative meanings into the trans-national locations and heroines.¹⁴ Dryly humorous about having to abandon his preferred title of *Véronique* after learning

¹² Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p.186.

¹³ Ewa Koszur (int.), 'Wolność artysty', *Głos Szczeciński*, Szczecin, no. 235, 19-10-1991.

¹⁴ Asked about the East-West symbolism of Weronika and Véronique, Kiesłowski responded with 'Co za bzdury. Weronika i Véronique nie symbolizują absolutnie niczego' ('What nonsense. Weronika and Véronique symbolise absolutely nothing'); Kiesłowski quoted in Gabriele Invernizzi (int.), 'Krótki wywiad z Kieślowskim', *Forum*, Warsaw, no. 21, 26-5-1991 (trans. from *L'Espresso*, 12-5-1991). Kiesłowski also warned against interpreting his film as a metaphor for his own crossing from Poland to France: Małgorzata Dipont (int.), 'Spokój', *Życie Warszawy*, Warsaw, no. 232, 3-10-1991. Nevertheless, several critics interpret the French and Polish aspects of *The Double Life of Véronique* symbolically. Most interesting of all is Paul Coates's observation that '[s]tories that deal explicitly with the Double seem in the main to be written by authors who are suspended between languages and cultures', which although written prior to the making of *The Double Life of Véronique*, offers suggestive insights when applied to the film and its makers; Paul Coates, *The Double & the Other: Identity as Ideology in Post-Romantic Fiction*, London: Macmillan Press, 1988, p.2. See also: Coates, 'Metaphysical Love in Two Films by Krzysztof Kieślowski', pp 335-336 & pp.342-343; Lubelski, 'Podwójne życie Kieślowskiego', p.5

Kiesłowski repeatedly made light of his move from Poland to France, maintaining that there was no great difference in working in or making a film about a country other than Poland, Vincent Ostria (int.), 'Przypadek i konieczność' in Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, (trans Maria Oleksiewicz & Tadeusz Lubelski from *Les Inrockuptibles*, Paris, no. 36 1992) p.286, & Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p.199. His admission of setting *The Double Life of Véronique* in Poland as well as France because he feared making a solely French-based film implies he recognised at the script-writing stage the potential deeper differences that exist between the two cultures; Wimphen (int.), 'O wolności i nowych regułach gry', p.7. However, he subsequently reverted to his oft-asserted belief that all people and places are fundamentally the same, stating that it was the making of this trans-national film which ultimately convinced him that '...nie jest ważne, gdzie się stawia kamerę, lecz po co?' ('... it is important not where you put a camera but why [you put it there]'); Stanisław Zawisliński (int.), 'Jeżeli w życiu jest za łatwo, to może wcale nie jest dobrze...' in Stanisław Zawisliński (ed.), *Kieślowski: varia*, Warsaw Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p 102. Certainly, he was unconcerned that his scanty knowledge of French would in any way limit or prevent him from working as closely with francophone actors as he did with Poles, and Polish- and French-speaking colleagues attest to discernment of the quality and honesty of an actor's work regardless of the language being used; Jadwiga Anna Łużyńska, 'Fenomen Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego cz. II', *Iluzjon*, Warsaw, nos. 1-4, 1995, p 32, & Stanisław Latek writing in Stanisław Zawisliński (ed.), *O Kieślowskim...refleksje, wspomnienia, opinie*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p 52. His firm conviction that language differences constitute a very minor problem was underscored by his use of a translator on not only this film but also the French and Swiss sections of the *Three Colours* trilogy; Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, pp 197-198

that the ending 'nique' has a sexual meaning in French at odds with the rarefied atmosphere of the film,¹⁵ Kieślowski further underplayed the poetic sensibility of his work by daring to explain the lovely and mysterious metaphysical concept of souls twinned across temporal and spatial distances by use of the distinctly unlovely analogy of rats in New York and Paris mysteriously immune to the effects of the poison that killed their predecessors in Paris.¹⁶ And given the predominant importance ascribed by so many directors, as well as critics and the public, to their role in making films, it comes as a refreshing surprise to read that Kieślowski said of *The Double Life of Véronique* '..to nie jest mój film, ja tylko pracowałem przy nim jako reżyser' ('..it isn't my film; I just worked on it as the director').¹⁷ Some critics may have questioned the pretensions of *The Double Life of Véronique*,¹⁸ but Kieślowski proved that there was no need to worry about his. However, rather than merely revealing an ironic disjunction between the director-writer and his film, these comments are suggestive of a more significant and potentially problematic divergence between the on-screen fantasy lived out by the naïve heroine and the real-life disillusionment of the man who co-created and directed this very fantasy and heroine from behind the camera. Indeed, the unhappy ending to the romance of Véronique and Alexandre demonstrates Kieślowski's unwillingness to let the fairytale run its course even within its fictional and cinematic boundaries; his claim to have changed the original ending of fulfilled love because it would not be realistic for Véronique with that particular actor (Phillipe Volter) playing Alexandre raises the suspicion that he may have in fact considered the initial version unrealistic regardless of the actor in question.¹⁹ *The Double Life of Véronique* is one of Kieślowski's most successful realisations of his

¹⁵ Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 173.

¹⁶ Joanna Orzechowska (int.), 'Widownia jest podobna do mnie', *Kino*, Warsaw, 5-1991, p.40.

¹⁷ Wimphen (int.), 'O wolności i nowych regułach gry', p 8.

¹⁸ Discussed below.

¹⁹ Tadeusz Szczepański (int.), 'Drzewo które jest', *Film na Świecie*, Warsaw-Lódź, 1991, p 18.

aspiration to film the inner life comprehensively and intimately and to capture inner reality on camera. Yet at the very moment when the director should have been celebrating his long-desired achievement, all too often his comments about this film hint at his fear of losing sight of actualities of the broader, real world by becoming too engrossed in the innermost lives of his imaginary characters and signal the uneasy co-existence of the fictional and real in his life that would eventually lead him to cease making films.

Kieślowski may have been dissatisfied with *The Double Life of Véronique*, judging that he had only achieved one-third of what he intended – admittedly, the director who rarely claimed to like any of his own work also thought this small proportion to be satisfactory²⁰ – and being deeply depressed at the time of its release.²¹ Nevertheless, the film enjoyed considerable success throughout the world, garnering several of the main awards at the Cannes film festival in 1991 while, its arthouse label notwithstanding, also being sold to over thirty countries and attracting almost two million viewers in America and Europe alone by the end of 1992 and as many dollars in profit worldwide.²² The critical reaction in Poland ranged from the unenthusiastic to the generally positive, if far from effusive, in tone, although even several critics from the latter category shared

²⁰ Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 191.

²¹ Marin Karmitz, the producer of the *Three Colours* trilogy, interviewed in Noël Herpe (int.), 'Rozmowa z Marinem Karmitzem o spotkaniach z Kieślowskim' in Stanisław Zawisliński (ed.), *Kieślowski znany i nieznan* (Exhibition catalogue), Warsaw, 1998, p 74; & comments made by Agnieszka Holland, a longstanding friend and colleague of Kieślowski, in Stanisław Zawisliński (ed.), *Kieślowski*, 2nd ed., Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p 108.

²² For comprehensive details on prizes awarded to *The Double Life of Véronique*, see Coates (ed.), *Lucid Dreams*, p 186; despite the prizes, it is worth noting that Roman Polanski, one of the jurors at the 1991 Cannes Film Festival and a fellow-Pole, described the film as "boring, boring, boring" (Roman Polanski quoted in Derek Malcolm, 'You certainly can pan Cannes', *The Guardian* (FEA), London, 7-5-1992, p 23) For details of sales, see Stanisław Zawisliński, 'Kiszka krytyka', *Polityka*, Warsaw, no. 25, 20-6-1998, p.56. For details of viewing figures, see: comments made by Krzysztof Piesiewicz in Jerzy Pawlas (int.), 'Odciać ogon polityczny', *Życie Warszawy*, Warsaw, no. 268, 16/17-11-1991; Łukasz Wyrzykowski (int.), 'Dekalog Piesiewiczza', *Film*, Warsaw, no. 39, 27-9-1992, p.10; & Kieślowski's comments in Quentin Curtis (int.), 'Tell it like it is: Krzysztof Kieślowski', *The Independent on Sunday* (The Sunday Review), London, 3-10-1993, , p 20. For details of profits, see Zawisliński (int.), 'Jeżeli w życiu jest za łatwo, to może wcale nie jest dobrze...', p.104.

reservations with colleagues from the former about the metaphysics, beautiful trappings, and absence of public reality, reservations that anticipated the broader consensus about the *Three Colours* trilogy.²³ However, if the Western critics were considerably more appreciative and complimentary,²⁴ what united many British, French, and American reviewers with some of their Polish counterparts was their differentiation between the Polish and French sections of the film and, furthermore, their consistent preference for the former.²⁵ Notably, critics who were less acquainted with Kieślowski's earlier work were also those least concerned by either the French segment or the film's inner and metaphysical focus.²⁶ Ironically, although Kieślowski's move into the field of international productions coincided, appropriately, with his gaining of a new international audience for *The Double Life of Véronique*, it also resulted in the disapproval of his longstanding professional critics of all nationalities, who wanted their Kieślowski Polish and questioned how well he and Weronika travelled.

²³ For an unenthusiastic review see Robert Bugajczak, 'Profesjonalna mistyfikacja', *Miraż*, Warsaw, no. 1, 1-1992; and for a discussion of other unimpressed voices see Marzenna Wiśniewska, 'Krzysztof Kieślowski – od dokumentu do tajemnych znaków', *Polska Zbrojna*, Warsaw, no. 45, 5/7-3-1993. For examples of reviews with reservations, see: Lubelski, 'Podwójne życie Kieślowskiego', p.2 & pp.4-5; Tadeusz Sobolewski, 'Ostatnie słowo', *Kino*, Warsaw, 9-1991, p.9; & Anna Tatariewicz, 'Dlaczego Weronika umiera?', *Polityka*, Warsaw, no. 44, 2-11-1991. For examples of generally good reviews see: Andrzej Wielowycycki, 'Weronika-Veronique', *Życie Warszawy*, Warsaw, no. 28, 10-10-1991; & Stanisław Zawisliński, 'Poczułem się bogatszy...', *Miraż*, Warsaw, no. 1, 1-1992.

²⁴ For just a few examples of the very positive Western reviews see: Vincent Canby, 'Review/Film Festival; Identical women & multiple portents', *The New York Times* (Sec: C Weekend Desk), New York, 20-9-1991, p 18; Jonathan Romney, '*La Double Vie de Véronique/The Double Life of Véronique*', *Sight & Sound*, vol. 1, issue 11, 3-1992, pp 42-43; Derek Malcolm, 'Cinematic riches of Hollywood's poor rival', *The Guardian* (FEA), London, 16-5-1991, p 25; Sheila Johnston, 'Cannes Diary: Desperately seeking hype: Is there life after Madonna?', *The Independent* (Arts), London, 17-5-1991, p 19; Hugo Davenport, *The Daily Telegraph*, London, 27-2-1992, p 16; & Milena Michalski, '*The Double Life of Véronique*', *The Slavonic & East European Review*, vol. 72, no. 1, 1-1994, pp 191-192.

²⁵ For examples of reviews in which the Polish and French aspects of the film were distinguished between see: Lubelski, 'Podwójne życie Kieślowskiego', p.5, the summary of French reviews in René Prédal, 'Recepcja krytyczna filmów Kieślowskiego we Francji' trans. Maria Żurowska in Lubelski (ed), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, p 259ff.; Canby, 'Review/Film Festival; Identical women & multiple portents', p.18; Coates, 'Metaphysical Love in Two Films by Krzysztof Kieslowski', p 335, p 341 & p 342, & Malcolm, 'Cinematic riches of Hollywood's poor rival', p 25

²⁶ Judging by the dearth of references to the earlier Polish works, the following reviewers appear not to have been much, if at all, acquainted with Kieślowski's films prior to *The Double Life of Véronique*: Romney, '*La Double Vie de Véronique/The Double Life of Véronique*', pp.42-43; Michalski, '*The Double Life of Véronique*', pp.191-192; Mars-Jones, 'You only live twice: The Double Life of Veronique', p 18; & Anthony Lane, 'Unbearable lightness of desire', *The Independent on Sunday* (Arts), London, 1-3-1992, p.19.

Despite his growing audience and critical recognition throughout the world, Kieślowski remained as unwilling as ever to embrace the label of *auteur*. Collaboration remained a key tenet for the man who described himself as a worker on, rather than owner of, *The Double Life of Véronique*.²⁷ In addition to writing the screenplay with Krzysztof Piesiewicz, the director continued to work closely with Zbigniew Preisner, trusting the composer with an extraordinary freedom and input as Preisner readily acknowledged,²⁸ and re-employed his cinematographer of old, Sławomir Idziak, who now, as before in *A Short Film About Killing* and *The Decalogue: 5*, used coloured filters to such notable effect. Kieślowski and Piesiewicz also continued to invite their audience into a dialogue. The so-called 'Director's Cuts' preferred by many notable directors decrease the potential viewers have for individual interpretations with their insistence upon a holy trinity of *auteur*-ship, authority, and originality, but with *The Double Life of Véronique* Kieślowski rejects such an authoritarian stance implicitly, as his preference for multiple versions of the film without any one being superior to another shows, and explicitly, as seen in his remarks concerning the alternative ending:

Of course I thought about the audience all the time when making *Véronique* so that I even made a different ending for the Americans, because I thought you have to meet them halfway, even if it means renouncing your own point of view.²⁹

In this context, the central themes of doubling and multiplicity in *The Double Life of Véronique* that take various forms including the two-in-one heroine, the puppet-show-within-a-puppet-show, the preponderance of mirroring and glass objects, and the interplay

²⁷ See above.

²⁸ See Preisner interviewed in Geoffrey Macnab & Chris Darke (int.), 'Working with Kieślowski', *Sight & Sound*, vol. 6, issue 5, 5-1996, p 20; Katarzyna T. Nowak (int.), 'Sukces jest sprawą prywatną', *Gazeta Krakowska*, Cracow, no. 69, 21/22-3-1992, & Richard Williams (int.), 'The music of friendship', *The Guardian* (G2T), London, 9-10-1998, pp 22-23.

²⁹ Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 189.

of reality and fantasy, belie their appearance of post-modern trickery.³⁰ Rather, they signify Kieślowski's readiness both to embrace all possibilities and allow his audience the opportunity to do the same.

* * *

³⁰ Piesiewicz is particularly vehement in his denial of post-modernism, stating that '[n]ajbardziej paranoiczne określenie, jakie przeczytałem na temat naszych filmów, to było przypisanie ich do postmodernizmu' ('[t]he most paranoid description I have read of our films was the attribution of postmodernism to them'); Krzysztof Piesiewicz, 'Skupienie i przenikliwość' in Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, p 202.

LA DOUBLE VIE DE VÉRONIQUE *PODWÓJNE ŻYCIE WERONIKI**(THE DOUBLE LIFE OF VÉRONIQUE, 1991)*

The paradox of the singular being located in the universal, which Kiesłowski had been seeking to explicate and exploit since the 1980s, is embodied in the two female protagonists of *The Double Life of Véronique*, Weronika and Véronique, who are at once the same and yet quite distinct. Mirrors, which provide the observer with a self-image both exact and reversed, appear in various guises throughout the film as symbols of the simultaneous similarity and dissimilarity of the two young women and function in a double capacity as metaphors for the protagonists' different ways of relating to the world. The repeated mirror-images of Weronika reflect her solipsism – her reflection in the window of the tram on which she stands completely wrapped up in her singing and herself, pithily illustrates her utter dislocation from her lover Antek and the world – but the sole instance of Véronique's being reflected in a bookshop window behind which lie the books of her prospective lover, Alexandre, reveals her willingness to see beyond herself to another.³¹ Similarly, the puppet-imagery surrounding Véronique – she looks especially like a marionette when woken up by Alexandre's telephone call, a motif continued in the long-distance string-pulling by mail and illustrated again by the puppet-like image her shadow makes on the wall outside Alexandre's office just before she enters it and discovers the actual dolls he has made of her – speaks of her desire to place herself in the hands of another. Other visual conceits continue the motif of recognising and experiencing alternative perspectives: just as the yellow filter alters the audience's observation of the world inhabited by the two heroines, so too do Weronika and

³¹ Paul Coates suggests Véronique's reflection in the bookshop window indicates her yearning for her other half, as described by Plato in *The Symposium*, as a lover, Coates, 'Metaphysical Love in Two Films by Krzysztof Kiesłowski', p.342.

Véronique look through a variety of glass objects to gain a new vision. Seeing through glass alters perception, distorting in the case of the train window, enlarging as in the case of Véronique's magnifying glass and inverting as does the small ball owned by each girl. Glass always marks the gateway to a different reality and the potential of an alternative realm of existence: if Weronika looks up through her transparent coffin-lid at the earthly existence she has left behind, then Véronique standing by the glass doors marking the threshold of the station-café is like Alice, about to step through the looking-glass and in this case enter the new personal world of her lover. Needless to say, it is also a glass café-window that barely separates her and Alexandre's self-created personal sphere from the outside public spectacle of the bombed Sawad Air offices.

The glass signifying the potential connecting point between different worlds in *The Double Life of Véronique* is also found in the lens separating off that which takes place in front of the camera from that behind, which points to the metaphorical crossover between the on-screen manipulator, Alexandre, and his off-screen counterpart, Kieślowski. If the two share a predilection for the stage-management and utilisation of Véronique for their own purposes, the revelation of Alexandre's self-seeking motivations where Véronique's inner life is concerned reflects uncomfortably back upon the director. Certainly, Kieślowski's explanation that Véronique eventually leaves Alexandre because he took what was personal to her and made it public is suggestive of the director's self-reproach at having exploited the lives and dramas of his real-life protagonists in his documentaries.³² Nevertheless, although Alexandre and Kieślowski to a lesser extent lack quite the benevolent and loving gaze of Tomek in *Krótki film o miłości* (*A Short Film about Love*, 1988) and *The Decalogue: 6*, another voyeur seeking control over a woman, like he they are a necessary force, without which the audience would have never been

³² Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, p 182.

aware of the potential mystery of Weronika and Véronique. Alexandre, like his creator, may be a manipulator but he is also the impetus needed by Véronique to find herself, not only manoeuvring her from afar with his enigmatic packages but causing her to see when things are amiss – it is he who warns her when she absent-mindedly lights a cigarette from the wrong end – and later spotting the crucial photograph of Weronika that has hitherto gone unnoticed by its owner. Voyeurism and manipulation by a higher power may eventually be shown to be abusive of an individual's right to privacy and an inner life but nevertheless, without Kieślowski and his fictional surrogate there would be no narrative and no film.

If Alexandre acts as a double for Kieślowski, Véronique becomes the stand-in for the audience: with glass also being the medium through which the cinema-projectionist relays *The Double Life of Véronique* to the audience, the film becomes the other world on offer to the viewer, who watches and vicariously experiences an alternative life and reality. Although the audience possesses more knowledge than Weronika, knowing from the outset that she has a French counterpart, in the case of Véronique, whose experiences occupy the greater part of the film, the viewer knows no more about the conclusion of the mysterious affair with Alexandre than she does herself, and in searching for an answer to her romance, which is both love-affair and quest, she becomes the double of the audience also keenly awaiting the conclusion of the mystery. It is precisely because the positions of audience and Véronique are so alike, both experiencing the narrative in the present tense and never being sure of what might happen next, that Alexandre's revelation about his forthcoming story about two twinned girls entitled 'La double vie de...' ('The double life of...'), a grotesque repetition of his earlier confession of having led Véronique on for the purpose of a novel but more importantly a barely-veiled revelation of Kieślowski's own string-pulling, devastates her and the viewer in equal measure. Like Véronique the

audience has been similarly enraptured, similarly unaware of the plot unfolding about it, similarly tricked, and finally similarly upset by an explanation that is so crass and so trite. If Véronique's final unspoken thought of Alexandre is 'how could he do this to me?', then so too is it the audience's with regard to Kieślowski's manipulation of it.

Having pulled the wool from the eyes of the viewer as regards the art and artifice underlying *The Double Life of Véronique*, Kieślowski allows himself another playful joke at the end, opening the credits with an acknowledgement that the puppets were manipulated by Bruno Schwarz, a statement which although doubtless a genuinely heartfelt tribute to a man whose skill he admired, in no way obscures the fact that all the manipulation – of characters and audience alike – is attributable to the hands of the authors. Kieślowski was similarly disingenuous, and perhaps defensive even, off-screen, insisting that it was not he or Piesiewicz or even some mysterious other presence but love alone that is pulling Véronique's strings.³³ As such, had Alexandre realised when playing at God that He is love, not art, the ending could well have been very different. Nevertheless, with Alexandre exemplifying the conflict between love and art and his punishment for choosing the latter being to lose the girl, his dilemma is also that faced by the other puppeteer, Kieślowski, whose welding once again of a highly formal structure to issues of emotional and spiritual values challenges his audience to decide whether the method aids and elucidates, or simply turns his film into an elaborate, clever, and ultimately hollow game. And yet, judging by the largely radiant reviews, the critics' preference for the Polish section above the French aside, the audiences who returned repeatedly for further viewings – how else does one explain the astonishing fifty-six week run in a London cinema?³⁴ – and the young French girl who thanked Kieślowski for

³³ Tadeusz Sobolewski (int.), 'Niecierpliwość wyższego rzędu', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Warsaw, no. 236, 9-10-1991.

³⁴ The film ran for fifty-six weeks at the MGM Swiss Centre; Curtis (int.), 'Tell it like it is: Krzysztof Kieślowski', p 20.

making a film that proved to her the soul really exists,³⁵ the director convinces his audience of his sincerity. What sticks in the mind of most viewers is the mystery woven around Véronique's quest rather than the disillusioning revelation, the potential love affair rather than the actual outcome, and Véronique's ultimately successful journey towards finding herself rather than her disappointment in not finding a perfect partner in Alexandre. Despite choosing love Véronique has art thrust upon her, as indeed does the viewer, but what is truly remarkable is that, for all the ultimate blatancy of the artifice at play in the film, one never senses that Kieślowski has lost sight of his own humanity, which is to say, love for his protagonists and audience alike, and his admiring comments about Bruno Schwarz's puppetry apply equally well to himself: '...after a second or two, you forget that those hands exist, because the doll lives its own life, even though you can see his enormous paws all the time'.³⁶ It is the scenes in which Weronika runs clumsily through a puddle or smiles blissfully as dust motes surrounds her head, when Véronique cold-shoulders a fellow teacher and probable ex-lover as she hurries along a school-corridor or falls over in the road in her distress to get away from Alexandre that truly bring the heroine(s) to life, for they demonstrate an outstanding and awesome attention to the emotional and psychological detail of the inner life that shows Weronika and Véronique are no mere dolls to Kieślowski but authentic fully-faceted protagonists in whom he has invested immense time and feeling.

That Kieślowski succeeds in so risky a game is perhaps also because in revealing the strings pulled by Alexandre and himself he simultaneously cuts them, allowing Véronique at last to find and become herself. Her walking away from Alexandre coincides with the turning away of the camera from her not because her story has finished

³⁵ Stok (ed), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, pp 210-211.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.181.

but rather because her existence as a self-aware individual makes her independent of outside influences, so that her continuing narrative will now be hers and hers alone to dictate. The viewer who has possessed more knowledge than Weronika and later been equivalent to Véronique, is ultimately left behind, for the end of the film is not her end – indeed, her new-born life is about to start – but rather the conclusion of the audience’s participation in it; the rolling of the final credits does not cut Véronique off from the audience but rather the audience, who will be given no more indication as to how she develops, from her. Nevertheless, the ending of *The Double Life of Véronique* is one final dual masterstroke for it not only leaves Véronique on the brink of a future that she is at complete liberty to decide but, in taking her away from the viewers at this crucial moment, also provides the audience with both the incentive and freedom to speculate as to how her life will unfold.

* * *

Having ventured into filming outside of Poland with *The Double Life of Véronique*, Kieślowski made what was his most successful film to date. Notwithstanding a narrative that centres on the inner life of emotions and intuitions of its main female protagonists and forgoes the concern with the public world that dominates in earlier productions, the film was a hit with the critics and public alike. Nevertheless, although Kieślowski also achieved the personal success of realising his dream to film the inner life, the film reveals that the influence of the public world had waned but certainly not disappeared from his work, whilst his comments about it show that his ability to create beautiful fictions on screen was countered by an unsettling determination to remain grounded in reality off-screen. These tensions would continue into his final work, the

Three Colours trilogy, which again focuses intensely upon the inner lives of its protagonists and yet implicitly questions the appropriateness of either the camera or the individuals being so inwardly-turned. Likewise, Kiesłowski's presentation once more of emotional and spiritual issues via a formal structure and self-referential narrative would again raise the controversy of whether art aids or impairs the revelation of truth, and the ending of the trilogy would leave the critics and viewers with the considerable task of deciding whether Kiesłowski loved his characters, mocked the intelligence of his viewers, or was managing to do both concurrently.

CHAPTER 7

The Final Films 1993-1994

Having filmed outside of Poland for the first time at the outset of the 1990s and garnered both critical and financial success with the resulting film, *La Double Vie de Véronique* *Podwójne życie Weroniki* (*The Double Life of Véronique*, 1991), Kieślowski began work upon a project that once again was an international co-production and utilised non-Polish as well as Polish locations. Shot at a remarkable pace between September 1992 and May 1993, the *Trois Couleurs* (*Three Colours*, 1993-1994) trilogy, like the earlier *Dekalog* (*The Decalogue*, 1988), was inspired by a set of widely-recognisable and established precepts, in this case the French *tricolore* and its associated concepts of liberty, equality, and fraternity. These ideals had been instituted some two centuries earlier with a definite view to the public world, being the bases of the egalitarian society that was one of the ostensible aims of the French Revolution, and appropriately, it was when watching another monumental upheaval to the socio-political European order, this time the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, that Krzysztof Piesiewicz had the idea of making films centred around this set of principles.¹ However, Kieślowski maintained, as he been doing since the 1980s, that his interest lay in the personal and private spheres:

It was Piesio's [Piesiewicz's] idea that having tried to film the *Decalogue*, why shouldn't we try liberty, equality and fraternity...on a very human, intimate and personal plane and not a philosophical let alone a political or social one.²

¹ Jacek Wróblewski (int.), 'Lwie pazury', *Trybuna*, Warsaw, no. 237, 9/10-10-1993; & Piesiewicz interviewed by the author, Appendix, p 302 & p.315.

² Danusia Stok (ed.), *Kieślowski on Kieślowski*, London: Faber, 1993, p.212.

Nevertheless, just as the apparent absoluteness of the retreat from the public to the inner world in *The Double Life of Véronique* is in fact more complicated and ambivalent than Kiesłowski was prepared to admit, problematic too is the director's ready dismissal of the socio-political connotations of the precepts underpinning his trilogy. If, as the director asserted, the three colours, and by implication their related concepts, are mere pretexts,³ why not follow the example of Eric Rohmer's *Six Conte moraux* (*Six Tales of Morality*, 1962-1972) or the near-contemporaneous *Contes des quatre saisons* (*Tales of Four Seasons*, 1990-1998), and employ a thematic motif or structure with no social or political overtones upon which to base the trilogy? Defining the series with a pithy and catchy rubric may be an advantageous marketing ploy pleasing to producers and viewers alike, but there is no reason to assume that either producers or viewers would be any more attracted by a trilogy examining liberty, equality, and fraternity than by a series exploring, say, faith, hope, and charity or, for that matter, the notions of heaven, hell, and purgatory that constitute the schema for Kiesłowski's final unrealised project.⁴ Moreover, having adopted themes with obvious socio-political meanings, Kiesłowski consciously further extends his focus in the direction of the public world by situating his narratives within specific geographical settings of which the contemporary social and political conditions figure significantly in the films. The move towards European unification that forms the backdrop to *Trois Couleurs: Bleu* (*Three Colours: Blue*, 1993) parallels the gradual reintegration of Julie, the bereaved main protagonist, into society.⁵ Equally, the concluding 'Hymn to Love' composed to celebrate Europe's integration is as much a

³ Janusz Michalczak (int.), 'Každy z nas „kombinuje” podobnie', *Dziennik Bałtycki*, Gdansk, no 246, 22-10-1993; & Tony Rayns, 'Glowing in the dark', *Sight & Sound*, vol 4, issue 6, 6-1994, p 9.

⁴ See chapter 8 for details on *Raj, Piekło, Czysciąc* (*Heaven, Hell, Purgatory*, 2002 – date unconfirmed).

⁵ Nick James extends the parallels between Julie's actions and broader European society, suggesting that '[o]n an allegorical level [the film] could also be about Europe's futile attempt to wipe the memory of its fractious history – otherwise why the trilogy?'; Nick James, 'Kind of 'Blue'', *Sight & Sound*, vol 12, issue 4, 4-2002, p.36.

comment on the need for Europeans to extend amity to one another across state-borders as it is an illustration of Julie's recognition that she must re-establish personal relationships, as the repeated inclination of Kieślowski to concentrate on the application, however ironic, of the concerto to Europe's anticipated political union rather than the emotional progress made by his fictional character, indicates.⁶ Likewise, the director acknowledged that *Trois Couleurs: Blanc* (*Three Colours: White*, 1993) depicts life in a particular social and historical milieu at a given time.⁷ Indeed, the distinctive social and economic climate of post-communist Poland is crucial to the narrative and the development of Karol, the hero, suggesting why he might feel inadequate in the West but also explaining how he amasses a fortune back on Polish soil with such speed, an achievement almost impossible in most capitalist economies unless involving manifestly criminal activities but conceivable under the unusual circumstances existing in contemporary Poland. The public world of social, political, and economic affairs is least conspicuous in *Trois Couleurs: Rouge* (*Three Colours: Red*, 1994), but nevertheless Kieślowski's descriptions of contemporary Switzerland as a country of wealthy yet lonely inhabitants indicate its relevance and resonance, albeit ironic, as the location for a film about fraternity.⁸ Kieślowski may have rejected the association of the *Three Colours* trilogy with political and social matters but his filmic engagement with these aspects of

⁶ Stanisław Zawiśliński (int.), 'Jeden na jednego' in Stanisław Zawiśliński *et al*, *Kieślowski bez końca*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1994, p 36; & Paul Coates (int.), "The inner life is the only thing that interest me": a conversation with Krzysztof Kieślowski' in Paul Coates (ed), *Lucid Dreams: The Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski*, Wiltshire Flicks Books, 1999, p 173-174. See also comments made by Kieślowski and Zbigniew Preisner in: Wróblewski (int.), 'Lwie pazury'; & Preisner interviewed in Piotr Mucharski (int.), 'Do źródeł, pod prąd', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Cracow, no. 22, 2-6-1996, p 1.

⁷ Eileen Anipare (dir), *A Short Film about 'Decalogue'*. *An interview with Krzysztof Kieślowski*, London, Copyright: Black & White Productions, 1995 (p 3 in transcript of filmed interview) Kieślowski argues that *Three Colours: White* is unique amongst the trilogy in its documentation of life at a given time and in a particular place, although by commenting in other interviews about the relevance of the unification of Europe to *Three Colours: Blue* (see above) and the appropriateness of Switzerland as a setting for *Trois Couleurs: Rouge* (*Three Colours: Red*, 1994) (see below) he contradicts himself

⁸ Adam Horoszczak (int.), 'Najważniejsza jest miłość...', *Dziennik Zachodni*, Katowice, no. 110, 8-6-1994; & Ken Shulman (int.), 'Pytania bez odpowiedzi', *Nowa Trybuna Opolska*, Opole, no. 113, 17-5-1995 (trans. J from *Newsweek*).

the public world to an extent that is noticeable and significant once again contests his longstanding claim to be concentrating solely on the inner world.

The ambivalence Kiesłowski exhibits with regard to his portrayal of the public world in the *Three Colours* trilogy is just one of the many ambiguities and tensions apparent in this series. The intense focus upon the most intimate aspects of the main protagonists' lives in all three films results in what are perhaps the most successful illustrations, *The Double Life of Véronique* aside, of the concentration upon the inner world espoused by the director since the 1980s, and yet Kiesłowski's and Piesiewicz's examinations of the inner realm suggest ultimately that life must embrace more than this. Although *The Double Life of Véronique* is at once a study in solipsism and a warning against it, the *Three Colours* trilogy, the first and third parts especially, is very much in the latter vein. *Three Colours: Blue*, which concludes on the note of Julie's eventual acceptance of an existence that includes the personal and possibly public worlds as well as the inner life, finds its counterpart in *Three Colours: White*, in which Karol realises that a flourishing public life is but an empty shell without personal happiness and inner contentment. *Three Colours: Red* in turn recapitulates the arguments of the two preceding films in the form of the opposition and gradual reconciliation of Joseph, the former judge, isolated and turned in on himself as a consequence of his misanthropic and cynical view of humanity, and Valentine, the young model over-eager to embrace the world without a forethought. Kiesłowski's final films do not constitute a simple or even simplistic celebration of the inner life, as his and Krzysztof Piesiewicz's continuous emphasis upon this aspect of their work might suggest.⁹ Rather, the films individually show the public, personal, and inner realms from different angles in order to point out the

⁹ For Piesiewicz's remarks about his and Kiesłowski's mutual efforts to explore the most intimate of human experiences, see him interviewed in Barbara Hollender (int), 'Nie kreuje fantomów', *Rzeczpospolita*, Warsaw, no. 111, 14/15-5-1994, p 4; & his comments in Barbara Hollender, 'Zycie, czyli wszystko', *Rzeczpospolita* (TeleRzeczpospolita), Warsaw, no. 45, 27/11-3/12-1993, p.5.

inherent flaws and dangers of becoming too absorbed in any one, so that taken as a whole, the trilogy makes a case for the necessity of engaging with all these worlds in order to experience a fulfilled and meaningful life. Nevertheless, with each film ending upon the reconciliation of a couple – even in the case of *Three Colours: Red*, although the ostensible coming together is that of Valentine and Joseph, their amity anticipates her potential romance with Auguste, a trainee judge – it is the personal sphere that is posited as the most positive and necessary element in a contented existence. Although the *Three Colours* trilogy is concerned with the individual's ability to live with his or her self, that is, to find contentment in the inner sphere, ultimately and above all it stresses the importance of its protagonists learning to live with one another.

Nonetheless, although St Paul's declaration that love¹⁰ is the greatest of all human gifts (I Cor.13.13), forms not only the conclusion to both the Concerto for the Unification of Europe and *Three Colours: Blue*, but is indeed the tacit precept underpinning the entire trilogy,¹¹ Kieślowski is fully cognisant of the modern-day materialistic, shallow, and self-centred versions of love that so frequently overshadow and indeed play havoc with genuine, altruistic love. Although not so overtly downbeat as much of *The Decalogue*, in which Kieślowski comprehensively documents the all-too-often lapsed condition of the personal sphere and family relationships, each of the final three films contains profoundly isolated characters, uncharitable behaviour, broken families, faulty marriages or love affairs, and adultery. That love can fail is demonstrated unequivocally by the infidelity of Patrice, Julie's husband, in *Three Colours: Blue*, by the sexual liaison with which Dominique, Karol's ex-wife, taunts her former husband in *Three Colours: White*, and by Joseph's past betrayal by a lover in *Three Colours: Red*, which finds its updated

¹⁰ Alternatively 'charity', depending upon the translation

¹¹ Similarly, Kieślowski explicitly agreed in an interview that love is perhaps most important of all, Zawisliński (int), 'Jeden na jednego', p 32.

correlative in the doomed romance of Auguste and his girlfriend Karin. Conversely, the possibility of fulfilled love is indicated only tentatively by the eventual unions of Julie and fellow-composer Olivier, Karol and Dominique, and, in the most speculative instance of all, Valentine and Auguste; these couples may be shown together in the concluding scene of the trilogy, but given the earlier, more numerous examples of love's tribulations, it is unwise to assume that carefree and happy futures inevitably await them.¹² Moreover, the trilogy contains brutally graphic scenes of a sexual nature that shock visually, as with the depiction of Lucille, Julie's neighbour, massaging the groin of her co-worker in a sex-club and the splayed bodies of Karin and her new lover in bed, and aurally, as is the case with Dominique's orgasmic moans, courtesy of a lover, down the telephone to Karol. These incidents are all the more striking given the otherwise rarefied atmosphere of emotions and intuitions that dominates *Three Colours: Blue* and *Three Colours: Red* in particular, the physicality and carnality underlining St Paul's spiritual and high-minded love by means of ironic juxtaposition but also implicitly suggesting the rarity, if therefore value, of emotional and spiritual, as opposed to physical, love. Despite advocating the redemptive nature of love in his trilogy, Kiesłowski evidently remains sceptical as to its success. More intriguingly, it may also be that these explicit and even ugly scenes, so obtrusively at odds with the prevailing ambience of the films, are a sign of his scepticism about the virtues of his decade-long attempts to concentrate on the inner reality of moods and feelings at the expense of the social and material reality, with which he had been initially concerned as a filmmaker, and constitute a self-questioning of the philosophical, metaphysical leanings and beautiful, beautifying style that had so dominated his method of filmmaking since he moved his camera beyond Poland.

¹² Cf Milena Michalski, 'Trois Couleurs: Rouge', *The Slavonic & East European Review*, vol. 74, no. 1, 1-1996, p.192.

It may well be another sign of Kieślowski's dissatisfaction with these final works that, even though the films are clearly intended to be taken seriously and the audience meant to accept that the fundamental human predicaments illustrated are based in reality, reality as depicted in the trilogy, whether of the inner realm or otherwise, is at times implicitly called into question by the highly artificial methods used to construct it. Excellent though the acting of Juliette Binoche as the grief-stricken Julie is, images such as the extreme close-up of her eye when she lies in hospital after the crash or the black-outs she experiences sporadically, perhaps the most memorable and certainly most virtuoso manifestations of her innermost emotions, are the result of sheer camera trickery that grants the viewer greater access to Julie's state-of-mind allows than is humanly possible; such shots are undoubtedly extremely effective but they in no way correspond to the distinctly more limited vision of the human gaze. Of the three films *Three Colours: White* is the most rooted in a socio-economic reality and it is tempting to read into Kieślowski's return to Poland a concomitant return to his previous concern with public, social reality as did some critics.¹³ However, this should not blind the viewer to the fact that the film is a black comedy that takes full advantage of its generic prerogative to move the narrative along by use of fantastic and unrealistic situations such as Karol's incredible journey back to Warsaw in a suitcase, or Dominique's inexplicable arrest (viewers might be forgiven for assuming that Karol's woeful attempts at handling a comb and scissors are also part of the comic element and not intended to be taken as realistic, although the claim of Zbigniew Zamachowski, who plays Karol, to have attended a hairdressing course in

¹³ Derek Malcolm's comment that the film '...feels somehow truer, as if the director instinctively knows how his characters should react' suggests Kieślowski is returning to his earlier style of filmmaking; Derek Malcolm, 'Do the white thing', *The Guardian* (G2T), London, 9-6-1994, p.6. See also Bożena Janicka, 'Kamień czy szkiełko', *Kino*, Warsaw, 2-1994, p.9.

preparation for the film suggests otherwise¹⁴).¹⁵ *Three Colours: Red* also treads a hazardous path between artifice and reality not only with its insistence upon the mysterious recurrence through time of people and events – and inevitably, the more Kieślowski and Piesiewicz aim at showing the mysterious workings of fate, coincidence, and chance, the more their narratives are open to the criticism of being self-consciously contrived, even though Kieślowski maintained otherwise¹⁶ – but also with its pairing of a realistic Swiss setting, the intended credibility of which is explicitly underscored by the press notes that detailed the precise Geneva street locations at which each scene takes place,¹⁷ with characters who are highly symbolic and perhaps, as Kieślowski himself proposed, exist as real, living people no more on screen than they do off screen.¹⁸

Indeed, this final film demonstrates once again its writers' growing fascination with protagonists and scenarios more symbolic and idealistic than realistic, a fascination already evinced in *The Double Life of Véronique* and one that they seem least occupied with when returning to the old stamping ground of Poland. While the tempestuous marriage of Karol and Dominique in *Three Colours: White* is open to interpretations that draw upon the asymmetric relationship between East and West or, more specifically, between Poland and France, the protagonists' personal motivations and actions are

¹⁴ Zamachowski interviewed in Maria Oleksiewicz (int.), 'Gotów byłbym włamać się do szafy pancерnej aby wykraść kopię', *Three Colours: White* Press Release, Studio Filmowe „Tor” & MK2 Productions, p 8

¹⁵ For similar comments about the fantastic elements – notably, it is the Polish critics who observed them – in *Three Colours: White* see. Janicka, 'Kamień czy szkiełko?', p 9; & Barbara Hollender, 'Fryzjer i człowiek z tajemnicą', *Rzeczpospolita*, Warsaw, no 47, 25-2-1994.

¹⁶ Kieślowski said 'Sztuka dla sztuki, forma dla formy..w ogóle mnie nie interesowało' ('Art for art, form for form's sake..never interested me'), Kieślowski quoted in Stanisław Zawislinski (ed), *Kieślowski znany i nieznan* (Exhibition catalogue), Warsaw, 1998, p 1. However, see below for opposing critical reactions.

¹⁷ Janet Maslin, 'Critic's notebook; Even Cannes's fray can't chase away Hugh Grant's smile', *The New York Times* (Sec. C Cultural Desk), New York, 18-5-1994, p 17

¹⁸ Kieślowski questioned whether Joseph really exists – as the director points out, the only proof that he has not been imagined by Valentine comes from Joseph's appearance at the tribunal where other people are present – and mused upon whether he is a ghost or, even less tangibly, a manifestation of the possible old age awaiting Auguste; Slavoj Žižek, *The Fright of Real Tears: Krzysztof Kieślowski between Theory & Post-Theory*, London: British Film Institute, 2001, p.67 (Žižek citing interview in Vincent Amiel (ed), *Krzysztof Kieślowski. Textes réunis et présentés par Vincent Amiel*, Paris: Positif, 1997, p 147).

sufficiently convincing and their portrayal gritty enough to prevent the figurative subtext from overshadowing the narrative. However, the graver consequences of an over-employment of symbolism are apparent in the potential problems besetting the characters and narrative of *Three Colours: Red*. Valentine and Joseph have characteristics and relationships that humanise them and prevent them from being reduced to ciphers, but their symbolic properties – she is youth, optimism, and naïveté to his age, cynicism, and God-like authority – and the metaphorical signs surrounding them, such as the chewing-gum advertisement featuring Valentine that crumples as the ferry on which she is sailing to England sinks or the seven new-born puppies corresponding to the seven survivors of the aforementioned disaster, are so in evidence as to be a uneasy distraction from the characters' actual lives and tribulations.¹⁹ This symbolism adds a vital depth to the film's profound contemplation of life's mysteries, but its continual presence can cause what is a genuine and deeply-felt inquiry to veer dangerously towards what some view as empty philosophising.²⁰ The stylisation of character, figurative references, and elaborate camerawork, stemming from the concentration on inner reality and so distanced from the documentary approach which Kieślowski was still using in works as recent as *The Decalogue*, threaten to compromise the plausibility of the events taking place on screen for those viewers who expect a more accurate portrayal of outer reality. Worse still, in doing so they may consequently severely limit the viewer's ability, and perhaps willingness, to accept the emotional and metaphysical truths they are intended to illustrate.²¹

This move away from the earlier realistic style of filmmaking towards a more

¹⁹ One reviewer similarly comments of Joseph that '...his symbolic presence crushes his real self'; Simon Hattenstone (int.), 'Auteur of his own destruction', *The Guardian* (G2T), London, 8-11-1994, p 4

²⁰ See below for critical reactions of this kind.

²¹ Cf. Krzysztof Wolicki, 'Raz jeszcze o kolorach', *Dialog*, Warsaw, no. 4, 4-1995, pp.95-96; & Jonathan Romney, 'Appointment with destiny', *The Guardian* (G2T), London, 22-3-1996, p.5.

overtly symbolic narrative and ornate filmic style goes hand in hand with Kieślowski's most radical departure from his former approach of having "small" men as central characters. Karol is the only such main protagonist in the trilogy, – and this label must be applied even to him with some caution²² – a decidedly ordinary man who is neither beautiful nor beautified like his female counterparts, even if Kieślowski and Piesiewicz alike denied their beautifying the actresses playing these roles and insisted upon their being normal.²³ Accordingly, the co-writers find comedy in the modest figure and unhappy experiences of Karol – needless to say, he is one of three weak and humiliated men found in the trilogy, the other two being Olivier and Auguste, whose characterisation harks back to that of males in earlier Kieślowski films – but not in those of Julie or Valentine. They, women, non-Poles, and thus it seems inevitably attractive and self-possessed, neither could be nor are visualised on rubbish-heaps, and although both women suffer humiliations they never do so as tangibly, crudely, nor as explicitly as does Karol.²⁴ Likewise, Karol is also the only leading character whose problems in the personal and inner spheres are directly related to his dismal socio-economic circumstances: Julie is wealthy and Valentine too appears to be financially independent judging by her lifestyle of leisure and few professional obligations. The fact that it is the Polish male who is lacking in attractiveness, glamour, and affluence, who, quite simply, is ordinary, suggests again that Kieślowski's sensibility differs considerably according to

²² See below for the analysis of *Three Colours: White*

²³ Speaking about *The Double Life of Veronique* and the *Three Colours* trilogy, Piesiewicz said 'Naszymi bohaterami są dziewczyny, które można spotkać na ulicy, które bywają zmęczone, mają zmarszczki po nieprzespanej nocy' ('Our heroines are girls whom you can meet on the street, who are tired, have bags under their eyes after a sleepless night. '); Ewelina Puczek (int), 'Może coś się stanie ..', *Dziennik Zachodni*, no. 56, 19-3-1996, p. 11. See also Kieślowski's comments about Irene Jacob in: Ewa Koszur (int), 'Wolność artysty', *Głos Szczeciński*, Szczecin, no. 235, 19-10-1991, & Gilles Anquetil (int), 'Metafizyczny kryminał Kieślowskiego', *Forum*, Warsaw, no. 56, 8-9-1991, (trans. from *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 9-5-1991).

²⁴ Cf. Jonathan Romney's comment on Kieślowski's reliance upon the women's glamour and beauty, Jonathan Romney, *Three Colours: Red (Trois Couleurs: Rouge)* in Jonathan Romney, *Short Orders*, London: Serpent's Tail, 1997, p.136

whether his protagonists are Polish or non-Polish. That he should choose protagonists such as Julie and Valentine is understandable, given that he had already made so many films about “small” men whose dilemmas stem from their day-to-day social and pecuniary worries:²⁵ as the director pointed out, with both beautiful and ugly people suffering, what is key is to stand on the side of those who are unhappy.²⁶ However, it is also a decision fraught with problems. Heroines who experience emotional distress whilst living in what is largely a socio-economic vacuum can be difficult to empathise with as the vast majority of real people, including those who make up the audiences of these films, are affected in their suffering, for better or worse, by their obligations and responsibilities in the public world; ironically, Kiesłowski himself said when talking about *Three Colours: White* that ‘Ludzi, którzy nie mają trosk pieniężnych, na pewno spotyka się częściej w kinie niż w prawdziwym życiu’ (‘One undoubtedly comes across people who don’t have financial worries more frequently in the cinema than in real life’).²⁷ To ignore this is to create characters whose lack of financial and professional anxieties, coupled with their physical attractiveness, imparts them a glamour that will certainly attract many viewers – after all, Hollywood films abound with such protagonists – but may leave others uncomfortable at being unable to recognise themselves in the on-screen heroines, another irony as it was for this reason that Kiesłowski rejected “big heroes” at the outset of his career,²⁸ and consequently possibly feeling that the protagonists’ sorrows are difficult to take seriously or, worse still, appear self-indulgent. If some viewers believe, like the film critic Derek Malcolm, that *Three Colours: White*

²⁵ Janusz Wróblewski (int.), ‘Miłość ważniejsza jest od wolności’, *Życie Warszawy* (Kultura), Warsaw, 12/13-3-1994.

²⁶ Hanna Krall, ‘Jakiś czas’ in Stanisław Zawisliński (ed.), *O Kiesłowskim...refleksje, wspomnienia, opinie*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p.41.

²⁷ jm (int.), ‘Kiesłowski ma dosyć?’, *Forum*, Warsaw, no 10, 6-3-1994 (trans from *Der Spiegel*, 14-2-1994).

²⁸ Jerzy Pawlas (int), ‘Zająć się tym, co się dzieje wokół’, *Tygodnik Kulturalny*, Warsaw, no. 6, 10-2-1980. See also chapter 2.

‘..feels somehow truer..’, then this may be because its emotional veracity is matched by social verisimilitude, which is to say that both the outer and inner realities feel authentic.²⁹ There is a pleasing but more importantly convincing symbiosis between Karol’s public, personal, and inner lives, so that his social disenfranchisement in France promotes his personal distancing from Dominique, just as later his public success in Poland and high social status causes him to regain his inner confidence. *Three Colours: White* is certainly not concerned purely with social realism or a completely authentic depiction of public reality, as the comic and fantasy elements prove. However, these elements, which are necessary chiefly as a method of moving the plot along, never hinder the serious and utterly credible exploration of the connection between social inferiority and private feelings of insecurity, nor disrupt or distort the genuine and acute unhappiness shown to result from miscommunication, be it in the public or personal spheres, and emotional power games. The interplay between the public, personal, and inner worlds, as well as that between outer and inner reality, may mean that *Three Colours: White* lacks the emotional intensity of *Three Colours: Blue* and *Three Colours: Red* that results from their concentrated focus upon the inner life and reality, but it is the most balanced of the films.

Needless to say, similar criticisms and more were levied at Kieślowski upon the release of the trilogy not just by Polish reviewers, some of whom had long disparaged the director, but also by their European and American counterparts who had hitherto been full of praise for *The Decalogue* and *The Double Life of Véronique*. Accusations that the films, especially the first and third episodes, were artfully contrived and absurdly distanced from reality, beset with resplendent trappings and what one reviewer termed

²⁹ Malcolm, ‘Do the white thing’, p.6.

'designer angst'³⁰ rather than examinations of genuine suffering, hollow and pretentious, schmaltzy and kitsch in their sentiments, and simply lacking the effectiveness of Kieślowski's earlier films, were made by critics worldwide.³¹ It would be inaccurate to say that all of these reviews amounted to outright condemnation – in fact, some of these critics concurrently expressed admiration for other aspects of the films – but even at their least negative they demonstrate the reservations felt by many about the series. Kieślowski bore the criticism gracefully: asked if he would suggest that those disappointed with *Three Colours: Blue* wait for the rest of the trilogy, the endearingly modest director answered 'Absolutely no [sic]. I'd say, don't buy any more tickets'.³² Nevertheless, the trilogy also found its advocates who admired its elegance, emotional

³⁰ Philip French, 'Red's mixed palette', *The Observer* (Rev), London, 13-11-1994, p.9.

³¹ For such reactions to the trilogy as a whole see: Mateusz Werner, 'Kolorowa pustka', *Film*, 8-1994, pp.72-73; Ryszard Legutko, 'Dziwaczny Kieślowski', *Czas Krakowski*, Cracow, no. 197, 26/27-8-1995; Anna Tatariewicz, 'Pobratąć się z Walentynką', *Wiadomości Kulturalne*, Warsaw, no. 7, 10-7-1994; Wolicki, 'Raz jeszcze o kolorach', pp.91-96; David Thomson, 'Renoir, of course', *The Independent on Sunday* (The Sunday Review), London, 28-8-1993, p.16, & Philip French, 'Review of 1994', *The Observer* (Rev), London, 18-12-1994, p.5.

For *Three Colours: Blue* see: Jacek Cieślak, 'W stylu rokoko', *Rzeczpospolita*, Warsaw, no. 234, 6-10-1993; Tomasz Wiścicki, 'Pusto w środku', *Więź*, Warsaw, no. 3, 3-1994, pp.161-162; the summary of French reviews in René Prédal, 'Recepcja krytyczna filmów Kieślowskiego we Francji' trans. Maria Żurowska in Tadeusz Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, Cracow: Universitas, 1997, pp.259ff.; Milena Michalski, 'Three Colours: Bleu', *The Slavonic & East European Review*, vol. 72, no. 4, Oct 1994, p.791; Vincent Canby, 'Review/Film Festival: Life at a new tempo, in Kieślowski's 'Blue'', *The New York Times* (Sec: C Cultural Desk), New York, 12-10-1993, p.15, Caryn James, 'Review/Film: 'Blue' & 'White' as different as day & night', *The New York Times* (Sec. C Weekend Desk), New York, 10-6-1994, p.23, Geoffrey Macnab, 'Trois Couleurs. Bleu (Three Colours: Blue)', *Sight & Sound*, vol. 3, issue 11, 11-1993 pp.57-58; Adam Mars-Jones, 'Surviving the guillotine', *The Independent* (Film), London, 15-10-1993, p.26; Derek Malcolm, 'The perils of freedom', *The Guardian* (G2T), London, 14-10-1993, p.5; Geoff Brown, 'Blue with cold - & a Sun without heat', *The Times*, London, 14-10-1993; & Quentin Curtis, "'White': a paler shade of 'Blue'", *The Independent on Sunday* (The Critics), London, 12-6-1995, p.25.

For *Three Colours: White* see: the analysis of Polish reviews in Mirosław Przyłipiak, 'Monter i studentka', *Kino*, Warsaw, 3-1997, p.7, Tadeusz Sobolewski, 'Równanie w dół', *Kino*, Warsaw, 2-1994, p.11; the summary of French reviews in Prédal, 'Recepcja krytyczna filmów Kieślowskiego we Francji', p.260ff., Philip Strick, 'Trois Couleurs Blanc (Three Colours White)', *Sight & Sound*, vol. 4, issue 6, 6-1994, pp.63-64; Curtis, "'White': a paler shade of 'Blue'", & Sheila Johnston, 'White with a hint of grey', *The Independent* (Film), London, 10-6-1994, p.26.

For *Three Colours: Red* see: the summary of French reviews in Prédal, 'Recepcja krytyczna filmów Kieślowskiego we Francji', p.260ff.; Lisa Nesselson, 'Trois Couleurs: Bleu (Three Colours: Blue)', *Variety*, 20-9-1993; Derek Malcolm, 'Film of the week True Colours', *The Guardian* (G2T), London, 10-11-1994, p.12; French, 'Red's mixed palette', p.9; & Adam Mars-Jones, 'The judge, the dog & woman in Red', *The Independent* (Film), London, 10-11-1994, p.25

³² Kieślowski quoted in Jonathan Romney (int.), 'No end to the enigma', *The Guardian*, (G2T), London, 15-10-1993, p.6.

content, and intellectual stimulation,³³ and, notwithstanding the mixed reviews won many prizes and accolades, most notably major awards at the 1993 Venice International Film Festival and the 1994 Berlin Film Festival for *Three Colours: Blue* and *Three Colours: White* respectively, as well as three Academy Award nominations in 1995 for *Three Colours: Red*.³⁴ The films were also greatly successful with the cinema-going public throughout the world, being sold to almost fifty countries and seen by several million viewers.³⁵

Kieślowski remained as collaborative and generous as ever when making these final films. Krzysztof Piesiewicz believes he and the director attained their closest understanding to date when writing the trilogy,³⁶ and Zbigniew Preisner, Kieślowski's long-term composer, once again remarked upon the creative freedom granted him.³⁷

³³ For positive reactions to *Three Colours: Blue* see: Barbara Hollender, 'Gdybym miłości nie miał...', *Rzeczpospolita*, Warsaw, no. 234, 6-10-1993; Bożena Janicka, 'Wolność jakowie', *Kino*, Warsaw, 11-93, p 34; Tomasz Bieroń, 'Na skrót do Europy', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Cracow, no. 42, 17-10-1993; Anna Karoń-Ostrowska, 'Tajemnice niebieskich kryształków', *Więź*, Warsaw, no. 3, 3-1994, pp.163-166; Hugo Davenport, 'The Secret Garden bursts into life', *The Daily Telegraph*, London, 15-10-1993, p.18, & Sheila Johnston, 'That's why they call it the blues', *The Independent (Film)*, London, 10-9-1993, p.18.

For *Three Colours: White* see: James, 'Review/Film: 'Blue' & 'White' as different as night & day'; Lisa Nesselson, 'Trois Couleurs: Blanc (Three Colours: White)', *Variety*, 31-1-1994; Geoff Brown, 'White & black & funny all over', *The Times*, London, 9-6-1994; & Malcolm, 'Do the white thing', p 6.

For *Three Colours: Red* see: Tadeusz Lubelski, 'Szwajcarski zegarek z duszą', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Cracow, no. 23, 5-6-1994; Piotr Lis, 'Summa', *Kino*, Warsaw, 7/8-1994, pp 26-28; Maria Kornatowska, 'Kreacja w czerwieni', *Kino*, Warsaw, 7/8-1994, pp.28-29; Janet Maslin, 'Film Festival/Review: After 'Blue' & 'White', the rosiness of 'Red'' *The New York Times* (Sec: C Cultural Desk), New York, 4-10-1994, p.15; Lisa Nesselson, 'Trois Couleurs: Rouge (Three Colours: Red)', *Variety*, 23-5-1994; Philip Kemp, 'Trois Couleurs: Rouge (Three Colours: Red)', *Sight & Sound*, vol. 4, issue 11, 11-1994, pp.54-55; Geoff Brown, 'Kieślowski decants his finest colour', *The Times*, London, 19-5-1994; Sheila Johnston, 'Cannes Diary: Life & nothing but', *The Independent (Arts)*, London, 17-5-1994, p 22; Hugo Davenport, 'Swansong of a philosopher', *The Daily Telegraph*, London, 11-11-1994, p 24; Iain Johnstone, 'Polish polish', *The Times*, London, 13-11-1994, & Quentin Curtis, 'Goodbye & thank you', *The Independent on Sunday (Arts)*, London, 13-11-1994, p 26.

³⁴ For more comprehensive details on prizes awarded to the trilogy, see Coates (ed), *Lucid Dreams*, pp 186-187.

³⁵ For details of sales, see Stanisław Zawislinski, 'Kiszka krytyka', *Polityka*, Warsaw, no. 25, 20-6-1998 p 56 For details of viewing figures, see Piesiewicz interviewed in Aleksandra Kieślanczyk (int), 'Dotknięcie tajemnicy', *Przegląd Tygodniowy*, Warsaw, no. 45, 14-11-1993, pp 9-10, & B H 'Sukces kasowy „Białego”', *Rzeczpospolita*, Warsaw, no. 64, 17-3-1994. For details of profits, see T K., 'Nos Kieślowskiego', *Kurier Poranny*, Białystok, no. 91, 13/15-5-1994.

³⁶ Piesiewicz interviewed in Tadeusz Sobolewski (int.), 'Pogoń za motylem', *Kino*, Warsaw, 1-1992, p.12.

³⁷ Jadwiga Anna Łużyńska, 'Muzyczny aspekt twórczości Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego', *Ruch Muzyczny*, year XL, no. 4, 25-2-1996, p 9; & Preisner interviewed in Richard Williams (int), 'The music of friendship', *The Guardian (G2T)*, London, 9-10-1999, pp 22-23.

Agnieszka Holland and Edward Żebrowski, old friends of Kieślowski and filmmakers in their own right who reviewed the scripts, are listed in the film credits of *Three Colours: Blue* and *Three Colours: White* as 'screenplay consultants' as are the respective cinematographers, Sławomir Idziak and Edward Kłosiński, for their contribution to the realisation of each narrative. So willing was Kieślowski to listen to his colleagues and adopt their proposals that Marin Karmitz, the producer and also someone who suggested changes of which many were accepted, reported that the director took the opinion of every member of his crew.³⁸ Given Kieślowski's imminent resignation from filmmaking, the celebration and elevation of those artistic collaborators who usually remain unknown and unseen in *Three Colours: Blue* acts as the final, generous gesture of acknowledgement and thanks from the director to his many co-workers.

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³⁸ For Kieślowski's willingness to listen to others' suggestions, see Marin Karmitz, 'Głosa producenta' trans. Tadeusz Lubelski in Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, p.209. For an example of Kieślowski's readiness to listen to his producer see Stanisław Zawiśliński (ed.), *Kieślowski*, 2nd ed., Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, pp.78-79.

*TROIS COULEURS: BLEU**(THREE COLOURS: BLUE, 1993)*

The opposition between seclusion and intrusion, or alternatively the inner life versus the personal realm, underlies the *Three Colours* trilogy, the characterisation of Joseph and Valentine in *Three Colours: Red* as loner and intruder respectively being mirrored on a lesser scale in *Three Colours: White* in the relationship between the life-weary businessman Michał, who saves Karol from penury, and ambitious latter individual who rescues Michał from his private melancholy. However, it is never more strongly illustrated nor enforced by its main protagonists than in *Three Colours: Blue*. The bereaved Julie uses silence not only as a defensive barrier but also as a weapon against the outer world that dares intrude upon her solipsistic grief, whether freezing out the attempts at communication made by Olivier simply by wordlessly closing her eyes against him when in her hospital bed and later turning away when sitting on the stairs in her house, closing the door upon the unanswered question of a journalist, or smiling as she blankly refuses to answer her lawyer's queries about her financial arrangements.³⁹ Even at the moment of her most generous and self-renunciatory gesture, when she presents Sandrine, the pregnant former mistress of her dead husband, with the gift of her house for her unborn child, the chilly 'Ah oui?' ('Really?') and ensuing silence with which Julie greets Sandrine's remarks about having discussed her with Patrice underscores her devastating ability to cut others off even as it simultaneously prevents the scene from descending into trite sentimentality. In her capacity for such understandable ill-temper and unreceptive behaviour, which incidentally goes some way towards grounding her in reality, Julie is reminiscent of Urszula, the heroine of *Bez końca* (*No*

³⁹ Cf. Geoff Andrew, *The 'Three Colours' Trilogy*, London: British Film Institute, 1998, p 30.

End, 1984), similarly widowed and at odds with the world. The marked divergence between the earlier protagonist's suicide and Julie's ultimate reconciliation with the world ought not, however, to be misread as a softening in Kieślowski's and Piesiewicz's views on the difficulty of human existence. The message of *Three Colours: Blue* that rather than seeking a way out through death to a potentially more tolerable afterlife – note how quickly Julie dispenses with thoughts of suicide – one must learn to cope with life and people in this world, is demonstrated to be no less difficult and valid a truth than that espoused in *No End*, despite the later film's allowing potentially for a more conventional "happy ending".

What, then, makes the portrayal of Julie at once compelling and ambivalent is that in desiring utter privacy for so much of the film, she stands in opposition not only to those around her who would penetrate her solitary inner world and draw her back into the personal and public realms of relationships and human interaction, but indeed to the inward-looking tenor of the very film that charts her mental processes and emotional reactions. *Three Colours: Blue* is concerned above all with the depiction of the inner life, yet intriguingly, the film has a main protagonist who, even as her life is shown in such intimate detail, initially represents the opposite and no less legitimate viewpoint of those who resent intrusions upon their privacy. In the light of Julie's understandable antagonism towards the investigative journalist, her palpable distress when Lucille handles the blue lamp that is her one remaining memento of her daughter, Anna, and her interpretation of Olivier's frequenting of her local café as a form of spying, her aggressively self-protective stance may well leave some viewers questioning the legitimacy of their own unrestricted, intimate access to the innermost reaches of an individual's life. True, Julie is a fictional character, not a real-life person, and therefore the audience is under no obligation of responsibility to her as far as the issue of

voyeurism is concerned. Nonetheless, any viewer prepared to accept Julie's character and situation as valid to the extent of spending some two hours becoming engrossed in and emotionally involved even with her imagined condition and imagined behaviour must equally pay some attention to her concerns, albeit also imagined. Viewed from the standpoint of the distanced Julie, the shots of her bedclothes rising and falling with her breath or of her iris in close-up reflecting an approaching doctor are not so much triumphant examples of the camera's ability to penetrate human depths as they are obscenely invasive. Such scenes are pure paradox, provoking feelings comprised at once of deep admiration for Kieślowski's extraordinary ability to illustrate the inner life and uneasy discomfort at having eavesdropped upon another's privacy.

Kieślowski and Piesiewicz make evident their own reservations about the effects of modern-day visual media and its attendant technology upon human relations. Although a mini-television allows Julie to see the funeral of her husband and Anna, her daughter, how much this benefits her is dubious, it being arguable whether remotely viewing the burial of loved ones is more comforting than distressing. More tellingly, the shot of photographers not only crawling around the coffins of Anna and Patrice but moreover oblivious to them in their desire to seek out more atmospheric pictures of the mourners – unsurprisingly, notwithstanding their efforts, none of the shots of the funeral seen on the television compares with the emotional impact of Julie's reactions – reveals fully Kieślowski's mindfulness of the potential for insensitivity and sheer crassness in his profession. Far from the television bringing Julie closer to the funeral, the transmission underscores the emotional chasm separating her from those actually present at the service, her poignant stroking of the image of her daughter's coffin overwhelming the official testimony to Patrice's abilities as a musician and her private tears for the destruction of her family eclipsing the public-world pomp commemorating the loss of a national

composer. When the television signal eventually fails, causing the broadcast to be cut short, it is as much a merciful curtailing of a ceremony that bears little relation to Julie's personal suffering as it is an ironic comment on the flaws of technology. Later, when Julie visits her elderly and disorientated mother, the presence of a television in the background is again both a cause and symbol of the distancing between them, just as its mindless images of elderly people bungee-jumping comment on the mother's own mental reversion to childhood.

However, if Julie's desire for an inviolable inner sanctum dominates the earlier section of *Three Colours: Blue*, ultimately she learns the importance of humanity and community over solitude, and Kieślowski likewise demonstrates the benignity of his cinema both with regards to his heroine and his audience. Having reluctantly held out a hand to the distressed Lucille, who spots her father in the audience of the sex-club in which she is about to perform, Julie is rewarded for her brief gesture of solidarity, however undesired and begrudged by her, by seeing through chance a television programme in which Olivier discusses his intention to finish Patrice's Concerto for the Unification of Europe and thus triggering a chain of events which ultimately leads to her reconciliation with the world. As Julie re-establishes contact with Olivier, begins to track down Sandrine in order to offer her an inheritance for Patrice's unborn child, and works upon a musical composition of which the libretto advocates Christian love, her negative concept of *liberté* as 'freedom from' (from memories and property, from friends and family, and indeed from any meaningful human contact) is transformed into the positive 'freedom to' (to trust, to love, above all, to allow herself contact with the world). It is connecting with people that proves Julie's redemption, as the final sequence, in which various people with whom she has come into contact during the course of the film are depicted, illustrates. What matters is not that Julie has necessarily been a positive agent

of good in these people's lives – there is no evidence that she and Olivier will prove soul-mates as he evidently hopes, and it is impossible to gauge what effect she has had upon her mother, Antoine, the young boy who witnessed her car-crash, and Lucille – but simply that she has been, that she has somehow touched upon their lives.

The community of people touched by Julie also extends to the audience, and far from intrusion, it is inclusion that Kieślowski ultimately achieves with his penetrating camera. The penultimate scene, consisting of another extreme close-up of an open eye, presumably again of Julie, may be a near mirror-copy of the eye-shot that occurred early on in the film, but although both scenes reveal how exposed Julie is to the outside world, the marked difference between the import of each (the first reveals her initial hostility towards humanity, the second her ultimate acceptance of it) is verified by the words of St Paul sung over the latter: 'But the greatest of these three is love'. Although Julie's eye is even more open, more closely focused upon, and more vulnerable in appearance in the penultimate scene than in the early shot, it signifies not only her willingness to open her gaze to the world but also to be opened to the gaze of the world – and this includes the audience – upon her. Likewise, if the window-pane from behind which Julie weeps in the final scene reminds the audience of the camera-lens separating them from what has been transpiring on the screen for the past two hours, it is also a timely reminder of how that barrier has been overcome during the course of the film precisely by the intense, intimate, and involving nature of Kieślowski's cinema.

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TROIS COULEURS: BLANC
(*THREE COLORS: WHITE*, 1993)

Three Colours: Blue having depicted its heroine's attempts to decontextualise herself socially by withdrawing from the personal and public realms, the reverse perspective is taken in *Three Colours: White*, its main protagonist Karol taking the opposite approach to that of Julie in order to regain his self-confidence and sense of self. When abroad in France, Karol's lack of *égalité* with his wife and indeed all Francophones is shown by the losses that he suffers to his person, which are both physical, as with his vomiting and premature ejaculation, and mental, his revoked credit cards, discarded hairdressing diplomas, and, above all, absconding wife symbolising his divestment of the features with which he has hitherto defined his manhood and thus public and private roles. Once back on home territory in Poland, his accumulation of material possessions and reinvention of his public persona becomes his means of recovering his self-possession, as well as suggesting that his newfound status allows him now to feel more than equal to his former spouse. This reversal in *Three Colours: White* of the gender and state of affairs of the leading character in *Three Colour: Blue* is moreover complemented by a complete change in pitch, with the sorrow and introspection of the trilogy's first part giving way in the following instalment to a blackly comic tone. Indeed, if it is tempting to surmise that the authors have allowed themselves the crude joke of an impotent protagonist for whom the wad of money in his hip pocket fills the gap left by his diminished manhood, the film invites that kind of bawdily humorous approach. Careful though Karol's creators are to make him sympathetic, nonetheless Kieślowski and Piesiewicz show a certain glee in humiliating their hero at every turn, saddling him with a

name (Karol Karol) and ungainly bearing that heighten his resemblance to a clown,⁴⁰ an unenviable career in hairdressing that is as ill-regarded a profession for a male in Poland as in the West, and repeatedly exposing his private affliction of sexual inadequacy in public, be it at court or by having him observe the silhouettes of Dominique and her latest lover in the presence of his new-found friend, Michał. One suspects Karol is forced to travel home bent double inside a suitcase and emerge onto a rubbish-tip not because an alternative is beyond the imaginations of Kieślowski and Piesiewicz, but because it becomes his status as a man reaching rock bottom and, more simply, adds to the laughs. Even when he eventually regains his composure and sense of self by becoming a high-flying businessman, the authors have one last joke at his expense by characterising him as one of Poland's *nouveaux riches*, all flashy, outsized suits and slicked-back hair. Nevertheless, for all the humour, the film is punctuated by telling moments of seriousness. If *Three Colours: Blue* has the audience intruding upon its heroine's inner life, in *Three Colours: White* the viewer is uncomfortably privy to Karol and Dominique's personal realm and made the undesirable, if unwitting, third party to a marriage already in a devastated state. Once again, Kieślowski forces the audience to question their right to observe such intimate matters.

A symbolic connotation of the defining colour of *Three Colours: White* generally overlooked is that of white as a *tabula rasa*, an allusion to the psychological rebirth of Karol and also Mikołaj, allowed a second chance after his friend intentionally reneges on his promise to kill him, as well as a broader reference to the national regeneration of Poland following the fall of communism at the end of the 1980s. The film's winter setting, also white, reinforces the theme with its suggestion that spring, with its

⁴⁰ The English equivalent would be Charles Charles, an intentional reference to Charlie Chaplin whom the writers admire. See. Claude-Marie Tremois & Vincent Remy (int.), 'Wąpie, zawsze wąpie...' trans. in *Gomec Pomorski*, Koszalin, no. 207, 22/24-10-1993; & Piesiewicz interviewed in Aleksandra Szariat (int.), 'Charlie Chaplin puszcza oko', *Sztandar Młodych*, Warsaw, no. 40, 25/27-2-1994.

concomitant associations of hope and fresh beginnings, awaits its protagonists, and Polish viewers might further speculate that this imagery deliberately replicates that found in Stanisław Wyspiański's *Wesele* (*The Wedding*, 1901), a famous and highly influential play in its homeland about the fight for national independence that hints at Poland's future emergence from its then winter of foreign occupation and eventual springtime rebirth.⁴¹ And yet, the brave new Poland envisaged by Kieślowski and Piesiewicz is one that comes with the ironic twist of lacking the innocence and virtue also generally associated with white. In the eyes of its authors, Poland is characterised by chicanery and theft, by black-market dealings in products and services ranging from currency exchange to contract killings to corpses, – and the three telephone lines in Karol's new offices could only have been acquired through illegal means, given the near-farcical difficulty in contemporary Poland of having a mere single line installed⁴² – and by people obsessed by money.⁴³ Equally, although Karol begins the film as one of Kieślowski's typical small men, his resurrection as a wealthy, cynical businessman marks him out from earlier protagonists precisely because he, unlike they, is successful. The similarity in appearance between Karol and earlier protagonists functions on a purely ironic level, for although he looks like them, the resemblance ends there. A modern-day scheming hero befitting a modern-day scheming Poland, he would most likely despise his filmic predecessors for their honesty and attendant failure in their struggles to thrive in the public world. Those who rejoice in Kieślowski's return to filming in Poland would do well to note how his

⁴¹ Kieślowski would not be the first Polish director to refer to *The Wedding*. Andrzej Wajda ends *Popiół i diament* (*Ashes and Diamonds*, 1958) on a somnambulist dance that intentionally echoes that found at the end of *The Wedding*, and went on to film Wyspiański's play in 1972.

⁴² It is tempting to view Karol's easy and abundant access to telephone lines as the director's in-joke about his own dismal experiences of Polish telecommunications. Having discovered in 1991 that the four-month wait to have his telephone repaired was no shorter than the norm ten years earlier under communism, Kieślowski noted that none of the candidates standing for president that year promised to fix telephones more quickly and consequently concluded that 'Since they didn't, I didn't vote'; Sarah Gristwood (int.), 'The reluctant auteur', *The Guardian* (FEA), London, 17-5-1991, p.37.

⁴³ Geoff Andrew points out that every relationship in the film takes at least the partial form of an economic exchange; Andrew, *The 'Three Colours' Trilogy*, p.43.

perspective on it has changed by the time of this film, there being no place in the unscrupulous and self-serving society of *Three Colours: White* for the moral dilemmas and tragic heroes seen in the films of the 1970s and 1980s. The comic element prevents the highly critical observation of contemporary Poland from becoming too bitter or damning – indeed, the humour indicates a certain exasperated affection with which the authors are able to see their countrymen, warts and all – and viewed simply as a comedy, the film is certainly funny. Viewed, however, as a slice of Polish realism in the vein of Kieślowski's earlier works, *Three Colours: White* reads as though the director were both paving the way and highlighting the need for a new cinema of moral concern.

Several Polish reviewers warn against reading Karol's and Dominique's relationship in terms of a Polish-West complex, perhaps unsurprisingly given that such readings do little credit to their homeland,⁴⁴ after all, Tadeusz Sobolewski's contention that Karol's Polish homecoming on a rubbish-tip is immaterial, what with rubbish-tips existing the world over, ignores the fact that Kieślowski only ever filmed a Pole tumbling about in rubbish and never any non-Poles falling in non-Polish refuse.⁴⁵ A more interesting interpretation is that Kieślowski and Piesiewicz root the dilemma of Karol, torn between a certain innate romantic disposition rooted in Polish tradition and an opposing brutal entrepreneurship aping the spirit of Western capitalism in his quest to reclaim his wife and his sense of self, in that faced in the macrocosm by Polish society after the collapse of communism. Described by Piesiewicz as a typical modern-day Pole in whom Polish Romanticism lives on '...w formie tandetnego sentymentalizmu..' ('..in

⁴⁴ Janicka, 'Kamień czy szkiełko?', p 9; & Tadeusz Sobolewski, 'Tajemnica Kieślowskiego', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Warsaw, no. 47, 25-2-1994. Curiously, Sobolewski contradicts what he wrote in another article about *Three Colours: White* published in the same month, in which he does interpret the film in terms of a Polish-West complex, see Sobolewski, 'Równanie w dół', pp 10-11.

⁴⁵ Sobolewski, 'Tajemnica Kieślowskiego'.

the form of trashy sentimentalism..’),⁴⁶ Karol does indeed behave in his personal life as though there were some truth to the largely Romantically-based myth of a special Polish-French relationship that goes beyond a mere East-West rapport.⁴⁷ In fact, although he may adore Dominique as certain sections of Polish society do France, carrying about and kissing a bust which if not actually of Marianne certainly resembles that national emblem of France strongly enough to emphasise the broader symbolism underlying his wife’s character, her contemptuous responses reveal the more realistic face of Polish-French relations and thereby deconstruct yet another facet of Polish Romanticism. However, Kieślowski and Piesiewicz show the folly of an over-romantic sensibility to be equalled by that of turning capitalist, the preferred option for the many Poles who took their cue from America following 1989. Although publicly and materially fulfilling for Karol, an obsession with financial matters comes with its own in-built problems of emotional and spiritual emptiness, as Michał’s inability to take pleasure in life despite his professional success exemplifies. As employed by Kieślowski and Piesiewicz, Polish Romanticism and modern-day capitalism serve as one another’s foil, each highlighting the other’s shortcomings and inadequacies as a philosophy of life, and if the director’s earlier films warn against the former, *Three Colours: White* cautions in addition against a wholehearted embracing of the latter.

Nevertheless, the film ends as befits a comedy on a note of reconciliation. Having

⁴⁶ Krzysztof Piesiewicz, ‘Skupienie i przenikliwość’ in Lubelski (ed.), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, p 208. See also Piesiewicz interviewed by the author, Appendix, pp 306-307 & p 320.

⁴⁷ Although the supposed special Polish-French relationship has roots going back to the sixteenth century, it was born in the main of Napoleon’s promise to restore an independent Poland in the early nineteenth century – Napoleon also had a Polish mistress, Maria Walicka, a fact of which Poles are inordinately proud – and Polish mass emigration to France in the 1830s, with Paris becoming a stronghold of Polish cultural and political activity. More likely born of Poles’ one-sided longing for association with France rather than a genuine fraternity, nonetheless the French connection is so strong in the Polish collective consciousness, especially that of Poles in Warsaw and Eastern Poland, that to disregard it is to misjudge its enormous impact upon the national mentality. See Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland*, rev ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp 158-162, p.258, & p.344, & Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, 2nd ed., Berkeley & California: University of California Press, 1983, pp 197-198.

moved from privately feeling inferior to Dominique to publicly humiliating her, Karol ultimately finds equilibrium in the personal sphere. His and Dominique's equality lies in the mutual love to which both eventually admit after having attempted to overpower the other, and although the final scene is ambivalent about this equality – Karol's tears may reflect his empathetic suffering with his imprisoned wife, but there is a notable disparity between them in his having effected her imprisonment and change of heart – the reappearance of Karol and Dominique as a couple in the final moments of *Three Colours: Red* is more positive. Equally, coming after the seemingly insurmountable obstacles of language, sexual frustration, and physical distance, the final scene in which Dominique and Karol communicate simply but effectively through sign-language is an immensely compelling symbol of the potential for genuine dialogue between seemingly opposing parties. What it is also is a fitting illustration of Kieślowski's mastery of his craft, a perfect metaphor for his ability to communicate ideas to an audience through pure, wordless cinema.

* * *

TROIS COULEURS: ROUGE

(*THREE COLOURS: RED*, 1994)

Many commentators upon *Three Colours: Red* have noted the conscious reflexivity of the film upon its makers, Joseph Kern's manipulations and near God-like foreknowledge of the lives and fates of those around him being both a parallel of and commentary upon the omniscient control retained over their characters by Kieślowski and

Piesiewicz.⁴⁸ Although the writers openly signal the impact of art upon their characters' lives, whether as a metaphor for the workings of God, fate or even Joseph or that stemming from themselves as authors, what is less clear is how far they intend the tension between reality and artifice that exists in this film. Moments of highly stylised and active camerawork, including the opening telephone sequence, the accelerated panning back of the camera from Joseph, as he describes confessing his eavesdropping to the police, to a table on which lies a brick thrown through his window in retaliation, and the sudden swooping shot from the theatre balcony to the floor illustrating the fall of Joseph's law book many years earlier, draw attention to the fact that this is Art with a capitalised 'A'. Kiesłowski's handling of artifice with such dramatic camerawork is as justified as it is deliberate, for it both highlights and expresses the existence of an unseen, metaphysical reality, be it of the difficulty of communication, the drama surrounding Joseph's arrest, or the life-defining significance of a fallen book. Similarly dynamic and conscious photography is used to illustrate the souls of Antek and Weronika leaving their bodies in *No End* and *The Double Life of Véronique* respectively, but here the increasingly sophisticated camerawork captures even more abstract ideas and presentiments and testifies to the director's ingenuity. Nevertheless, the plot contains worrying anomalies and holes that leave the basic outer reality of what takes place in *Three Colours: Red* in what is probably more doubt than the authors intended. The most glaring problem lies in the characterisation of Valentine, whose social existence as model, ballet enthusiast, and student appears largely carefree and even glamorous and sits uneasily with the apparent misery of her personal life; it is not that unhappy models or students are unbelievable *per se* but that Valentine fails to be wholly persuasive as such. Equally niggling, if less

⁴⁸ Grażyna Stachówna, '„Trzy kolory” – wariacje na jeden temat' in Lubelski (ed), *Kino Krzysztofa Kiesłowskiego*, pp.101-102, Andrew, *The 'Three Colours' Trilogy*, pp.60-61; Curtis, 'Goodbye & thank you', p 26; & Paul Coates, 'Usuwanie się w cień: wcielenia Kiesłowskiego' trans. Magdalena Loska in Lubelski (ed), *Kino Krzysztofa Kiesłowskiego*, p.132

immediately prominent, are the questions of why the inhabitants of a land-locked country should go to the considerable trouble of travelling to England by ferry especially as cost can hardly be said to be an issue for either Valentine or Auguste, how Auguste is able to take his dog onboard the ferry without facing the usual complications involved in transporting pets across the United Kingdom border, and why a Swiss television report about the ferry disaster should list the English, French, and Polish survivors of the tragedy before finally mentioning the two Swiss nationals also rescued. The simple answer is that these inconsistencies are included for the purpose of plot necessity and, more importantly, dramatic effect. However, the problem with this dramatic effect, especially in the case of the final scene, is that in so palpably intending to move the viewer it may be successful, may even be ironic and self-conscious, but is also prey to being undermined by its own calculated emotional manipulation.

The chewing-gum advertisement featuring Valentine that is undoubtedly the key image of the film is too a source of conflicting messages, as though once again the writers' ostensible intentions were being undercut by the subtext of the film. Milena Michalski makes a significant if largely overlooked point that Kieślowski is playfully self-parodic in *Three Colours: Red* and that the shots of Marlboro cigarette packages acknowledge ‘..the emptiness of excessive stylishness’, but then how does this reflect back upon the advertisement in which Valentine appears?⁴⁹ Certainly, it is an undeniably potent image, a clever metaphysical double conceit – a play on the experiences of *déjà vu* and *après vu* in simultaneously looking back to Valentine's pose at the modelling session and presaging her countenance following the ferry accident, it is also a reworking of the ‘reality or representation?’ paradox of Magritte's pipe – and an effective metaphor for the

⁴⁹ Michalski, ‘*Trois Couleurs: Rouge*’, p.192. See also Kemp, ‘*Trois Couleurs: Rouge (Three Colours: Red)*’, p 55.

‘Fraîcheur de vivre’ (‘Freshness of life’) that Valentine represents for Joseph. And yet, Kieślowski and Piesiewicz choose to encapsulate a key tenet of the film’s philosophy in a chewing-gum advertisement, a trivial use of visual imagery aimed at selling a trivial product. That the advertisement appears to be for Hollywood Gum, the prevalent European brand, only makes the mockery and critique of the superficiality of images complete. So where does that leave Kieślowski the filmmaker? The picture of Valentine promoting gum-sales can be read as an acknowledgement of the potential for something as shallow as a poster-board to generate profundity and contemplation – and that is unquestionably the way in which it is primarily intended – but it also raises uncomfortable questions about the extent to which Kieślowski’s own employment of glossy and beautified images has been for the purpose of aiding the marketing potential of *Three Colours: Red*.⁵⁰

If Joseph is a self-portrait of Kieślowski as the arch-manipulator of people and events in the film, as noted above, the more unpleasant connotation of sitting in moral judgement is one that the director, together with his co-writer, also shares with his fictional counterpart, something which is all the more noticeable as it seems a misjudged reversal of his earlier stance of always taking the side of the accused.⁵¹ According to Kieślowski, it is because Valentine cares for Rita, Joseph’s dog, after knocking her over, because she has that ‘..odruch etyczny’ (‘..ethical reflex’), that she earns the chance to meet Joseph, who will change her life for the better.⁵² The unfortunate reverse implication of this, however, is that those too weak, too fearful, or perhaps too overcome

⁵⁰ Cf. Simon Hattenstone, who comments ‘At its worst, with designer locations married to Irene Jacob’s perfect face, Red looks like a Volkswagen commercial for the existential professional woman’; Hattenstone, ‘Auteur of his own destruction’, p 4.

⁵¹ See chapter 2.

⁵² Elżbieta Baniewicz (int.), ‘Pytania bez odpowiedzi’, *Rzeczpospolita*, Warsaw, no. 7, 18/19-2-1995, & Lothar Kampatzki & Andreas Voigt (dir.), *Kieślowski*, prod. ‘a jour’ Film in Auftrag des Bayerischen Rundfunks, 1995 (transcript also available in Piotr Łazarkiewicz, ‘Zapis I’, *Reżyser*, no. 65, 3-1997, p.1).

by other matters to take care of a run-down dog are somehow below consideration and undeserving of the chance of improvement. Indeed, where flawed minor characters do appear in *Three Colours: Red* – and it is they, not the idealised young Valentine, who are the genuine descendants of the similarly imperfect protagonists populating Kieślowski's earlier films – they are judged harshly by their creators and excluded from the *fraternité* that is the central theme of the film. When Joseph suggests to Valentine that her brother turned to drugs because he discovered his mother to be a whore, a description she does not explicitly accept but neither does she deny, there is something exaggerated, hysterical even, about the anti-maternalism on display, and it acts as an unpleasant reminder that the most sympathetic mother to feature in a film by Kieślowski, whether co-written or not with Piesiewicz, is Julie in *Three Colours: Blue*, who is promptly bereft of her daughter within a few minutes of the film's opening. Karin, the unfaithful girlfriend of Auguste, is likewise treated ruthlessly, her infidelity exposed in a brutal third-party point-of-view shot that regards the sexual act of her and her new lover as animalistic coupling rather than a loving embrace. Moreover, she is denied the opportunity of explaining to Auguste that she loves her new boyfriend, although the scene exists in the original screenplay,⁵³ leading to the further damning implication that it may be the wealth of the yacht-owning latter that attracts her, and there is an unmistakable cruelty to the near-certain drowning of her and her lover upon that boat, which it is difficult to read as anything but a punishment for her betrayal of Auguste.

And, indeed, then there is the question of the ferry tragedy that brings together as survivors the main protagonists of the trilogy. According to Kieślowski, the trilogy should be read backwards from this moment: when an interviewer suggested the film

⁵³ Krzysztof Kieślowski and Krzysztof Piesiewicz, *Three Colours Trilogy: Blue, White, Red*, trans. Danusia Stok, London. Faber, 1998, p 279.

allows the possibility of rescuing the heroes of the trilogy from chaos, Kieślowski replied ‘Jest dokładnie odwrotnie. Dlatego, że się uratowali, zrobiłem o nich trzy filmy’ (‘It’s exactly the opposite. It’s because they were saved that I made three films about them’).⁵⁴ However, Piesiewicz’s linear version of events, according to which the leading protagonists of the trilogy are saved along with a British barman because they deserve to be so, suggests something quite different:

The business with the ending is quite simple. We thought up this ending in Paris in order to close the three films, and it doesn’t depend on the fact that they in particular were chosen. It’s something different. An intelligent person will come to the conclusion that these people were saved but they deserved to be so...It’s simply that they behaved during their lives in such a way that they deserved it. They deserved it.⁵⁵

Leaving aside the question of how these manifestly opposing views reflect upon the supposedly unified mindset of Kieślowski and Piesiewicz, the unavoidable implication of Piesiewicz’s version of events is that the other fourteen hundred or so passengers are somehow less deserving of salvation, a conclusion that leaves a particularly nasty taste in the mouth. There is something intensely disturbing about a film in which empathy and compassion, which after all are surely fundamental to a film dealing with *fraternité*, are extended to a lucky exclusive few.

Three Colours: Red is in most aspects an exemplary film that deservedly enjoys its worldwide reputation as one of Kieślowski’s best-known and most loved works, and Anglophones need only turn to Annette Insdorf or Geoff Andrew to read an appreciation

⁵⁴ Baniewicz (int), ‘Pytania bez odpowiedzi’. See also Agata Otrębska & Jacek Błach (int), ‘Ponieważ są ciągle ci ludzie...’ in Lubelski (ed), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, (reprinted from *Incipit*, Katowice, 4-1996) p 295. Kieślowski omits to say why the seventh survivor, Steven Killian, does not feature in any of the films.

⁵⁵ Piesiewicz interviewed by the author, Appendix, p.319 (original Polish on p 306).

of the many virtues of this film and the trilogy as a whole.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, it also contains features that are troublesome and perturbing, albeit largely overlooked or ignored, and it is time that they were addressed. The film is a composite of tensions, of conflicting and ambiguous signals, and although on-screen there exists a progress from opposition to reconciliation and fraternity as made by Valentine and Joseph, off-screen the result is not so unambiguously straightforward or successful.

* * *

Despite the considerable worldwide success of the *Three Colours* trilogy with public and festival jurists alike, it was to be the last directorial contribution of Kieślowski to cinema. Even as *Three Colours: Red* was being distributed throughout European cinemas, Kieślowski announced his decision to cease directing, although he did allow himself to continue writing scripts. It was a resolution that startled many and indeed, caused some disbelief amongst film critics, but it is one to which he would stick resolutely until he died in 1996.

⁵⁶ See bibliography for details.

CHAPTER 8

Postscript: 1995 until the present day

Kieślowski publicly announced his resolution to refrain from further film direction at the beginning of 1994, although it was almost a year later, in the winter of 1994 to 1995, following the release of *Trois Couleurs: Rouge* (*Three Colours: Red*, 1994), that his decision to resign from his filmmaking career began receiving attention.¹ His declaration was received with some shock and disbelief from film critics who, their reservations about the *Trois Couleurs* (*Three Colours*, 1993-1994) trilogy notwithstanding, felt the director had attained remarkable cinematic heights over the past decade, but his decision was perhaps not as surprising as some thought when viewed in the light of his long-term disparaging attitude towards his profession. Although Kieślowski referred to his lack of energy and patience when discussing his decision,² and on another occasion stated that he quit because he tired of constantly being asked ‘what next?’³ these symptoms of fatigue tally with his longstanding *ennui* where filmmaking, both his own and that in general, was concerned. Despite his growing international success since the 1980s, in recent years Kieślowski had remained not particularly pleased with his films or profession, pessimistic about the state of contemporary cinema, and unimpressed by film as a useful medium.⁴

¹ It appears that Kieślowski first publicly announced this decision in an interview with the German publication *Der Spiegel*. For reports of this interview see. Dagobert, ‘Espia. It’s a wrap for Krzysztof’, *The Guardian*, London, 16-2-1994, p.10; & jm (int.), ‘Kieślowski ma dosyć?’, *Forum*, Warsaw, no. 10, 6-3-1994 (trans. from *Der Spiegel*, 14-2-1994).

² Tony Rayns, ‘Glowing in the dark’, *Sight & Sound*, vol. 4, issue 6, 6-1994, p 10; & Lothar Kampatzki & Andreas Voigt (dir.), *Kieślowski*, prod. ‘a jour’ Film in Auftrag des Bayerischen Rundfunks, 1995 (transcript also available in Piotr Łazarkiewicz, ‘Zapis I’, *Reżyser*, no. 65, 3-1997, p.3).

³ Stanisław Zawiśliński, ‘Nikt nie wierzył...’, *Trybuna*, Warsaw, no. 66, 18-3-1996, p 11.

⁴ Stanisław Zawiśliński (int.), ‘Najważniejsze jest samo życie’, *Trybuna*, Warsaw, no. 218, 19-9-1991, Adam Garbicz (int.), ‘Gra z widzem’, *Gazeta Krakowska*, Cracow, 9 10-10-1993, Stanisław Zawiśliński (int.), ‘Jeden na jednego’ in Stanisław Zawiśliński *et al*, *Kieślowski bez końca*, Warsaw. Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1994, p 45; & Paul Kerr (int.), ‘A revolution that’s turned full circle’, *The Observer* (Rev), London, 15-5-1994, p 14 See also Kieślowski’s comments on modern-day cinema in Krzysztof Kieślowski, ‘Milczenie Bergmana’, *Życie Warszawy*, Warsaw, 6-6-1994

Given that he had been expressing similar opinions since the 1970s,⁵ proof that his statements of the 1990s cannot simply be attributed to his having become older and cynical after over twenty-five years in his profession, the surprise perhaps is not that he finally quit but rather that he had not done so earlier.

Despite Kieślowski's largely matter-of-fact approach to his retirement, his decision to cease directing is also attributable to alternative, more personal reasons. Marin Karmitz, the producer of the *Three Colours* trilogy, suggested the director resigned from his career because he felt he had attained all he could: 'I know [Kieślowski] considered 'Red' his best film; but then, the very serious question for him was whether he could go even further, or if he risked repeating himself'.⁶ Certainly, Kieślowski admitted on several occasions that *Three Colours: Red* was his most personal film,⁷ and this, ironically, may have led to a further difficulty for the director, in addition to that of repeating himself, of feeling that he had revealed too much of himself in this final work. Never one to play out his life in public, the director perhaps expressed his unease at having become too exposed in his last, most personal film when, several years after completing the trilogy, he maintained that the sphere of his personal life that finds its way into his films should be left untouched by viewers.⁸

Ultimately, however, it was not dislike of self-exposure but, crucially, fear of becoming too involved with his work that is the most striking and significant, if also least known and remarked upon, reason that Kieślowski gave for his retirement from directing:

⁵ See chapter 2.

⁶ Karmitz quoted in Annette Insdorf, *Double Lives, Second Chances: The Cinema of Krzysztof Kieślowski*, New York, Hyperion (Talk Miramax Books), 1999, p.184 (Insdorf citing interview in Vincent Amiel (ed), *Krzysztof Kieślowski. Textes réunis et présentés par Vincent Amiel*, Paris: Positif/Jean-Michel Place, 1997, p 173).

⁷ Piotr Sobocinski writing in Stanisław Zawisliński (ed), *O Kieślowskim refleksje, wspomnienia, opinie*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p.47, & Geoff Andrew, *The 'Three Colours' Trilogy*, London: British Film Institute, 1998, p 52.

⁸ Marek Hendrykowski & Mikołaj Jazdon (int), 'Fragmenty spotkania z Krzysztofem Kieślowskim (24.II 1996)', *Kino*, Warsaw, 5-1996, p 12.

‘Życie a robienie filmów to jest coś zupełnie różnego, wie pan. Ja się zorientowałem w ostatnich zwłaszcza latach, w sposób bardzo taki wyraźny się zorientowałem, że ja właśnie żyłem przez wiele, wiele lat w świecie fikcji, w świecie sztucznym, w świecie wymyślonym. W świecie wymyślonych problemów, w świecie wymyślonych spraw, w świecie wymyślonych ludzi, w świecie wymyślonych wydarzeń. Wszystko to ja sam wymyślałem. Ale to jest przecież świat sztuczny, to jest świat fikcyjny, tego świata naprawdę nie ma. Oczywiście żyje bardzo dużo dziewcząt i kobiet na świecie, i żyje bardzo wielu różnych starszych panów, ale Walentyny i Sędziego z filmu „Czerwonego” nie ma naprawdę. To są ludzie wymyśleni przez mnie. Czy przez nas. I wszystko to, co ich otacza, jest też wymyślone. Nasze kamery fotografują wymyślone rzeczy. Nasze kamery fotografują wymyślony świat... I w związku z tym wiem, że całe moje życie właściwie obracało się wokół wymyślonego, sztucznego świata... I w pewnym momencie miałam taką rzeczywiście bardzo określoną ochotę z tego świata wyjść i wrócić do świata normalnego, do świata, który naprawdę istnieje, do świata, w którym ludzie są prawdziwi, w którym problemy są prawdziwe, w którym wydarzenia są prawdziwe. I po prostu przeszedłem z tego świata sztucznego, fikcyjnego do tego świata prawdziwego.

...Przecież wszystko to co jest przemysłem filmowym jest w istocie światem wymyślonym...Zauważyłem coraz wyraźniej, że to jest nie moj świat. Że ten świat ... [sic] że ja do tego świata nie należę. I że ten świat jest mi obcy, że mi się nie podoba. To nie znaczy, że mi się prawdziwy świat podoba, wcale nie. Ale prawdziwy świat przynajmniej jest prawdziwy. Ma tę zaletę.’

‘Life and filmmaking are quite different. I became aware especially in recent years, became aware in a very clear way, that actually I had been living for many, many years in a world of fiction, in an artificial world, in an invented world. In a world of invented problems, in a world of invented matters, in a world of invented people, in a world of invented events. I invented all of this myself. But this is an artificial world, a fictional world, this world doesn't really exist. Of course the world is full of girls and women and a great many different elderly gentlemen, but in truth there is no Valentine and Judge from *Red*. These are people invented by me, or by us. And all that which surrounds them is also invented. Our cameras film invented things. Our cameras film an invented world... And in connection with this I know that my whole life actually revolved around an invented, artificial world... And there came a moment that I had a really very definite

desire to get out of this world and return to the normal world. To a world that really exists. To a world in which the people are real, in which the problems are real, in which the events are real. And I simply went from this artificial, fictional world to this real world.

...After all, everything involved with the film industry is in fact an invented world ...I've noticed more and more clearly that this is not my world, that this world... [sic] that I don't belong to this world. And that this world is alien to me, that I do not like it. That doesn't mean that I like the real world, not at all. But at least the real world is real. It has that advantage.'⁹

These are not offhand or unprepared remarks to be taken lightly. Rather, they were made by Kieślowski in a documentary produced a year after he first publicised his decision to quit – he made almost identical comments in March 1996, in the last interview he made before his death¹⁰ – and thus after he had had the benefit of a considerable period of time to look back at, meditate on, and fully articulate this decision. The final paragraph of the quotation cited above is the least remarkable, it being unsurprising that a man as modest and unpretentious as Kieślowski would have grown tired of the illusory media fanfare surrounding filmmakers. What, however, is at once fascinating and extraordinary about this statement is the emphasis Kieślowski puts in the preceding paragraphs upon his recognition of his immersion in a fictional world and the implication in the phrase ‘..especially in recent years..’ that this was directly related to his shift of focus from an outer reality to that of the inner life. It was the reality of the Polish public world that Kieślowski sought to represent when he first began directing in the late 1960s, yet it was also this world and concomitant reality that he deliberately abandoned increasingly, if never fully, in later years in his quest to film an inner reality independent of social description and commentary. He certainly attained this goal in his final works,

⁹ Kampatzki & Voigt (dir), *Kieślowski* (see also transcript in Łazarkiewicz, ‘Zapis I’, p 4).

¹⁰ Agata Otrębska & Jacek Błach (int.), ‘Ponieważ są ciągle ci ludzie...’ in Tadeusz Lubelski (ed), *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, Cracow: Universitas, 1997, (reprinted from *Incipit*, Katowice, no. 2, 4-1996) p.297.

but in order to capture an inner reality consisting of emotions and motivations so intimate, so hidden, and, perhaps most importantly, so abstract, he had to resort to highly sophisticated and effective but nonetheless artificial methods and devices that moreover often came at the cost of his depiction of public reality. A brilliant evocation of its heroines' inner reality, *La Double Vie de Véronique* *Podwójne życie Weroniki* (*The Double Life of Véronique*, 1991) is nevertheless also essentially and self-consciously a fantasy in a way that Kieślowski's earlier films are not. Equally, the references to the public world in the *Three Colours* trilogy serve largely to underline how uncomfortably distanced, deracinated even, this series is from outer reality or, put another way, how fictitious is its depiction of outer reality. If one interprets the 'great emotions' Kieślowski mentions in his final interview when describing his characters' world as one '..nie istniejącym, zatem nieprawdziwym, gdzie są wielkie emocje, ale to wszystko są emocje nieprawdziwe' ('..that does not exist, thus unreal, where there are great emotions but they are all unreal emotions') to be those of his last films – certainly 'great emotions' feature most in the final works – the strong implication is that it is also to these films that Kieślowski refers a few moments on with his remarks about his filmmaking having caused him to feel '..że jestem w jakimś idiotyzmie, że zabrałem w jakiś kompletny kretynizm, że zacząłem żyć życiem, które nie jest prawdziwe' ('..that I was in some kind of idiocy, that I had descended into some kind of complete stupidity [lit. 'cretinism'], that I had begun to live a life that was not real').¹¹ What Kieślowski's comments suggest so compellingly is that, ironically, it is the reality of the inner life that he strove so hard to capture on film in his later years and was indeed so successful in doing, the films that he regarded most highly, and those same works that brought him greatest public recognition, that ultimately led him to abandon filmmaking.

¹¹ Ibid.

Despite forgoing further directorial duties, Kieślowski conceded that he would continue writing screenplays with his co-writer Krzysztof Piesiewicz. When work on the *Three Colours* trilogy came to an end, Piesiewicz proposed that they script another trilogy, this time based around the themes of heaven, hell, and purgatory. Kieślowski eventually agreed and following the completion of notes regarding the broad outline of the trilogy by January 1995,¹² the first part, *Raj* (*Heaven*, 2002), was written in novella form by the beginning of July of that year.¹³ This willingness on the part of Kieślowski to continue writing for the cinema, combined with wishful thinking on the part of his many fans, led to speculation that he would eventually resume the director's mantle. Piesiewicz certainly believed this to be the case, stating in an interview that took place some eighteen months after Kieślowski's death that he suspected the latter would have directed the *Raj, Piekło, Czystaście* (*Heaven, Hell, Purgatory*, 2002 – date unconfirmed) trilogy.¹⁴ Alternatively, Irène Jacob, with whom Kieślowski remained in close contact following the completion of *Three Colours: Red*, thought otherwise: according to her, the Pole planned to write and oversee the production of the new trilogy, and allocate the direction of each film to a different young director.¹⁵ Conjecture about Kieślowski's future prospects in filmmaking is inevitably fraught with difficulties, given the unknown factors. Nevertheless, Kieślowski was not a man to make statements as serious as that concerning his retirement lightly and it seems highly unlikely that he would go back on his word, not

¹² Reproduced in Stanisław Zawiślinski (ed), *Kieślowski*, 2nd ed, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1998, p.119. Interestingly, the ideas recorded therein do not appear to have been taken up in the three novellas, which form the bases for the screenplays, written subsequently. Whether any of these original ideas will make it to film remains to be seen.

¹³ *Heaven* was first published in its novella form in a Polish literary periodical; Krzysztof Kieślowski & Krzysztof Piesiewicz, 'Raj', *Dialog*, Warsaw, no. 3, 3-1997, pp 5-33. It has since been published in book format: Krzysztof Kieślowski & Krzysztof Piesiewicz, 'Raj' *Czystaście Piekło*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1999. Although the text is identical in the two editions, both are of interest as they respectively contain a differing introduction and afterword written by Piesiewicz.

¹⁴ Piesiewicz interviewed in Neil Bowdler (int.), 'His life's work', *The Guardian* (G2T), London, 17-10-1997, p 13.

¹⁵ Monika Maurer, *Krzysztof Kieślowski*, Harpenden, Herts: Pocket Essentials, 2000, p 89.

least when his original declaration had been so strongly expressed: ‘Wiem to. Nieodwołalnie. Raz na zawsze’ (‘I know it [i.e., that I will not direct any more]. Irrevocably. Once and for all’).¹⁶ Despite his continuing commitment to writing, the marked deceleration in his production of screenplays likewise underlines the declining appeal that film held for him. Doubtless the heart attack Kieślowski suffered in August 1995 shortly after the completion of *Heaven* provides a partial explanation as to why he made no further progress with either *Piekło (Hell)* or *Czyściec (Purgatory)* in the next seven or so months before his death but it seems unlikely that the considerable hiatus is attributable to his ill-health alone. Rather, the standstill in the production of the new trilogy suggests that even this part-time work was no longer of primary importance in his life, and that far from rueing his decision to stop filmmaking in 1994, Kieślowski had become even more averse to involvement with cinema in the ensuing years. As such, whilst it is impossible and somewhat futile to predict whether Kieślowski might have returned to directing had he lived long enough to complete the *Heaven, Hell, Purgatory* trilogy, the evidence indicates that he showed very little if any inclination for this in the months leading up to his death.

In the end, however, all such speculation is purely academic. Following his heart attack in the autumn of 1995, due to coronary weakness believed to have been precipitated by his age-old and notorious habit of chain-smoking, the fifty-four year-old Kieślowski entered a Warsaw hospital in March of the following year for a major heart operation. He never awoke from the anaesthetic and died on 13th March 1996.

* * *

¹⁶ jm (int.), ‘Kieslowski ma dosyć?’. Quentin Curtis reported in 1995 that Kieślowski was out of retirement but, curiously, wrote that he had ‘..agreed to one last movie, or trilogy, inspired by the ideals represented in the French Three Colours series [sic]’, which suggests somewhat oddly that Kieślowski was to re-make the *Three Colours* trilogy; Quentin Curtis, ‘Kieślowski out of retirement’, *The Independent*, London, 7-5-1995, p.2. Curtis later refers to a ‘..film on purgatory..’ suggesting he meant in fact to refer to Kieślowski’s writing of the *Heaven, Hell, Purgatory* series.

Dead yet still wielding an active and weighty influence in film: this has been and continues to be the status of Kieślowski long after his death. It is not uncommon for great directors to exert a profound influence beyond the grave on young filmmakers but Kieślowski, like Welles, Truffaut, and Kubrick, went one better by leaving behind a number of incomplete and unrealised projects. The first of these to reach cinema screens was not a part of the *Heaven, Hell, Purgatory* trilogy as might be expected but *Duże zwierzę* (*Big Animal*, 2000), a Polish production directed and co-written by Kieślowski's longstanding favoured actor and collaborator, Jerzy Stuhr. Based on an eighteen-page outline-cum-unfinished-script written by Kieślowski in 1973 that was found in 1998 in archives in Wiesbaden, where it had been stored after being rejected by German television companies in the early seventies, the film charts the deteriorating fortunes of Mr Sawicki, played by Stuhr, following his adoption of a circus camel as a pet.¹⁷ Whereas initially the local townsfolk are intrigued and charmed by Sawicki's strange pet, within a short space of time they become intolerant of his and its aberration and eventually contrive its abduction and disappearance. *Big Animal*, like so many films written by Kieślowski in the 1970s, examines the tension between private preference and the public good, and the scenes in which the local council debates how Sawicki's pet, adopted by Sawicki purely out of fondness, can be employed for the benefit of the townspeople as a whole constitute a classic Kieślowski depiction of conflict between the personal and public.¹⁸ Likewise, Stuhr's choice of black-and-white film stock and his setting of the action during a time that is unspecified but appears to be the not-too-distant past play up the similarities between this production and Kieślowski's earlier works. Where the film fails is in being too long at fifty-five minutes for the relatively slight tale

¹⁷ Kieślowski's script was based on a tale by Kazimierz Orłos

¹⁸ Stuhr acknowledged that although he made additions to Kieślowski's outline in order to complete the screenplay, the scenes involving the local council are Kieślowski's original work; Jerzy Stuhr, *Udawać naprawdę*, int Marek Mikos, Cracow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2000, p 148

it portrays. It is unfortunate that Stuhr should remark that 'Ten film ma rytm wielbłąda' ('This film has a camel's rhythm')¹⁹ as *Big Animal* does indeed lumber at times, a failing which raises the thought that Kieślowski may well have avoided reviving the script himself after its initial rejection because he recognised its shortcomings. Certainly, Krzysztof Piesiewicz questioned the appropriateness of Stuhr's filming so old a script of Kieślowski,²⁰ and undeniably, the latter showed no interest in resuming this early project prior to his death. *Big Animal* aside, Stuhr has mentioned his desire to make another Kieślowski-related film, again, one initiated after the death of Kieślowski and therefore one for which his potential endorsement or disapproval is unknown, namely, a follow-up to *Amator (Camera Buff, 1979)*, which chronicles the adventures of the son of Filip Mosz, a film buff like his father. According to an interview conducted with Stuhr in 1999, production was set to begin in March 2000 but as yet no further details are available.²¹

The most eagerly awaited posthumous project is undoubtedly the *Heaven, Hell, Purgatory* trilogy, of which the completed three novellas have been published. The Platonic ideal of love existing between two halves of the same person, denied in *The Double Life of Véronique* and hinted at in *Three Colours: Red*, is finally realised in *Heaven*, in which a teacher, Filipinka, who attempts to bomb the office of a drug-dealer, and Filip, a young policeman assigned to her following her arrest with whom she shares her name and birthday, fall in love.²² Recognising the justice of her cause and equally the corruption in his police force, Filip helps Filipinka to escape, kill the drug-dealer (on her first attempt she mistakenly kills four innocent bystanders), and flee the police who

¹⁹ Stuhr, *Udawać naprawdę*, p 144.

²⁰ Neil Bowdler, 'Flashback to times of great expectation', *The Guardian*, London, 21-8-1998, p 22.

²¹ Stuhr interviewed in Marek Mikos (int.), 'Jestem za stary, żeby zwariować', *Polityka (Wysokie Obcasy)*, Warsaw, 4-9-1999, p 37. According to Stuhr, Stanisław Latek, Kieślowski's Canadian-Polish assistant on the *Three Colours* trilogy, was set to write and direct the film and Stuhr's own son was a probable candidate for the role of Mosz junior.

²² See either: Krzysztof Kieslowski & Krzysztof Piesiewicz 'Raj' *Dialog*, no. 3, 3-1997, pp 5-33; or Krzysztof Kieslowski & Krzysztof Piesiewicz, 'Raj' *Czyściec Piekło*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1999.

consequently seek them both. *Heaven*, like Kiesłowski's recent films, focuses on the individual and not the public world, yet like the *Trois Couleurs* trilogy, it implies that it is not the inner life of a sole individual but rather the realm created by two alike individuals that holds the key to a fulfilled and happy existence. Filipinka's initially lonely stance against a world indifferent or even acquiescent to the problems caused by narcotics is transformed through Filip's collaboration: her private vendetta becomes a shared cause, and she finds release from her hitherto lonely life and pacification of her private demons in the realm she and Filip create through their growing love. But for the police tracking the two lawbreakers, the public world fades out of *Heaven*, partly by default – people on the run generally avoid public areas and crowds – but mainly to illustrate the superiority of Filip and Filipinka's harmonious realm. Themes long favoured by Kiesłowski and Piesiewicz are thus evident in *Heaven* but the novella also contains some problematic features. The characterisation tends towards the black-and-white, a failing the two writers largely avoided hitherto, and the characters either good or bad, either for Filipinka and Filip or against them. The result, in the novella at least, is to make the narrative appear didactic, demanding that the reader love the goodies and loathe the baddies, so obviously delineated are they. There is also something potentially corny about the depiction of the couple's love affair, the characterisation of Filipinka's innocent victims as an elderly lady and a father with two young daughters, and the simplistically sympathetic attitude towards the addicts whose lives have been damaged by the drug-dealer, in particular the overdone description of one victim as pregnant, HIV-positive, and a suicide (as though that were not enough, her boyfriend dies of an overdose a week after her death). The spiritual aspect of Kiesłowski's and Piesiewicz's works has also undergone a change from advocating the importance of one's personal relations with God to a more overtly anti-Church stance, as evinced when Filipinka makes a confession of the murders in a

confessional that turns out to be empty, but at this stage it is uncertain how well this potential over-explicitness will compare with the more complex attitude displayed by the authors towards religion in earlier works. What is clear is that transferring such characters and scenes to screen will require a sensitive and steady touch.

*Hell*²³ was written by Piesiewicz, with the help of Agnieszka Lipiec-Wróblewska, after Kiesłowski's death, and at the moment it is unclear how much the novella owes to the input of the latter, especially as his name does not feature as an author; presumably Piesiewicz will explain more about the creative origins of this work should it be filmed. It deals with three French sisters, Greta, Zofia, and Anna, and the manner in which their adult lives have been affected by the jailing of their father for paedophilia and his suicide following his release from prison, all of which took place in their childhood. As a consequence of these traumatic events and an upbringing by a mother who openly detests her former husband to the extent of telling him she flaunted her adulterous relationships in front of Zosia and even enlisted Greta's participation in her affairs, all three are unable to form successfully intimate relationships in their adult lives. Even as Zosia watches her husband betray her, she is unable to prevent herself from alienating him further, whilst Anna attempts in vain to prevent her married lover from breaking off their affair and Greta misinterprets the advances of Sebastian, a man who initiates a relationship with her, as romantic. As conceived in this novella, hell is the isolated and damaged inner life of the individual, unable to find happiness in his or her self or communicate, and thereby find relief, with others. Filipinka in *Heaven* is rescued by Filip but the protagonists of *Hell* have no such saviours offering redemption. The tragic futility of the sisters' unnecessary misery is shockingly exposed when Sebastian reveals himself to have been

²³ See either: Krzysztof Piesiewicz (assisted by Agnieszka Lipiec-Wróblewska), 'Piekło', *Dialog*, no. 5, 5-1997, pp 5-31; or Krzysztof Piesiewicz (assisted by Agnieszka Lipiec-Wróblewska), *Raj Czyściec 'Piekło'*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1999. See footnote 13, above, regarding the existence of two versions of the same text.

the boy who, as he explains, falsely accused their father of abuse and thus set off the chain of events that has resulted in their damaged emotional growth. The novella is as unremittingly bleak as its titular theme implies, and even Sebastian's revelation can hardly be described as uplifting or healing, failing as it does to secure the prospect of a happy future, be it in the personal or inner realm, for any of the main protagonists. The few potential problems of the novella *Hell* lie in scenes that almost self-parody the central concerns of Kieślowski and Piesiewicz, as when a man complains that one can telephone everywhere but speak with no one,²⁴ or when Zofia seeks shelter from the rain for herself and her children in a church only to find the doors locked, and raise the question of whether they might have been expressed more subtly had Kieślowski co-written this novella.

Purgatory,²⁵ also written by Piesiewicz with the assistance of Agnieszka Lipiec-Wróblewska and to which the full extent of Kieślowski's contribution is again unknown, is the first narrative collaborated upon by the former and latter to be set mainly in England.²⁶ Beginning with the murder by Serbian soldiers of a photo-journalist, Frank Dopton, as he records a massacre taking place in Kosovo in 1999, it follows the endeavours of his wife, Aniela, to prove that a series of photographs for which another photographer, Richard Blass, has been given an award are in fact her husband's and indeed record the last moments of his life. Aniela, whose name translates literally into English as 'Angela', enlists the help of author Bernhard Kassel to make Richard admit to his appropriation of the dead man's work and tell her where Frank is buried. Whilst undergoing the strain of her husband's death and the necessity of explaining it to her

²⁴ Cf. Paul Coates, 'Introduction' in Paul Coates (ed.), *Lucid Dreams: The Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski*, Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1999, p.14.

²⁵ Krzysztof Piesiewicz (assisted by Agnieszka Lipiec-Wróblewska), *Raj 'Czysta' Piekło*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Skorpion, 1999.

²⁶ Interestingly, Piesiewicz previously stated it would be set in Poland; Bowdler (int.), 'His life's work', p.13.

young son, Edward, she simultaneously attempts to reinforce her relationship with another journalist, Adam, with whom she has been having an affair long before Frank's death, and draw him into her family unit. *Purgatory* contains many elements reminiscent of earlier films written by Kieślowski and Piesiewicz: Aniela's love for both Frank and Adam links her with Dorota in *Dekalog 2 (The Decalogue: 2, 1988)*, and her widowhood and efforts to have her husband's work publicly recognised posthumously hint at similar elements in *Three Colours: Blue*. The most significant and deliberate evocation is that of Joseph from *Three Colours: Red* in the figure of Kassel, who like his predecessor, and by extension the artists-as-creator Kieślowski and Piesiewicz whom Joseph symbolises, is possessed of an extraordinary insight into and effect upon human behaviour. However, just as Kassel's God-like control over those people surrounding him is more overtly emphasised than with Joseph by his being an author, so too Kassel is even more open about the interaction between fiction and reality, and art and life, and explicitly proclaims the responsibility of the recorder of events to those who suffer them. What is interesting, then, is that it is also Kassel who, for all his apparent self-awareness and wisdom, is eventually revealed as the most flawed of the protagonists. The redemption that will bring the characters out of their self-constructed purgatories is sought, and therefore found, by Richard and Aniela who atone for his theft and her adultery respectively, but it is Kassel who is ultimately shown to be in greatest need of doing penance for his arrogant appropriation of the matter of Frank's stolen photographs for a new novel and yet who fails to expiate his sin. The critique of artists' responsibility and guilt for profiting from others' intimate affairs is the most damning yet to have appeared in a Kieślowski-Piesiewicz collaborative effort and is all the more striking as it forms the genuinely surprising conclusion to *Purgatory* and indeed the entire trilogy.

However, like its predecessors, *Purgatory* too contains troublesome features. As

in *Heaven*, some of this novella's characters appear to suffer stereotyping: having been identified as a murderer in the opening scene, the Serb commander Skaza's minimal reappearance in a late scene that reveals his penchant for soft porn results in a characterisation that feels too crude. Alternatively, other protagonists behave as they ought to and not as is readily believable: Richard's bafflingly immediate and wholehearted repentance feels both rushed and under-explained; and Edward appears to be neither distressed unduly by his father's murder nor by his discovery that his mother has a lover, which unlikely strength of character in one so young is matched by an equally improbable preternatural insight into Kassel's untrustworthy nature. Piesiewicz and Kieślowski, assuming the latter's input, take the rare step of using a real and specific historical event, namely, the Kosovan conflict, as the backdrop to the narrative, but this too leaves them on dangerous ground. The employment of a real event, moreover one that took place in the recent past and continues to resonate for millions of Albanians and Serbs, as a backdrop for what is a fictional narrative might alienate those unhappy with its depiction of historical reality, however thoughtful and valid its insights into the personal and inner lives of its characters, much as was the case with *Bez końca* (*No End*, 1984). Indeed, despite the novella's concern with the vicarious nature of creativity, which repeats a key theme of *The Double Life of Véronique* and *Three Colours: Red*, it is also not quite clear whether Piesiewicz (and Kieślowski?) damns himself as he does Kassel for the utilisation of a real historical event for a fictional novella self-consciously or unintentionally.²⁷

Nevertheless, the ending to *Purgatory* is a testimony to Piesiewicz's skills when

²⁷ In an earlier instance of Kieślowski's art imitating life and causing distress, *Three Colours: Red* was publicly condemned for utilising real-life footage of the ferry disaster near Zeebrugge, involving the sinking of *The Herald of Free Enterprise* and deaths of almost two hundred passengers and crew; Suzannah Herbert, 'Zeebrugge film condemned', *The Daily Telegraph*, London, 26-8-1994, p 3. In fact, it is not clear if Kieślowski did indeed use real-life footage in his fictional disaster scene.

writing, presumably, without his long-term collaborator Kieślowski. The unexpected shift in attitude against Kassel in the final act works very well in preventing him from merely being a second Joseph and thus avoiding a conclusion that mimics that of *Three Colours: Red*. Piesiewicz also breaks the pattern of the trilogy hitherto established by having a helicopter, which features in the final scenes of *Heaven* and *Hell*, appear in the penultimate scene of *Purgatory*, thereby confounding audience expectations and gently mocking his own artistry. Even the tenor who figures in the conclusion might be read as a conscious break with his and Kieślowski's previously favoured motifs by his supplanting the soprano employed in *The Double Life of Véronique* and the *Three Colours* trilogy.

Production on the *Heaven, Hell, Purgatory* trilogy is slow. Although filming of *Heaven* had been variously reported as being expected to commence in 1998 and 1999,²⁸ the film was not completed until 2001 and announced for release in 2002. Bernardo Bertolucci, Lars von Trier, and Wim Wenders were amongst those touted at various stages as potentials for the role of director – according to Piesiewicz, the first two resigned from the project for fear of comparison with Kieślowski²⁹ – but this eventually went to Tom Tykwer, best known outside his native Germany for *Lola rennt* (*Run Lola Run*, 1998). Although *Run Lola Run* is stylistically far more frenetic and oriented towards pop culture than anything to be found in Kieślowski's oeuvre or increasingly elaborate and elegant camerawork, the film's three-in-one narrative structure resembles *Przypadek* (*Blind Chance*, 1981), just as the metaphysical and philosophical musings upon the impact of chance, coincidence, and fate upon life also mirror the Pole's preoccupations. No plans have been announced as yet concerning *Hell* and *Purgatory*,

²⁸ See respectively: Bowdler (int.), 'His life's work', p 13; & Piesiewicz interviewed by the author, Appendix, p.303 & p.316.

²⁹ www.empiktv.com/empiklopedia/film/index.cgi?id=1792&dzial=film&fraz=PIESIEWICZ Unfortunately, this webpage has recently been deleted.

perhaps because producers wish to see how *Heaven* is received before committing themselves to filming the rest of the trilogy, or, as Jerzy Stuhr claims, because even though the remaining parts of the trilogy have been sold to the West, directors fear the responsibility of taking them on.³⁰

Whatever happens with the filming of the remaining parts of the *Heaven, Hell, Purgatory* trilogy, *Purgatory* is likely to constitute the last screenplay with which Kieślowski can be associated. Whether any director will dare to bring to life the remaining part of the trilogy remains to be seen; whether a director who takes on these formidable tasks can reach the heights repeatedly attained by Kieślowski throughout the course of his career, however, is unlikely.

³⁰ Stuhr, *Udawać prawdę*, p.231.

APPENDIX

ZAPIS NAGRANEGO WYWIADU Z KRZYSTOFEM PIESIEWICZEM 6-ty listopad 1998, Warsaw

ED: Ja czytałam w angielskich pismach że w latach 80-tych Kieślowski się nie interesował polityką. A pan właśnie się chyba interesował polityką w latach 80-tych?

KP: Proszę pani, sprawa jest bardzo prosta. Kiedy ja spotkałem Kieślowskiego on był po ogromnej karierze w filmie dokumentalnym. Wiesz, żeby w ogóle poznać jego kino naprawdę głęboko trzeba znać jego filmy dokumentalne, ponieważ one w dużej części, jeżeli chodzi o sprawy formalne i docieranie kamerą czy obrazem do pewnych tajemnic człowieka, on to uzyskał przez taką przenikliwość dokumentalisty. Oczywiście dokument mu nie starczał już i później musiał przejść do fikcji, do konstruowania fabuły i tak dalej. Jak ja go spotkałem ja byłem dosyć wziętym takim młodym adwokatem który zajmował się głównie prawami człowieka. On był po filmie dokumentalnym i po tym kinie "moralnego niepokoju", no w którym on zrobił dwa czy trzy filmy popularne. I myśmy absolutnie, jak on się ze mną zetknął, ja zaczęłem z nim dyskutować a on mi pokazał film *Przypadek*. I ja mu powiedziałem 'Słuchaj, ty masz ogromną szansę w kinie ponieważ ty możesz połączyć Hitchkocka z Bergmanem, i trzeba w ten sposób robić współczesne kino'. To jest jedyna szansa żeby ludzi przyciągnąć, aby im tak dawać suspens a jednocześnie mówić o bólu, o tęsknocie, radości, nostalgii et cetera et cetera et cetera. W ogóle uważam że kino Kieślowskiego jest w ogóle szansa żeby kino mogło być sztuką w dalszym ciągu, znaczy w jego metodzie. Ja uważam jeżeli ludzie nie pójdą jego tropem w kinie, to kino stanie się, staje się sztuką jarmaczną, stanie się sztuką...[sic] ja nie mówię że złą ale nie będzie odpowiadało na pytania które są ludziom potrzebne od początku świata, prawda?

To były nasze pierwsze spotkania. Ja przyszedłem na początku z nim z pomysłem *Bez końca*, który był oparty na pewnej tragedii związanej ze śmiercią mojego przyjaciela adwokata z którym ja broniłem w procesach politycznych. A poza tym w tych procesach politycznych, w tym filmie *Bez końca* była nie tyle polityka co pewne dylematy których ja dotykałem będąc obrońcą tych ludzi, pomiędzy nacjonalizmem a pomiędzy idealizmem, pomiędzy pewną misją narodową wyzwolenczą a pewną rozprochnością wynikającą z starego układu w którym myśmy wtedy żyli. I w tym filmie to jest oddane. Myślę że w *Bez końca* są dotknięte sprawy które dzisiaj są w Polsce bardzo czytelne, pewne konflikty które już były w ramach opozycji która walczyła z tym. Powstał ten film i po tym filmie zostaliśmy...[sic] Ja jak gdyby zawsze oddzielałem moją działalność publiczną od działalności kreatywnej. Po tym filmie zostaliśmy zaatakowani przez opozycje i przez władze komunistyczne, przez opozycje ponieważ nie zrobiliśmy takiego filmu plakatowego jak Wajda, *Człowiek z żelaza*, prawda, tylko zrobiliśmy film prawdziwy. Jak teraz oglądam to z perspektywy to wydaje mi się że to jest naprawdę nie zły film który oddaje prawdę o tamtym czasie, że to jedyny film, jedyny, bardzo uczciwy film.

W związku z tym ja kiedyś z nim się spotkałem w jakiejś kawiarni i powiedziałem 'Słuchaj, trzeba skończyć z polityką kompletnie, trzeba skończyć z opisywaniem socjologicznym świata. Trzeba się skupić na jednostce ponieważ w istocie jeżeli wszędzie na świecie, tak nawet jeżeli nie ma, to ludzie akceptują demokrację i jeżeli demokracja ma decydować o tym w jakim żyjemy świecie i w jakich nastrojach, to w istocie decyduje to co ludzie noszą w sobie indywidualnie, i suma tych postaw

indywidualnych tworzy pewien krajobraz. Poprzez głosowanie, poprzez inne rzeczy, prawda? W związku z tym stają się pojedynczymi postawami ludzkimi, konkretnymi.' 'A o co ci chodzi?' Ja mówię 'Wiesz co, wydaje mi się że trzeba zająć się Dekalogiem' no i cała historia była tym.

Apropos zapytał mi się 'Jak ty chcesz to zrobić?'. Ja mówię 'To jest proste. Trzeba opisać dziesięć historii współczesnych ludzi, ludzi którzy niewiele mieszczą w tej samej sytuacji, oderwać się od polskiej obyczajowości zupełnie, bo to jest nie ważne dla ludzi na świecie i w ogóle jest nie ważne, bo pewien obyczaj który tworzy się w wyniku jakiejś sytuacji jest chwilowy, nie jest rzeczą trwałą, nie jest wartością trwałą.' To że na przykład ludzie stoją w kolejce po kielbasę to to się okazało że w 89-tym roku po trzech miesiącach już nie było co robić z tą kielbasą, prawda? W związku z tym dla mnie to było nie istotne, więcej, brak kielbasy często powodował to że ludzie głębiej myśleli niż dzisiaj, prawda?

Także to są bardzo złożone procesy, bardzo skomplikowane. Okazało się że to są rzeczy ważne, bardzo ważne, ale w istocie dla postaw ludzkich nie tak bardzo istotne w związku z tym co ludzi naprawdę draży, do czego ludzie naprawdę tęsknią. I zresztą swego czasu w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie, który jest teraz w kościele Mariackim w Gdańsku, był obraz który ciągle oglądałem. Była wielka deska czternasto wieczna podzielona, i tak dalej i tak dalej, i to potem dostosowana była identyczna metoda: opis zachowań ludzkich, w kontekście Dekalogu, w miejscu i czasie określonym. I co się stało po tym *Dekalogu*? Ten *Dekalog* stał się ważniejszy dla ludzi na całym świecie niż dla Polaków w 89-tym roku, bo Polacy uznali że już sprawy tak naprawdę głęboko ludzkie są nie ważne a ważne jest żeby się zorganizować, prawda? Wolny rynek, handel i tak dalej, biznes.

Oczywiście, w tej chwili to się zmienia. *Dekalog* zaczyna być kultowy, nie tylko dla studentów w Ameryce, tak słyszałem—

ED: Tak? W Ameryce?

KP: Tak, tak. W tej chwili zaczyna być z tym afera, ponieważ *Dekalog* nie był puszczany w Ameryce ponieważ były problemy copyright. W tej chwili zaczyna być puszczany na uczelniach i tak dalej i zaczyna być obłęd tam. I tak samo, okazało się, że staje się tak samo ważny w Polsce, ale dopiero teraz. To już stało się jakimś takim modułem, klasykiem, prawda, ale dlatego że myśmy uciekali od pewnych typowych zachowań.

ED: Właśnie że on był bardziej uniwersalny, tak?

KP: Uniwersalny, prawda? Ludzi tak samo boli brzuch w Londynie jak i w Warszawie, tak samo kochają się w Warszawie, tylko w innych okolicznościach, prawda? Mają często inne problemy. Wiedzą, na przykład, już po pewnych doświadczeniach dwustu lat że pewnych rzeczy nie należy robić, prawda? A czasami w Polsce jeszcze zrobią ale szybciej dochodzą do tego że nie trzeba robić, dlatego bo to jest jak dziecko które dotknie do pieca które jest rozgrzane. Ale tych rzeczy, ponieważ jest inna komunikacja i media działają bardzo silnie, ludzie są bardziej wykształceni, więc szybciej te doświadczenia są przerabiane na uzus, na praktykę. Ale te wszystkie sprawy są takie same, uczucia, erotyka, ból brzucha, miłość do dzieci, nienawiść i tak dalej. To wszystko to samo, prawda? Tylko okoliczności są inne. I w związku z tym myśmy zrobili *Dekalog* i faktycznie myśmy uciekli od polityki. Ale w istocie myśmy nie uciekli od polityki, tylko żeśmy dotknęli tego co jest istotą zagadnienia. Tak naprawdę, rewolucja Bolszewicka wynikała z tego co nosili ludzie w sobie. Nosili nienawiść z powodu jakiś przyczyn. To że Hitler zaczął rządzić w Niemczech to wynikało z tego że ludzie go wybrali, więc mieli w sobie szaleństwo. Powstaje pytanie, skąd to szaleństwo się bierze? Skąd się bierze nienawiść w pewnych okolicznościach, prawda? Jakie są procesy psychologiczne? I

myśmy, dlatego myśmy zdecydowali skupić się nad tym, na człowieku. Jest 89-ty rok i ja przychodzę z koncepcją równości, wolności i braterstwa. Przychodzę dlatego bo widzę mur Berliński, że zacznie być znowu dyskusja czym jest wolność, czym jest braterstwo między narodami czy między ludźmi, czym jest równość? Cały czas te hasła są, tylko my już wiemy po dwustu latach że te hasła bez miłosierdzia, bez miłości użyte, stają się po prostu przekleństwem, bo w imię tych haseł mamy miliony grobów. W związku z tym, teza wyjściowa przecież w tym naszym filmie *Niebieskim* jest że ludzie nie chcą być wolni. Ludzie chcą być tylko sugerentni.

ED: Zgadzam się. No bo właśnie, odkąd Pan zaczął pracować z Kieślowskim te filmy stały się bardziej uniwersalne. Czy to było właśnie pod Pana wpływem?

KP: Wie pani, ja mogę tylko Pani powiedzieć że wszystkie te filmy były z mojej inspiracji, to znaczy, z moich pomysłów, z moich idei, z mojego jakiegoś tego, bo taka jest prawda.

ED: Wie Pan że odkąd Pan pisał te scenariusze razem z Kieślowskim to też kobiety stały się bohaterkami. To jest od Pana?

KP: Wie Pani, nie wiem. Ja po prostu wiem tylko tyle że kobieta jest dla mnie o wiele bardziej interesującym medium niż mężczyzna.

ED: Tak?

KP: Tak. Z tysiąca przyczyn.

ED: Właśnie Kieślowski coś mówił że kobiety są bardziej wrażliwe.

KP: Proszę pani, natura, albo Bóg dał im po prostu więcej szans na... [sic] Kobiety mają więcej szans dotknięcia człowieczeństwa w większym wymiarze. Po prostu, to są sprawy równie biologiczne jak i biologiczne-psychologiczne. Dla mnie sam akt erotyczny, czy zbliżenia kobiety i mężczyzny... [sic] to są dwa fascynujące inne światy, prawda?

ED: Tak, napewno inne światy.

KP: Przecież, przez powód kobieta jak gdyby wyrzuca mężczyznę. Moim zdaniem dlatego kobieta każda po porodzie, kobieta brzemienna jest fenomenem. Mnie się wydaje że kobiety wrażliwe, z ogromną intuycją, a do tego wykształcone są pewnym o wiele ciekawszym medium dla kogoś kto opisuje kondycję ludzką niż mężczyźni. Tak mi się wydaje. I dlatego często jak w tych scenariuszach szukaliśmy bohatera to bohaterem stawała się kobieta.

ED: No, ale Pan z Kieślowskim też chyba mieliście tą wrażliwość, tą intuicję, nie? Inaczej, jak można napisać scenariusze takie?

KP: No wie pani, ale trzeba o tym wiedzieć. Jest pewien etos męski który często przeszkadza, ale to trzeba się nad tym pochylić. Trzeba się nad tym pochylić bez uprzedzenia, trzeba się otworzyć na pewne rzeczy. Oczywiście że dla mnie być może że jedną z najpiękniejszych rzeczy jaka istnieje na globie ziemskim jest ta różnica ludzi i te światy inne które się dopełniają, kiedy one się dopełniają.

ED: Pan myśli że ta różnica jest piękna czy właśnie to dopełnianie?

KP: To dopełnianie. I to jest fenomen. Kiedy to się staje jednością? To się staje jednością w rzeczywistym akcie miłosnym.

ED: Ale właśnie w tych filmach to rzadko tak się dzieje, nie?

KP: No, wie Pani, ale jest tęsknota do ideału, ale jednocześnie przecież my uważamy że są te dwie połówki jabłka. Często trudno im się odnaleźć. Dlatego ja przed śmiercią Krzysztofa napisałem z nim ostania rzecz, nowele *Raj*, w którym taką sytuację kreujemy, dwie połówki jabłka. Uważam że to jest właśnie ta sytuacja. W bardzo dziwnych okolicznościach te dwie połówki się odnajdują, bo ona jest, w cudzysłowie, terorką, on jest policjantem młodym.

ED: To jest tu w Polsce?

KP: Nie, we Włoszech. I to jest... [sic] Ta trylogia będzie robiona, bo ja w tej chwili robię dwie trylogie. *Raj, Piekło, Czyściec* – *Raj* napisałem z Kieślowskim, *Piekło* i *Czyściec* już sam napisałem – i drugą trylogię, *Wiara, Nadzieja, Miłość*. Mam napisaną *Wiarę* i mam napisaną *Nadzieję*. I tu w Polsce robię osiem filmów telewizyjnych pod tytułem *Naznaczeni*. *Naznaczeni* to będzie osiem filmów krótkich nawiązujących do ośmiu Błogosławieństw. I to będzie robił najzdolniejszy Polski młody reżyser, Michał Rosa.

ED: *A kto będzie właśnie reżyserem–?*

KP: Na zachodzie? Nie bardzo mogę o tym mówić jeszcze ale za jakieś dwa miesiące, trzy miesiące, to już będzie wiadomo bo zdjęcia prawdopodobnie zaczną się już na wiosnę.

ED: *To znaczy że w roku 2000-nym wyjdzie ten pierwszy film?*

KP: No, myślę że tak.

ED: *A Pan będzie miał ciągle coś do czynienia z tym wszystkim?*

KP: Tak, tak. Ja będę, no będę... [sic] No wie pani, z Kieślowskim ja pracowałem od pierwszego zdania w scenariuszu do ostatniej sklejki montażowej. Byłem przy montażu, byłem przy wszystkim. Tutaj nie wiem jak mi się będą układały relacje z reżyserami, no ale mam nadzieję że oni będą tego chcieli, no bo producent tego chce.

ED: *To ciągle będzie Marin Karmitz?*

KP: Nie, nie.

ED: *Wie Pan, na zachodzie to raczej wszyscy myślą że Kieślowski był takim samotnym człowiekiem, że on sam wszystko robił, że to wielki artysta...*

KP: Nie. Kieślowski był, przede wszystkim, wielkim kreatorem. On stawiał ostanią kropkę nad 'i', ale on tworzył znakomity zespół.

ED: *No bo to właśnie mnie interesuje. Na zachodzie nikt nie wiedział, na przykład, że on ma tą rodzinę. No, może wiedzą że Pan z nim pisał te filmy...*

KP: Wie Pani, ja z nim spędzałem w istocie codziennie albo fizycznie, siedząc i rozmawiając, albo prze telefon, kilka godzin dziennie. Więc to jest, wie Pani, przez ostatnie piętnaście lat jego życia. Także był bardzo blisko z kompozytorem, Preisnerem.

ED: *Tak, i na przykład Sławomir Idziak.*

KP: Idziak i Sobociński. I przecież kompozytor, dlatego ta muzyka była taka jak jest. Czy Pani zna ostanią płytę Preisnera, *Requiem*?

ED: *Ja właśnie dzisiaj kupiłam.*

KP: Wie Pani, on potrafił stworzyć zespół ludzi. Natomiast, ze mną pracował codziennie. Był bardzo blisko rodziny, był bardzo blisko przyjaciół. Preisner w jednym wywiadzie mówi słusznie że nigdy się tak nie bawił jak myśmy się bawili we trójkę. On nie był ani smutnym człowiekiem ani samotnikiem. To jest nie prawda.

ED: *Ja się zgadzam. Ja na przykład kupiłam tu w Polsce takie książki i tam są te zdjęcia z psami, z żoną, z córką. No i to są wspaniałe zdjęcia, bardzo szczęśliwe i przyjemne. A w Anglii nikt o tym nie wie. W Anglii myślą że on był samotny, to znaczy, wielki artysta ale samotny, prywatny, nikogo nie miał, i że cały czas miał żal do czegoś, wie Pan?*

KP: On miał żal, oczywiście, ale to polega na czymś innym. To polega na... [sic] ja mam to samo w sobie. Ja mam... [sic] Ja nie potrafię żyć i prawdopodobnie on też nie potrafił ale myśmy to musieli w pewnym momencie robić, jak to się nazywa po angielsku? 'Superficial'?

ED: *Tak, 'superficial'.*

KP: Sztuczność pewna, tak?

ED: *Tak, takie jakby płytkie.*

KP: Tak. I z jednej strony, na przykład, Kieślowski miał gigantyczne propozycje Amerykańskie. To były miliony dolarów. Ale nawet gdyby chciał to nie mógł, rozumie

Pani? Kiedy myśmy rano, na przykład, jak ja byłem z nim w Ameryce na Oskarach i się schodzi rano i przychodzi człowiek i mówi że jest 'extremely well', no po prostu, nam się na to rzygać chce. To jest pewna forma i ja rozumiem to, ja rozumiem że tak jest lepiej żyć tylko to nie ma nic wspólnego z twórczością. Bo jeżeli człowiek żyje w takiej konwencji w twórczości to mogą być tylko filmy Amerykańskie.

ED: A w ogóle co Pan myśli o filmach Amerykańskich, bo wiem że Kieślowski ich za bardzo nie lubił.

KP: Nie, proszę Pani, to nie jest tak. Filmy amerykańskie, to znaczy, o czym my rozmawiamy? Czy my rozmawiamy o ostatnich pięciu, dziesięciu latach w kinie Amerykańskim? To jest dramat. To jest dominacja producentów, producentów którym się wydaje że tak można długo. A moim zdaniem to jest droga do klęski. Do klęski! Albo rozmawiamy, na przykład, o Peteru Bogdanowichu czy rozmawiamy o wielkim kinie amerykańskim z lat poprzednich. Przecież, wie Pani, jeżeli weźmiemy *Nocnego Kowboja* czy weźmiemy Petera Bogdanowicha czy...

ED: Hitchcocka może?

KP: Czy weźmiemy Hitchcocka, no różne rzeczy, no to w końcu gdzieś jesteśmy, w jakimś wielkim kinie.

ED: A teraz to już raczej nie, Pan myśli?

KP: Myślę że jest bardzo zły kierunek. Ten kierunek jest dramatyczny ponieważ on nie jest dlatego dramatyczny że kino amerykańskie jest takie w tej chwili tylko dlatego że dziewięćdziesiąt procent informacji na temat człowieka młodzi ludzie uzyskują w tej chwili z kultury obrazkowej. Mniej czytają i kultura obrazkowa musi wziąć na siebie rolę wstawiania pytań o teraźniejszość, przyszłość i przeszłość, na temat sensu życia, na temat człowieczeństwa musi przejąć ta kultura. I jeżeli by się uprawiało tak kino jak Kieślowski, które jest i atrakcyjne i głębokie, to to kino to udzwignie. Natomiast w innym wypadku to musi prowadzić do katastrofy, do jakiejś katastrofy. Przecież jeżeli pani stawia pytanie eutanazje, to z punktu widzenia logikii, tempa życia, każdy powie to jest OK. Dlaczego ma jej nie być? Dopiero jeżeli człowiek dokona refleksji na temat tego, przez to co przeszła ludzkość, i na ten temat że człowiek jest ułomny i że nie może dotykać pewnych spraw, o pełen decydować...[sic] ale to jest dyskusja która musi być prowadzona na jakimś poziomie. Trzeba przygotowywać ludzi do pewnych pytań, do rozwiązań, bo to że możemy wysadzić w powietrze świat to my już wiemy. Tylko chodzi o to, jak kombinować żeby lepiej żyć, prawda, dlaczego pewna duchowość i transcendencja jest potrzebna. Bo się wydaje że nie jest potrzebna, ale dlaczego jest potrzebna ponieważ tym się różnimy od, od...

ED: Od zwierząt?

KP: Od zwierząt, prawda? Że gdzieś człowiek jest po środku, prawda? Ponieważ ta kultura słowa pisanego jest w kryzysie, nie dlatego że ona jest w kryzysie w ogóle, tylko niech pani zwróci uwagę największe sukcesy jacy pisarze mają? Którzy zaczynają pisać obrazkami. Przecież wściekło jest tych anglo-saskich pisarzy w tej chwili którzy sprzedają ogromne ilości książek. To jest przeważnie literatura, na przykład, ile ja zauważę jak moje scenariusze się sprzedają.

ED: One są bardzo popularne chyba, nie?

KP: Tak, a to jest dramat, to jest dramat. Bo ludzie chcą czytać obrazki. A wiadomo że scenariusz jest półfabrykatem, że dopiero reżyser z wrażliwością, operator, może to wziąć i z tego stworzyć pewną metafizykę. Także, no, sytuacja jest dosyć trudna. Ja nie krytykuję tego co się dzieje w kinach w Ameryce bo to jest ich sprawa, tylko że to jest groźne z tego punktu widzenia.

ED: A co pan myśli, na przykład, o polskim kinie albo o polskiej telewizji?

KP: Nie ma polskiego kina.

ED: *Nie?*

KP: Nie ma polskiego kina. Jest wielki kryzys, wielki dramat. Jest wielki dramat dlatego bo cały czas coś ktoś udaje. Starzy mistrzowie już nie umieją opowiadać.

ED: *Na przykład Wajda, Zanussi, Holland?*

KP: Nie to jest nic, nic.

ED: *A ci nowi też nie?*

KP: Trzeba im dać szansę. Ja właśnie w tej chwili pracuję z takim Michałem Rosą, trzydzieści-dwa lata ma, chłopak, i chce coś, wie pani, coś żeby on poszedł swoją drogą. Jest szansa na to. On zrobił taki film w zeszłym roku, *Farba* się nazywał, polski, bardzo ciekawy, uczciwy bardzo, szorstki taki, chropowaty, dotykający prawdy, nie tego co jest powierzchu, przecież reklama i co wszystko się dzieje tutaj to jest atrapa, gdzieś w środku są jakieś dramaty, no i on te dramaty pokazuje.

ED: *A w ogóle mówiąc o książkach, czytałam że Kieślowski powiedział że on raczej brał swoje pomysły z książek, z Dostojewskiego, Szekspira, Tolstoja czy Kafki.*

KP: Nie, to są brednie. No każdy z nas jest wykształcony, każdy z nas coś przeczytał, każdy z nas jeżeli jest człowiekiem mądrym, znaczy może nie mądrym, źle powiedziane jest, jeżeli stara się postępować roztropnie, rozważnie, to wie o tym że niczego nowego nie wymyśli tak naprawdę, że wszystko już było, a może nawet było głębiej. Z wiązku z tym gdzieś zawsze no do czegoś nawiązujemy. Natomiast, to co myśmy robili w kinie z nim, język kina... [sic] Na przykład, ja uważam że dobra literatura i dobry dramat jest nieprzekładalny na film.

ED: *Naprawdę?*

KP: Tak, ponieważ może pozostać tylko anegdota. Natomiast to są inne środki wyrazu.

ED: *A więc, dlaczego Pan lub Kieślowski nie pisaliście po prostu opowiadań zamiast scenariuszów?*

KP: Myśmy zawsze pisali na początku opowiadanie, ale to było opowiadanie które było podporządkowane filmowym środkom wyrazu. Problem polega na tym że jest akcja fizyczna, i akcję fizyczną obrazkami może pani ułożyć. Natomiast, największą tajemnicą jest akcja emocjonalna, i jakie obrazy ułożyć żeby oprócz akcji fizycznej jeszcze opowiadać o tym co człowiek ma w środku. Bo literatura i poezja przez setki lat wykształciła pewne formy i teraz trzeba te formy trzeba strasznie pracować, trzeba ogromny wisielek mieć w sobie żeby stworzyć środki wyrazu filmowe, bo to może być. Cała technika co nas otacza daje coraz większe możliwości. Więcej ludzi którzy chodzą do kina i oglądają filmy są coraz bardziej przygotowani do skrutu, do syntezy. Młodzi ludzie oglądają wideo-klipy. Dziewięćdziesiąt-pięć procent wideo-klipów jest gównem, ale jest pięć procent które są dziełami sztuki, które potrafią w ciągu dwóch trzech minut opowiedzieć historię człowieka, jego problemów, jego tragedii, jego rozpacz, jego uczuć, nostalgii, etc.. A więc ludzie którzy przychodzą do kina w tej chwili są przygotowani do formy która może być nawet trudna, do pewnych znaków, do pewnych alegorii. Ale trzeba nad tym pracować, na to trzeba mieć pomysły. Oczywiście, bardzo łatwo jest, wie pani, ktoś kogo zabija potem go gonia i potem jest przez dwie godziny i tak dalej. Natomiast, opowiedzieć o rzeczywistych mechanizmach psychologicznych, o rzeczywistych preferencjach ludzkich, o rzeczywistych zdarzeniach ludzkich... [sic] Wie pani, mnie na przykład w kinie nie interesuje to że ktoś do kogoś strzela. Mnie interesuje dlaczego strzela i co po tym strzale należy zrobić.

ED: *No właśnie, to jest Krótki film o zabijaniu, nie?*

KP: Tak. Mnie to interesuje. Na przykład, w tej chwili wszystkie scenariusze które piszę to się zaczynają od scen które w normalnym kinie są scenami kulminacyjnymi. Na przykład, ktoś skacze przez okno, i od tego zaczynam. Ktoś wpada pod samochód, i od tego zaczynam film.

ED: *No bo właśnie to jest co było z Trylogią. Kieślowski powiedział że ta końcowa scena, gdzie są ci uratowani z tego promu, to jest początkiem. Wszyscy mówili że nie, nagle to jest taki szczęśliwy koniec, że są ci główni bohaterzy uratowani, a właśnie on powiedział że to jest początkiem tej trylogii, że właśnie on wybrał tych ludzi tak samo jak tych z tych mieszkań w Dekalogu.*

KP: Tak. Proszę pani, to jest sprawa prosta z tym końcem. Ten koniec został wymyślony przez nas w Paryżu żeby zamknąć te trzy filmy, i to nie polega na tym że zostali wybrani akurat oni. Coś innego. Człowiek myślący dojdzie do konkluzji że ci ludzie zostali uratowani ale oni zasłużyli na to.

ED: *A czy ci inni nie zasłużyli?*

KP: Nie wiem. Po prostu, oni w życiu tak przebierali nogami że im to się należało. Im się to należało. Julia z *Niebieskiego* jest wspaniałą kobietą, jest kobietą takiej której się bardzo rzadko spotyka, żeby kobieta tak kochała męża który umarł a żeby zaakceptowała jego kochankę z dzieckiem. Sprawa jest na tym polega cały *Dekalog* jest zbudowany tak. Teza *Dekalogu* główna jest taka: nie ma sytuacji bez wyjścia.

ED: *Naprawdę pan tak myśli? Nie ma sytuacji bez wyjścia?*

KP: Nie ma. Są tylko sytuacje ostateczne, ale które od nas nie zależą. Wszystkie sytuacje które od nas zależą, od naszej decyzji, są sytuacjami w którym można znaleźć wyjście.

ED: *A jak się rozróżnia?*

KP: Mogę pani dać dziesiątki przykładów. Jeżeli pani wpada pod samochód to pani nie ma wyjścia. To jest los, to jest rządzenie losu. Jeżeli samolot spada, to pani nie ma szansy. Ale jeżeli zdradził panią mąż, to pani ma wyjście, jeżeli pani rzeczywiście kocha. Jeżeli działają ambicje, wyłącznie... [sic] druga część *Dekalogu* to jest totalny przykład, totalny przykład tego że jeżeli się zaakceptuje człowieczeństwo i się potrafi wybaczyć, a nie tylko nienawidzić, można zbudować wspaniały świat. Ale bohater drugiej części *Dekalogu* musiał dotknąć ostateczności żeby zaakceptować dziecko i mówi na końcu 'My będziemy mieli dziecko', a to nie jest jego dziecko.

ED: *Ale on o tym chyba nie wie że to nie jest jego dziecko?*

KP: Wie, oczywiście wie. Nie jest idiotą.

ED: *Już wspomniałam że filmy Kieślowskiego są widziane jako filmy bardzo poważne. Oczywiście są one poważne, bo to są poważne sprawy, ale chyba jest też w nich komedia?*

KP: Ja jak jego spotkałem zawsze marzyłem o tym żeby z nim robić prawdziwe komedie.

ED: *No, Biały to chyba jest komedią?*

KP: Tak, dokładnie. Na przykład, dla mnie najśmieszniejsi są ludzie, którzy są dobrzy, z natury dobrzy, i za dużo chcą. I dla mnie takie dwa filary, albo trzy filary, które są bardzo bliskie temu co ja myślałem a co udało mi się dwukrotnie z Kieślowskim zrealizować, a uważałem że on miał ogromne poczucie humoru, co wyszło w filmie *Personel* na przykład, w siedemdziesiątym-piątym roku. I zawsze go naciskałem chociaż on tego nie chciał, ale on to lubił robić, bo on się tego bał bo uważał że to jest najtrudniejsza forma. To było to co nazywam klimatem czy też stylem który wywodzi się jeszcze z Bruegla, który następnie mieliśmy w *Dobrym wojaku Szwejku*, co mieliśmy w Chaplinie, co mieliśmy w niektórych fragmentach dramatu albo w całych dramatach Szekspira, i to jest to wielkie dotyknięcie człowieczeństwa. Ja to nazywam że to jest opowiadanie o tej myszy która wpada do mleka i tak przebiera łapami że w koncu stoi na górze masła. I dwukrotnie, śmiejąc się myśmy napisali dwa scenariusze. Jeden *Biały*, który dotyczył Polaków. Karol dla mnie jest kwintesencją Polskiej mentalności takiej średniej.

ED: *A więc czy jego żona jest kwintesencją Francji?*

KP: Nie. W każdym razie, ja nie chcę o Francji opowiadać.

ED: *Nie?*

KP: Nie. Bo to ja się na tym nie znam. Ja mieszkałem tam dosyć długo ale dla mnie...[sic] Bo o Polakach się mówi że są romantyczni. Ale tak naprawdę ten romantyzm przeciętnego Polaka to jest na poziomie fryzjera Karola. I ten fryzjer, romantyk, zderza się z brutalnym mechanizmem wolnego rynku w Polsce. No i zmienia się z romantyka w walczącego, cynicznego faceta. Ale na końcu znowu patrzy w okienko jak na Matkę Boską, na kontakt Tam jest taka scena jak on ziemię kupuje od chłopca i się rano czesze i Matka Boska jest, prawda? Mamusia, mama, prawda? Bo w Polsce jest ten kult tego. I mi się wydaje że Karol jest pewną personifikacją przeciętnego Polaka po osiemdziesiątym-dziewiątym roku, po zmorach komunizmu. Zresztą, fenomenalnym przykładem ponieważ nie wiem czy pani tu była piętnaście lat temu w Polsce i teraz?

ED: *Nie.*

KP: No, to wie pani, to są zmiany. Ten kraj oczywiście jest taki jaki jest bo wychodzi z dwustu lat niewoli ale potrafił utrzymać te swoje pulsowanie, no i w ciągu ośmiu lat to w niektórych miejscach to już nie ma prawie różnicy między niektórymi krajami zachodnimi.

ED: *Wiem. Pierwszy raz przyjechałam tu w osiemdziesiątym-dziewiątym roku i teraz jest ogromna różnica.*

KP: Tak. No, ale to są rzeczy. My pokazujemy tego człowieka który przebiera tymi nogami a jednocześnie ma te zwykłe swoje takie namiętności romantyczne i chce odstukać te swoje wszystkie, w cudzysłowie, krzywdy i tak dalej i tak dalej. A drugim filmem, który też opadając tej konwencji Brueglosko-Chaplinowskiej to jest dziesiąta część *Dekalogu* o znaczkach.

ED: *Tak, ci sami bracia, nie?*

KP: Tak. Zresztą myślę że mogłem podać trzy przykłady w tych scenariuszach wszystkich bardzo nowoczesnego myślenia o kinie i nowoczesnej konstrukcji scenariusza. To jest dziesiąta część *Dekalogu*, to jest *Krótki film o zabijaniu*, i film *Czerwony*. To są przykłady bardzo trudnej konstrukcji scenariusza, i jeszcze *Podwójne życie Weroniki*, gdzie opowiada się dosyć wartkie historie, historie dosyć wciągające, z suspensem, z napięciem, ale jednocześnie które mają w sobie jakąś tajemnicę, mają zawsze drugie przesłanie. Pamiętam taką historię jak miałem nominację do Oscara za film *Czerwony*, za scenariusz, to siedział koło mnie młody scenarzysta trzydziesto-dwu letni który też miał nominację. On nazywał się Avery i on miał nominację za *Pulp Fiction*. I oczywiście wiedziałem że on dostanie tego Oscara bo w Ameryce jest niemożliwe żeby inaczej było. Nominacja to i tak było...[sic] I on z ogłoszenia wychodzi, wraca, wziął mnie za rękę i mówi 'Niech się Pan nic nie przejmuje. Ja się uczyłem pisać scenariuszy na dziesiątej części *Dekalogu*'.

ED: *To fajnie, nie!*

KP: Tak, tak. Także myślę że *Dziesiątka* również posiada taką konstrukcję bardzo ciekawą.

ED: *Pulp Fiction też wygrał na Cannes, wygrał nagrodę Palme D'Or.*

KP: Tak, były skandale.

ED: *Pamiętam że w Anglii też było to skandalem. No, szkoda, muszę powiedzieć że wolę Czerwony do Pulp Fiction. Reservoir Dogs to już fajny film, a Pulp Fiction...*

KP: Wie pani, to jest ściana, to jest dno. Znaczy, to dalej pójść nie można, z tego już nic nie wynika. Ludzie zamieniają się w automaty. To ma tylko jeden walor, że to oddaje klimat i energię współczesnej kultury i współczesnego życia.

ED: *Tak, to jest film dla młodych.*

KP: Tak, że to jest fotografia. Ale to jest dramat ponieważ to niepowoduję żadnego skupienia. Uważam że w współczesnej kulturze i współczesnemu światu w tej chwili jest absolutnie niezbędne i konieczne, jest konieczna, mówię to oczywiście jako alegorię, jako przenośnię, modlitwa. Jest potrzebna modlitwa, to znaczy, jest potrzebne skupienie. A może jest potrzebna spowiedź i modlitwa.

ED: *Właśnie jest bardzo mało tego na Zachodzie.*

KP: Tak

ED: *Może jest więcej tego tu w Polsce.*

KP: Ale proszę pani ja mnóstwo jeżdżę. Ja się spotykam z studentami w Hiszpanii, we Włoszech, we Francji, w Stanach, dwa tygodnie temu byłem w Słowenii i tak dalej. Młodzież jest ta sama, jest ta sama wszędzie w tej chwili. Ja mówię o tym kręgu cywilizacyjnym naszym, ja nie mówię o wariatach, o jakiś fundamentalistach i tak dalej. Ja mówię o młodzieży. Ludzie są ci sami. I te filmy wszędzie mają identyczny odbiór. To jest fenomen, to jest fenomen. I jest absolutna tęsknota za tą spowiedzią i za modlitwą. Ja oczywiście nie używam tu modlitwy w kategoriach religijnych tylko mówię o jakimś skupieniu, jakimś cofnięciu, zastanowieniem się.

ED: *Właśnie o duszy.*

KP: Tak. Więcej. Wie pani, ja właśnie w Słowenii miałem rozmowę na temat spraw erotycznych, na temat spraw seksualnych, na temat miłości i tak dalej. No przecież, te wszystkie rozmowy są w totalnej opozycji do tej całej kultury. I ja się boję tylko jednej rzeczy, że te rozmowy i to co ja słyszę w tych rozmowach, jeżeli się temu nie wyjdzie na przeciw to to może wywołać za dziesięć, piętnaście lat, dwadzieścia, jakieś wołanie o nową ideologię. A to byłoby dramatem.

ED: *Pani mówi o ideologii politycznej, moralnej?*

KP: No, ideologię, nową ideologię. A my wiemy już po dwudziestym wieku całym, po doświadczeniach totalitaryzmu, komunizmu, faszystów, wszystkiego, my wiemy że nie ma ideologii dobrych, że nie ma. Że my doskonale wiemy na czym to wszystko polega. Polega na tym, na życzliwości między ludźmi i na zrozumieniu że nikt nie ma racji. I teraz jest problem że, na przykład, nie może nastąpić absolutyzacja praktyczności. Elity nie mogą bazować na tym że są sprawne tylko. Autorytety to nie mogą być autorytety. Na przykład, w tej chwili są różne fundacje różnych panów którzy robią wielkie pieniądze na spekulowaniu pieniędzmi. I oni się wykładają w ramach wszystkiego, filozofii, socjologii, moralności, etyki i tak dalej. Co tu kurwa jest, wie pani? Co to w ogóle jest, co to są za goście? Co to jest? Pani otwiera jakąś gazetę i jakaś aktorka ostrzyżona mówi o tym jak żyć. Nie ma już jakiś wielkich autorytetów, profesorów, nie ma już wielkich. No i kto został? No Wojtyła został, Papież, ale też go atakują bo jest z innej opcji religijnej. Ale to jest jedyny człowiek do którego można mieć sto procent zaufanie bo wiadomo że nie manipuluje.

ED: *Ale na Zachodzie się nie zgadzają. Właśnie myślą że to jest takie starodawne i już nie ważne.*

KP: No i to jest koniec, to jest koniec. Rozumie pani, ludzie będą zawsze używali prezerwaty i zawsze będą robili aborcje, tylko że musi ktoś powiedzieć że to nie jest dobrze. Ja z Wojtyłą rozmawiałem z godzinę, nie dawno, i on mi powiedział 'Oczywiście skrobanki będą bo ludzie są tacy, ale ja mam mówić że to jest dobrze?'

ED: *W Dekalogu, jeden ojciec się nazywa Krzysztof, i to jest pierwsza postać która nie ma autorytetu, no bo w Dekalogu jest brak autorytetu. I ja przepuszczam że to jest do robienia z panem i z Kieślowskim, bo oba macie na imię Krzysztof.*

KP: Tak, tak.

ED: *W Podwójnym życiu Weroniki są dwie wersje jednego życia, albo jest Przypadek, w którym są trzy wersje*

KP: *Podwójne życie Weroniki* dotyczy... [sic] Ja pani coś powiem. Gdyby pani chciała poważnie pisać te rzeczy wszystkie, kiedy pani ma ten doktorat napisać?

ED: *Dopiero zaczęłam, jeszcze trzy lata mniejwięcej.*

KP: No właśnie, no może się jeszcze spotkamy to porozmawiamy.

ED: *Dobrze, dziękuję.*

KP: Wie pani, bo to są bardzo złożone sprawy. Wie pani, Kieślowski umarł mając pięćdziesiąt-cztery lata. Ja myślę że on nie umarł przypadkowo. Dzisiaj wiem że płaci się cenę za pewne rzeczy. To nie tylko jest fizyczna praca ale to jest niszczenie się moralne. I ja myślę że w bardzo wielu filmach których myśmy zrobili razem istnieje jak gdyby intuicyjna zapowiedź tego co się stanie. Płaci się potwornie swoją psychofizyczną kondycją za pewien wysiłek przedzierania się przez pewne sytuacje, przebijania się. Przecież proszę pani, żeby zdobyć taką pozycję na świecie, i żeby mieć cztery nominacje do Oscara¹ z filmem *Czerwonym*, w tych czasach, to pani sobie zdają sprawę, wyjeżdżając z Warszawy, że to nie jest proste. Jaką trzeba mieć potworną siłę w sobie, ja trzeba pracować, ile trzeba mówić, i jak trzeba umieć mówić do mediów żeby to wreszcie zaistniało. Ile trzeba było w Polsce się napracować żeby w systemie komunistycznym zaakceptowali produkcję *Dekalogu*. Oni to zaakceptowali w osiemdziesiątym-szóstym roku ze strachu, bo się kończył system. To że walka z Kościołem w Polsce, ateizm był ideologią, prawda, w szkole uczono że Bóg to jest opium dla mas. Także wie Pani, i za to się płaci. I w *Podwójnym życiu Weroniki*...

ED: *Właśnie ta Weronika, ta Polka, płaci za to, nie?*

KP: No troszkę za dużo chciała.

ED: *A Pan myśli że lepiej jest być tą spiewaczką z Dekalogu, dziewczę, która chciała tylko tyle?*

KP: Od tego się zaczęło ten scenariusz.

ED: *A lepiej takim być człowiekiem czy takim który chce wszystko?*

KP: Nie znam na to odpowiedzi. Mogę pani tylko powiedzieć tyle że gdybym dzisiaj zaczynał życie od nowa, to być może został astronomem, matematykiem, może bym się zajął muzyką.

ED: *A adwokactwem to nie?*

KP: Ja się zajmuję dziesiątkami rzeczami. Ja jestem senatorem, ja jestem adwokatem, ja jestem publicystą, ja dużo piszę. Spędzam w tej chwili jedną dziesiątą życia w samolotach. Po prostu ja już nie mam siły. I to co naprawdę się liczy to jest jakiś koherentny, ciepły, wypełniony miłością świat, i jakieś minimalne warunki materialne do życia które tworzą niezależność. Wszysztko reszta jest pułapką.

ED: *A czy Pan myśli że teraz w Polsce jest lepiej bo nie ma tej zależności?*

KP: To nie ma nic wspólnego z tym bo mi się wydają że to o czym ja mówię, w komunizmie można też było taką niezależność mieć. Ja mówię o rodzinie, o bliskich ludziach, o przyjaciółach, o książkach, o dzieciach. Wie pani, co to wszystko jest? Jak patrzę na te wieżowce w Warszawie które budują, przecież to jest erekcja jakaś, jakież penisy stoją. I po co to wszystko? Jaki to ma w ogóle sens? Co to wszystko jest? Nie lepiej niżej, jakoś sympatycznie, jakiś coś, to wszystko...Zwróciła pani uwagę, na przykład to, ja mam coś takiego bo muszę mieć. I co, i jest mi lepiej z tym?

ED: *Raczej chyba nie.*

KP: Parę lat temu, to było z pięć czy sześć lat temu, do Paryża przyjechał Spielberg i zaprosił nas bo robił *Listę Schindlera*, żebyśmy mu powiedzieli co w Polsce i tak dalej. Myśmy mieszkali wtedy w Paryżu. Ja wchodzę do Ritza do hotelu, na środku ich apartamentu stoi faks i cały czas pracuje. Jak taki człowiek może zrobić sztukę? To jest

¹ Właściwie, trzy.

w ogóle niemożliwe, to jest w ogóle niemożliwe. Do robienia sztuki jest potrzebne kawałek papieru i ołówek, żadnej maszyny, hotel być może, te maszyny mogą coś, ale to wszystko jest... [sic] I potem pani widzi taki film jak ten jego ostatni, jak on się nazywa?

ED: Saving Private Ryan.

KP: Tak. I pani widzi, no niby to jest przerażający ale czy jest jakaś konkluzja z tego?

ED: *Raczej nie. Ja tego filmu za bardzo nie lubię ale jest popularny. A właśnie, gdy pan pisze te filmy, pan chyba nie myśli tylko o Polsce ale o takich uniwersalnych tematach, nie że tylko Polacy będą rozumieć ale że w ogóle to jest dla wszystkich.*

KP: Ja naprawdę uważam że jak pani spotyka pastucha w Turcji który pogania kozy i pani zaakceptuje świat w którym on funkcjonuje, tę jego chatę rozwalającą się, te kozy, to jego brudne spodnie, to jego kubeł w którym on się myje, usiądzie pani i spojrz pani głęboko w oczy, to on naprawdę, podstawowe pytanie jego to jest pytanie 'Jak żyć?'. Bo to w ogóle nie o to chodzi czy pani mieszka w pałacu czy pani mieszka w tym którym brudzie bo każdy może odnaleźć spokój..

ED: *Wewnętrzny taki.*

KP: Tak. I na tym polega istota zagadnienie. To było zawsze to pytanie z Kieślowskim które myśmy stawiali 'Co jest najważniejszą w życiu?'. Spokój. Czy można go osiągnąć? Nie można. A na tym polega w ogóle tajemnica człowieka. Ale ciekawa jest droga do tego.

ED: *Czytał Pan Brzezine? Na końcu pisze 'Spokój, spokój, prawie szczęście'.*

KP: Tak, tak. I muszę pani powiedzieć że ludzie za dużo od innych wymagają, chociaż mogą czegoś się domagać od innych, ale za mało zastanawiają się co sami dają. Na tym polega cały dramat, tego wszystkiego co się kotłuje i tak dalej. Boję się, wie pani, boję się teraz są różne takie sprawy. Nie powinien tego pani mówić ale na przykład dla mnie takim klasycznym niebezpiecznym postacią, postaciami które w tej chwili wybierają wpływ na różne rzeczy są, jest tak zwany eklektyzm ideowy, eklektyzm ideowy. Macie w Anglii takiego premiera na razie Tony Blair, tak? To są tak praktyczni ludzie że aż czasami nie wiadomo o co chodzi. Eklektyzm, wie pani. To są wszystko ludzie którzy kiedyś byli Marksistami i teraz wiedzą że to się nie sprawdziło, to z od innej strony próbują to samo realizować. A ja wolę takich surowych ojców rodziny, bo są pewne rzeczy z których nie wolno zrezygnować.

ED: *Na przykład?*

KP: To się nazywa pewien kod antropologiczny. Dla mnie rada Europy która uchwała tezę że małżeństwa homoseksualne mogą wychowywać dzieci jest początkiem końca.

ED: *To znaczy, że Pan myśli że są takie podstawowe wartości?*

KP: Tak, ponieważ one sytuują nas, są podstawą początkiem i końcem wszystkiego. Jeżeli na przykład zakwestionujemy pojęcie rodziców to my kwestionujemy wszystko. Jeżeli dziecko ma być wychowywane przez osoby które są niezdolne do prokreacji, to jest okwestionowanie wszystkiego. Jeżeli uznamy związek homoseksualny za rodzinę, my możemy zaakceptować ten związek ale nie jako rodzinę, bo rodzina to jest pojęcie, ma desygnaty, i my nie możemy kwestionować takich rzeczy. Ja na przykład jestem za całkowitymi prawami dla homoseksualistów, wszystkich, za tym żeby oni żyli w związkach, małżeńskich nawet. Wszystko, wszystko, wszystko, absolutnie wszystko, jestem za totalnym równym uprawnieniem. Tylko nie wolno nazywać tego rodziną, bo to jest początek końca.

ED: *Czy Pan czytał autobiografię Kieślowskiego, O sobie?*

KP: Tak. To trzeba do tego podchodzić z ogromną ostrożnością. Ponieważ, to było nagrywane w biegu. On kręcił filmy. On nie wiedział że on umrze za chwilę. Tam wszystko trzeba rozwijać. Tam są niedopowiedzenia. To trzeba bardzo uważać.

ED: *Jest chyba bardzo wielu ironi w tym w ogóle?*

KP: Ironi, tak.

ED: *No bo na jednej stronie pisze że butelka mleka to stanowi tylko butelkę mleka, a potem pisze że sznurowadło Weroniki dotyczyło jej problemów z sercem. Myślałam właśnie że trzeba uważać z tym.*

KP: Przede wszystkim Kieślowski nie był intelektualistą. Był intuicjonistą. Był czystym człowiekiem. On się nigdy nie poddał żadnej spekulatywności.

ED: *I tak samo z Panem, czy Pan raczej ..?*

KP: Wie Pani, nie wiem, co tu o sobie mówić? Musiała pani przeczytać dziesiątki wywiadów ze mną i tak dalej, trudno o tym mówić. Ja oczywiście gdzieś głębiej wchodziłem w pewne rzeczy. Natomiast, nie ulega wątpliwości że Kieślowski przechodził pewną drogę, w którą ja chyba przeszedłem wcześniej. To jest droga o której dzisiaj mogę pani tylko powiedzieć że oprócz tego magnetofonu i paczki zapalek na stole jest coś więcej na świecie.

ED: *Pan chyba w ogóle jest bardziej religijny niż Kieślowski.*

KP: Wie pani, co to znaczy religijny?

ED: *Zgadzam się że fakt że się nie chodzi do kościoła to nie znaczy że się nie jest religijny, że się nie myśli o duszy i tak dalej.*

KP: Tak, tak. Ja mogę tylko pani powiedzieć tyle że są pewne filary których trzeba dotknąć. Mamy stare przymierze żydowskie, prawda? Mamy Boga. Mamy filozofię grecką, która nas uczy niesamowitych rzeczy, a przede wszystkim przyjmowania świata takim jakim on jest. I że nic się nikomu nie należy, taka prawda. I mamy pojawienie się młodego faceta który nazywa się Chrystus, który łączy stare przymierze, stary testament, z Antygoną. Antyгона mówi w pewnym momencie że lepiej słuchać Boga niż ludzi, prawda? Antyгона antycypuje jak gdyby chrześcijaństwo. Ja w tej chwili nie mówię teologicznie, ja mówię praktycznie, praktycznie. Z różnych przyczyn, żaden nikt się tym nie zajmował, skąd się pojawia taki facet, który tyle wie? Który praktycznie wie wszystko! Nie w sensie religijnym, bo wierzyć można w różne rzeczy, tylko w sensie psychologicznym. Jeżeli pani weźmie współczesne, nawięźniejsze opracowania psychologiczne, które są empirycznie sprawdzone, empirycznie powiadam, to się całkowicie pokrywają z nauczaniem Chrystusa. Nie w tym sensie teologicznym tylko w sensie praktycznym. Jeżeli pani weźmie kazanie na górze, który jest jeden z najwspanialszych tekstów literackich, w dziejach ludzkości, i pani zobaczy osiem błogosławieństw, to pani dzisiaj wie że jeżeli tych osiem błogosławieństw nie zostanie zrealizowanych w dwudziestym-pierwszym wieku w jakiejś części, to ten wiek się skończy katastrofą. Nota bene, pierwsze błogosławieństwo mówi 'Błogosławieni ubodzy w duchu, do nich będzie należyć królestwo niebieskie'. Ja to analizowałem bardzo długo i ja nie mogłem dojść dlaczego są ubogobławieni co są ubodzy w duchu, czyli mają mniejszą duszę, prawda? I znalazłem tłumaczenie angielskie z starego testamentu. I to jest tłumaczenie wielkie, i tam jest napisane 'Błogosławieni ci którzy wiedzą że są ubodzy w duchu' czyli wiedzą więcej, czy mają pokorę. I to już jest pierwsze błogosławieństwo, jest takie które gdyby to było spełnione, gdyby ludzie chcieli być tymi naznaczonymi, czyli błogosławionymi, i wiedzieli że nie wiedzą wszystkiego najlepiej ..

ED: *To to jest początek.*

KP: To jest początek. I ma pani osiem takich rzeczy, które stanowią korzenie możliwości współistnienia. Wie pani, potem były rewolucje, demokracje, prawa człowieka, a to wszystko jest gówno. Tam wszystko jest zapisane, tylko że głębiej, w oparciu o stary testament i o filozofie grecką. Wszystko jest. Wie pani, jest pytanie teraz, na przykład, to w sumie pasuje Chrystusie w tej chwili: skąd ten gość się wziął, który miał wszystko w małym palcu? Miał ostatnie sześćset lat w małym palcu. Skąd się wziął ten Żyd? Kim on był? Jakich miał nauczycieli? Skąd była ta wielkość, skąd te teksty są?

Czy one są sfabrykowane później, czy to są teksty który napisał jakiś instytut naukowy? Bo jeżeli nie to to znaczy że albo był to człowiek naznaczony przez Pana Boga albo geniusz który się nie pojawił w dziejach ludzkości następnych. I tego nie można odrzucić. Można nie wierzyć w Boga, można w ogóle nie wierzyć w nic ale tych tekstów nie można odrzucić.

APPENDIX

TRANSCRIPT OF TAPED INTERVIEW WITH KRZYSZTOF PIESIEWICZ 6th November 1998, Warsaw

ED: I've read English articles stating that Kieślowski put aside politics in the 1980s. Weren't you involved in politics during this time?

KP: It's quite simple. When I met Kieślowski he had a long career making documentaries behind him. In order to understand his films really deeply one has to know his documentary films because, as far as form and the ability to get to certain human mysteries with a camera or film are concerned, he obtained these things by virtue of his documentarist's perspicacity. Of course, documentaries were no longer enough for him and he later had to turn to fiction, to devising stories and so forth. When I met him I was a fairly sought-after young barrister concerned mainly with human rights. He had come from documentaries and from the cinema of 'moral concern', in which he made two or three popular films. After he got in touch with me we began to talk and he showed me the film *Blind Chance*, and I told him, 'Listen, you have a great potential for filmmaking because you're able to combine Hitchcock with Bergman, and this is the way in which contemporary films should be made'. It's the one hope of attracting people, by giving them suspense but simultaneously speaking about pain, about longing, joy, nostalgia etc.. On the whole, I consider Kieślowski's films to be a chance generally for film to continue to be an art, that is, if following his method. I think that if people don't follow in his cinematic footsteps then film will become, is becoming a trashy art-form, will become...[sic] I'm not saying that it will become a bad art-form but it will not answer those questions that people have asked since the dawn of time.

Those were our first meetings. I initially came to him with the idea of *No End*, which was based on a certain tragedy connected to the death of my friend, a barrister with whom I co-defended in political trials. Besides, in these political trials and in the film *No End* the issue was not so much one of politics as of certain dilemmas that I touched upon as counsel for the defence for these people: nationalism versus idealism; a certain national liberation movement versus a certain confusion resulting from the old system in which we then lived. And this is expressed in this film. I think that *No End* touches upon issues that are highly topical in Poland today, certain conflicts that were already part of the opposition's agenda. This film was made and after this film we were...[sic] I, so to speak, always distanced my public activity from my creative activity. After this film we were attacked by the opposition and by the communist authorities. We were attacked by the opposition because we had not made a crowd-pleasing film like Wajda's *Man of Iron* but a truthful film. Watching it now in retrospect I feel that it's really a not bad film which expresses the truth about that time, that it's the only such film, the only one, a very honest film.

In connection with this I once met with him in some café and said, 'Listen, we have to finish completely with politics, we have to finish with sociologically describing the world. We have to concentrate on the individual because in fact if throughout the world people everywhere accept democracy, even there where it doesn't exist, and if democracy determines the world in which we live and in what kind of atmosphere, then in fact the crucial factor is that which people carry inside of themselves. The sum of these individual attitudes forms a certain perspective, through voting and through other things.

Consequently, individual and specific human values are formed.' 'What do you mean?' I say, 'You know, it seems to me that we must tackle the Decalogue', and that was how it happened.

Apropos he asked me 'How do you want to do this?'. I said, 'It's simple. We have to describe ten cases of contemporary people, people who live in similar circumstances, and completely get away from Polishness, as this isn't important for people around the world and generally isn't important. A particular custom which is formed as the result of some situation is momentary, it isn't a lasting thing, it isn't of lasting worth.' For example, people queued for meat but it turned out in 1989 after three months that there was no longer anything to do with all the meat. Thus for me this wasn't crucial, more even, the shortage of meat often caused people to think more deeply than today.

Also these are extremely complex processes, very complicated. It turned out that these are important things, extremely important, but in fact, not so very crucial in terms of human values in connection with that which really troubles people, for which people really yearn. In any case, at that time there was a picture in the National Museum in Warsaw, which is now in the Mariacki Church in Gdańsk, that I kept going to see. It was a huge 14th century diptych and so forth, and accordingly we adopted an identical method: an account of human behaviour, in the context of the Decalogue, set in a specific time and place. And what happened after *The Decalogue*? *The Decalogue* became more important for people all over the world than for Poles in 1989, because Poles deemed that matters of such a truly deep and human nature are unimportant whereas it's important to become organised, right? The free market, commerce and so forth, business.

Of course, this is currently changing. *The Decalogue* is becoming a cult, not just among students in America, as I have heard—

ED: Really? In America?

KP: Yes. At present there's something of a love affair with it, since *The Decalogue* wasn't shown in America because of copyright problems. It's currently beginning to be shown in universities and so forth and people are beginning to go mad over it. And similarly, it's transpired that it's become just as important in Poland, but only now. It's already become some kind of model, a classic, but precisely because we fled from certain typical kinds of behaviour.

ED: It was more universal, wasn't it?

KP: Universal, right? People get the same stomach-aches in London as in Warsaw, they love one another the same in Warsaw except under different circumstances. They often have different problems. They know, for example, after the experiences of two hundred years that certain things should be avoided. Sometimes in Poland they'll still do one of these things but they're quicker to realise that it's not right, rather like a child who touches a hot stove. Because the forms of communication are different and the media is highly influential, people are more educated, hence they are quicker at transforming these experiences into custom and practice. But all these issues are the same: feelings, eroticism, a stomach-ache, love for children, hatred and so forth. They're all the same, right? Only the circumstances are different. And so, consequently, we made *The Decalogue*, and it's true that we fled from politics. However, in fact we didn't flee politics, but rather we touched upon the essence of the problem. Truly speaking, the Bolshevik revolution resulted from that which people carried around inside of themselves. For some reason they carried around hatred. The fact that Hitler began governing in Germany resulted from the fact that people chose him, hence they carried madness in themselves. The question that arises is from where does such madness come? How does hatred arise under certain circumstances? What are the psychological processes? And

that's why we decided to concentrate on this, on human beings. It's 1989 and I arrive with the concept of equality, liberty, and fraternity. I arrive at this because I see the Berlin Wall, that once again there will be a discussion as to what is liberty, what is fraternity amongst nations or people, what is equality? These slogans have always been present, except that after two hundred years we know that these slogans when used without mercy, without love, become, quite simply, profanities since we have millions of graves in the name of these slogans. In accordance with this, the point of departure in our film *Blue* is that people don't want to be free. People want only to be acted upon.

ED: I agree. It seems that since you began working with Kieślowski the films became more universal in nature. Did this result from your influence?

KP: I can only say that all of the films came from my inspiration, that is to say, from my thoughts, my ideas, my something or other, because that's the truth.

ED: I've also noticed that since you began to write screenplays together with Kieślowski the central characters have been women. Was this also a result of your input?

KP: I don't know. I simply know that as far as I'm concerned a woman is a far more interesting medium than a man.

ED: Really?

KP: Yes, for thousands of reasons.

ED: Kieślowski said that women are more sensitive.

KP: Either nature or God gave them quite simply a greater possibility for...[sic] Women, to larger extent, have a greater possibility of touching humanity. Quite simply, this is as much due to biological matters as to psycho-biological matters. For me, the act of lovemaking, or intercourse between a woman and a man...[sic] these are two fascinating, different worlds, right?

ED: They're certainly different worlds.

KP: After all, the reason is that it's almost as though a woman doesn't need the man. In my opinion this is why every woman who has given birth or pregnant woman, is a wonder. It seems to me that sensitive women who have enormous intuition, and who are also educated, are a far more interesting medium for someone who describes the human condition than men. That's how it seems to me. And that's why frequently when we looked for a leading character for the screenplays, the main protagonist would be a woman.

ED: But surely you and Kieślowski had to have a similar sensitivity and intuition? Otherwise, how else did you manage to write such screenplays?

KP: You have to know about such things. There's a particular male ethos that can often interfere, but one has to work on such things. One has to work on such things impartially, one has to open oneself to certain things. Of course, for me perhaps one of the most beautiful things that exists in the world is this difference between people and these different worlds that mutually fulfil one another and the moment when they complete one another.

ED: Do you mean that the difference is beautiful or the fulfilment?

KP: The fulfilment. And it's amazing. When does the unity arise? The unity arises in the real act of lovemaking.

ED: But surely this rarely takes place in your films?

KP: But there is a longing for the ideal, and at the same time we do believe that there are these two halves of one apple. Frequently it's difficult for them to find one another. That's why before Krzysztof died he and I wrote one final thing, the novella *Paradise*, in which we create such a situation, the two halves of an apple. I think that it depicts precisely this situation. These two halves find each other in very strange circumstances because she is, so to speak, a terrorist and he is a young policeman.

ED: *Is it set here in Poland?*

KP: No, in Italy. And it is...[sic] This trilogy will be made, because right now I'm making two trilogies: *Paradise, Hell, Purgatory* – *Paradise* was written with Kiesłowski, and I wrote *Hell* and *Purgatory* by myself – and a second trilogy, *Faith, Hope, Love*. I've already written *Faith* and *Hope*. And I'm making eight films for television, entitled *The Marked Ones*, here in Poland. *The Marked Ones* will consist of eight short films referring to the eight Beatitudes. And these will be made by Michał Rosa, the most gifted of young Polish directors.

ED: *And who is going to direct ?*

KP: In the West [i.e., *Paradise* etc.]? I'm not really able to say much about that just yet but it will be known in some two or three months, as shooting is likely to begin in the spring.

ED: *So the first film should be released in 2000?*

KP: I think so.

ED: *Will you continue to be involved with the filmmaking?*

KP: Yes, yes. I'll be...[sic] You know, I worked with Kiesłowski from the moment of the first sentence in the screenplay through to the final editing and assembly. I was present at the editing, I was present at everything. I don't know how relations will shape up with the directors now, but I hope that they will want the same, well, because the producer wants it.

ED: *Is Marin Karmitz still the producer?*

KP: No.

ED: *In the West people tend to think that Kiesłowski was a lonely person, that he did everything by himself, that he was a great "artist" ...*

KP: No. Kiesłowski was, above all, a great creator. He was the one to place the final dot above the 'i', but he formed a first-rate team.

ED: *This is exactly what interests me. In the West no one knew, for instance, that he had a family. Maybe they know that you and he wrote these films together.*

KP: Essentially, I would spend several hours a day with him, either physically, sitting and talking, or over the telephone. And this was for the last fifteen years of his life. Similarly, he was very close to Preisner, the composer.

ED: *Yes, and Sławomir Idziak, for instance.*

KP: Idziak and Sobociński. And obviously the composer as that is why the music is such as it is. Do you know Preisner's latest CD, *Requiem*?

ED: *I bought it today.*

KP: He was able to form a team of people. However, he worked with me on a daily basis. He was very close to his family, he was very close to his friends. Preisner rightly points out in one of his interviews that he has never had as much fun as when we three were together. He was neither a sad nor a lonely person. That's not true.

ED: *I agree. I bought some books in Poland a year ago and they contain photographs of him with his dogs, his wife, and his daughter. They're wonderful photographs, very happy and cheering, but no one knows about them in England. In England they think that he was lonely, that is to say, a great artist, but very private, with no close friends or family, and that he always unhappy about something.*

KP: He was unhappy, of course, but it was based on something else. It was based upon...[sic] I have the same thing inside of me. I have ..[sic] I am unable to live, and he was probably the same although we both had to do so at certain times, in a way that is, how do you say it in English? "Superficial"?

ED: *Yes, superficial.*

KP: A certain artificiality, right?

ED: Yes, a kind of shallowness.

KP: Right. And on the one hand, for instance, Kieślowski had gigantic American offers, millions of dollars, but even if he had wanted to he would not have been able to accept them. For example, when I was with him in America for the Oscars and we come down in the morning and someone came up to say he feels 'extremely well', well, quite simply this makes us want to puke. This is a certain convention and I understand this, I understand that it is better to live this way, except that this has nothing in common with artistic creativity. If a person lives in this kind of convention then the only type of films made will be American.

ED: Generally speaking, what do you think about American films, because I believe that Kieślowski wasn't particularly keen on them.

KP: No, it wasn't like that. American films, that is to say, about what precisely are we talking? Are we talking about the last five or ten years of American films? That's a tragedy. It is the domination of producers, producers to whom it seems that things can continue in this way for a long time, but in my opinion it is the road to disaster. To disaster! Alternatively we can talk, for instance, about Peter Bogdanovich or we can talk about the great American cinema of former years. After all, if we take *Midnight Cowboy* or if we take Peter Bogdanovich or...

ED: Hitchcock, perhaps?

KP: If we take Hitchcock, various things, well then finally we are getting somewhere, we get to some kind of great cinema.

ED: But you think that that's no longer the case now?

KP: I think that there is a very bad trend at the moment. This trend is tragic, not because American cinema is thus at the moment, but because young people currently obtain ninety percent of their information about human affairs from the visual arts. They read less and so the visual arts have to take upon themselves the role of asking questions about the present, the future, and the past; this medium must concern itself with question of the point of life, with the question of humanity. And if filmmaking were to be made in the manner of Kieślowski, so as to be both attractive and profound, then film will be able to cope with this. Otherwise, however, it must lead to catastrophe, to some kind of catastrophe. After all, if you pose the question of euthanasia, then, from the point of view of logic, of the pace of life, everyone will say it's OK. Why shouldn't we have it? It's only if a person reflects upon the subject, about that which mankind has undergone, and about the fact that humans are flawed and can not touch certain issues... [sic] but this is a discussion that must be carried out at some level. One has to prepare people for certain questions, for solutions. We already know that we can blow up the entire world, but what matters is to contrive a better way of living, what matters is why a certain spirituality and transcendence is necessary. It may seem not to be necessary, but it is necessary because through it we differ from, from...

ED: From animals?

KP: From animals. Human beings are somewhere in the middle, right? The written word is in crisis, not because it's generally in crisis, but please note, which authors are the most popular? It is those who are beginning to write using pictures. After all, currently there's a crazy amount of Anglo-Saxon writers who sell huge numbers of books. It's mostly literature, for example, I've noted the sales of my screenplays.

ED: They're very popular, aren't they?

KP: Yes, but it's a tragedy, it's a tragedy, because people want to read pictures but it's obvious that a screenplay is semi-finished product, that only a sensitive director, a cameraman, can take it and make some kind of metaphysics out of it. Hence, the situation

is fairly grave. I'm not criticising that which is going on in cinemas in America because it's their affair. It's just that it's dangerous from this [i.e., KP's] point of view.

ED: What do you think about Polish cinema or Polish television?

KP: There is no Polish cinema.

ED: Really?

KP: There is no Polish cinema. There's a great crisis, a great tragedy. It's extremely tragic because people are always imitating something. The old masters are no longer able to tell stories.

ED: What about Wajda, Zanussi, or Holland?

KP: They're nothing, nothing.

ED: And are the new directors also no good?

KP: They have to be given a chance. Right now I'm working with Michał Rosa, thirty-two years old, a young man, and he wants something, he wants to do his own thing. There's a chance for him to do so. He made this Polish film last year called *Paint*, which was very interesting, very honest, harsh, rough, touching upon truths and not that which is superficial. After all, the publicity and everything that is going on here is deceptive, but somewhere in the centre there are dramas and he shows these dramas.

ED: You mentioned books earlier. I read somewhere that Kieślowski claimed to take his ideas mostly from books, from Dostoyevski, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, and Kafka.

KP: No, that's nonsense. We are all educated, we have all read something. Every one of us who is wise, that is, maybe not wise, that was badly expressed, but who tries to behave prudently, judiciously, knows that nobody can think up something truly new, that everything has already been done, and maybe even done in greater depth. Hence, we are always referring to something. However, what he and I did in terms of film, the language of film...[sic] For instance, I believe that good literature and good drama can not be adapted into film.

ED: Really?

KP: Yes, because only the storyline can remain. These are different means of expression.

ED: In that case, why didn't you or Kieślowski simply write stories instead of screenplays?

KP: We always began by writing a story, but it would be a story that conformed to a filmic means of expression. The problem lies in the fact that there is physical action and physical action can be represented with visual images. However, the greatest mystery is that of emotional action and how to arrange images in such a way as to show what a person has inside of himself as well as the physical action. Literature and poetry have developed certain forms over hundreds of years and now one has to work extremely hard, one has to put a lot of effort into creating a filmic means of expression, because it is possible. All the technology that surrounds us gives greater and greater possibilities. More people who go to the cinema and watch films are increasingly prepared for abbreviations and synthesis. Young people watch pop videos. Ninety-five percent of pop videos are shit but there is five percent that are works of art, that are able, in the space of two or three minutes, to relate a person's history, his problems, his tragedy, his despair, his emotions, nostalgia, etc.. Hence, people who are currently going to the cinema are prepared for a form that might even be difficult, are prepared for certain signs, for certain allegories. But one has to work on this, one has to have ideas for this. Of course, it's very easy to have someone kill a person, then they chase him and so forth for two hours. However, to be able to talk about real psychological mechanisms, about real human priorities, about real human occurrences...[sic] For instance, when watching a film I'm

not interested in the fact that someone shoots another person. I'm interested in why someone shoots and what should be done after the shooting.

ED: That's the basis of A Short Film about Killing, right?

KP: Yes. It's what interests me. For instance, all the screenplays that I'm writing currently begin with scenes that would be the climactic scenes in ordinary films. For instance, some one jumps through a window, and that's how I begin. Someone falls under a car, and with that I begin the film.

ED: Isn't that the case with the Three Colours trilogy? Kieślowski said that the final scene, in which several people from the ferry are saved, is the beginning. It was generally read as being a happy ending in which the main protagonists are saved, but he said that it was actually the beginning of the trilogy and that he had chosen these people just as he chose those from the apartment-block in The Decalogue.

KP: Yes. The business with the ending is quite simple. We thought up this ending in Paris in order to close the three films, and it doesn't depend on the fact that they in particular were chosen. It's something different. An intelligent person will come to the conclusion that these people were saved but they deserved to be so.

ED: Did the others not deserve it as well?

KP: I don't know. It's simply that they behaved during their lives in such a way that they deserved it. They deserved it. Julia from *Blue* is a wonderful woman, the kind of woman whom one very rarely meets, a woman who so loved her husband who died that she accepted his pregnant lover. The entire *Decalogue* is constructed in this manner. The main argument underlying *The Decalogue* is this: there is no such thing as a situation without a solution.

ED: You really think so? There's no situation without a solution?

KP: There isn't. There are extremities but these are not up to us. All situations that depend upon us, upon our decision, are situations from which a way out can be found.

ED: But how does one differentiate between these two types?

KP: I can give you dozens of examples. If you fall under a car then you have no choice. It's fate, it's fate's judgement. If a plane falls from the sky, you don't have a chance. But if your husband has been unfaithful to you then you have a choice, if you truly love him. If pride alone is the motivator...[sic] the second part of *The Decalogue* is a perfect example of the fact that if one accepts human nature and is able to forgive, and not merely hate, then one can build a wonderful world. But the hero of *The Decalogue, 2* has to reach rock bottom in order to accept the child and say at the end, 'We are going to have a baby', although it is not his child.

ED: But surely he doesn't know that it is not his child?

KP: He knows, of course he knows. He's not an idiot.

ED: I've already mentioned that Kieślowski's films are regarded as being very serious. Of course, they are serious as they deal with weighty issues, but surely they also have elements of comedy?

KP: When I met him I always dreamed about making real comedies with him.

ED: Surely White is a comedy?

KP: Yes, exactly. For instance, for me the funniest people are those who are good, who are good by nature, and want too much. And for me there are two or three models that are very close to what I wanted and which I was able to produce twice with Kieślowski. I considered him to have an enormous sense of humour, which made its mark in the film *Personnel*, for example, in '75. And I always pressed him to do comedy, even though he didn't want to despite enjoying doing so, because he feared it as he considered it to be the most difficult of forms. It's what I term the climate or style that comes from as far back as Brueghel, which we next had in *The Good Soldier Svejk*, which we had in Chaplin,

which we had in some dramatic fragments or in the whole of Shakespeare's dramas, and this is the great touching upon of humanity. I call it the story about the mouse that fell into some milk and paddled its feet so that eventually it was left standing on top of butter. And so twice, laughing, we wrote two screenplays. One is *White*, which is about Poles. For me Karol is the quintessence of a common Polish mentality.

ED: *So is his wife the quintessence of Frenchness?*

KP: No. In any case, I don't want to talk about France.

ED: *No?*

KP: No, because I know nothing about it. I lived there for quite a while but for me...[sic] Because Poles are called romantics but in reality the romanticism of the average Pole is on a par with that of Karol, the hairdresser. And this hairdresser, a romantic, collides with the brutal mechanism of the free market in Poland. Well, and he changes from a romantic into a fighting, cynical guy. But at the end he looks once again through a window as though at the Virgin Mary, for contact. There's a scene where he buys land from a peasant and he's brushing his hair in the morning and the Virgin Mary is there. Mummy, mama, right, because there's a cult of this in Poland. And it seems to me that Karol is a kind of personification of the average Pole after 1989, after the spectre of communism. In any case, a phenomenal example since I don't know if you were here in Poland fifteen years ago.

ED: *No.*

KP: Well, you know, there have been changes. This country, of course, is as it is because it has emerged from two hundred years of captivity yet it was able to retain its own way of life, and so in the course of eight years there is now almost no difference in some areas between Poland and certain Western countries.

ED: *I know. I came here for the first time in '89 and the difference now is enormous.*

KP: Yes. Still, these are things. We show this person who paddles his feet yet simultaneously has these simple kinds of romantic feelings and wants to avenge all his, so to speak, injuries and so forth. The second film that is also based upon the Brueghelesque-Chaplinesque convention is the tenth part of *The Decalogue*, about stamps.

ED: *The same brothers as in White, right?*

KP: Yes. In any case, I think that I can give three examples from all these screenplays of a very modern kind of thinking about film and modern construction of a screenplay. They are *The Decalogue*, *10*, *A Short Film about Killing*, and *Red*. These are examples of extremely complexly-constructed screenplays – and also *The Double Life of Véronique* – where fairly fast-moving stories are told, quite involving stories, with suspense and tension, yet which simultaneously hold some mystery within themselves, always have a second meaning. I remember how I had a nomination for an Oscar for the screenplay of *Red*, and sitting next to me was a young thirty-two-year old screenwriter who also had a nomination. He was called Avery and he had a nomination for *Pulp Fiction*. Of course, I knew that he would get the Oscar because it would be impossible for it to happen otherwise in America. And anyway, just getting the nomination itself...[sic] And after the announcement he comes out, returns, takes me by the hand and says 'Don't worry about it. I learned how to write screenplays from the tenth part of *The Decalogue*.

ED: *That's great!*

KP: Yes, yes. Hence I think that *10* also possesses a very interesting kind of structure.

ED: *Pulp Fiction also won the Palme D'Or at Cannes, right?*

KP: Yes, there was outrage.

ED: *I remember that it was also seen as scandalous in England. It's a pity as I must say that I prefer Red to Pulp Fiction. Now, Reservoir Dogs is a great film but Pulp Fiction...*

KP: You know, it's a wall, it's the rock bottom. That is to say, it can go no further, nothing can result from it. People turn into automatons. It has only one virtue, which is that it reflects the climate and energy of contemporary culture and contemporary life.

ED: Yes, it's a film for young people.

KP: Yes, inasmuch as it's photography. However, it's tragic as it doesn't bring about any concentration. I believe that what is absolutely indispensable and essential at this moment in contemporary culture and the contemporary world is prayer, allegorically or metaphorically speaking of course. There is a need for prayer, that is to say, a need for concentration. And perhaps there is a need for confession and prayer.

ED: There is very little of either in the West.

KP: Yes.

ED: Maybe there is more here in Poland.

KP: I travel a lot. I meet with students in Spain, in Italy, in France, in America, two weeks ago I was in Slovenia, and so forth. Young people are all the same, they are the same everywhere right now. I'm talking about our circle of civilisation, I'm not talking about lunatics, about some kind of fundamentalists and so forth. I'm talking about young people. People are the same. And these films meet with an identical reception everywhere. It's extraordinary, it's extraordinary. And there's an absolute longing for this confession and for this prayer. Of course, I'm not talking about prayer here in terms of religion. I'm talking about some kind of concentration, some kind of retreat, self-reflection.

ED: About the soul.

KP: Yes. More. When in Slovenia I had a conversation about erotic issues, about sexual issues, about love and so forth. And yet, all these conversations are in complete opposition to this whole culture. And I fear only one thing, namely, that if one does not speak out against these conversations and what one hears in them, then in ten, fifteen, twenty years they may bring about a call for a new ideology. And that would be a tragedy.

ED: Do you mean a political or moral ideology?

KP: No, simply an ideology, a new ideology. We already know from of the whole of the twentieth century, from the experiences of totalitarianism, communism, fascism, everything, we know that there are no good ideologies, none. We know perfectly well upon which everything really depends. It depends on goodwill amongst people and on the understanding that nobody is right. And there is a problem now, for instance, that practicalness can not be absolute. The elites can not rely upon the fact that they alone are competent. Authorities can not claim authority. For instance, right now we have the various foundations owned by men who make enormous amounts of money by speculating on the markets, and they attempt to touch upon everything, philosophy, sociology, morality, ethics and so forth. What the fuck is all this? What is all this about, who are these men? What is this? You open some newspaper and some shaven-headed actress talks about how one should live. There are no great authorities or professors any longer, there are no great people any longer. Well, and who remains? There's Wojtyła, the Pope, but they also attack him because he has a different religious persuasion. Yet he is the one person in whom one can have one hundred percent faith because it's clear that he isn't manipulative.

ED: But that's not how it's seen in the West. There they think that all this is old-fashioned and no longer important.

KP: Well then it's the end, it's the end. People will always use condoms and will always have abortions, but someone has to say that this is not right. I spoke with Wojtyła not

long ago for an hour, and he told me 'Of course abortions will take place because that's how people are, but am I supposed to say that this is right?'

ED: *In The Decalogue, 1 the father is called Krzysztof, and he is the first of the protagonists lacking authority, because generally there is a lack of authority in The Decalogue. I assume that this refers also to you and Kieślowski, given that you both have the name 'Krzysztof'.*

KP: Yes.

ED: *In The Double Life of Véronique there are two versions of one life, and in Blind Chance there are three versions—*

KP: *The Double Life of Véronique* is about...[sic] Let me tell you something. If you're planning to write seriously about these things, when are you supposed to write this PhD?

ED: *I've just begun it. I have another 3 or so years.*

KP: Right, so maybe we can meet up again and talk about it.

ED: *OK, thank you.*

KP: These are very complicated issues. You know, Kieślowski died at the age of fifty-four years. I think that it was no accident that he died. Today I know that one pays the price for certain things. This work isn't only of a physical nature but it also causes moral deterioration. And I believe that in a great many of the films that we made together there is a kind of intuitive foreshadowing of what will happen. One's psychological and physical conditions pay terribly for a certain effort of struggling through, of breaking through, certain situations. After all, in order to achieve such a position in the world and to receive four Oscar nominations for *Red*,¹ in these times, you understand, leaving Warsaw, that this is no easy matter. What terrible strength you must possess, how you must work, how much you have to say, and how you have to be able to talk to the media in order for all this to come about. How we had to work in Poland in order to have the production of *The Decalogue* accepted under the communist system. They accepted it in '86 out of fear, because the system was coming to an end. There was the battle with the Church in Poland, because atheism was the ideology, and in schools they taught that God is the opium of the masses. And anyway, you see, you have to pay for this. And in *The Double Life of Véronique*...

ED: *Weronika, the Polish girl, pays for it, right?*

KP: Well, she wanted a little bit too much.

ED: *Do you think that it's better to be like the singer in The Decalogue, 9, who wanted only this much? [Holds finger and thumb a little apart]*

KP: That's how the screenplay started.

ED: *Is it better to be like that, or to be somebody who wants everything?*

KP: I don't have an answer for that. I can only tell you that if I were starting my life anew today, then I might become an astronomer, a mathematician, I might take up music.

ED: *But not law?*

KP: I'm busy with dozens of things. I'm a senator, I'm a barrister, I'm a political commentator, I write a lot. At the moment I spend on tenth of my life in aeroplanes. Quite simply, I'm running out of strength. And what really counts is some kind of coherent, warm, world filled with love, and some minimal financial means that allow one to live independently. All the rest is a trap.

ED: *Do you think that it's better in Poland now that there is no more of this kind of dependence?*

KP: That has nothing to do with it. I'm talking about something different, because even under communism one could have some kind of independence. I'm talking about family,

¹ Actually three.

about close friends, about books, about children. What is all this? I look at the high-rise buildings being built in Warsaw, and they're some kind of erections, they're some kind of penises. What's it all for? What's the sense of it? What is all this? Isn't it better to have lower ones, somehow nicer, somehow different... You've noticed, for instance, that I have this [points to his mobile telephone] because I have to have it. And what, am I any the better for it?

ED: It's rather unlikely.

KP: Some five or six years ago Spielberg came to Paris and invited us over, because he was making *Schindler's List*, to tell him how things were in Poland and so forth. We were then living in Paris. I walk into the Ritz and in the middle of their suite stands a fax, working constantly. How can such a person produce art? It is completely impossible, it is completely impossible. To produce art one needs a piece of paper and a pencil. No machine is necessary, a hotel perhaps. These machines can do something, but it's all... [sic] And then you have a film like his latest one, what's it called?

ED: Saving Private Ryan.

KP: Yes. And, well, it's seemingly horrifying but is there any conclusion to be drawn from it?

ED: Not really. I don't like it that much but it's very popular. As for when you're writing screenplays, you seem to be thinking not merely about Poland but about universal issues, so that everyone, rather than Poles alone, can understand them.

KP: I truly believe that if you meet a goatherd in Turkey who runs around after goats, and if you accept the world in which he lives, his falling-apart hut, the goats, his dirty trousers, the bucket in which he washes himself, if you sit down and look deep into his eyes, then his basic question is 'How to live?'. Because generally speaking it's not a question of whether you live in a palace or whether you live in that goat's mess, because everyone can find peace.

ED: You mean of an inner kind?

KP: Yes. And in that lies the heart of the matter. The question that Kiesłowski and I always asked was 'What is the most important thing in life?'. Peace. Can one attain it? One cannot, but the whole mystery of mankind depends upon this. However, the road to it is an interesting one.

ED: Have you read The Birch Wood? The last line in it is 'Peace, peace, happiness almost'.

KP: Yes, yes. And I must tell you that people demand too much from others. Of course, they can demand something from others, but they don't think enough about what they themselves are giving. This tragedy of all this rushing and agitation and so forth rests upon this. I'm afraid, you know, I'm afraid of various issues now. I shouldn't be telling you this but for me, for instance, a classic example of a dangerous person, of those people who currently enjoy great influence over various things is, it's the so-called ideological eclecticism, ideological eclecticism. In England you currently have Tony Blair for a prime minister, right? These are such practical people that sometimes you don't know what they're on about. Eclecticism, you know. These are all people who used to be Marxists and now know that that didn't stand the test, so they're trying to attain the same thing from another angle. I, however, prefer harsh patriarchs because there are certain things that can not be abandoned.

ED: For example?

KP: It's what one might call a certain anthropological code. For me, a European Council that passes the proposition that homosexual couples are allowed to bring up children is the beginning of the end.

ED: That is to say, you believe that certain fundamental values exist?

KP: Yes, because they situate us, they are the basis of the beginning and end of everything. If, for example, we question the concept of the family, then we question everything. If a child is to be brought up by people who are unable to procreate, then this is a questioning of everything. If we recognise a homosexual relationship as a family, we can accept this relationship but not as a family, because the family is a concept, it has designations, and we cannot question such things. I for instance am in favour of complete rights for homosexuals, of everything, of their living together in relationships, even marital ones. Everything, everything, everything, absolutely everything. I'm in favour of completely equal rights. But they cannot be called families, because this is the beginning of the end.

ED: *Have you read Kieślowski's autobiography, Kieślowski on Kieślowski?*

KP: Yes. It has to be approached with great care, since it was recorded on the run. He was making films. He didn't know that he was to die shortly. Everything in it has to be unravelled. It fails to answer all questions. One has to be very careful.

ED: *Doesn't it also have a lot of irony as well?*

KP: Irony, yes.

ED: *For example, on one page he writes that a bottle of milk can only signify a bottle of milk, and then a few pages later he says that Weronika's shoe-lace symbolises her heart problems. I guessed that one has to take immense care with it.*

KP: Kieślowski, above all, was not an intellectual. He was an intuitive person. He was a pure person. He never gave in to speculation.

ED: *And are you the same?*

KP: I don't know. What can I say about myself? You'd have to read the dozens of interviews that have been carried out with me and so forth, as it's difficult for me to say. Of course, I went more deeply into certain things. However, there's no doubt that Kieślowski was undergoing a certain journey that I had probably undergone earlier. All I can tell you about this journey today is that there's more to life other than this dictaphone and the box of matches on the table.

ED: *You're more religious than Kieślowski, aren't you?*

KP: What does "religious" mean?

ED: *OK, so the fact that one doesn't go to church doesn't mean that one isn't religious, or that one doesn't reflect upon one's soul and so on.*

KP: Yes, yes. All I can tell you is that there are certain pillars that must be touched upon. We have the old Jewish covenant, right? We have God. We have Greek philosophy, which teaches us amazing things, but, above all, to accept the world as it is. And that nobody deserves anything, that's the truth. And we have the appearance of this young guy called Christ, who combines the old covenant, the Old Testament, with Antigone. Antigone says at one point that it is better to listen to God than to people, right? It's as though Antigone anticipates Christianity. I not talking about theology here, I'm talking in practical terms, practical. For various reasons no one's bothered with how such a guy could appear, who knows so much, who knows practically everything. Not in terms of religion, because one can believe in various things, but in terms of psychology. If you take the most outstanding contemporary psychological studies, which have been empirically tested, I'm talking empirically, they completely agree with Christ's teaching. Not in a theological sense but in a practical sense. If you take the Sermon on the Mount, which is one of the most wonderful literary texts in history of mankind, and if you look at the eight Beatitudes, then you know now that if these eight Beatitudes are not fulfilled in some part in the twenty-first century, then this century will end in disaster. *Nota bene*, the first beatitude says 'Blessed are the poor in heart, for the kingdom of heaven shall belong to them'. I spent a long time analysing this and I couldn't figure out why the poor

in heart are blessed, because they have smaller hearts, right? And I found an English translation of the Old Testament. It's a great translation and it said, 'Blessed are those who know that they are poor in heart', that is, who know more, who have humility. And this is just the first beatitude which, if fulfilled, if people wanted to be marked by it, that is, blessed by it, and if they knew that they don't know everything for the best...

ED: It's a start.

KP: It's a start. And you have eight of these things, which constitute the roots of the possibility of coexistence. Later there were revolutions, democracies, the rights of man, but that's all shit. Everything is written there only more profoundly, based on the Old Testament and Greek philosophy. It's all there. You know, now there's a question, for instance, which is suited to Christ at this moment: whence did this person come who had everything in his little finger? He had the past six hundred years in his little finger. Where did this Jew come from? Who was he? Who were his teachers? Where did this greatness come from, where are these texts from? Were they fabricated later on, were these texts written by some institute of education? Because if not it means that either this was a person marked by God or else a genius who has never since appeared in the history of mankind. And this cannot be ignored. You don't have to believe in God, you don't have to believe in anything, but these texts cannot be ignored.

FILMOGRAPHY

This filmography provides brief production details as well as a short synopsis of each of Kieślowski's films. The production information has been derived from the films, film credits, and from various filmographies published in Poland and England, while the synopses are my own.

The following abbreviations have been used:

<i>bw</i>	black and white
<i>col</i>	colour
<i>d</i>	director
<i>ed</i>	editor
<i>m</i>	minutes
<i>m</i>	music
<i>p</i>	producer/production company
<i>ph</i>	cinematographer
<i>w</i>	writer

Readers requesting a more detailed filmography, including details of awards won by Kieślowski, are advised to use that compiled by Paul Coates in Paul Coates (ed.), *Lucid Dreams: The Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski*, Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1999, pp.175-187.

Tramwaj

The Tram

Short feature

Poland 1966 6m bw

A boy runs and catches an almost-empty night-time tram. Attracted to a pretty girl, he tries to get her attention, then watches her as she sleeps. He gets off at his stop, leaving the girl behind, but upon second thoughts he once again runs after the tram.

p Łódź Film School *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski

ph Zdzisław Kaczmarek

main cast Jerzy Braszka, Maria Janiec

Urząd

The Office

Documentary

Poland 1966 6m bw

Based in a Social Security office, the film observes the interaction between claimants and staff over an unspecified period of time.

p Łódź Film School *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski

ph Lechosław Trzęsowski

Koncert życzeń

Concert of Requests

Short feature

Poland 1967 17m bw

A coach-party of youths stops by a lake, where the young people drink and have a rowdy time. One of the party is a bespectacled loner who goes off by himself. He watches a young couple who have been camping by the lake and are at odds with each other as they pack their bags and ride off on a motorbike. The coach-party also departs and the driver finds a bag dropped by the girl from the young couple. The couple return for the bag, which the girl claims contains her identity papers. A tense situation arises when the coach-driver demands that the girl join the coach-party if she is to have her bag back but eventually her boyfriend finds that in fact he has her papers and they ride off together, watched by the bespectacled youth.

p Łódź Film School *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski
ph Lechosław Trzęsowski *ed* Janina Grosicka
main cast Jerzy Fedorowicz, Ewa Konarska

Zdjęcie

The Photograph

Documentary

Poland 1968 32m bw

Kieślowski is given an old photograph of two little boys. He goes in search of these two boys, now grown men, and encounters their neighbours and relatives. Eventually he meets the men themselves and films them as they look upon the photograph of themselves.

p Polish Television *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Marek Józwiak *ed* Niusia Ciucka

Z miasta Łodzi

From the City of Łódź

Documentary

Poland 1969 17m bw

A portrait of Łódź and its inhabitants, showing the decrepit post-war state of the city and depicting the townspeople at work and at play.

p Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Janusz Kreczmański, Piotr Kwiatkowski, Stanisław Niedbalski *ed* Elżbieta Kurkowska, Lidia Zonn

Bylem żołnierzem

I Was a Soldier

Documentary

Poland 1970 16m bw

Kieślowski interviews a handful of ex-combatants, all of whom lost their sight as a result of war. They talk about their disability, their suffering, and their hopes.

p Czołówka *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Ryszard Zgórecki *ph* Stanisław Niedbalski

Fabryka

The Factory

Documentary

Poland 1970 17m bw

A film about the Ursus tractor factory. The camera alternates between showing the workers, as they set about their daily toil, and a management board meeting, the members of which are unable to agree with one another. As the meeting progresses, it becomes apparent that despite the workers' best efforts, the factory is on its last legs as a result of shortages and bureaucracy at the national level.

p Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Stanisław Niedbalski, Jacek Tworek *ed* Maria Leszczyńska

Przed rajdem

Before the Rally

Documentary

Poland 1971 15m bw

Kieślowski films the Polish Fiat team as they prepare for the Monte Carlo rally. Although the car is eventually overhauled to the point that it can be entered for the race, the team never completes the competition.

p Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Piotr Kwiatkowski, Jacek Petrycki *ed* Lidia Zonn

Refren

Refrain

Documentary

Poland 1972 10m bw

A film concerning the bureaucracy involved in making funeral arrangements in Poland. The dead figure only as paperwork and their relatives' emotions disappear amongst the facts and figures.

p Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Witold Stok *ed* Maryla Czolnik

Między Wrocławiem a Zieloną Górą

Between Wrocław and Zielona Góra

Documentary (commissioned)

Poland 1972 10m col

A film about the city of Lublin and all it has to offer to prospective inhabitants.

p Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych, commissioned by Lublin Copper Mine
d Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Jacek Petrycki *ed* Lidia Zonn

Podstawy BHP w kopalni miedzi

The Principles of Safety and Hygiene in a Copper Mine

Documentary (commissioned)

Poland 1972 21m bw

An instructional film about the conditions of safety and hygiene in the Lublin copper mine.

p Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych, commissioned by Lublin Copper Mine
d Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Jacek Petrycki *ed* Lidia Zonn

Robotnicy '71: nic o nas bez nas

Workers '71: Nothing About Us Without Us

Documentary

Poland 1972 46m bw

A broad picture of the Polish workers' state of mind in 1971, following strikes in December 1970 and the downfall of Gomułka, then president. Despite changes made by the directors to make the film more palatable to the authorities and censors, it was later re-edited by Polish Television and released under the title *Gospodarze (Masters)*.

p Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Tomasz Zygadło, Wojciech Wiszniewski, Paweł Kędziński, Tadeusz Walendowski *ph* Witold Stok, Stanisław Mroziuk, Jacek Petrycki *ed* Lidia Zonn, Maryla Czołnik, Joanna Dorożyńska, Daniela Cieplińska

Murarz

The Bricklayer

Documentary

Poland 1973 17m col

A documentary that follows Józef, a bricklayer, as he prepares for and participates in a May Day celebration. He recounts how he joined the Party in his youth and worked as an activist. In later years, however, he became disillusioned with his masters and resigned from the Party, deciding to concentrate upon his bricklaying.

p Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Witold Stok *ed* Lidia Zonn

Przejście podziemne

Pedestrian Subway

Television drama

Poland 1973 30m bw

A teacher seeks out his wife, who has left him and her own job as a teacher to work in a crafts shop in a pedestrian subway in Warsaw. He attempts to convince her over the course of one night to return to him and her former profession but as they talk the faults in their relationship become increasingly apparent.

p Polish Television *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Ireneusz Iredyński, Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Sławomir Idziak *ed* Elżbieta Kurkowska, J. Wiśniewska
main cast Teresa Budzisz-Krzyżanowska, Andrzej Seweryn

Prześwietlenie

X-Ray

Documentary

Poland 1974 12m col

A film about a group of tuberculosis patients. They speak of their reactions to the disease, their fears, and their hopes for the future.

p Jerzy Tomaszewicz *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Jacek Petrycki *ed* Lidia Zonn

Pierwsza miłość

First Love

Documentary (television)

Poland 1974 50m col

A film documenting the emotional but more often bureaucracy-induced trials of a young couple as the girl undergoes a pregnancy, she and her boyfriend are married, and finally the baby is born.

p Polish Television *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Jacek Petrycki *ed* Lidia Zonn

Życiorys

Curriculum Vitae

Drama Documentary

Poland 1975 45m bw

A Party Control Committee, composed of real-life Committee members, cross-examines a Party member threatened with expulsion from the Party. Although the life-story of the accused is fictional, the actor playing the role underwent a similar experience in his own life, and the Committee members treat him as they would any real-life Party member.

The film also exists in a shorter version known as *Krótki życiorys (Short Curriculum Vitae)*.

p Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Janusz Fastyn, Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Jacek Petrycki *ed* Lidia Zonn

Personel

Personnel

Television drama

Poland 1975 67m col

Romek, a shy young man, joins the opera where he works as a tailor. He is entranced by the arts but is also repeatedly confronted by the ugly reality behind the scenes of infighting, jealousies, and corruption. As Romek becomes more and more caught up in life at the opera house and is invited to join a committee of opera-workers, his friend and fellow tailor runs into conflict with an arrogant singer. Romek is asked to denounce his friend and the film ends upon the former being faced with a sheet of paper on which he must either defend or condemn his friend.

p Polish Television/Tor *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Witold Stok *ed* Lidia Zonn
main cast Juliusz Machulski, Michał Tarkowski, Irena Lorentowicz, Włodzimierz Boruński

Szpital

The Hospital

Documentary

Poland 1976 21m bw

A film following a group of orthopaedic surgeons as they go about a thirty-two hour shift. Despite the appalling conditions in which they have to work, the doctors retain their humanity and good humour.

p Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Jacek Petrycki *ed* Lidia Zonn

Blizna

The Scar

Feature

Poland 1976 104m col

Bednarz, a Party man, is given the job of manager at a new chemical plant being built in a town in which he used to live. He has unpleasant memories of the town but sets about his job in the belief that he can please both the townspeople and the authorities. However, his good intentions come to nothing: the townspeople remain unhappy with the plant; the plant itself has been built and is run along corrupt lines; and Bednarz is too intransigent and insensitive to those about him. Finally, he gives up his post.

p Tor *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, based on a story by Romuald Karas *dialogue* Romuald Karas, Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Sławomir Idziak *ed* Krystyna Górnicka

main cast Franciszek Pieczka, Mariusz Dmochowski, Jerzy Stuhr, Jan Skotnicki, Stanisław Igar, Stanisław Michalski, Michał Tarkowski

Klaps

Slate

Short feature (compilation of out-takes from *Blizna (The Scar)*)

Poland 1976 6m col

d Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Sławomir Idziak *ed* E. Dmitroca**Spokój**

The Calm

Television drama

Poland 1976 82m col

Antek Gralak is released from prison and goes to work on a building site. All he wants are basic necessities, including work, a home, food, a wife, and in particular peace. He is friendly to his co-workers and boss alike and begins a relationship with a young woman. However, after getting married he finds himself torn between his conflicting colleagues and boss. Both sides expect his loyalty. Hoping to make a deal on behalf of his friends, he goes to see his boss but discovers that the latter has planned to sack everyone apart from himself. He leaves his boss's home in disgust to be set upon by his former friends, who think he has betrayed him and beat him up.

p Polish Television *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, based on a story by Lech Borski *dialogue* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Jerzy Stuhr *ph* Jacek Petrycki *ed* Maryla Szymańska *m* Piotr Figiel

main cast Jerzy Stuhr, Izabella Olszewska, Jerzy Trela, Michał Szulkiewicz, Danuta Ruksza, Jerzy Fedorowicz, Elżbieta Karkoszka

Z punktu widzenia nocnego portiera

From a Night Porter's Point of View

Documentary

Poland 1977 17m col

A portrait of Marian Osuch, a factory porter who likes to apply the disciplinary and authoritarian features of his professional job to all aspects of life. Osuch's often despotic views coincide with those of the Party, of whom he is a supporter, but Kieślowski's film

is a sympathetic portrayal of a complicated man.

p Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Witold Stok *ed* Lidia Zonn *m* Wojciech Kilar

Nie wiem

I Don't Know

Documentary

Poland 1977 46m bw

The former director of a factory talks about how in attempting to eradicate corruption and incompetence in the workplace he found himself increasingly at odds with the workers but also his Party bosses. As the film progresses, the former manager's narrative becomes ever bleaker.

p Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Jacek Petrycki *ed* Lidia Zonn

Siedem kobiet w różnym wieku

Seven Women of Different Ages

Documentary

Poland 1978 16m bw

The seven ages of man is refigured in the form of seven ballerinas of different ages. With each female corresponding to a different day of the week, Kieślowski explores the changes undergone over the course of life.

Amator

Camera Buff

Feature

Poland 1979 108m col

Filip Mosz buys a film-camera with which to record the life of his new baby but quickly becomes interested in filming subjects other than his family. His bosses encourage him to film events taking place at the workplace but they also begin to censor his efforts. After winning a prize at a film festival, Filip is increasingly taken up by his filming at the expense of his family, and his wife eventually leaves him. Naively convinced of the truth of his films, Filip makes a documentary about misappropriation of town funds without realising that the money has been used for other beneficial project and causes the sacking of one of his bosses. Disenchanted, he exposes his film-stock. The film ends with Filip turning the camera upon himself.

p Tor *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski *dialogue* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Jerzy Stuhr *ph* Jacek Petrycki *ed* Halina Nawrocka *m* Krzysztof Knittel *main cast* Jerzy Stuhr, Małgorzata Ząbkowska, Ewa Pokas, Stefan Czyżewski, Jerzy Nowak, Tadeusz Bradecki

Dworzec

The Station

Documentary

Poland 1980 13m bw

A film set in the Central Railway Station in Warsaw. The station functions badly with the staff being apathetic and the trains delayed. The travellers fare badly in this hostile environment and nobody is seen to arrive or depart.

p Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Witold Stok *ed* Lidia Zonn

Gadające głowy

Talking Heads

Documentary

Poland 1980 15m bw

Seventy-nine Poles, ranging between a baby and a hundred-year old woman, explain who they are and what they wish for.

p Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Jacek Petrycki, Piotr Kwiatkowski *ed* Alina Siemińska

Przypadek

Blind Chance

Feature

Poland 1981 117m col

The film consists of three versions of the life of Witek Długosz, the main protagonist. In the first he catches a train, meets a Communist, and joins the Party but soon becomes disillusioned. This version finishes with the cancellation of his aeroplane trip abroad due to strikes in Poland. In the second version, he misses the train, is arrested for fighting a railway guard and, as a consequence of being jailed, joins the opposition. Again, he becomes disenchanted and this time chooses not to make a aeroplane trip abroad on behalf of the opposition. In the final version of Witek's life, he misses the train, meets a fellow medical student whom he marries, and completes his own studies to become a doctor uninterested in politics. Asked to go abroad on a work-trip on behalf of his boss, this time he catches the aeroplane, which explodes shortly after take-off.

p Tor *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski *ph* Krzysztof Pakulski *ed* Elżbieta Kurkowska *m* Wojciech Kilar
main cast Bogusław Linda, Tadeusz Łomnicki, Bogusława Pawelec, Jacek Borkowski, Adam Ferency, Irena Byrska, Monika Goździk

Krótki dzień pracy

A Short Working Day

Feature

Poland 1981 79m col

Poland, 1981: a former Party Secretary of a large town is interviewed about his impression of events that took place in 1976 after the government proposed price-rises. The film shows how the unnamed Party Secretary tried to cope with the strikes that break out amongst the workers as a result of the announcement. The Party Secretary veers between trying to placate the rioting townspeople and appease his exacting bosses, whilst

all the while hoping above all to save himself. As he finally abandons his office out of fear for his life, he imagines the workers winning this struggle but also remembers how such past apparent victories have turned to nothing.

p Polish Television *d* Krzysztof Kiesłowski *w* Hanna Krall, Krzysztof Kiesłowski, based on Krall's report *Widok z okna na pierwszym piętrze* (*The View from a First-Floor Window*) *ph* Krzysztof Pakulski *ed* Elżbieta Kurkowska *m* Jan Kanty Pawluśkiewicz *main cast* Waław Ulewicz

Bez końca

No End

Feature

Poland 1984 107m col

Poland is under martial law. Urszula, the widow of Antek, a young lawyer, tries to cope with life without her husband. His ghost watches her as she realises the full extent of her loss. Urszula becomes involved with the case of an opposition activist, whom her husband was going to defend but who must now, instead, be defended by an older lawyer who believes the best course of action is compromise. However, despite a half-hearted one-night stand with an American tourist and an attempt to help the family of the activist, Urszula is unable to go on with life. After leaving her son with his grandmother, she commits suicide. The final scene of the film shows her reunited with Antek.

p Tor *d* Krzysztof Kiesłowski *w* Krzysztof Kiesłowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz *ph* Jacek Petrycki *ed* Krystyna Rutkowska *m* Zbigniew Preisner *main cast* Grażyna Szapołowska, Jerzy Radziwiłłowicz, Maria Pakulnis, Aleksander Bardini, Artur Barciś

Siedem dni w tygodniu

Seven Days a Week

Documentary

Poland 1988 18m col

One of a cycle of films called *City Life* made by different directors about various cities. Kiesłowski concentrates on a different protagonist on each day of the week from Monday to Saturday, as he or she goes about his daily life. On Sunday, the six protagonists are shown to be the members of one family.

p City Life (Rotterdam) *d* Krzysztof Kiesłowski *ph* Jacek Petrycki *ed* Dorota Warduszkiewicz *m* Fryderyk Chopin

Krótki film o zabijaniu

A Short Film about Killing

Feature

Poland 1988 85m col

A young man, Jacek, brutally murders a taxi-driver for no reason. Jacek's lawyer, Piotr, is unable to prevent his client from being sentenced to execution by hanging. Jacek and Piotr talk just before the execution and the former explains what led to his sociopathic state-of-mind. Having killed, Jacek is then killed in the name of the state.

p Tor/Polish television *d* Krzysztof Kiesłowski *w* Krzysztof Kiesłowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz *ph* Sławomir Idziak *ed* Ewa Smal *m* Zbigniew Preisner *main cast* Mirosław Baka, Krzysztof Globisz, Jan Tesarz, Artur Barciś

Krótki film o miłości

A Short Film about Love

Feature

Poland 1988 87m col

Tomek, a young postal worker, spies upon Magda, an older, promiscuous woman who lives in the tower-block opposite his own. He endeavours to get her attention through various methods. Finally, he declares his love and she agrees to go on a date with him. Magda tells Tomek that there is only sex, no love, and finishes the date by sexually humiliating him. He attempts suicide and is taken to hospital. Now Magda, upset at what she has caused and drawn to the idealistic young man, becomes obsessed with him. The film ends with her imagining his comforting her.

p Tor *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz
ph Witold Adamek *ed* Ewa Smal *m* Zbigniew Preisner

main cast Grażyna Szapołowska, Olaf Lubaszenko, Stefania Iwińska, Artur Barciś

Dekalog

The Decalogue

Ten television dramas based on the Ten Commandments

Poland 1988

Dekalog 1

The Decalogue: 1

Television drama

Poland 1988 53m col

Krzysztof and his young son Paweł are fascinated by the apparent omniscience of computers. Paweł wants to go skating on a nearby lake, so Krzysztof uses his computer to calculate that the ice is safe. When Paweł doesn't come home one afternoon, Krzysztof refuses to believe an accident has occurred, despite all the signs pointing to this. Finally, he goes to the lake, where a crowd has gathered. The computer was wrong: Paweł fell through the ice and drowned. Krzysztof runs to his church, where candle wax falls like tears upon the portrait of the Black Madonna.

p Polish Television/Sender Freies Berlin *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz *ph* Wiesław Zdort *ed* Ewa Smal *m* Zbigniew Preisner

main cast Henryk Baranowski, Wojciech Klata, Maja Komorowska, Artus Barciś

Dekalog 2

The Decalogue: 2

Television drama

Poland 1988 57m col

Dorota approaches a doctor who lives in her apartment block. Her husband, Andrzej, is dying in hospital. She is pregnant but not by her husband. Dorota loves her husband but also wants to keep the baby, especially as it may be her last chance to have one. Not wishing to keep the baby if Andrzej lives, she wants the Doctor to tell her whether or not her husband will die. The Doctor is unwilling to make such a decision, not wanting to play God nor, by judging Andrzej's chances to be good, leading Dorota to abort her unborn baby. Finally, the Doctor tells her that Andrzej will die. In fact, Andrzej recovers

and tells the Doctor how happy he is that his wife is to bear a child.

p Polish Television/Sender Freies Berlin *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz *ph* Edward Kłosiński *ed* Ewa Smal *m* Zbigniew Preisner

main cast Krystyna Janda, Aleksander Bardini, Olgierd Łukaszewicz, Artur Barciś

Dekalog 3

The Decalogue: 3

Television drama

Poland 1988 56m col

Christmas Eve. Ewa asks Janusz, her ex-lover to help her find her husband, whom she claims has gone missing. Janusz leaves his family and spends the night with Ewa searching for her husband. During their time together they talk about their affair and each recriminates the other about its breakdown. When dawn approaches, Ewa admits that her husband is not missing – in fact, he left her several years ago upon discovering her affair with Janusz – and that she required Janusz to be with her that night if she were not commit suicide. They part and Janusz returns to his family.

p Polish Television/Sender Freies Berlin *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz *ph* Piotr Sobociński *ed* Ewa Smal *m* Zbigniew Preisner

main cast Daniel Olbrychski, Maria Pakulnis, Joanna Szczepkowska, Artur Barciś

Dekalog 4

The Decalogue: 4

Television drama

Poland 1988 55m col

Anka, a young student of acting, lives with her father, Michał, and they get on well. While Michał is away on a trip, Anka finds a letter written to her by her mother, who died many years ago. Upon Michał's return, Anka tells him that she read the letter and that it says she is not his biological daughter. They undergo a difficult night during which they discuss the change in their relationship. Anka attempts to seduce Michał. He resists and in the morning looks set to leave. Anka calls after him and confesses that she never read the letter and made up its contents. They burn the original letter.

p Polish Television/Sender Freies Berlin *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz *ph* Krzysztof Pakulski *ed* Ewa Smal *m* Zbigniew Preisner

main cast Adrianna Biedrzyńska, Janusz Gajos, Artur Barciś

Dekalog 5

The Decalogue: 5

Television drama

Poland 1988 57m col

Television version of *Krótki film o zabijaniu* (*A Short Film about Killing*); see above.

Dekalog 6

The Decalogue: 6

Television drama

Poland 1988 58m col

Television version of *Krótki film o miłości* (*A Short Film about Love*); see above. The ending differs in this version: when Magda, who has been eager to see Tomek ever since his suicide attempt, finally sees him, he tells her that he is no longer spying on her.

Dekalog 7

The Decalogue: 7

Television drama

Poland 1988 55m col

A little girl, Ania, is being brought up by Ewa and believes Majka, Ewa's teenage daughter, to be her sister. In fact, Majka is Ania's biological mother and Ewa her grandmother. Wanting to have a proper motherly relationship with her daughter, Majka takes Ania and runs away from her parents to seek refuge with Wojtek, Majka's ex-teacher and the father of Ania. Majka calls her mother and tells her that unless she recognises that Ania is her granddaughter and not daughter, Majka will take Ania abroad. Ewa is too slow to agree, so Majka breaks off contact. With Wojtek unwilling to help Majka in her plans, she runs away again with Ania and hides at a train-station. Ewa reaches the station and finds Ania just as a train pulls in. Majka, seeing Ania run to Ewa, departs on the train.

p Polish Television/Sender Freies Berlin *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz *ph* Dariusz Kuc *ed* Ewa Smal *m* Zbigniew Preisner

main cast Anna Polony, Maja Barełkowska, Władysław Kowalski, Bogusław Linda

Dekalog 8

The Decalogue: 8

Television drama

Poland 1988 55m col

Zofia is an elderly professor of ethics at the University of Warsaw. Elżbieta, a younger woman researching the fate of Jewish survivors of the Second World War, sits in on a class in which Zofia posits a dilemma: how could a Christian Polish couple during the war refuse to hide a baptised Jewish girl on the grounds that her baptism is a falsehood against God? Elżbieta approaches Zofia after the lecture. Zofia admits the dilemma is one drawn from her own life and Elżbieta tells her that she is the little girl whom Zofia and her husband turned away. Zofia eventually reveals that they did this because they feared the tailor with whom they planned to place Elżbieta was a traitor and would betray their underground movement; ironically, it later turned out that the tailor was no traitor. Zofia and Elżbieta are reconciled. However, when Elżbieta meets the tailor and tries to thank him, he refuses to talk about the war.

p Polish Television/Sender Freies Berlin *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz *ph* Andrzej Jaroszewicz *ed* Ewa Smal *m* Zbigniew Preisner

main cast Mara Kościółkowska, Teresa Marczevska, Tadeusz Łomnicki, Artur Barciś

Dekalog 9

The Decalogue: 9

Television drama

Poland 1988 58m col

Roman learns that he is impotent but his wife, Hanka, insists that what matters is love, not sex. Nevertheless, Roman begins to suspect Hanka of having an affair with a student, Mariusz, and becomes obsessed. Hanka, already unhappy about the affair, breaks it off, and when she learns that Roman knows about it, promises him it will never happen again. She goes on a skiing trip. Roman sees Mariusz is also going skiing and, suspecting the affair has been rekindled, attempts to commit suicide. In fact, Hanka brushes Mariusz off when he turns up and, sensing something is wrong with Roman, rushes home. Just as she reads his suicide note, the telephone rings. It is Roman, alive in hospital. They are reunited.

p Polish Television/Sender Freies Berlin *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz *ph* Piotr Sobociński *ed* Ewa Smal *m* Zbigniew Preisner

main cast Ewa Błaszczyk, Piotr Machalica, Jan Jankowski, Artur Barciś

Dekalog 10

The Decalogue: 10

Television drama

Poland 1988 57m col

A man dies and leaves his valuable stamp collection to his sons, Jerzy and Artur. They learn that one very rare stamp is needed to complete a set and thus add to the value. A stamp-dealer offers to give them that stamp in exchange for Jerzy's kidney, which he requires for his ailing daughter. Whilst Jerzy has his kidney removed and Artur waits in the hospital, the flat is robbed and the entire stamp collection gone. Each brother suspects the other and their relationship sours. However, it turns out that the robbery was orchestrated by the stamp-dealer. The brothers are reconciled and it transpires that both have decided to start a new stamp collection.

p Polish Television/Sender Freies Berlin *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz *ph* Jacek Bławut *ed* Ewa Smal *m* Zbigniew Preisner

main cast Jerzy Stuhr, Zbigniew Zamachowski, Henryk Bista

La Double Vie de Véronique/Podwójne życie Weroniki

The Double Life of Véronique

Feature

France/Poland 1991 98m col

Two girls, Weronika and Véronique, are born at the same time in Poland and France respectively. Weronika sings but suffers from a potentially fatal heart condition. Turning away from her boyfriend, she accepts an offer to perform in a concert. Whilst doing so, she suffers a heart attack and dies. In France, Véronique senses a change. She, who also sings and has a heart condition, decides to stop singing. A puppeteer and writer, Alexandre, visits the school at which she teaches music, and she is fascinated by him. He sends her mysterious tokens through the post, which she understands from having read his books, and she also receives a tape-cassette of noises made at a station café at which he is waiting for her. Véronique tracks Alexandre down but instead of revealing his love, he

tells her that in manipulating her so he was simply testing an idea for a book. Distraught, she runs away. He catches up with her in a hotel and confesses he was lying about using her for a story. They become lovers. Later, Alexandre finds some photos Véronique took on a recent visit to Poland and he points out that one of the photos is of herself. She looks and realises that in fact it is of her double, Weronika. Shortly afterwards, Véronique discovers that Alexandre has made two puppets of her and wants to use the idea of her and her Polish double for a story. Disillusioned by his manipulations of her, she leaves him and returns home to her father.

p Sideral Productions/Le Studio Canal Plus/Tor/Norsk Film *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz *ph* Sławomir Idziak *ed* Jacques Witt *m* Zbigniew Preisner

main cast Irène Jacob, Halina Gryglaszewska, Władysław Kowalski, Philippe Volter, Claude Duneton

Trois Couleurs: Bleu, Blanc, Rouge

Three Colours: Blue, White, Red

A trilogy based upon the concepts of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

France/Poland/Switzerland 1993-1994

Trois Couleurs: Bleu

Three Colours: Blue

Feature

France/Poland 1993 100m col

Julie loses her husband, Patrice, a renowned composer, and their daughter Anna in a car accident. In order to forget and cut off all ties to the past, she moves to Paris and tries to live anonymously. However, despite her efforts, she finds herself being drawn into various relationships and is also haunted by excerpts of her husband's unfinished concerto. She also learns from Olivier, a family friend who is in love with her and attempting to finish off Patrice's concerto, that Patrice had a mistress, Sandrine, pregnant with his baby. Julie approaches Sandrine and gives her Patrice's house for the unborn baby. She also helps Olivier to complete the concerto and spends the night with him.

P MK2 SA/CED Productions/France 3 Cinema/CAB Productions/Tor *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz *screenplay consultants* Agnieszka Holland, Sławomir Idziak, Edward Żebrowski *ph* Sławomir Idziak *ed* Jacques Witt *m* Zbigniew Preisner

main cast Juliette Binoche, Benoît Régent, Florence Pernel, Charlotte Véry, Emmanuelle Riva

Trois Couleurs: Blanc

Three Colours: White

Feature

France/Poland 1993 91m col

Karol, a Polish hairdresser in Paris, is thrown out and divorced by his French wife Dominique because of his impotence. He gets back to Poland with the help of Michał, a fellow Pole. Back at home, Karol plots to make his fortune. Instead of hairdressing, he becomes involved in black-market money dealing and makes a small fortune by swindling his boss out of a good deal. Karol sets up a business with Michał and his

wealth grows. Deciding to revenge himself upon his ex-wife, Karol feigns his own death and then, when Dominique comes to Poland for his funeral, appears to her and they successfully make love. He leaves her the next day and she is arrested on suspicion of causing his death. However, Karol realises that he still loves Dominique. He stands outside her prison window and weeps as she signals that she too still loves him.

p France 3 Cinema (FR 3)/MK2 Productions SA/Tor/CAB Productions SA/Canal+ Productions *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz *screenplay consultants* Agnieszka Holland, Edward Żebrowski, Edward Kłosiński *ph* Edward Kłosiński *ed* Urszula Lesiak *m* Zbigniew Preisner *main cast* Zbigniew Zamachowski, Julie Delpy, Janusz Gajos, Jerzy Stuhr

Trois Couleurs: Rouge

Three Colours: Red

Feature

France Switzerland/Poland 1994 99m col

Valentine, a young model, finds the jealousy of her boyfriend, who is away on a trip, increasingly difficult, and is also worried by her drug-addicted brother. She knocks down a dog as she drives and takes it to its owner. He, an ex-judge called Joseph, lives alone and listens in to the conversations of his neighbours. Initially disgusted by his behaviour and unconcern for the dog, Valentine gradually becomes friendly with Joseph. He reports his eavesdropping to the police. At the court-case, Karin, a young woman who is seeing Auguste, a young judge who lives close to Valentine, albeit unknown to her, meets another man and starts an affair with him. Valentine decides to go on a trip to England. Auguste, depressed at the break-up of his relationship, catches the same ferry as Valentine. The ferry sinks and almost everyone on-board drowns. Joseph watches the news report in trepidation and the survivors are shown to include the main protagonists of *Trois Couleurs: Bleu* (*Three Colours: Blue*) and *Trois Couleurs: Blanc* (*Three Colours: White*), as well as Valentine and Auguste.

p France 3 Cinema (FR 3)/MK2 Productions SA/Tor/Canal+ Productions/Television Suisse Romande (TSR) *d* Krzysztof Kieślowski *w* Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz *ph* Piotr Sobociński *ed* Jacques Witta *m* Zbigniew Preisner *main cast* Irène Jacob, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Frédérique Feder, Jean-Pierre Lorit, Juliet Binoche, Julie Delpy, Benoît Régent, Zbigniew Zamachowski

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The following bibliography has been arranged according to two principles: first, it separately categorises primary and secondary sources, and second, it lists these sources in terms of English and Polish material. I located the main bulk of the Polish material at the FilMOTEKA Narodowa (National Film Archive) in Warsaw. This archive files its material as clippings, often without giving full bibliographical details for any given piece. Therefore, although I have tried to supply comprehensive bibliographical information, some of the Polish material lacks details of pagination or, occasionally, authorship. The same is also true of some of the bibliographical detail of the listed English newspaper articles and interviews, due to deficiencies on the related CD-ROMS. Where the details of authorship are missing, the piece in question is listed by title. I have not made use of the considerable French material available on Kieślowski in the original. However, quite a few key interviews with Kieślowski in French have been translated into Polish and are included in their Polish versions.

Several of the books on Kieślowski (sections 11 and 12) are compilations of essays by various authors. All such essays that I have cited specifically in my thesis receive their own bibliographic reference in sections 13 and 14 (Essays on Kieślowski in English and Polish). Similarly, where I have cited essays from books listed in sections 15 and 16 (General books in English and Polish), these too receive a reference in the following sections 17 and 18 (General essays in English and Polish). All articles and essays that are taken not from books but from sources such as newspapers and periodicals are listed in sections 19 and 20 (Newspaper/periodical articles and reviews in English and Polish). I have largely avoided making reference to material available on the Internet as this very rarely outstrips that available in other secondary sources. However, I have included a reference to one Polish webpage, which contains information that I have been unable to confirm elsewhere, and this is listed in section 20 (Newspaper/periodical/website articles and reviews in Polish).

Primary sources

1. Screenplays (English)
2. Screenplays (Polish)
3. Statements by Kieślowski in English
4. Statements by Kieślowski in Polish
5. Interviews with Kieślowski in English
6. Interviews with Kieślowski in Polish
7. Documentaries about Kieślowski in English
8. Documentaries about Kieślowski in Polish
9. Interviews with Kieślowski's colleagues in English
10. Interviews with Kieślowski's colleagues in Polish

Secondary sources

11. Books on Kieślowski in English
12. Books on Kieślowski in Polish (including special journal issues)
13. Essays on Kieślowski in English
14. Essays on Kieślowski in Polish
15. General books in English
16. General books in Polish

17. General essays in English
18. General essays in Polish
19. Newspaper/periodical articles and reviews in English
20. Newspaper periodical/website articles and reviews in Polish

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