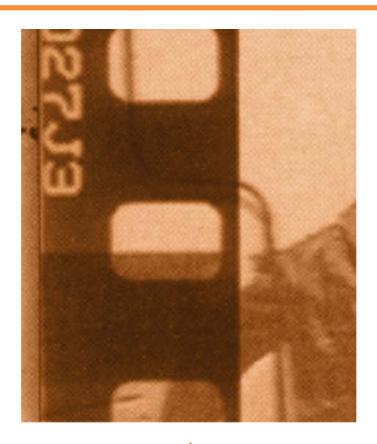Kaisa Hiltunen

Images of Time, Thought and Emotions

Narration and the Spectator´s Experience in Krzysztof Kieślovski´s Late Fiction Films

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

ABSTRACT

The thesis deals with narration and style in and the spectator's experience of the late fiction films of the Polish director Krzysztof Kieślowski. It analyses *A Short Film About Killing* (1988), *A Short Film About Love* (1988), the television series *The Decalogue* (1988/89), *The Double Life of Véronique* (1991), and *The Three Colours* trilogy (1993/94). The earlier documentary and fiction films are discussed briefly to establish a stylistic and thematic continuity between the socially conscious early films directed when Kieślowski worked in the national Polish film industry and the late art films made as European co-productions.

The narratives of these films are examined on the one hand as structures and on the other as processes, paying special attention to the spectator's experience and understanding of them. Narration is analysed as a process taking place between the spectator and a film. Phenomenological approaches and cognitive film theory provide the theoretical framework for the study. A central question is how time is organised in Kieślowski's narratives and how it is connected with their meanings and the representation of their protagonists' inner lives.

His narratives are elliptic and ambiguous and focused on individual moments rather than on the final outcome. They demand the spectator's active participation. They are thematically constructed and stylised, which makes them self-conscious. But instead of detachment the spectator experiences a sense of being *in between*: of being simultaneously aware both of the story and of the means of telling it.

Kieślowski's main interest was to portray the inner lives of his contemporary main characters, resulting in very subjective stories. Kieślowski represents the world as it is perceived from an individual subject's point of view, creating films that appear as mindscreens of their characters. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is used to characterise the interconnectedness of the subjective and the objective, the internal and the external in Kieślowski's narratives. The relation between subjectivity, temporality and space in his stories is one of the key questions addressed.

Keywords: Krzysztof Kieślowski, film, narration, time, experience, phenomenology, cognitive film theory.

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FOREWORD

My long journey with Krzysztof Kieślowski's films is coming to a close, or at least to a temporary halt, with the completion of this doctoral thesis. This is the time and place for me to look back and express my gratitude to the people who have helped and supported me during the voyage.

First of all I want to thank my supervisors. Jarmo Valkola encouraged me to continue studying Kieślowski's films beyond the licenciate thesis and commented on the manuscript in its different stages. Professor Pauline von Bonsdorff's careful reading and encouragement helped me greatly. Marjatta Saarnivaara made valuable comments in the Arts Education seminar. I am also grateful to Tadeusz Lubelski, Professor of Film History at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, who helped me in so many ways during my trips to Poland.

It was the grants awarded by the University of Jyväskylä and the Finnish Cultural Foundation that made this dissertation possible in the first place.

In the summer of 2004 I finally decided to write the thesis in English. I would have been lost without Hannu Hiilos, who checked the language carefully. I learned much from his expertise.

I extend my collective thanks to my colleagues at the University of Jyväskylä, especially to the people in the two seminars I have attended – the Arts Education seminar and the "Tuesday seminar" at the Research Centre for Contemporary Culture. Moreover, there are friends who may not even know they helped me by simply being there and listening to my worries about whether I would ever be able to complete this dissertation!

Last but not least, I am for ever grateful to my parents, who despite living far from Jyväskylä have always been with me in spirit and have supported me in all possible ways. I dedicate this thesis to my mother's memory.

Jyväskylä 14.4.2005
Kaisa Hiltunen

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This study discusses narration and style in the late films of the Polish director Krzysztof Kieślowski (1941-1996). I examine narration as interaction between the spectator and the film. I shall consider both the film form - narrative structures and style - and the spectator's experience of Kieślowski's films. The central questions addressed here concern the representation and experience of subjectivity and time in narration. I am interested in how Kieślowski makes meaning and expresses the inner world of his protagonists through the film form.

When analysing films it is impossible to separate form and content, except in a heuristic sense, because they interact in so many ways. In this study I shall stress the interplay between content and form in Kieślowski. As his career progressed, his interest in the inner life of the human being came increasingly to determine the form of his films. At the same time, his growing formal sophistication made possible new ways of expressing inner experiences. So far, there has been no large-scale study of the narrative structures of Kieślowski's films. The question of subjectivity has been broached in several texts, but mostly with respect to individual films.

The study focuses on Kieślowski's mature films, that is, his fiction films from the ten-part television series *The Decalogue* (Dekalog, 1988/89) onwards. In Kieślowski's oeuvre, *The Decalogue* marks a turn to an aesthetically more refined style. As regards both form and content, *The Decalogue* starts the art-film phase in Kieślowski's career. His earlier fiction films were more straightforward in their narration and style. *The Decalogue* was also a big step away from social questions. The series demonstrates a growing interest in cinematic form and the representation of inner experience. Other works of Kieślowski's mature period are *A Short Film About Killing* (Krótki film o zabijaniu, 1988), *A Short Film About Love* (Krótki film o miłości, 1988), *The Double Life of Véronique* (Podwójne życie Weroniki/La double vie de Véronique, 1991) and *The Three Colours: Blue, White and Red* (Trois couleurs: bleu, blanc, rouge, 1993-94). Kieślowski's documentary films and early fictions call for theoretical perspectives and analytical methods of another kind.[1] However, there is a strong stylistic and thematic continuum running from the early documentaries to the late fictions, making it impossible to draw a clear-cut distinction between an early and a late phase. For the same reason, it is not possible to study Kieślowski's late films in isolation. Thus, I shall call attention, in my analysis, to the continuities between the early and late films.

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[1] Studying the structure of documentary film means tackling a different problematics. For example, documentary film has no established narrative forms such as those of fiction film, which has long been under the influence of Hollywood cinema (Carl Plantinga 1997, 106). Moreover, documentary films need to be considered as representing ways of constructing logical arguments (Jarmo Valkola 2002).

The beginning of Kieślowski's career

Krzysztof Kieślowski was born in 1941 in Warsaw. He had one younger sister. The Kieślowski family moved all the time; first because of the work of the father who was a construction engineer, later because of the father's tuberculosis. Every time the father moved from one sanatorium to another, the family followed. In the course of about 40 changes of house Kieślowski learned to know his homeland well, but he never had time to make himself really at home anywhere.

Kieślowski trained for a number of occupations, for example to be a fireman, a theatre technician and a teacher. After attending the relevant schools and working in several jobs Kieślowski decided to become a film director, applying for Łódź Film School. He was finally admitted at the third attempt in 1964. The film school was a small island of freedom in the middle of socialism, more open to outside influences than Polish society in general. The students, for example, saw films that were not shown in ordinary cinemas.

During Kieślowski's time at the school it had many renowned teachers. Among them were the nationally important documentary film makers Jerzy Bossak, Kazimierz Karabasz and Wanda Jakubowska. The students included several people who later became famous. The directors Roman Polański and Jerzy Skolimowski had graduated just before Kieślowski arrived, and Krzysztof Zanussi was two years ahead of him. His later collaborator cinematographer, Sławomir Idziak, also received his education in Łódź. Kieślowski described his time there in very positive terms except for one incident. Only the gloomy year of 1968, in Poland a time of anti-Semitism and intolerance, cast a shadow on his otherwise happy existence in the industrial town of Łódź. Several Jewish teachers at the film school had to leave the country. Student protests gave Kieślowski his first, negative experiences of politics. (Stok 1993, 68-71.)

On his graduation in 1968 Kieślowski had a clear goal: to record the reality surrounding him with the help of documentary film. In his diploma thesis he writes, idealistically, that reality itself is a source of such good dramaturgies that the filmmaker has no need to make them up himself. For the filmmakers of Kieślowski's generation, being faithful to reality was of utmost importance. It did not take long, however, before Kieślowski tried directing a fiction film. This was in 1974, when he made a short film, *Pedestrian Subway* (Przejscie podziemne). In the 1970s he was also interested in combining documentary and fictive material. Kieślowski became one of the most important socially conscious filmmakers in Poland of the 1970s and 1980s, a period when film had an exceptionally important role in Polish society. Nevertheless, Kieślowski's experiences of politics continued to be frustrating, and after Martial Law (13 November 1981 – 22 June 1983) he gradually left political topics behind. After 1980 he made only one documentary film.

In the 1990s Kieślowski said that from the start, his goal had been to describe the inner world of the human being. In the same breath he admitted that this is an unattainable aim: "The goal is to reach that which exists inside the human being,

but there are no ways to describe it. You can get closer to it, but you will never reach it. (...) Cinema can't reach it because it has no means to do so." (Stok 1993, 224-225.[2]) When he was making documentaries Kieślowski felt that the closer to the human being he tried to get, the more he was left outside. In the 1980s he switched from documentary films to fiction films, assuming that this would bring him nearer to the inner world. There was another reason for this change of approach: Ethical problems, for example the question of what one is allowed to show in a documentary film, had troubled him a long time. He thought that there would be no such problems with fiction films. (Stok 1993, 114; Hendrykowski & Jazdon 1996, 10.)[3] Although Kieślowski deemed his goal difficult if not impossible, he did succeed, if not in seeing inside the human being, certainly in problematising the representation of inner experience by cinematic means.

Invisible forces, called metaphysical by many commentators of his films, interested Kieślowski from an early stage of his career. The first suggestions in this direction can be found in the fictions *Peace* (Spokój, 1976) and *Camera Buff* (Amator, 1979) in the form of dreams and inexplicable visions. In *Blind Chance* (Przypadek, 1981) Kieślowski asks about the nature of the forces that determine our lives, and about the extent to which we ourselves can shape our fate. To demonstrate these ideas he gave his hero three alternative lives. The themes of alternative lives, realities and decisions were present in virtually all his fiction films. In terms of theme, narration and style alike, *No End* (Bez końca, 1984) belongs to the turn of his early and late period. This film, which depicts the time of Martial Law, is Kieślowski's last treatment of a clearly political topic. After *No End*, Kieślowski's interest in invisible forces and deeply personal experiences becomes more conspicuous.[4]

The Decalogue, made for Polish Television, means the final departure from the macro level to the micro level. From now on, Kieślowski tells stories about individuals, not about groups of any kind. Contemporary Poland remains the setting of his stories. In fact, Kieślowski's stories are always contemporary. Poland's everyday problems are to be seen in the background of the ten stories, but more general themes concerned with human emotions and moral and existential problems have taken the centre stage. Kieślowski began to move towards the tradition of European art cinema. Up until now, subjectivity had in Kieślowski's films meant that the story centred on an individual. The narrative method itself was not - with the exception of a few memory and dream images – particularly subjective but, rather, straightforwardly realistic. This thematic and stylistic shift made Kieślowski's films more approachable also abroad, which was obviously what Kieślowski and Piesiewicz, his co-scriptwriter, had intended (Stok 1993, 175).

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[2]   All citations from Polish and Finnish critical texts are in my translation.
[3]   The police had confiscated Kieślowski's tapes a few times; once when they were looking for a murderer and once for political reasons. Kieślowski did not want to co-operate with the police in any circumstances. (Stok 1993, 112-114.)
[4]   *No End* also marks the start of Kieślowski's collaboration with the lawyer-turned-scriptwriter Krzysztof Piesiewicz. It is surely no coincidence that so many of the films they co-scripted feature lawyers and judges. When Piesiewicz came along, the metaphysical strand became stronger.

The Decalogue was co-produced in Poland and Germany. In this sense, too, the series was a first step in a new direction.

The Decalogue and the longer cinema versions made from Parts 5 and 6, *A Short Film About Killing* and *A Short Film About Love*, brought Kieślowski to the notice of the great public. After the collapse of socialism in Poland (1989) Kieślowski moved to Paris, living there several years. In Paris he directed first *The Double Life of Véronique* and then *The Three Colours: Blue, White* and *Red*; all of them European co-productions. In these films Kieślowski was finally able to create worlds of his own and refine his aesthetics. It is these mature works that allow us to consider him an innovator and a developer of modern European art film. It would be an interesting task to compare Kieślowski's works with those of other European filmmakers, but in this study I must limit myself to only a few remarks.

Because there are no direct ways of representing the inner world of humans, Kieślowski began to use form and style to express subjective experiences. In his earlier films he had criticised Polish society by using various indirect means because open criticism was not possible in socialism. It is interesting to note how this indirect style, "speaking between the lines", born out of the circumstances, later turned into an auteur style, which he used for completely different purposes.

In *The Double Life of Véronique* and *Blue* in particular, the representation of inner life, and the difficulty of representing it in the first place, become the central issues. In developing his themes Kieślowski makes more use of narrative means and style than of dialogue. The attempt to tell the story through visual methods becomes more determined and the role of speech diminishes. The events are transferred to the level of the mind - both the characters' and the spectators' minds. Narrative moments gain in weight and narration in general becomes *process-oriented* in contrast to more classical *goal-oriented* narration.

It has often been pointed out that for Kieślowski, a story is merely an excuse for getting his ideas across to the spectator (Benedyktowicz 1993/94, 107; Gazda 1993/94, 90). It is true that *Blue*, for instance, is not just a story about Julie who mourns her dead husband but equally a study of the cinematic representation of sorrow, remembering and freedom. This can be seen from the way in which narration is in Kieślowski's films organised along thematic lines. It does not follow primarily external actions, that is, cause and effect. Self-consciousness of this kind forces the spectator to think harder in order to understand the relation between the theme, the events and the manner of representation. Kieślowski aestheticises the feelings of his characters and uses them as pawns in his game. However, his films are not cold exercises in aesthetics. An analysis of Kieślowski's films from the point of view of estrangement or defamiliarisation reveals that such an effect is always only partial. The story has always the last word.

After the trilogy Kieślowski announced that he would retire from film-making. He was tired, he suffered from heart problems, and he only wanted to live a peacefully with his family. Nevertheless, he could not resist the temptation of cinema for long. When he died on 13 March 1996 after a heart attack and an unsuccessful bypass operation in Warsaw, he was in the middle of collaborating with Krzysztof Piesiewicz on writing scripts for a new trilogy, to be called *Heaven*,

Hell, and *Purgatory*. Only the script for *Heaven* was more or less finished when he died. It was filmed by the German director Tom Tykwer in 2002.

Kieślowski's long career includes films made for the national public, films which were used in the fight for social justice, and art films dealing with general human issues. The history of Poland from the 1970s to the 1990s and the history of his own life are both reflected in many ways in the films he made.[5]

The approach and structure of the study

My interest in the spectator's activity and experience as a part of film narration has led me to cognitive film theory on the one hand and to phenomenological approaches on the other. In film studies, a cognitive approach means examining viewing as a process in which the spectator actively seeks to make sense of what she sees. This entails studying only the film text but also the processes going on inside the spectator. Such a dual perspective is important because as a filmmaker, Kieślowski paid a great deal of attention to the means of representation. He wanted to initiate a dialogue between the spectator and the film.

The phenomenological perspective gives me the tools for dealing with the relations between film and time and with the viewing of films as a process taking place in time. Phenomenology provides also a fruitful perspective from which to examine the questions involved in multiple gazes, visual perception and point of view, which are related to the nature of film viewing in general and the theme of subjective narration in particular. Keeping in mind the differences and incompatibilities between phenomenology and cognitivism, it is possible to say that adopting either of these two perspectives means looking at film as an encounter between a spectator and a film. According to the film scholar Vivian Sobchack (1992, 296), for a long time film studies were limited to studying the spectator as she appears to an objective observer. However, the spectator's activity is to a great extent invisible; for example, there is the inner speech in which she engages in a dialectical and dialogic interaction with the film she is seeing.

Phenomenology, especially Maurice Merleau-Ponty's existential philosophy and Mikel Dufrenne's phenomenology of aesthetic experience, is drawn on in the study as offering ways of approaching the issues associated with the relationship between the human perceiver, time, space, and art. I use Merleau-Pontys's ideas about the embodied mind and his reversibility thesis to analyse Kieślowski's style, in particular questions concerning the representation of subjective experience. Kieślowski's films show that the subject and the world in which she lives are intertwined in many ways. Both Merleau-Ponty and Dufrenne think that

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[5]   Paul Coates (1999a) has studied the autobiographical features of Kieślowski's oeuvre. According to Coates, the films are autobiographical on two levels: Firstly, the films' explicit themes are connected with Kieślowski's personal experiences and interests at the time when they were made. Secondly, there is a deeper, emotional link, which may be partly unconscious. Kieślowski's move to fiction films can be seen as an aspect of his interest in an examination of emotional experiences going back to his childhood.

experiences of time and space can only be understood from a subjective perspective, in terms of a meeting between the subject and the world where time and space are transformed into *temporality* and *spatiality*. The phenomenological conception of time is based on a separation between personal or subjective time and public or objective time. These ideas will be used to characterise the representation of time in Kieślowski's films.

Cognitive film theory makes available some interesting approaches to analysing the relationship between the spectator and the film, enabling generalisations about the experience of watching films. In fact, the claims that the cognitive approach makes about film viewing are mainly general. Because of this, some of the arguments presented in this study are applicable not only to Kieślowski's films but also to films by other directors. At the same time, questions connected with the relationship between the spectator and film narration have been considered in film theory even before the cognitive turn. I shall take up such views a few times.

In the second half of the study I shall introduce the concept of *the in-between* to describe the spectator's experience. Kieślowski constructed narrative spaces of a particular kind, *in-between spaces*, which make the spectator feel that she is inhabiting an area or mental space intermediate or intervening between the diegetic world and the discourse. That is, the spectator is simultaneously conscious of both the story and the means of telling it. It might be said that the spectator finds herself in an entrance hall; she is not quite inside the fictive world, but neither is she a distanced and external observer. From this position the spectator is able to reflect on the viewing situation and recognise the methods used to create meaning and generate empathy - but simultaneously she is able to engage emotionally with the film. At the same time, *the in-between*, or a sense of being *in between* two domains, is related to the question of what a film represents. The worlds created by Kieślowski in his mature films are situated between inner and outer realities, between subjective and objective narration. Often the lines between these realities are blurred. What we see on the screen seems to be a part of both realities. My use of the word "space" must be understood in this context: Most of the time when talking about space I am thinking metaphorically, using the word to indicate inner, mental space.

My purpose is to see Kieślowski's films with fresh eyes. This is not as simple as it might sound because in the course of years of research, watching them has become almost a routine. I have done my best to fight against fixed ways of viewing. I do not believe that any single theory or method would make such fresh watching possible. Phenomenologists often say that one should look at things without the burden of acquired knowledge. Gaston Bachelard (1969, xxviii-xxix) quotes the French poet Jean Lescure, who asserts that learning to know means forgetting. Lescure is not speaking about sinking into ignorance but about an attempt to see things afresh and in all their magnificence. In my own pursuit of a fresh view I have come to favour the parallel use of several theories which will, I hope, help me to break away from habituated perceptions. This is the reason why I look at Kieślowski's works both from a phenomenological and from a cognitive perspective. Both are broad approaches, not ready-made methods. Together they

enable me to shed light on different aspects of Kieślowski's films. At the same time I am aware that by adopting such a strategy I run the risk of theoretical heterogeneity.

Another reason for adopting more than one theory is that in film studies there are few ready-made methods in the first place. Rather, there are several approaches and lines of thought. I wish to create a fruitful dialogue between the films I discuss and the theories I apply. The aim is to avoid reducing the films to illustrations of the theories. Instead, I want the dialogue between the films and the theories to be a two-way process.[6] As regards the structure of my thesis, such an approach means that I shall return to the same films in different chapters, each time considering them from a different point of view. I shall not analyse every film from all points of view. This is a question of choices and emphases and of finding the most representative examples to bring home each thematic point.

Because I study both narrative structures and the spectator's mental processes, Kieślowski's films interest me above all as aesthetic and psychological objects. In the case of a socially aware director like Kieślowski, the significance of the social and cultural context is so great that it has to be taken into account.[7] This perspective might be characterised as combining, to a certain extent, a contextual and a textual approach. Kristin Thompson argues from her neoformalist point of view that some films cannot be understood without extensive knowledge of contextual factors, such as historical and social backgrounds, whereas other films create more self-contained meaning systems. The most important framework for understanding such films is formed by other artworks. (1988, 23.) An aesthetic and a cognitive understanding of works of art are both dependent on knowledge of their historical background (Valkola 2000, 20-21).

The importance of the context for making sense of Kieślowski's films became clear to me in a very concrete way during my research in Poland. The early critical films, which deal with the then current national issues, are closely bound up with the time when they were made, with the result that a contemporary spectator can find them difficult to follow. Their style may similarly appear a little dated today. The mature works, on the other hand, present the spectator with more elaborate visual challenges. Here, comprehension does not depend on the Polish cultural and social context. It is, rather, a question of having a grasp of audio-visual narration and the ability to evaluate the films in the context of film history. Naturally, the mature works are also connected with a certain historical and social situation, for example in the sense of having been produced at a particular point of time in a particular social context. There are also some references to the current historical situation, such as the end of Communism in *The Double Life of Véronique*

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6   In this sense, my approach is related to Kristin Thompson's (1988) neoformalism, which starts from the films, not from a method. Neoformalism entails analysing each film individually and in a distinct way. Neoformalism makes it possible to ask every film those questions which are the most important and interesting ones that it can be asked. Every analysis should tell something not only about the film in question but also about the potential of film as art.

7   I have studied the Polish context in greater depth in my unpublished licentiate thesis *Sisäisiä ja ulkoisia todellisuuksia: Krzysztof Kieślowskin muuntuva elokuvallinen tyyli* (2001). University of Jyväskylä: Department of Arts and Culture Studies.

and the unification of Europe in *Blue*. These references, however, are less essential for an understanding of these films than they would have been in the 1970s and 1980s.[8]

I shall deal with narratives on the one hand as *structures*, which means asking, for example, how a film is made up and what kind of elements constitute it. Here, film is seen as a ready-made continuum of time which opens before us as something spatial and where relations of before and after have been defined in advance for us to see. On the other hand, I analyse narratives, and narration, as a *process*, as a relationship taking shape *now* between the film and the spectator. Here, film is seen as a meaning process unfolding in time.

As in art films in general, in Kieślowski's films time breaks loose from the grip of "real time", linking up, instead, with the characters' subjective experiences, which are not synchronous with objective (or "real") time. Kieślowski is more interested in conveying feelings and reactions associated with certain situations than in representing goal-directed action. His narration progresses through moments and associations. It is process-oriented and layered. Its ambiguity awakens the spectator's cognitive processes, and this can be called *inner speech* of a kind.

In the last subchapter of the Introduction I offer a concise discussion of earlier research on Kieślowski, concentrating on those studies which are most relevant to my own analysis. Part I presents the general theoretical framework of the thesis, phenomenology and cognitive science, which will be supplemented in Parts II and III by theories related to more specific themes. First I consider the relation between phenomenology and cognitive science and what it means to combine these two perspectives in a single study. Next I introduce those elements of Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology and Dufrenne's ideas about temporal arts that I draw on in my thesis, involving the phenomenological conception of time and what it implies in the context of temporal arts. In the next two chapters I deal with the relationship between the spectator and narrative as conceived in cognitive theory. The question of time will be taken up also here.

Part II describes the development of Kieślowski's narrative style from the early documentaries to the mature films. I analyse the effects that his intensive and elliptic documentary style had on the fiction films. I also argue that Kieślowski's films are based on ideas rather than on stories in the traditional sense of the word, as can be seen from the way in which the films are constructed. There is deep-seated pessimism and existential anxiety running through his oeuvre. Kieślowski's constant doubt about humans' ability to find happiness and satisfaction in life is manifest both on the level of narrative structure and in his themes.

In Part III I consider how narrative structures and style relate to the representation of subjective experience in Kieślowski's late art films. I want to define Kieślowski's narration from a perspective that is different but not separate from that employed in Part II. Among the ideas I use in this section are David

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[8] After Communism the state ceased to support the film industry on such a large scale as before, plunging the Polish cinema into depression. Thanks to the success of *The Decalogue* Kieślowski was able to find international financing for his next films, which he made mainly abroad. (See, for example, Haltof 2004.)

Bordwell's and Torben Grodal's theories of narration and spectatorship. I go on to consider the question of subjectivity with the help of Bruce Kawin's concept *mindscreen*, my own concept *the in-between*, and Merleau-Ponty's existential philosophy. The theme of subjectivity raises also the question of who sees in a film, that is, whose gaze or point of view it is that we see manifested on the screen. In short, I am asking how a film mediates the visions, experiences, and world-views of its characters. The last chapter looks at cinematic space as a mental space. From Chapter 7 on the focus will be more on questions of style than on narrative structures. In the final chapter I present the main conclusions of the thesis.

I shall use comments about the films by Kieślowski and some of his collaborators, but not very extensively. Kieślowski and his collaborators are mostly speaking about such questions as the director's aims and working methods. A few times I cite or refer to Kieślowski's own remarks to support my arguments. However, Kieślowski is not appealed to systematically as an authority to provide "correct" interpretations of the films. That is, I feel free to interpret them also without taking account of their maker's expressed intentions.

Earlier research on Kieślowski

A great many thematic analyses have been written on Kieślowski's films. In fact, most research on Kieślowski consists of treatments that stress as their main themes the moral and existential choices made by the protagonists. It is not surprising that his works have inspired a lively, even pointed discussion on the big questions of life and art.[9] Kieślowski's opinions have divided the ranks of the Polish critics in particular. His late works, especially, have aroused debates. The opinion that Kieślowski betrayed Poland and Polish concerns in his last apolitical art films has been voiced more than once. Some contributors to these discussions have said that Kieślowski's films are pure surface without any deeper content (Jankun-Dopartowa 1995, 4-7; Werner 1994, 72-73).

It is more surprising that the film form, notably Kieślowski's narrative structures, has received relatively little attention. There are analyses of particular narrative features or of the narrative aspects of individual films by several scholars and critics, but a comprehensive presentation of Kieślowski's narration is lacking. Kieślowski can, however, be considered one of the most form-conscious European filmmakers of the late 20th century. Despite this, many critics have confined themselves to tracing his recurrent themes and motives without offering a full analysis of his narrative structures (e.g. Stachówna 1997).[10]

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[9]   The Polish critic Tadeusz Sobolewski, one of Kieslowski's most prolific commentators, repeatedly raises themes related to religion. Members of the clergy have written about *Blue* in the Polish film journal *Kwartalnik Filmowy*. See Paprocki, Henryk 1993/94. Niebieski jak niebo, *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, nr. 4, pp. 77-81 and Sochoń, Jan 1993/94. Pokonać śmierć!, *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, nr. 4, pp. 83-87.

[10]   In her article, Stachówna sums up *The Three Colours* trilogy, seeing love as its main theme: "*The Three Colours* is three films where ideas, motives, emotions, gestures, situations, and objects repeat themselves. Each film combines them in its own way and

Wolfgang Iser has criticised research of the kind that chases up meanings. As Iser sees it, as soon as a critic starts thinking that she has found the (hidden) meaning of a work, she has nothing else left to do, except to congratulate herself for this achievement. Iser (1978, 4) writes: "After all, what can one do with a meaning that has been formulated and put on display, having been stripped of all its mystery? So long as it *was* a mystery, one could search for it, but now there is nothing to arouse interest except for the skill of the searcher." According to Iser, many works continue to speak to us long after their meanings have been unveiled (1978, 13). Many films, such as those of Kieślowski, continue to intrigue us after several viewings and analyses. This is because their ambiguous and challenging form and content allow a range of obviously meaningful interpretations. After all, otherwise I would not myself be writing this thesis. It is important to interpret films, but my aim is to put more emphasis on the description and analysis of experience than has been done previously in discussions of Kieślowski's oeuvre.

Since the mid-1990s, several scholarly and other critical books and collections of articles on Kieślowski have come out. Two important collections, *Kino Krzysztofa Kieslowskiego* (1997), edited by Tadeusz Lubelski, and *Lucid Dreams: The Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski* (1999), edited by Paul Coates, display a great diversity of approaches. Neither collection has a specific theme. The articles analyse the films from an autobiographical perspective or consider Kieślowski's representation of women, his early political themes, his film music, and so on. Such a wide range of topics is an indication of the rich variety of the subject matter. The Polish book offers, besides bringing together critical analyses of Kieślowski's works, the director's collaborators an opportunity to recount their experiences.

The Decalogue generated a great many articles examining its religious content. *Das Gewicht der Gebote und die Möglichkeiten der Kunst: Krzysztof Kieślowski's "Dekalog"-Filme als ethische Modelle* (1993), an anthology edited by Matthias Loretan and Walter Lesch, considers the films in a theological framework. In his academic dissertation *Krzysztof Kieślowski's Decalogue* (1997), Christopher Garbowski deals with the protagonists of the series by using, among other conceptual tools, Bakhtin's idea of a dialogic work of art. For Garbowski, *The Decalogue* represents religious art, a view that strongly colours his interpretations. Garbowski examines also the protagonists' relation to cinematic space and time from a phenomenological point of view. (I discuss Garbowski's analyses further in Chapter 8.)

Margarete Wach's *Krzysztof Kieślowski: Kino der Moralischen Unruhe* (2001) is another academic dissertation and the most extensive monograph on Kieślowski's works. Her approach might be best characterised as film historical and auteurist. Wach describes the director's career in very great detail. However, her thesis has no specific film theoretical point of view. The whole of Kieślowski's career is

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starts a discussion with the other two parts, and later also with the director's earlier works." After this Stachówna makes a list of these recurring elements, which include colours, the key words of the French Revolution, coincidence, the composer Van den Budenmeyer, loneliness and so on. These elements enrich the main theme of love and indicate its significance both universally and in the life of an individual. (1997, 102.) This is true, but it would be more interesting to analyse the structural variations and similarities and find out how structures are connected with such themes and meanings.

covered also in Marek Haltof's *The Cinema of Krzysztof Kieślowski: Variations on Destiny and Chance* (2004). Haltof's study focuses on the relationship between the films and the Polish context. The Polish critics' response to Kieślowski is particularly well covered. In his introduction Haltof claims that his approach draws on the critical concept of auteurism. However, he does not really thematise this approach further later in the book. Geoff Andrew's booklet *The Three Colours Trilogy* (1998) is a personal account of the trilogy.

Slavoj Žižek was among the first scholars to study Kieślowski in a theoretical context in his *The Fright of Real Tears: Krzysztof Kieślowski Between Theory and Post-Theory* (2001). As can be seen from the title, Žižek's concern is less to talk about Kieślowski's films in itself than to construct theory through an analysis of his films. Žižek's project is to prove the superiority of the Lacanian psychoanalytic stance as against cognitive film theory. Given this perspective, his book participates in the debate, in film studies, between the psychosemiotic and cognitive approaches, as is indicated by the reference in the title to the polemical *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* (1996) edited by David Bordwell and Noël Carroll.[11] A few paragraphs about Žižek's study and this debate will help me to clarify the theoretical choices that I have made in my own thesis.

The two opposite theoretical positions have been discussed under many different terms. Actually, they are not two theories but two broad approaches. "Theory" (with a capital T) is an umbrella term used by Bordwell and Carroll to refer to the theories that have reigned in film studies since the 1970s. These include psychosemiotics (both in Freudian and Lacanian versions), Althusserian and Marxist theories, and theories stemming from feminism and cultural studies. According to Bordwell and Carroll, all these theories share a totalising view of the task of film theory and consider that theorising about film should be doctrine-driven. Few if any questions related to cinema have escaped attempts to solve them with the help of these grand theories. (Bordwell 1996; Carroll 1996.)

Spectatorship, a particular focus of my study, is a central consideration in these theories, but it has been theorised in a very negative light. The spectator's reactions to what she sees are presented as passive and powerless. Bordwell discusses this passive concept of the spectator under the term subject-position theory, coined by him. One of the biggest problems with Theory has been the adoption of theories drawn from outside the field of film studies with the result that the special nature of film viewing has received too little attention. Many of these theorists have sought to unmask what they see as the reactionary strategies of classical Hollywood films. Much of their thinking could be said to represent ideology theories.[12] The power of totalising theories began to wane in the early

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[11]   For this debate see also Pulkkinen 2000, 8-23.

[12]   In Jean Louis Baudry's theory of cinematic apparatus (1970, 1975), a reactionary (capitalist and bourgeois) ideology contaminates cinema even on the level of technology (the renaissance perspective). The same ideology has found its way also into the principles of classical continuity narration. Baudry is not the only one to think that the way in which the spectator is positioned in narration means that she cannot but accept the reactionary world order presented in the classical films. (See Baudry 1986a (1970); 1986b (1975).) Other representatives of psychoanalytic theory (Jean-Pierre Oudart (1977) and Stephen Heath (1981) for example) consider that the spectator is sutured as an

1980s, when they started to make way for historical, neoformalist and cognitive approaches to film theory.

According to the proponents of the cognitive approach, one of the main weaknesses of Theory is that it is based on concepts, such as the mirror phase, used out of their original context, which drains them of their explanatory power.[13] Theory or, rather, different versions of it, forces films into a single mould with the result that their individual characteristics do not seem to matter anymore.[14] Instead of producing new information about films such analyses seemed, rather, to confirm the theory applied - the analytic tool. Bordwell (1996, 26-29) has suggested that instead of one big theory there should be several smaller-scale theories, or "middle-level research" as he calls it, designed to solve clearly defined problems. This tendency is obvious in cognitivist approaches, but it is not the road taken by Slavoj Žižek.

As Žižek sees it, Bordwell and other cognitivists present Theory in too simple a manner, making their criticism partly miss its goal. Žižek argues that film studies can be revitalised with the help of the original and authentic Lacan. He does not accept Bordwell's middle-level research, thinking instead that film theory should still be able to generalise. According to Žižek, the only way to do justice to works of art is by using them as building blocks of theory. This is what he does with Kieślowski's films. (Žižek 2001, 1-9.) Below I present the main points of Žižek's arguments, returning to them in later sections of the thesis.

Žižek holds that Kieślowski can be saved from mystical post-modern interpretations and "'post-secular' obscurantist readings" with the help of the Lacanian approach. "Post-secular readings" are his reference to what may be called New-Age interpretations, encouraged by the alleged mysticism of Kieślowski's late films, for example the supersensual connection between the two girls in *The Double Life of Véronique*. (2001, 1-7; 121.)

According to Žižek, it is typical of Kieślowski's narration that the suture between the subjective and the objective shots "fails", or is interrupted. Because of this, the origin of the gaze is not revealed. He terms this phenomenon *interface*, defined as a moment when a part of normal reality suddenly starts to function as a

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element of narration in a way that makes her feel as if she is being shown everything, that there is no blind spot in the diegetic space, not even where the camera is. It follows that the spectator mistakenly thinks that she is a unified subject/ego even though in reality there are no unified subjects. Another consequence of a narrative structure of this kind is the illusion that the classical narrative tells itself. Apparently, there is no narrator hiding in any corner of the cinematic space. (See Oudart 1977; Heath 1981.)

Feminist film theorists, such as Laura Mulvey (1975) and E. Ann Kaplan (1983), argued that a male gaze reigns in classical narration. Not only the female protagonist but also the female spectators are subjected to this gaze, which at the end of the film restores the female characters to their proper places in the patriarchy. Several theorists have proposed that only deconstructive films, films that reveal the mechanisms of narration, can provide a way out of the traps of ideology. (See, for example, Mulvet 1975; Kaplan 1983.)

[13]   Noël Carrol criticises such disconnected and metaphorical concepts vigorously in his book *Mystifying Movies. Fads and Fallacies in Contemporary Film Theory.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

[14]   Thus, psychoanalytic feminist theory seemed to find in every classical film an almost identical oedipal situation.

"door of perception" "through which another, purely fantasmatic dimension becomes perceptible". (2001, 39.) As an example of the emergence of interface he presents the scene from *The Double Life of Véronique* where Weronika is travelling by train. An uneven glass surface makes the view of the countryside and the small town, as seen through the train window, look slightly distorted - an indirect way of telling the spectator of Weronika's heart condition. Those things that cannot be explicitly narrated in film are, says Žižek, expression of the Real[15].

The ultimate cause of suture is an ontological crack that cuts through reality itself. Because it is not possible to accept the whole of reality, it is not possible to present all of it. The failure of suture is a sign of the return of the repressed. A spectral fantasy appears in the place of the repressed. (2001, 31-54.) Another way for the Real to appear is through *sinthoms,* repetitive features which have no single meaning. They repeat themselves both inside one film and from one film to another. (2001, 98.) Žižek (2001, 71) writes: "It was precisely a fidelity to the Real that compelled Kieślowski to abandon documentary realism - at some point, one encounters something more Real than reality itself." I shall return to the question of *sinthoms* in Chapter 7.3.

This is fascinating and I cannot but admire some of Žižek's analyses. His approach works in some cases, such as in *Blue*; I discuss his analysis of the film in Chapter 8.6. However, the more examples he presents the more it seems that he is reducing Kieślowski's films to a single pattern. I agree with Žižek when he says that in cinematic language, elements of narration and style articulate that part of the content which is excluded from the explicit narrative. Žižek goes on, however, to claim that these elements stand for what he calls the repressed aspect of the content. I do not think that this is necessarily true, or that it would be, even if it were true, a very interesting explanation in the long run. Can a perspective which almost completely lacks concepts specific to film studies be a saviour of film theory, to say nothing of Kieślowski? Žižek does not tell us much about the cinematic form of individual films, nor is this his aim. His aim is to generalise, and in this he succeeds. It can be concluded from this that if one wants to learn more about the structures of films and the experience of the spectator, then Lacan is not the best point of departure.

I see it as a positive sign that film studies are showing increasing interest in the role of the spectator. Cognitive studies are not the only approach to be commended here. Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of cinema, in particular his conception of the nature of the relationship obtaining between cinema and thinking, has recently attracted a great deal of attention. I shall not examine Deleuze's cinematic thinking in this study beyond making one or two short

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15   The Real is one of Lacan's three orders through which we pass as we are growing up and which are responsible for our ego development. The other two are the Imaginary and the Symbolic. The Real comes first, determining our subsequent engagement with the world. As Sobchack defines it: "(...) the relations of the Real transcend both the image and the sign, are their excess, and cannot be contained by them." Even though the Real is outside the domain of symbolisation, it is not outside the domain of the subject. It is synonymous with what is real for the subject. According to Sobchack, the Real is "commensurate with the primary area of Merleau-Ponty's concern". (Sobchack 1992, 104-107.)

comments. However, Deleuze's impact can be seen also in research on Kieślowski. *Memory and Survival* (2000) is Emma Wilson's discussion of Kieślowski's French films, *The Double Life of Véronique* and *The Three Colours* trilogy. She analyses the films in the light of Deleuze's theory of the *time image* and his recent trauma theory, arguing that Kieślowski's cinema is post-Deleuzean in its transgression of the time image. Kieślowski achieves this by rejecting the time image as a representation of time and mental images, particularly in *Blue*. Wilson also places Kieślowski's films in the context of the French new wave, detecting in them references to such directors as Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard and Eric Rohmer.

In this study I shall also put more emphasis on the systematic examination of film form, especially of narrative structures, than has been previously done in research on Kieślowski. The special attention that I pay to the spectator's experience further distinguishes my point of view from those of my predecessors. Kieślowski has been studied from various perspectives, but explicit film theoretical considerations have been absent from most examinations. Only the most recent ones, those of Žižek and Wilson, are a clear exception. My own hope is to contribute first of all to the discussion on Kieślowski but also to the questions involved in film theory.

I PHENOMENOLOGY AND COGNITIVE FILM THEORY AS THEORETICAL STARTING POINTS

1 The relationship between phenomenology and cognitive science

Questions about consciousness, mind, perception and thinking were asked in phenomenology and the philosophy of mind long before cognitive science joined them. Thus, there are obvious points of contact between phenomenology and cognitive science[16]. Cognitive science is a multidisciplinary field of activity. So far, no consensus has been reached on what exactly forms its subject matter. General-level representations, knowledge formation, information processing, or human agency have all been suggested as candidates. These definitions are loose; "representation" alone covers an endless number of phenomena. (Saariluoma 2001, 42-48.)[17] The relationship between cognitive science and neuroscience is similarly rather ill-defined, especially on the level of theory, which is among the factors that make it difficult to specify the subject matter of cognitive science (Revonsuo 2001, 81). Howard Gardner (1987, 6) defines the task of cognitive science as involving "a contemporary, empirically based effort to answer long-standing epistemological questions - particularly those concerned with the nature of knowledge, its components, its sources, its development, and its deployment." Gardner makes an explicit distinction between analyses of human cognitive activities and biological, neurological, sociological and cultural analyses (1987, 6). It is immediately obvious that such a differentiation would be impossible in phenomenology.

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[16]   According to Howard Gardner (1987, 5-6; 28), the term cognitive science came into use only in the early 1970s. The official start of cognitive science has, however, been dated at 1956. The year saw a number of important events, among them a conference at Dartmouth College where the concept of artificial intelligence was used for the first time.

[17]   Saariluoma (2000, 44) offers a helpful outline of what is meant by representations in cognitive science: "Representations are presentations of information, but not information in the sense of classical epistemology. Unlike information, representations need not be true or well defined. (...) The representations researched by cognitive science are in a philosophical sense closest to sets of beliefs, systems of beliefs, or bodies of information."

It has been stressed that the findings of cognitive science must be based on empirical research. For film studies, the most important area within cognitive science is cognitive psychology, which has roots in Gestalt psychology and phenomenology. One of the questions raised in these fields concerns the way in which the structures and mechanisms of the mind organise perception and meanings, or whether this is what they do in the first place. (Grodal 1997, 13.) The goal of cognitive psychology is, according to Baars (1986, 7), to formulate theories about the invisible structures controlling our behaviour. It is a crucial claim of cognitive science that "mental states function causally between sensations and bodily reactions. It is because of this mediating function that mental states exist." (Saariluoma 2001, 28.) This acknowledgement of the existence of mental states separates cognitive science from behaviourism. In fact, cognitive science was originally a reaction to behaviourism. The existence of mental states means that we humans have what we call an inner life, that we do not merely react passively to stimuli coming from outside.

Unlike cognitive science, phenomenology has not pursued the ideals of objective science. Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, rejected naturalism (empiricism) and psychologism. According to Husserl, psychology is an objective science about the subjective (1970, 126). Phenomenology considers things as they appear to a human consciousness. This does not mean, however, that anything goes in phenomenology. Husserl created a method, reduction, a rigorous stance where our natural attitudes and assumptions about things are "bracketed". Reduction entails looking at things as they appear to us, without the inaccuracies of a natural, everyday attitude. The assumptions underpinning the way in which people normally recognise and categorise their experiences are suspended, put aside. Reduction was an attempt to find the essence (eidos) of phenomena, while the question whether phenomena exist outside the perceiver's intention was considered irrelevant. A belief in the feasibility of such a procedure makes Husserl's phenomenology transcendental. In the end, becoming aware of the difficulties following from the suspension of the life-world, Husserl had to acknowledge the impossibility of reduction, our inability to bracket the existence of the life-world in which we always find ourselves. He had to admit that even theoretical interests are always related to practical concerns. The needs of practice determine which features of the object under scrutiny are to be taken into account and which are to be bracketed. What remained of the idea of reduction was the search for the essence of things. (Husserl 1995; Moran 2000, 11-14.)

After Husserl, in Merleau-Ponty's existential philosophy, the life-world, or the lived world as Merleau-Ponty calls it, assumed the centre stage. Everything we do has to be considered in the context of the lived world. The lived body and the lived world are intertwined and inseparable (Sobchack 1992, 38). Phenomenologists do not deny the value of scientific explanations (Merleau-Ponty 2001, vii). Rather, the common opinion among phenomenologists is that science is incapable of giving a holistic account of the human being. Phenomenology seeks to achieve a direct and primitive contact with the world. Descriptions of our experience (of time and space for example) as such are more important than causal explanations and accounts of the psychological origin of sense experience. The aim

has been to describe pure and real, pre-reflective sense experiences. (Husserl 1995; Stadler 2002, 238.)

Phenomenology is a way of "rescuing" things from the objective and often invisible sphere of science by taking them into the sphere of experience and the life-world. The aim is not to make science useless, however. (Himanka 2002, 107.) Jarmo Valkola (2000, 128) sees the cognitive approach to aesthetic perception as "a part of a wider understanding of a phenomenology of aesthetic experience."

Recently there have been increasing attempts to bring about a dialogue between phenomenology and cognitive science. Depraz and Gallagher (2002, 2-3) point out that for phenomenologists, there is nothing new about dialogue with empirical science. Merleau-Ponty, for example, has used empirical evidence to support his phenomenological analyses, and his thinking is indebted to many psychologists and neurologists. He was interested in the early forms of cognitive science in the work of Gestalt theorists and William James, the philosopher of mind (Dillon 1988, 58; 92).[18]

Merleau-Ponty considers all information about the world, even scientific information, to be attainable only through personal experience and from a personal point of view. Absolute truths about the world are not possible. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 236; 388.) In this sense, the objective world of science is not the world where humans actually live. It does not follow from this, however, that the world is a creation of the subject. In phenomenology, the world predates us and our reflection of it. A spectator, for example, does not construct the world in her perception but, instead, takes part in the world (von Bonsdorff 2000). I shall return later to what is a two-way relationship between the perceiver and the perceived.

Phenomenology is about describing phenomena. According to Merleau-Ponty (2002, x), "... the demand for a pure description excludes equally the procedure of analytical reflection on the one hand, and that of scientific explanation on the other." We proceed to description of the world through perception. Description of reality does not involve construction or formulation. That is, perception cannot be put in the same category as syntheses, such as judgements or predications. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, ix-xi.) The empiricism of cognitive science and the phenomenological attitude stressing the importance of pre-reflective experience are not commensurable, but not necessarily contradictory either, because they deal with phenomena on different levels.

What kind of roles might phenomenology and cognitivism then be assigned in film analysis? As regards phenomenology, Torben Grodal remarks that it is important to describe a consciously felt film experience and the mental states accompanying it. Description is not enough, however; it should go together with analysis. Grodal argues that "phenomenology overrates the possibilities of unmediated introspection and perception". (Grodal 1997, 6-7.) I do not think that a phenomenological analysis of films means wallowing in an obscure subjective realm of some sort. This is shown by Vivian Sobchack's example in her book *The*

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[18]   In the opinion of Depraz and Gallagher, writing in their editorial introduction to the journal *Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, one possible way to launch a dialogue of this kind would be taking, in phenomenology, empirical case studies as points of departure. Phenomenology can help us understand cognition.

Address of the Eye (1992), to which I shall return later; the book proves that film experience on a general level (the essence of film experience) can be tackled and analysed using a phenomenological approach.[19] I believe that phenomenological considerations can be, and have been, combined with an analytic study of films. Bruce Kawin's book *Mindscreen: Bergman, Godard and First-Person Film* (1978) demonstrates that such a combination is possible. I shall go back to this subject in Chapter 7 below.

Grodal considers that what distinguishes the phenomenological and the scientific approach (including his own) is that phenomenology evokes the "sensuous *qualia*" of consciousness while science describes and explains them. He emphasises that scientific explanations of aesthetic phenomena are not reductive. Cognitive explanations of the phenomena that generate mental states give a richer account of the "felt" qualities of those phenomena than phenomenological descriptions. (1997, 11.) However, Revonsuo points out that explanations of the subjective phenomena of consciousness are still a problematic issue in cognitive science (2001, 79). Scientific explanations have not been able to fill in the gaps between brain processes and personal experiences.

Cinematic experience cannot be reduced to rational explanations and the processing of information alone, which cognitivists tend to prioritise. Films offer also aesthetic and emotional experiences. This is increasingly acknowledged by cognitivists, who have lately started to look at emotions as an element of the process of viewing films (see, for example, Plantinga & Smith 1999, Tan 1996 and Grodal 1997). Some of their ideas about the role of emotions are a little too clear-cut, however, as I shall point out in Chapter 6.2. Their key argument is that emotions and cognition are not enemies but that they tend to act jointly. Emotions are connected to specific goals, objects and motivations. (Plantinga & Smith 1999, 2-3.) Grodal (1997, 6), for example, argues that

> The viewer's experience and the phenomena experienced often demand explanations that imply non-conscious activities; but the emotions and cognitions must be explained in relation to conscious mental processes. For evolutionary reasons, it is improbable that the way phenomena appear in consciousness is just an illusion caused by certain quite different non-conscious agents and mechanisms.

Cognitivists' demand that film studies should be more scientific is only partly justified, because in the humanities we cannot make a complete break with subjective experience. As Dermot Moran (2000, 15) sees it, phenomenology defends the fundamental role of subjectivity and consciousness in all knowledge and in all descriptions of the world. According to him, this is a part of its continuing appeal. "Indeed, the whole point of phenomenology is that we cannot split off the subjective domain from the domain of the natural world as scientific naturalism has done." (Moran 2000, 15.) Sobchack (1992, 300) stresses that only a lived body can understand a film experience and its significance.

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[19] Allan Casebier's Film and Phenomenology. Toward a Realist Theory of Cinematic Representation (1991) is a Husserlian approach to cinema.

1.1   The reciprocity of the subject and the world in phenomenology

In this and the next two chapters I present some pivotal ideas of Merleau-Ponty's existential philosophy, concerning perception in particular, and some phenomenological ideas about time and art. These ideas will be taken up again and deepened in later chapters of the thesis.

As mentioned above, there was a contradiction in Husserl's philosophy in that his original conception of a transcendental subject could not be reconciled with the concept of the life-world. Merleau-Ponty, who was a follower of Husserl, based his existential philosophy on the related concept of the lived world (Dillon 1988, 87). He rejected the notion of a transcendental or disembodied ego. For him, the subject is embodied, always situated in the world, and pre-reflectively aware of the world. Moran (2000, 411) characterises Merleau-Ponty's though as a synthesis of Hegel, Bergson and late Husserl. The basic idea of corporeal existence he shared with another existential philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre.

At the centre of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy lies the inseparability of the self and the world. He was equally opposed to those theories which see perception as a process of reacting to stimuli coming from outside and those that claim that consciousness is autonomous. The human mind is connected to both the body and the world. (Merleau-Ponty 1982, 3-4.) Our physical situatedness in the world affects our perceptions and experience. Perception is possible only from a personal perspective. How space, for example, appears to us, depends on the presence of a psycho-physical subject. Bodily intentions reside primary in our relation to the world, which has been constituted for us even before we encounter it in cognition.

Merleau-Ponty's ontology is grounded on a thesis about the ontological primacy of phenomena. We gain information about phenomena through perception. Merleau-Ponty sees perception as epistemologically primary; for us, the world of perceptions is the real world. Our conception of the objective world is based on perceptual experience of the phenomenal world. The lived world, the world of phenomena, predates both the subjective and the objective world. (Dillon 1988, 58; 88.) We do not live only in a world of real perceptions. Experience has several levels, such as that of dreams, but we can normally distinguish dreams from other perceptions. Our perceptions are always coloured by things, dreams and fantasies, which are not actual properties of objects. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, xi.) Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of perception leaves room for individuality, ambiguity and mistakes.

The idea that phenomena are the smallest entity of perception was first formulated in Gestalt theory. According to this theory, we see gestalts: the objects of perception do not appear as atoms but as figures. This is what Merleau-Ponty means with the words "Matter is pregnant with form" (Merleau-Ponty 1982, 12). We do not construct phenomena in perception. Instead, we carry the structures of the world in ourselves, which is what makes perception possible. This requires the rejection of the Cartesian dualistic separation between immanence and transcendence. In his late philosophy Merleau-Ponty uses words such as reversible, intertwined and the chiasm and introduces the concept of *flesh* to analyse the relationship between the subject and the world and the intersubjective character of our existence. In

perception we are given a concrete world of immediate experience and intersubjectivity. I shall consider this philosophy of reversibility in the context of the representation of subjective experience in Chapter 7.

Merleau-Ponty wrote a great deal about painting because painting reveals our perceptual relationship with the world. For him, Cézanne was a painting phenomenologist whose works demonstrate how we perceive things. It is curious that Merleau-Ponty wrote so little about film, for film offers even more opportunities for examining the relationship between the seer and the seen. As Vivian Sobchack (1992, 91), who examines film experience in the light of Merleau-Ponty's thought, remarks: "at their most rigorous, both painter and filmmaker practice a phenomenology of vision."

As I anticipated above, a division of time into subjective and objective time is an essential aspect of the phenomenological conception of time. Subjective time is also discussed as personal or inner time or temporality, objective time as world-time. Further, we all have a consciousness of inner time, or inner time consciousness, to borrow Husserl's term, which enables us to separate subjective and objective time. Our consciousness of inner time also makes it possible for us to measure objective time. (Sokolowski 2000, 130-132.) The terms world-time and objective time refer to the same phenomenon, the time of clocks and calendars, which belong to the sphere of worldly processes. World-time is measurable, public and verifiable. Inner time, in contrast, is private. It belongs to the sphere of mental acts and experiences, conscious life and events. The way in which our intentions and feelings relate to each other and to our current experiences are determined in subjective, immanent time. (Sokolowski 2000, 130.) Dufrenne (1973, 243) defines the difference between objective and subjective time as follows: "Clock time arises out of objective time, whereas the time proper to the living being expresses the interiority of life and what Kant calls its internal finality."

Temporality plays a significant role in Merleau-Ponty's thinking about human experience. Merleau-Ponty picked up on Husserl's and Heidegger's reflections on time, thinking like them that time is constituted in consciousness. According to him, "there are no events without someone to whom they happen and whose finite perspective is the basis of their individuality. Time presupposes a view of time." (2002, 477.) In other words, we can enter time and understand time only from a subjective perspective. To exist, *true time* demands the presence of a subject whose relationship to the world is intentional. True time is not a process of the objective world; it can only be encountered in a personal relation to things. Time is not some actual series, or an order outside me that I am content to register. True time arises from my relation to things and is never constituted completely. It is manifested in a process which is never finished. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 378-388; 477-478.)

The embodied subject and time are reciprocally related in the sense that time becomes understandable through the subject's position at the same time as the subject is, in turn, constructed in time (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 476-477). Time is thus, in phenomenology, an essential precondition for the formation of a personal identity. The subject is situated at a crossroads of personal and objective time. The subject belongs to the world and world-time, but she has also her own inner world

and time. (Sokolowski 2000, 130-133.) The subject is bodily situated in the present, in relation to which the past and the future are defined. Things acquire a historical orientation through the body and the subject, which the past and the future pull in their respective directions. To recapitulate, perception takes place in relation to time and the body, which is situated in time. Perception takes place on the axis of time, directing itself both to the past and the future, while the perceiver's body acts as a connector in between the two dimensions. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 278-279.) In this sense, Merleau-Ponty's conception of time is similar to that of Husserl. Passing through the subject, objective time turns subjective; becomes true time, or *temporality*. Now-moments are possible only for a subject. They exist only in subjective time.

Vivian Sobchack (1992, 59) observes that the subject expresses intentionality in the world by occupying a situation in space and having a temporally limited existence. She continues: "Thus, in existence, the body's finitude and situation and its power of movement transform the abstractions of time and space, informing them with the weight of choice and the thickness of movement, with *value* and *dimension*" (1992, 59).

1.2   Temporal art(s)

Describing the aesthetic object's mode of existence in time, Mikel Dufrenne points out the difference between time and temporality: An aesthetic object exists in time together with other things, but only when it is filtered through subjective experience is its time transformed into *temporality*. *Temporality* requires the existence of a subject, whereas objective time is decentralised, external time. External time always predates me, the one who experiences. A subject lives in time together with unhistorical objects; it is only through the subject that time can become historical. (Dufrenne 1973, 160-161; 242-243.) In other words, the temporality of a work of art is realised in the subject's experience. As will be seen later on, cognitive film theory stresses the same point with respect to film experience.

Like Merleau-Ponty, Dufrenne argues that our perception of temporal works of art is sequential, the work unfolding little by little along the past-present axis. Because of this, temporal arts "require the aid of imagination which operates as memory." Temporal works of art control time by preserving the past as immanent in the present, and by granting continuity to the objects presented. The spectator's memory must work hard, and from time to time she must recall what happened earlier in order to understand what is happening at the moment. In this respect, temporal arts differ from paintings, which can sometimes be assimilated in their entirety at a glance. (Dufrenne 1973, 364-365.) During perception our attention shifts between the details of the present moment and the totality of what we have taken in so far.

Although the arts of time require imagination, Dufrenne thinks that the role that imagination plays in aesthetic experience and perception is less active than the one it has in everyday perception. Works of art require less imaginative activity, or

understanding, because the time of the work of art differs from the time in which we otherwise find ourselves and which is filled with our personal memories and plans for the future. The events of the fictive world do not call for any practical actions on our part even though we might be affected by them on an emotional and intellectual level. (Dufrenne 1973, 365-366.) I would argue, however, that works of art can take us to completely new worlds which have little do with our everyday world. They can enrich our everyday lives by giving us new ideas and points of view. They ask us to imagine things we would otherwise not even think of.

Dufrenne says that aesthetic objects generate also a sense of the finality of time. In this regard fictive time resembles the time proper in which we live: we know that our time is limited. Yet, this sense of finality is stronger in aesthetic objects. Fictive time is marked by internal finality, by irreversibility. The future of a work of art, if it can be said to exist at all, is immanent in its present. Its every move has been decided in advance. The future of a work of art is to be understood above all as an unfolding of meanings "whose chronological dimension only illustrates a deeper logical dimension." The time of a work of art thus differs from real time in that fictive time is predetermined. Real time simply flows on even though things and events come to a close. In works of art, time in a sense comes to a stop with the closure of the action. (1973, 365-366.) The structure of a work of art is predetermined even when the ending of a film, for example, is purposefully left open.

The events of a narrative work of art have usually been made up by someone, that is to say, the incidents depicted are fictional. Time is a part of the story, of its invented structure. The fact that it is structured makes the time of a work of art feel different from real time. Mark Freeman (1998, 37) writes with reference to Hayden White that "*real* events just happen, unstoried; and time itself, from this perspective, can only be the linear backdrop of their happening." He continues, referring to Paul Ricoeur[20], that plot transforms events into a story in which temporality and narrativity cross (Freeman 1998, 42). Because of this, there is nothing self-evident or natural about the time of a work of art. This applies also to cinema because cinematic time is connected with the filmmaker's desire to tell the story in a certain way and make a certain impression on the spectator.

Freeman does not think that the difference between real time and the time of a work of art lies in the fact that real time is unstructured, the time of a work of art structured. It is common to consider that only stories give structure to an otherwise unorganised reality. We similarly ourselves break up and order the linearity of time. Seeking better control over our daily lives, our intellect breaks up the continuity of reality into snapshots which it then mistakes for ready-made things. (Freeman 1998, 40.) This idea can be found also in Bergson, who talks about the illusion which is born when we transfer "to duration itself, in its continuous flow, the form of the instantaneous sections which we make in it." This happens because of our bodily existence in space. Our visible bodies create suitable spaces for

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[20]   In his three-part monograph *Time and Narrative* (1984-1985) Ricoeur studies the relationship between time and literary narratives. Ricoeur's extensive research falls outside the scope of the present study.

storing our memories. (Bergson 1999, 148-149.) Time is similarly broken up in cinema. Cinematographic time is cut into pieces, is made spatial. Freeman concludes that "*experienced* time, unlike that which is measured by clocks, is structured and configured." (Freeman 1998, 40.) This view that personal experience moulds time is close to Merleau-Ponty's assertion that a perceiving body gives time a historical dimension. We may anticipate here that the film viewer similarly structures narrative time in her mind and thereby creates her own version of it.

The fact that the time of a narrative work of art is structured means that it is not continuous, unlike the time of in real life. According to Dufrenne, the question of how actively the spectator fills in the indeterminate spots of the aesthetic object (in film narratives, gaps) is related to the difference between objective time and the time of the work of art. While we are absorbed in an aesthetic experience, for example reading a book or watching a film, objective time disappears together with the objective world. Only the time of the work exists for us. Dufrenne argues – a little unconvincingly in my opinion - that because of this, the spectator has no need to step outside the work of art to look for the meanings of and explanations for its fictive events. He claims further that aesthetic perception in general does not require that we complete the work: close up gaps, restore continuity, or rearrange forms. It is enough that we perceive what there is to perceive. (1973, 365-368.)

Dufrenne goes on to say that the aesthetic object should be valued as it is because that is all there is: "The real task of imagination in aesthetic experience is therefore to grasp the represented object *in appearance*, without substituting for it (...) an imaginary object held to be more or uniquely true" (1973, 367). The aesthetic object is to be appreciated in its incompleteness, for artists are not really interested in giving a comprehensive representation (or reproduction) of any object. Instead, we must try to understand what the artist wants to say with the work. Then we may also understand what the omissions, indeterminacies or gaps in the work mean. Only a spectator who for some reason expects that art give a full account of reality worries about omissions or lacking details. In fact, a work of art is able to exist only because of its indeterminacies. (Dufrenne 1973, 367-368.)

I do not think that we should exclude, or that it is, to begin with, possible to exclude the real world, or objective time as Dufrenne says, during the viewing of films, no matter how intensive the experience. We always bring our earlier knowledge and past experiences with us to cinema. It can be said about art in general that it does not constitute a sphere separate from the rest of life. As for the filling in of narrative gaps, it is something that is probably a built-in characteristic of humans. Even abstract works of art make us want to discern a more complete picture, or a narrative – as in the case of avant-garde films based on loose associations. We tend to do this even though we know – as normal adult viewers know – that what we see is all there is. Dufrenne is right, however, to point out that we should consider the function of these gaps or omissions; their contribution to the meaning of a work of art. At the same time, I do not think that we strive to fill in all gaps all of the time. We are able to recognise those gaps that need to be closed up. This is a point I shall return to in Chapter 2.1 from the cognitive point of view, and again in Part III as it relates to Kieślowski's films.

1.3 Time in film

As was seen above, Merleau-Ponty thinks that time proper unfolds in a process of becoming where the past, the present and the future come into being and acquire a historical orientation in relation to a subject who is situated in the present (2002, 278-279). He talks about *constituted time* as against time proper, subjective time. This is how Merleau-Ponty (2002, 482) defines constituted time of this kind: "It is spatial, since its moments co-exist spread out before thought; it is a present, because consciousness is contemporary with all times. It is a setting distinct from me and unchanging, (...)." From this point of view, time in film could be said to be a ready-made continuum of relations of before and after. While Merleau-Ponty is not here speaking about film, his remarks can be applied also to it; to use his words to characterise the temporal quality of film, in this sense time in film is not time itself but a "recording of time, the result of its *passage*". (2002, 482.)[21]

It is true that from the spectator's point of view, the relations of before and after are already there in the film (or *on* the film). We know that the temporal relations presented in a film we are seeing predate our experience, but our consciousness of this fact varies during viewing, for at times we are more intensively engaged by the story and at times we reflect on its manner of presentation. That is, we are able to reflect on the structure of the film during viewing, which implies that our thoughts move in time during viewing, returning to past moments of the narrative. However, only afterwards is there time for proper detachment, time to look at the film in its totality.

In his short essay *The Film and the New Psychology* (1948) Merleau-Ponty calls film a "temporal *gestalt*". He is saying that like all perception, the viewing of films takes place in time. (1964, 54-55.) As I see it, because the structure of a film unfolds little by little in time, as Merleau-Ponty points out, we are able to perceive its *whole* structure only retrospectively. (Cf. Chapter 2.2.) In many cases we are probably able to anticipate a film's structure, but in some structurally more ambitious films it is only after viewing that we are able to perceive the whole and make out the meaningful connections between its different segments.

According to Merleau-Ponty, as a temporal *gestalt* film is more than a sum of its parts (images). He refers to the Russian filmmaker-theorist Lev Kuleshov's famous Mosjoukin experiment[22] to illustrate the fact that out of the relations between shots will emerge a new reality, formed in time. Since the meaning of a

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[21]   Mary Ann Doane examines the nature of cinematic time in relation to broader cultural changes in modernity in her book *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*, 2002. Doane concentrates on the representation of time in the early cinema. The spectator's experience of time is not her concern in this book.

[22]   Merleau-Ponty ascribes this experiment to Vsevolod Pudovkin, but in reality it was carried out by Kuleshov. Kuleshov filmed the actor Mosjoukin's inexpressive face at close range and connected the close-ups with shots of three different objects, a bowl of soup, a dead woman and, finally, a child playing with a teddy bear. The close-up of Mosjoukin's face was cut between these objects. The audience marvelled at the subtle shifts of Mosjoukin's expression. He looked pensively at the soup, sadly at the dead woman, and smilingly at the child. Because the shots affect each other, what was actually an unvarying expression seemed to change. The meaning of a shot thus always arises in relation to the shots preceding and following it. (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 54.)

film is included in its rhythm, it can only unfold through the film's temporal structure. (1964, 54-57.) This does not contradict the above statement that film is a record of time because during the viewing of a film the relations of before and after are formed anew for each individual viewer. The spectator cannot affect the factual duration of a film, just as she cannot affect the events of the fictive world. Nevertheless, the spectator brings her own subjective time and perspective to the film experience. I shall consider later the question concerning the factors that shape the spectator's experience of time and the length of time, that is duration, in film. Merleau-Ponty is emphasising the character of film as a process when he says that "the joy of art lies in its showing how something takes on meaning - not by referring to already established and acquired ideas but by the temporal or spatial arrangement of elements" (1964, 57-58). This description of film fits the aim of phenomenology to study phenomena as processes of becoming instead of seeking to provide an explicit expression for some existent thing (Merleau-Ponty 2002, xxii-xxiii).

Merleau-Ponty's claim that a film is perceived not thought seems a little odd in the light of the above, but it accords with his general view that we carry the structures of the world in us. With respect to understanding films this seems to imply that we do not dissect a film into its constituent parts and then synthesise these into a whole. He argues that perceiving films is essentially similar to perceiving the world in general, that films "appeal to our power tacitly to decipher the world or men and to coexist with them". (1964, 58.) To a certain extent I agree, because films are not separate from other aspects of life. I think also that some theorists have exaggerated our tendency to fill in narrative gaps. The words "to decipher tacitly" are appropriate as a characterisation of the way in which we deal with such gaps. I do think, however, that active thinking contributes strongly to our perception of films. I shall return to this point in Chapter 7.3.

The question concerning the nature of cinematic time and the spectator's position in relation to it was taken up also by some of the earliest film theorists. The active role of the spectator already emerges here. Hugo Münsterberg paid attention to the ability of film to move freely in time. In his book *The Film: A Psychological Study* (1916) he describes film's capacity to be in several places at once. Unlike theatre, film can shift freely back and forth in time and space. It can jump, in a moment, years forward or backward. In this sense, film works like human imagination. It has mobility akin to that of thoughts, which know no physical limits. Just like in the human mind, in film the past and the future become a part of the present moment. Film is subject to inner psychological laws rather than to external laws. According to Münsterberg, the spectator similarly moves back and forth in time in her mind while watching a film. To anticipate a fuller discussion later on, memory creates connections between different moments of the narrative. (Münsterberg 1970 (1916), 41.) Münsterberg saw the link between the spectator's thought and memory processes and film. He also considered that a film is actively completed by the spectator, but he conceived the completion process differently from later cognitive theory (Hietala 1989, 21-25). Indeed, there was no one to take up Münsterberg's ideas until the emergence of cognitive theory (Nyyssönen 1997). Jean Epstein was another film theorist and critic to give thought

to the temporal character of film, discussing it in connection with the concept of *la photogénie*. I shall come back to Epstein later when considering art-film narration in Chapter 6.1)

To return to a point made above, narrativisation is born out of humans' need to give reality meaning and shape. In narratives, everything is clearer and more manageable than in real life. We want to see such imaginary coherence also in our own lives. This is one reason why we create narratives. (Freeman 1998, 38.) Narrativising real or fictive events makes also time appear more controllable than in real life, as comprised of clearly defined moments and sequences. Every moment seems to be infused with meaning. This is because we can look at the fictive world from the outside. Our thoughts can move above it, so to speak.

Referring to Roman Ingarden, Joseph Scott Streb remarks in his dissertation *Prolegomenon to a Phenomenology of Film* that by organising events in time and space film narration creates meanings, sometimes even "metaphysical qualities". Metaphysical qualities are experiences felt to be so intensive and meaningful that they surpass experiences of everyday life. Works of art make such metaphysical qualities possible because in her relation to a work of art a spectator is in a sense an outsider. She exists physically in a different reality from that of the work of art. (Mentally she is not an outsider, of course.) Because of this physical separation, the spectator is able to see how moments are connected with each other and how the end is present in the beginning, and pick out the parallels between things. As spectators of works of art we can put the events depicted in them into perspective in a way not possible in our own real lives. We have an ability to discern temporal and spatial relations that is beyond the grasp of the fictive characters, a feature of spectatorship that I shall discuss more fully later, in Chapters 5.1 and 5.2 for example. As spectators we become aware of certain relations or parallels between things which seem to say something very profound about life. (Streb 1982, 160-168.)

2 The spectator and narrative in cognitive film theory

Cognitive film theory started to emerge in the mid-1980s. The first psychological explanations of the spectator's activity appeared as a part of formalist and neoformalist film analysis. David Bordwell's seminal *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985) was one of the first of such approaches. In it Bordwell presents his constructivist theory of film spectatorship, a very moderate version of cognitivism. Later, as more theorists have embraced cognitivism, there have been outspoken declarations that a cognitive approach is needed to raise the scientific status of film studies. The already mentioned book *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* is a collection of such views. The idea was to build several small-scale theories to solve particular problems.

More recently, cognitive explanations have proliferated to cover almost every area of film narration and film experience. Torben Grodal is a proponent of such large-scale cognitivism. Concerned voices have also asked whether Grodal's kind

of cognitivism is not on the way to becoming a new grand theory - something that cognitive explanations originally set out to oppose (Mattsson 2004). The main purpose of this study is not to evaluate cognitive theory as a whole, but as I said above, I do not think that cognitive explanations of film narration and film experience are adequate on their own.

Cognitive film theory often draws on research conducted outside film studies. As regards theories of perception, for example, it has been suggested that the same mechanisms underlie both the activities of everyday life and the activity of watching films. The representatives of ecological theory in particular have stressed that the very same mechanisms that have developed in the course of millions of years of evolution and that are crucial for our survival operate while we watch films (Anderson 1996). However, if film experience is explained purely on such a basis - which seems a little far-fetched for the purposes of film studies - there is a danger that inadequate attention will be paid to features specific to film and skills developed in the cinematic context, not to talk about the subjective character of film experience as such. Moreover, as Valkola points out, even though cognition is subject to internal causes, it is not immune to external influences arising from the social and cultural environment (2000, 111). But what is the relative contribution of internal and environmental factors in cognition? Little seems to be known about this. Thus, the empirical foundation of cognitive film theory is not quite watertight. In the next two sub-chapters I shall take up some aspects of narrative, the spectator and time that are relevant to my later discussion of Kieślowski.

2.1   The active spectator

Research dealing with film narration is not a clearly defined area within film studies. There are some general models of narration, such as a description of narration as a process where an initial equilibrium is replaced by a disequilibrium, followed by a return to a new equilibrium in the end. Such a model fits best classical Hollywood film. (Bacon 2000, 22.) It does not tell us much about individual films, let alone about the spectator's activity. Most theories of narration have been conceived with classical films in mind, which is understandable because in most of them the narrative follows established conventions. Noël Carroll's theory of *erotetic narration* is an example of a theory of this kind (for a more detailed discussion see Chapter 4.2). Art films, on the other hand, have no such clear-cut conventions of their own with the result that they elude ready-made models. By contrast, many small-scale cognitive theories have proved helpful in the analysis of aspects of art-film narratives.

Edward Branigan thinks that the function of a narrative can be defined in two broad ways. First of all, a narrative can be looked at in terms of how it reflects social questions; what kind of meanings it has for a particular community. Here, a narrative is being considered in a certain social *context*. Secondly, we can examine the relationship between a spectator and a narrative and ask how the spectator encounters the narrative on the level of her thoughts. In such a psychological

approach we pay attention to the characteristics of the spectator on the one hand and to the film as an aesthetic object on the other. In the first instance we examine a narrative as a *social and political object*, in the second instance as *a psychological object*. (Branigan 1992, 2-3.) As a representative of the cognitive movement, Branigan is more concerned with the second option, which is also the one closest to the approach adopted in this study.

Branigan defines narration as a dialectical process taking place between the spectator and a film and realising a narrative (1984, 38). Studying narration means studying those skills and methods that spectators use to gain information about narrative events. A cognitive study of narration involves following the spectator's train of thought, her processes of understanding and perceiving; it is not about finding in narratives ready-made properties. It means constructing statements on a micro level, statements which concern the film text but which are not themselves present in the text. Narration is about *how* an event is represented. Story, that is, *what* happens, is the object, or end result, of narration. While watching films a spectator acquires skills whose use enables her to understand *how* story events are represented. (Branigan 1992, 65; 112.) As regards Kieślowski's films, I am interested most of all in the *how*.[23]

Further, according to cognitive film theory the film spectator, instead of being a passive receiver, looks actively for meanings. Cognitive film theory seeks to understand and explain the ways in which the spectator deals with audiovisual information. (See Bordwell 1985; Branigan 1984; 1992.) Cognitive theorists have pointed out that unlike psychoanalytic film theory, cognitive theory is interested in rational rather than irrational processes. There has been an increasing tendency to explain inner processes instead of merely describing cinematic structures. Grodal situates cognitive theory, in the field of film studies, between data-driven realism and constructivist formalism. The most important difference between structuralism and cognitivism is that structuralism is static and describes objective structures of texts while cognitivism deals with those mental principles and processes which give birth to the structures that structuralists describe. (1997, 14; 21.) In this respect, Grodal has taken the cognitive theory of spectatorship at least a step further, extending cognitive explanations to practically every area of film viewing. However, instead of creating a general theory of the spectator's activity he presents several subtheories covering different kinds of narrative processes and stylistic questions. I will go more deeply into Grodal's theory of narration in Part III, where I work towards a characterisation of Kieślowski's narration based on Grodal's concept of process-oriented narrative.

According to cognitive film theory, watching films is a goal-oriented process in which thinking plays a significant role. Watching films is a skilled activity. The

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[23]   Branigan is among the film theorists criticised by Per Persson. Persson argues that Branigan does not explore the spectator's thought processes in any great detail. Instead of describing her activities and interpretive processes Branigan continues the structural theory of narration. He defines and studies structures and different epistemological levels of narration. As Persson sees it, the actual way in which a real spectator appreciates and understands those structures does not interest Branigan very much. (Persson 2002, 23.)

nature of a given set of perceptions is not determined by sensory stimuli alone. Sensory stimuli are ambiguous; it is the spectator who constructs the final perceptions with the help of her organism. This happens in part as a result of unconscious inferences. Inference is among the central concepts of the cognitive theory of spectatorship. (Bordwell 1985, 30-31.)

I shall now present the central ideas of Bordwell's constructivism and relate them to the earlier discussion of narrative gaps. At the centre of Bordwell's constructivist view is the idea that the spectator actively seeks to understand cinematic narration. Cognitivists think that viewing is guided by schemata. A schema is a set of models and generalisations concerning the world. It is a previously acquired information cluster about some aspect of reality. In film viewing the spectator uses schemata to form hypotheses about a film narrative. Schemata act as expectations helping the spectator to analyse narratives. During viewing, hypotheses are put to the test and either confirmed or invalidated. (Bordwell 1985, 30-33.) In this way, the concept of schema refers to the spectator's role in the film-viewing process. In cognitive theory, the schema, which belongs to the spectator, and the object of perception are two different things (Vescio 2001, 584). The difference is not absolute, however, because the spectator affects also the meanings of the object of perception.

In his theory, Bordwell is interested mainly in those aspects of narration which the spectator uses to construct the *story* and the story world (diegesis). It is this construction process that his "constructivism" refers to. Bordwell talks about cognition in relation to how the spectator builds the *fabula* (story) on the basis of the *syuzhet* (plot and style).[24] He excludes emotions from his view since he thinks that the spectator's comprehension of a story can be considered separately from her emotions. Bordwell thinks that emotions are predominantly non-cognitive phenomena. He does not consider emotions irrelevant, but he believes that understanding narration is theoretically separable from emotional reactions. (1985, 30.)[25] Story covers all those actions that are shown to the spectator and, further, also all those events that are not explicitly shown but which the spectator infers on the basis of what she sees. Causal relations, chronology, duration, frequency, and location in space and time apply to both events seen and events inferred. Plot presents directly only a part of the actions belonging to story. Those non-diegetic means of expression, such as music and camera angles, which affect our understanding of story, belong to plot. (Bordwell 1985; Bordwell & Thompson 1997, 90-93.)

There is an overlap between story and plot, but story encompasses more material. Plot compresses time in relation to story. In addition to duration, story and plot can differ as regards the order of presentation. Plot does not always present action in the same order as it happens in story. Thus, plot can start with events which belong to the end of story. Flashbacks and flashforwards are a means of reversing the order of events. In principle, there are no limits as to the ways in

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[24] The concepts *fabula* and *syuzhet* originate from Russian formalism.
[25] For the cognitivists' ideas about emotions see Chapter 6.2 in this study.

which plot can reorder story material.[26] (Bordwell 1985; Bordwell & Thompson 1997, 90-93.) On the basis of the above division, Thompson (1988, 41) defines narration as follows: "The process whereby the syuzhet presents and withholds fabula information in a certain order is *narration*."

The conceptual division of narrative into story and plot is a useful way of looking at the structure of narrative and the spectator's understanding of it, but much less useful as a way of considering the spectator's *experience* of film in a wider sense. I think that Bordwell's claim that the spectator builds story with the help of plot needs to be put more precisely. As I understand it, in his theory the spectator fills in ellipses, resulting in a story which is complete and temporally continuous - in the spectator's mind. The theory includes the assumption that continuity and coherence are essential for the viewing experience and for understanding what has been seen. To a certain extent I think this is true, as I argued above in Chapter 1.2. Nevertheless, I hope to show that Bordwell's view of narration is truer of narratives of a certain type, of classical rather than art-film narratives, and that Kieślowski's narratives belong to the latter category. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (2000, 14) points out that Bordwell's theory works best when the cognitive processes required by a film are comparable to the solving of crossword puzzles. Detective stories call for such thinking on the part of both the detective and the spectator. Cinematic narration is characterised as a form of problem-solving also by Peter Wuss in his article *Cinematic Narration, Conflict and Problem Solving*. He makes a distinction between *conception-based filmic structures* and *perception-based filmic structures*. This distinction is of interest for my analysis of Kieślowski's narration, and I shall return to Wuss's ideas in Chapter 5.2.

The reason why I cannot help but regard the idea of closing up narrative gaps with some suspicion is that it seems impossible to set any limits on such a process. How much material does story actually include? According to Bordwell, story is a chronological chain of causes and effects which unfolds within *a given time and space*. Story events have to be presented within a spatial framework no matter how vague or abstract it is. (Bordwell 1985, 49-51.) This definition is not very helpful. Seymour Chatman (1978, 29) thinks that filling in the gaps of a story has to do with the logical possibilities inherent in stories: "a narrative, as the product of a fixed number of statements, can never be totally 'complete,' in the way that a photographic reproduction is, since the number of plausible intermediate actions or properties is virtually infinite." It is for the very reason that the spectator has practically unlimited scope for adding plausible details that she does not do so in reality (Chatman 1978, 29).

I agree in part with Dufrenne, Bordwell and Chatman alike. Dufrenne is a little idealistic in arguing that works of art should be appreciated in their incompleteness. He is right, however, in asking us to consider what role a gap serves in a narrative. As regards Bordwell, it seems to me that he emphasises the activity of gap-filling without explicitly distinguishing between different kinds of narrative. Yet the usefulness of the plot–story distinction, from which the idea of

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[26]   Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994) is a good example of a non-linear plot structure.

narrative gaps derives, cannot be denied. Chatman is also right in pointing out that it is indeed difficult if not impossible to say when a narrative is complete.

2.2 Cinematic time arises from experience

In film theory, time has mostly been considered as a part of the film text. In cognitive theory, a common point of departure has been the dual structure of film narrative, the above-mentioned story-plot distinction. The duration of a film as it is seen onscreen may be called the time of projection. Plot-time is a selection from the full sequence of events, story-time, which includes everything the plot alludes to, what we infer instead of seeing it. (Bordwell 1985; Bordwell & Thompson 1997, 282.) A story can last, for example, five years, out of which the plot presents the events of the first and the last years, which in turn take place within two hours of projection. The three durations are rarely of equal length.

Normally, plot condenses story-time, but it can also extend story-time through repetition or by slowing it down. At some points of a narrative story-time and plot-time can coincide. As mentioned above, plot can present story events in a non-linear way. Time is not manifested in story-plot relations alone. Thompson (1988, 43) points out that time can be manifested also as a non-narrative element when it is articulated through rhythmic, sonic, and graphic qualities. I shall consider these aspects of film narration later as a part of my analysis of Kieślowski's films.

In film, time is subject to laws that differ from those operating in the real world. Filmmakers use narratives to manipulate time in many ways for their own purposes. A spectator is always subjected to a pre-programmed temporal form (Bordwell 1985, 74). A filmmaker decides on how much time the spectator is given to notice certain things. However, even though the spectator cannot affect the factual duration of shots and sequences, this does not mean that there is no scope for her personal experiences. If we define narration as interaction between the spectator and a film, as I have done above, some room must be left for the spectator's experience. In fact, time is not manifested, and there is no experience of time, without a spectator. The spectator's experience of time depends on many aspects of the interaction between the film form and spectator cognition. When the temporal continuity of narration is loose enough, the spectator can draw her own conclusions about the length of the ellipses (offscreen time) between shots and scenes. Non-linear narration can allow the spectator more scope for reconstructing the order of the events on the story level. In a narrative film, even in most non-mainstream films, it is normally possible to at least approximately determine the order of the events.[27]

Grodal is dissatisfied with the classical descriptions of time in narratives (Bordwell and Genette) because in them time is assumed to be a single phenomenon, clock time. However, instead of rejecting earlier theories completely

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[27]   A complete break-up of linear time is more common in avant-garde films in which narrative is replaced by an associative structure. Alain Resnais' poetic *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961) is an extreme example of temporal ambiguity in a film considered a narrative one.

Grodal modifies them. Grodal thinks that in visual fiction, the aesthetic experience of time is not directly related to the time of projection measured in clock time but stems, instead, from the way in which time is constructed in perception and cognition. Temporal experience is affected by a variety of mental processes and the ways in which these relate to the modal qualities and perceived tones of time. The spectator's experience of time is shaped not only by the content of the scenes but also by the affects they call forth in her. (1997, 139.) Grodal seeks to combine perceptual and cognitive processes with psychomimetic, emotion- and motivation-related processes to demonstrate that representations of time are not a matter of style alone. "The temporal experience in visual fiction is derived from anthropomorph mental schemata, not from 'pure', desemanticised, perceptual qualities." (1997, 139; 153.)

Differences in the emotional charge of sequences are thus one factor affecting the spectator's perception of the tempo and rhythm of narration. Scenes which are of equal length but have different emotional weight make the spectator experience a variation in the tempo. This is a normal in-built mechanism of film: the stronger the emotional charge, the longer the spectator tends to feel that a sequence lasts. Our memory records our own perception of the duration of a sequence, not its duration in screen time, that is in clock time. (Grodal 1997, 146-147.) Another way of saying this is that spectators' personal experience of the duration of cinematic units differs from their factual duration, for ultimately the spectator translates cinematic time back into experiential time.

This is evident in the way in which the spectator, after having seen a film, edits it in her mind to better suit her own purposes. When we think about a film later, our assessment of the lengths of shots and scenes differs from how we experienced them as we watched the film. Our memory may emphasise some things, relegate others to insignificance, and recall some scenes as longer or some character portrayals as deeper than they actually were. Here the spectator's personal, extra-cinematic experiences play an important part. Re-viewing is often full of surprises. The spectator's memory is limited, for the information gathered during viewing does not stay unchanged for long (Hochberg 1996, 373). Thus, the spectator creates her own version of the film, and partly for involuntary reasons. Perhaps it is not an overstatement to say that a film gives us a framework within which we create our own experiences of time. The ultimate experience of time is a combination of the spectator's personal time and film-time.

The spectator's freedom with respect to film can be explained in terms of two different processes related to perception, *bottom-up* and *top-down processes*. These two concepts, or perspectives, function here as two ways of looking at cinematic structures. But since they cannot be separated in practice, I use them primarily as a heuristics. Branigan introduces the two concepts in his discussion on the perception of sound in film. Time is involved also here, for the perception of sounds cannot be separated from time. Bottom-up processes are immediate and partly unconscious. Things are perceived directly on the basis of what we see on the screen, and reactions are to a large extent automatic. The spectator interprets and organises information quickly, which in the case of sound results in perceptions of such details as colour, pitch or depth of field. Inferences are made

directly from sense data, and the effects are short-term. (Branigan 1989, 316-317; 2003, 72.) The spectator's experience is shaped by the details of the situation, here a film, that she is engaged in (Gardner 1987, 97).

Top-down perception is grounded on earlier information and schemata. That is, it draws on the spectator's expectations and goals, the basis on which perceptions are organised. Top-down perception is conceptual, not automatic. How long the object of perception appears on the screen is less important here than in bottom-up perception. Top-down processes are the key to the spectator's freedom to consider a film separately from screen time. These processes are indirect because information is processed separately from the original viewing situation. At the same time, it needs to be emphasised that the two processes operate simultaneously during the viewing of films. (Branigan 1989, 316-317.) We may continue to perceive new details in a scene, for example, at the same time as we relate the scene to previous sequences of the film.[28]

Narrative is to a large extent an outcome of a retrospective organisation of information. The spectator is able to go through the film in any order, arrange it within a variety of frameworks (syntactic and semantic). The spectator can analyse similarities and differences in various ways. While coordinating information the spectator creates temporal (and spatial) structures not directly traceable to the time (and space) of projection. (Branigan 1989, 317; 2003, 72.) I think that the spectator begins her organisation of a narrative while she is still viewing because she is capable of reflecting on a film's structure at the same time as she follows the story.

In direct perception, the properties of sensory stimuli play an important role. Direct perception is a pervasive everyday phenomenon. Theoreticians who emphasise the role of interpretation in perception point to such examples as line drawings or other incomplete images to demonstrate the function of cognition and the indirect nature of perception. According to this argument, the less accurate is the information that we have about the object of our perception, the more prominent is the role played by cognition. In other words, perceiving representations is more indirect and requires more cognition than perceiving the real world. No clear distinction can be made, however. (Cutting & Massironi 1998, 140-141; 162.) I believe that the contribution of indirect perception is greater in film viewing than in real life. Reality confronts us in a more all-embracing manner than film, which requires from us no practical responses. We know that films have been

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[28] The difference between cognition and perception is related to bottom-up and top-down processes. Top-down processes require more cognition because information is not organised directly, with memory making a more prominent contribution. Because they are automatic, bottom-up processes are more purely perceptual. Nevertheless, perception and cognition cannot be clearly differentiated. In phenomenology it is thought that things are always seen *as* something, which also means that thinking is involved. There is no consensus on how significant a role cognition has in perception. Jackendoff (1987, 271-272) considers that the distinction between perception and cognition is unclear but points out that cognition can affect perception only to a limited extent. The main difference is that in perception, our experience of the world is a result of signals we receive from the outside, whereas in cognition the received information is interpreted on the basis of earlier information, beliefs and experiences. It is unlikely that there is perception completely without an element of cognition, for endogenous and holistic top-down processes and bottom-up processes always operate in concert.

made for our viewing by applying conventions of certain kinds, and because of this our expectations are more clearly defined.[29]

From a top-down perspective, from a distance, time can be seen as a broader phenomenon, as a part of a more large-scale event or model. Time approaches spatiality; it can now be understood in a new sense, as a part of a wider analysis of experience. Spatialising time means freezing it. When we talk about the relative aspects of time, such as order, frequency, and symmetry, time is being considered in spatial terms. To illustrate indirect perception of time Branigan describes a situation where a person looks from afar at two marks on a paper. The two marks are easily seen as a new totality, as a single mark instead of two separate ones. Thus, distance can offer us a new perspective on a figure. Temporal duration (in a film) can be likened to the dimensions of a solid object. In a film, this means that we can isolate moments of narration for analysis. These moments will be seen as temporal-spatial entities. (Branigan 1989, 315-317.) As I understand it, this implies that the spectator can reorganise the film material in several possible ways in her mind, and the result is never exactly the same as the original film. Partly for extra-cinematic reasons, the spectator perceives certain connections between images and sequences as meaningful and important, finds similarities and makes comparisons which other viewers might not find or make. This is related to the point made earlier that the spectator is able to look at the film from above. By contrast, time perceived directly, during viewing, appears, rather, as change or flow (Branigan 1989, 315-317).

To sum up, in the context of watching and analysing films we can distinguish between two aspects of time: the time of direct perception during viewing, and the time of indirect, post-film perception, spatial time. I think, however, that it is impossible to differentiate between the time of direct perception and the time of indirect perception on the level of practice because direct and indirect perceptions overlap in many situations. Nevertheless, such a distinction is workable for the purposes of analysis.

In the following chapters I shall examine Kieślowski's films both from a bottom-up and a top-down perspective. I feel that film analysis generally foregrounds top-down considerations. Especially when appraising narrative structures, such as the circularity of narrative or narrative anticipations, I look at Kieślowski's films from the top down. In my analyses of moments of narration, shots and scenes, perception is more direct. There is a challenge involved here because at the start of an analysis the analyst is already familiar with the film as a whole, making it quite difficult not to see the film from a top-down perspective.

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[29]   Cutting and Massironi remark that this distinction has become increasingly blurred as technology makes possible the creation of more and more verisimilar images. Photography, cinema and the computer are successive phases in this development. In this context, Cutting and Massironi make an interesting observation about the relation between pictorial presentations and cognition: "(...) these technological advances make pictures less and less like a decorated surface and more and more like a world within which we can act, and should, in principle, make their perception more and more 'direct'. (...) to discover the role of cognition in picture perception one might best look to the oldest kinds of pictures humankind has produced, rather than the newest." (Cutting & Massironi 1998, 140.)

My aim is to identify, in Kieślowski's films, large-scale structures, styles and themes and consider how they are related to questions of more general scope, such as cinema's ability to express inner experiences, thoughts and feelings. In Part III, where I go over the stylistic means used by Kieślowski to give expression to subjectivity, it is necessary to describe the sequences under scrutiny in more detail.

II NARRATIVE STRUCTURES

3 The legacy of the documentaries

An acquaintance with Kieślowski's early works is important for a proper understanding of his late fictions. I shall not undertake a detailed analysis of his early documentaries and fictions, but there is a need to sketch out the important outlines. Most of his later themes and narrative and stylistic devices date back to the early films he made while working in Poland's national film industry. In this opening phase of Kieślowski's career the national context exerted a strong influence on his style. The spectator's active role was important to Kieślowski from the beginning. The social and political situation contributed to the development of a rich dialogue between the filmmakers and the audience.

When Kieślowski graduated from Łódź Film School in 1969, it was clear to him that he would start making documentary films. He valued documentary film and his intention was to stick solely to documentaries. As Kieślowski's professional career began in the early 1970s, a new generation of filmmakers was emerging in Poland. This generation gave birth to the Polish new wave, *nowa fala*. Most of the filmmakers of the new generation were young enough to have no memories of the Second World War. This meant that the war, which had in the past decades been probably the most important theme in Polish cinema, was replaced by contemporary themes and problems. The Polish film historian Tadeusz Lubelski (1999, 54-76) calls Kieślowski's age group the new culture generation. Their driving force was the realisation that the society in which they lived had not been represented truthfully in art. There were only portrayals distorted by socialist ideology. According to Kieślowski, a world that has not been described anywhere is an abstract and impossible place to live in (Ostria 1992, 10). Out of this observation was born Kieślowski's desire to record reality with the help of documentary films. It meant making reality more concrete, making people aware of things and stirring up a public discussion. Kieślowski said that things must be recorded before they can be discussed, for there must be evidence that they are real (Stok 1993, 90).

Two films from 1976 by older filmmakers, *Man of Marble* (Człowiek z marmuru) by Andrzej Wajda and *Camouflage* (Barwy Ochronne) by Krzyzstof Zanussi are often mentioned as the first works of the new wave. Wajda has said that Kieślowski's socially conscious *Scar* (Blizna), which was completed earlier that year, encouraged him to make *Man of Marble*. (Bren 1986, 137; Tuuli 1981, 149.) Critical films, especially documentaries, had been coming out for years, but contributions by established directors seemed to be necessary to arouse the big audience's interest. After it had embraced the new-wave films, cinema-goers often saw the new-wave documentary presented as a warm-up and left before the main feature started.

The new wave consists of both documentaries and fiction films. Typically, a Polish filmmaker's career went from documentaries to fictions. Many continued directing documentaries alongside fictions.[30] Kieślowski was one of the most productive documentary directors, making more than 20 documentary films, the majority of them in the 1970s. Social criticism was a typical feature of all the new-wave films. A critical look was directed at politics and the morals of the political decision-makers. Because of their sense of social responsibility, these filmmakers were dubbed the Cinema of Moral Concern. Despite this name they did not really form a school. They never wrote a manifesto. They were united by a similar world view and similar living and working conditions. (Apunen 1993, 12.)

In Poland, film production became a state monopoly after the Second World War. In 1945 an act on the nationalisation of cinema was passed and Film Polski was founded as a central organ. This phase, during which the state paid filmmakers a salary and controlled film-making from scripts to distribution, lasted until the system broke down in 1989. State censorship saw to it that voices which were too critical were not heard. Poland was more tolerant of discordant notes than other socialist countries, and the phase of stringent socialist realism was short-lived. After Stalin's death in 1953 the tenets of socialist realism went out of use little by little. (Liehm & Liehm 1977; Michałek & Turaj 1988; Stok 1993, 125-126; Tuuli 1981.)

What were known as the Documentaries of the Black Series, made in the late 1950s, were the first critical voices to rise in Polish documentary film after nationalisation. These didactically oriented films were the first to tackle such problems as alcoholism, prostitution and hooliganism. All of them dealt with problems that officially did not exist in socialism.[31] In the 1970s the approach was no longer educational, but, rather, matter-of-fact.

The period when Kieślowski made his documentary films was the golden age of cinema in Poland in the sense that cinema took an active part in debates on social issues. It has been said that never before had the fates of a cinema and a nation

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[30]   Those new wave directors who made both documentaries and fiction films include Ryszard Bugajski, Feliks Falk, Agnieszka Holland, Irina Kamieńska, Janusz Kijowski, Bohdan Kosiński, Antoni Krauze, Marcel Łoziński, Marek Piwowski and Tomasz Zygadlo among others.

[31]   Among them are Jerzy Hoffman's *Attention, Hooligans* (Uwaga Chuligani, 1955), a film about juvenile delinquency; Jerzy Hoffman and Edward Skórzewski's *Children Accuse* (Dzieci oskarzaja, 1956), a film about the dangers of alcoholism; and Wlodzimierz Borowik's *Paragraf Zero* (1957), which deals with prostitution.

been tied so closely together (Warchol 1986, 190). As Kieślowski has pointed out (Stok 1993, 180), it was, paradoxically, thanks to censorship that films were so important during the 1970s and 1980s. Several of Kieślowski's films were banned for years. He forbade the screening of some of his films himself for ethical reasons.[32] Kieślowski also claimed that he did not mind if his films were banned (Abrahamson 1983, 4). For him, the most important thing was that they existed as evidence even though they had been shelved.

3.1 Telling stories with the help of reality

In his diploma thesis, *Documentary Film and Reality* (Film dokumentalny a rzecywistość, 1968)[33], Kieślowski presents his theory of documentary film. His main point is that documentary films should adhere to reality. He thinks that filmmakers should look to reality for their stories. He takes up several documentarists and theoreticians who have influenced him, such as André Bazin, Robert Drew, Robert Flaherty and Richard Leacock. However, his own theory is distinct from these authorities' views.

Kieślowski thinks that reality offers a great many dramaturgies that are better than what a filmmaker could ever think up. Because of this, the filmmaker can use reality as a source for scripts. Reality can be melodramatic, dramatic, tragic or comic. Reality offers not only action but also structures and forms. Kieślowski argues that reality should not be imitated but taken as it is. This does not mean, however, that the resulting films would be somehow formless. Film should follow the rhythm and temporal order of real events, but in such a manner that the critical attitude and purpose of the filmmaker will be revealed through the way in which the material is organised. (Kieślowski 1992, 7-9.) These somewhat idealistic views were soon to be put to the test.

As early as in *The First Love* (Pierwsza miłość, 1975), a documentary film about a young pregnant couple, he, so Kieślowski tells us, purposely manoeuvred the course of events (Stok 1993, 96-97). The finished film does not reveal these interventions, however. Kieślowski appears briefly in some of his films but does not highlight his own role as had been done in the tradition of interactive documentaries. In the 1970s he was interested in combining documentary and fictive material. As a result, he directed *Curriculum Vitae* (Życiorys, 1975), a drama documentary in which the Communist Party interrogates a member with a fabricated life story. *Personnel* (Personnel, 1975) was a TV drama laid in Wrocław Opera, where Kieślowski plants actors and a fictive story in an authentic setting among real opera workers.

It is difficult to put Kieślowski's documentary films into any predefined categories, such as those devised by Bill Nichols (1991, 1994) and Carl Plantinga

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[32]   *I Don't Know* (Nie wiem, 1977), for example, was never shown because Kieślowski was afraid that the film might harm its protagonist. For the same reason Kieślowski did not allow television to present *From the Point of View of the Night Porter* (Z punktu widzenia nocnego portiera, 1977). (Stok 1993, 107; 109.)

[33]   I am paraphrasing an abbreviated version of Kieślowski's thesis, published in the Polish film journal *Film na swięcie*, 3/4, 1992, 7-9.

(1997).[34] He was against compartmentalisation because a filmmaker must start with reality, not with some narrow set of narrative conventions (Kieślowski 1992, Marszałek 1997). Kieślowski understands documentary film in a wider sense than what is usual. When he talks about the dramaturgy of reality he has in mind a film whose action may be totally fictional but that is realised using a "documentary method" (Kieślowski 1992, 9). Wojciech Kałuzyński points out that for Kieślowski, the difference between documentary and fiction film pertains to the way in which the material is organised. Kaułużyński (1997, 25) observes:

> As Kieślowski sees it, the material of a documentary film is organised by the stream of thoughts of a filmmaker attempting to make sense of reality. This distinguishes documentary film from a film with a plot which seeks to imitate reality with the help of a few formulas. Thus, documentary film is 'thinking in images', really a genre without limits which nevertheless has reality as its subject matter.

Realism was obviously an important consideration here. As Kieślowski sees it, realism lies in the manner of representation rather than in intentions or in specific types of subject -matter. Kieślowski (Abrahamson 1983, 3) declared himself the first realist in Polish cinema. He meant, first of all, that he had tackled the truly sore spots of society, whereas earlier documentarists had been interested in the more romantic and emotional side of Polish people.

In general, Kieślowski's documentaries can be said to belong to an observational rather than a participatory genre even though he often spent a great deal of time getting to know his subjects. His style is at least partly derived from his teacher and mentor Kazimierz Karabasz, who was one of the most important Polish documentarists of the post-war era. In the 1960s Karabasz directed several lyrical and other more sociological documentaries in the observational style.[35] He was more romantic and less critical in his approach than Kieślowski, but the effect of his observational style can be seen in Kieślowski's work.

Despite this observational style, Kieślowski's films cannot really be said to represent direct cinema, or cinema vérité, based on the idea is that reality should be allowed speak for itself as much as possible. The development of direct cinema, in the West, in a more interactive direction from the late 1960s had to do with the new lightweight equipment. At the same time in Poland cameras were still heavy and difficult to move. The mobile "on–the-spot" approach characteristic of cinema vérité is absent from Kieślowski's documentaries, but this is partly compensated by dynamic montage. Most of his documentary films are short and concise, less than 30 minutes long. The material has been edited and organised in order to foreground the director's point of view. In those times in Poland, scripts had to be prepared also for documentaries (Stok 1993, 104). This must be one reason why Polish documentary films are often so pithy.

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[34] Nichols' five categories for documentary films are 1) expository documentary, 2) observational documentary, 3) interactive documentary, 4) reflexive documentary, and 5) performative documentary (Nichols 1991; 1994).

[35] His films include *Where the Devil Says Good Night* (Gdzie diabel mówi dobranoc, 1957), *Sunday Musicians* (Musykanci, 1960), which Kieślowski listed among his ten all-time favourites, and *The Year of Frank W.* (Rok Franka W., 1967).

Discussing Kieślowski's early career, Rafał Marszałek says that his work came to be marked by a distinctive "dry concreteness". Using a language understandable to everyone, Kieślowski dealt with problems familiar to any Pole. (1997, 14.) This matter-of-fact tone is present also in his first fiction films. Structurally Kieślowski's documentaries are carefully thought out. He constructed his films to a large extent during the editing phase, but he sought to respect the structure and characteristics of the profilmic situation.

Kieślowski's diploma thesis includes the important idea that a documentary film is about thinking with images. Instead of directly presenting the filmmaker's own opinions, a documentary is a dialogue with the spectator. (Kieślowski 1992, 9; Kałuzyński 1997, 25.) Kieślowski did not wish to impose his opinions on the audience. Instead, his arguments are incorporated into the structures of his film. In his documentaries, the choice of subject is a reflection less of style than of personal concern and morality. Thus, the choice of subject matter as such can be an expression of opinion. As Kieślowski saw it, a director's personality emerges most conspicuously in her choice of subject and her method of presentation, not in how she shapes the events. This is subjectivism not on the level of directing but on the level of recreating scenes. (Kieślowski 1992.)

Kieślowski's films have an *open voice*, defined by Plantinga as a strategy where the argument is not put into words and where reality is presented without preconceptions. It is the opposite of a *formal voice*, a voice which explains and teaches. (Plantinga 1997, 115-119.) The open voice obliges the spectator to be more active in constructing meanings. She is not just someone receiving information from above. To a large extent, a film takes place in the spectator's mind. There is what may be called an invisible dialogue going on between the filmmaker and the spectator. In the Poland of the 1970s and 80s, the filmmakers and the audience learned to speak a common language, used to speak about matters important to both. The form of the films was not in itself political or radical. In an interview in 1992 Kieślowski emphasised his position as an observer. When his early films were described as political, or as revealing hidden aspects of reality, he claimed that he did not want to reveal anything. He wanted only to show what the world around him was like: "I looked at people in certain situations. I observed them, and tried to understand them. But I did not protest. I did not scream." (Ostria 1992, 11.)

A contemporary Western viewer may find it difficult to understand how important it was during Communism to be able to speak about even small truths. Seeing factory managers or common workers talking on the screen might not seem such a big deal. It could be said that Kieślowski acted like a phenomenologist by taking phenomena of the real world under observation. By doing so he was making his world more visible, making it a less abstract place to live in. His whole documentary output is characterised by an endeavour to achieve something true, authentic, and honest.

3.2   The small worlds of Kieślowski's documentary

Instead of presenting an exhaustive study of Kieślowski's documentaries I shall now consider mainly two aspects which have shaped his later fiction films: metaphorical elements and repetition as structural features. Structure refers here to ways of organising material. I discuss structure as an element related to rhetoric, ways of influencing the audience. Style is connected with structure. In my examination of the documentaries I adopt Carl Plantinga's definition of the concept of style. Plantinga sees film techniques as "local means of composition in film", which include editing, camera movement, lighting, and sound. "A film's *style* consists of its patterns of uses of such techniques." Techniques and style have both a rhetoric and an informative function, in addition to which style affects the spectator on the level of emotions and perception. (Plantinga 1997, 147.) According to Bill Nichols, considered as rhetoric style is linked with the audience, that is, with the effects that a work of art has on its audience. Considered as a personal outlook, style is linked with the filmmaker. A director's moral stance or ethical point of view can be mediated through style, but rhetoric is the principal way in which the director seeks to win over her spectators. (Nichols 1991, 134.) In the early years of his career Kieślowski's relationship with his audience was affected by the then political circumstances, but the nature of the relationship remained basically unchanged later on: he was unwilling to spell things out.

Young Kieślowski saw documentary film as a means of recording reality. As late as in 1979, his answer to an interview question about his reason for making films was: "In order to record reality" (Krall 1997, 271). As regards content, most of his documentaries deal with social questions, but rarely directly with politics. Telling comprehensive truths, or speaking directly about problems, was impossible. Censorship officials had clear rules about what was permitted and what was not. Filmmakers learned to circumvent censorship by using metaphors and by talking between the lines. After graduation, Kieślowski started making films about small worlds. He zoomed in on carefully chosen sections of the bigger world, showing Poland and its problems in a nutshell. Critical observations were veiled in metaphors and allegories.

Kieślowski has observed that he and his colleagues communicated with their audience over the censors' heads (Stok 1993, 130). Janina Falkowska has pointed out that in Kieślowski's films the political is realised through an expert audience (1995, 39). Kieślowski's national spectators were such an audience. They knew how to read the hidden political meanings. A common language and a sense of a common enemy created a feeling of solidarity between the filmmakers and their audience. Thus, circumstances, censorship in particular, had a direct impact on the film form and film style. Even in his late fiction films Kieślowski remains unwilling to express things in the most obvious ways.

Johan Fornäs, a cultural theorist, argues that cultural products sometimes reveal primary meanings that are, relatively speaking, more obvious in a particular interpretive community than elsewhere. Secondary meanings can then be created through metaphorical displacements, as in "poetic creativity". (Fornäs 1998, 226.) As regards Kieślowski's documentary films, his national audience was such an

interpretive community. I would argue, contrary to Fornäs' view, that for the Polish national audience it was the primary meanings which were created through metaphorical displacements, and that other audiences might find those meanings difficult to grasp. Kieślowski's metaphors are taken from everyday life. Just as he said in his thesis, he did not have to invent them, he found them. The audience, again, understood that the director was expressing his stance through his choice of subject (Ostria 1992, 11).

Henry Bacon distinguishes between what he calls diegetic and non-diegetic metaphors. If the object or matter to which another object or matter is being compared is situated within the story world, we are dealing with a diegetic metaphor, while metaphorical comparisons belonging outside the story world are non-diegetic. Bacon mentions the comparison Charlie Chaplin makes between rushing crowds and a flock of sheep in *Modern Times* (1936) as an example of non-diegetic metaphor. (2000, 162.) Kieślowski's metaphors, by contrast, are diegetic because he does not incorporate extra-diegetic inserts into his documentaries.

The films' names are telling: *The Office* (Urząd, 1969), *Factory* (Fabryka, 1970), *Bricklayer* (Murarz, 1973), *Curriculum Vitae* (Życiorys, 1975), *Hospital* (Szpital, 1976), *Talking Heads* (Gadające głowy, 1980), and *Station* (Dworzec, 1980). The metaphors function more on the level of subject matter than on the level of single motives. Using metaphors means hinting at things. Kieślowski does not employ a narrator, he does not show statistics, nor does he provide other factual information. He does not display the most obvious problems, such as people queuing for food carrying their ration cards, strikes, or demonstrations.[36] Kieślowski does not suggest what should be done to improve the state of things. He has found real-life situations and events and arranged them so that as the films unfold, a commentary emerges through structure, without explicit argumentation.

The Office is the first one in the series of small worlds. Its subject is a government agency that administers pensions and indemnities. Old people come for their retirement benefits or other payments but it seems that they never get their money because there is always something wrong with their official forms. Stamps seem to be the biggest problem: they have been badly applied, are of the wrong shape, are in a wrong place, or are in a completely wrong paper. Confused, the old people must leave only to return again. (Anttila 1989, 17.)

This concise six-minute film consists mainly of close-ups of quite short duration. The camera observes customers and clerks at close range without being itself noticed. At one point the clerks have their tea break and the customers wait. Nervous hands fiddle with the forms, worried glances are exchanged. Image and sound are unsynchronised throughout the film. Even when we are shown a customer talking with a clerk we do not hear *their* voices, or see *their* eyes meeting. Instead, we hear some other people's anonymous voices on the tape. Ib Bjondebjerg (2002, 77) comments that the impersonal offscreen dialogue expresses the alienation of people in a socialist society.

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[36]   Kieślowski's *Peace* (Spokój, 1976) is the first film in the history of post-war Polish cinema to show a strike. The word strike is not used, however. (Stok 1993, 132-134.)

The film progresses as a series of fragmentary depictions of people's nervous gestures, glimpses of the clerks' bored faces, of hands sharpening pencils and holding papers. It ends with an ironical parallel structure. A few quick shots of a storage room bursting with paper reveals where the troublesome but apparently so important forms end up. Then a female clerk's voice is heard instructing a customer. The customer should write down everything she has done in her life, all her jobs. Images of the storage room return and the camera roams between the shelves. No one is interested in these dusty "life stories". People are reduced to numbers and pieces of paper, and the same bureaucratic pattern repeats itself. The clerk's voice can be heard repeating the same sentence over and over again until the film ends. In this film Kieślowski makes his point in a very simple yet effective way. He did not add anything that was not already there in the situation. He cut up the events, separated the images and sounds and drew some crucial parallels while remaining faithful to the character of the original situation. The power of the images derives in part from repetition, a characteristic also of the profilmic situation.

Of course, the film was not just about the inefficiency of one particular government agency. The anonymity of the events suggests that what we see is a rule rather than an exception. The pensions office represents a part of the larger Polish society – it is a metonymy. A related idea recurs in *Refrain* (Refren, 1972) on the level of both form and subject matter. *Refrain* tells about funeral bureaucracy. The film opens with a few shots from a cemetery accompanied by brisk music, after which it moves to an office. The first shot shows a picture being removed from a passport: somebody has died. The confrontation between customers and clerks is again at the centre of the narrative. The camera moves back and forth between the clerks and the customers so that finally they are just rhythmically changing figures. People are transformed into visual shapes, movement, and rhythm. Kieślowski cuts repeatedly to a view from the office window onto a busy city street. The view seems to be saying that as long as there are people on the streets, the funeral office will not run out of customers. In the end the camera dives once more into a room where some funeral paraphernalia are stored. Then we are given a glimpse of a hospital ward full of newborn babies as if to demonstrate still more fully the funeral office's future prosperity. Each small bed is marked with a serial number. What we see here is bureaucracy starting at birth and ending at death. This denouement functions as a quick conclusion similar to that given in *The Office*.

Like many other documentaries by Kieślowski, these two films can be seen also as allegories of Polish reality. At the same time, they include a more general comment on the human condition. Allegory is even more evident in some of his early fiction films, but I shall not take up this question here but continue, instead, a more general discussion of the metaphorical elements of Kieślowski's documentaries. Metaphorical expressions were typical not only of Kieślowski but of the Polish new wave in general.[37]

Station takes place at Warsaw Main Railway Station. On the allegorical level it stands for Polish society in general. Again, it is Poland in a nutshell. At the

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[37]   Polish fiction films based on a metaphorical style include Feliks Falk's *Top Dog* (Wodzirej, 1978) and Agnieszka Holland's *Provincial Actors* (Aktorzy provincjonalni, 1980).

beginning of the film, television news at the station introduces the spectator to official reality. The newscaster speaks about the favourable prospects of the economy, the country's great resources, a highly educated workforce, and the strengthening of the country in general. Problems are also alluded to: "Despite the achievements we can be proud of there are still difficulties in our lives (...) many things that complicate our lives can be eradicated if we take a critical look at things (...)". An opportunity for a critical look immediately presents itself as the image shifts from the television screen to show the station waiting room.

As in *The Office* and *Refrain*, situations are observed at close range but without intruding. People seem to be completely unaware that they are being filmed. Some of them hurry to trains, others wait, some run errands, others are working while yet other people seem to be simply passing their time at the station. The difficulties mentioned in the news manifest themselves quickly in the interactions between the people we see. At the ticket windows customers argue with the clerks. A customer asks why so many trains have been cancelled and is told that there used to be too many of them. The queues tell another story. A customer has problems with a ticket, but instead of being given assistance he is treated brusquely: "No one at the station can help you." A man operating a cleaning machine bumps into a woman, ripping her stockings. Some travellers are unable to lock the lockers.

All this is observed by the cold eye of the surveillance camera, shown repeatedly accompanied by a dull drum sound. The camera is presented in such a dramatic way that the spectator may reason that more than a simple camera is implied here: Big Brother is watching. In the end, we discover that the person doing his job behind the monitors is an ordinary chap. By pressing buttons he sees every corner of the station. The inclusion of the operator hints at the fact that somebody, no matter how unimportant as a person, is always watching. The candid camera-like cinematography enhances this effect. A sense of being constantly under surveillance helps to keep people submissive. Human relationships are again depicted as hierarchical and as involving humiliation. People's attempts to get some service are doomed to failure because the bored and all-powerful clerks have no wish whatsoever to be of service.

Despite its critical tone, *Station* is one of Kieślowski's more poetic documentary films. The camera records anonymous people on their way to unknown destinations. We learn nothing about any of them. In Kieślowski's words: "It is a film about people who are looking for something" (Stok 1993, 112). There are tensions and fear beneath the surface, however. Kieślowski may have felt a need to express these tensions since he said that the surveillance camera and its operator were added because otherwise "there was nothing in the story to carry it forward" (Stok 1993, 112). This dimension of the painful business of life distinguishes Kieślowski's view from that of Karabasz. Grodal (1999, 140) considers that documentary representations can generate also lyrical feelings if people and scenes are presented in a way that is not directly linked to action or the production of information.

Kieślowski was usually brief about what he wanted to say. He has observed that a short documentary film can communicate more than a feature-length film. Mercilessly, he threw away all unnecessary material and put together extremely

compact films. Besides, it was not uncommon for film to be in short supply during Communism. Sometimes things were better. For example, *From the Point of View of the Night Porter* is a 17-minute summary of 20 hours of film material (Ylänen, 1996).

In Kieślowski's documentary films the argument incorporated into the material unfolds along with the film in time. Kieślowski makes much use of repetition, or frequency, as a means of expression. Gérard Genette defines narrative frequency as a series of similar occurrences which are not identical in all respects. A perceiving mind ignores their individual features and pays attention to the abstract features that they share with the other occurrences belonging to the same class. Repetition is a mental construction. A system of relations emerges both on the level of the narrated events (story) and on the level of the narrative statements (text). (Genette 1980, 113-114.)

In Kieślowski's documentaries repetition is not only a structural characteristic but also a feature of the depicted events themselves, as was seen in *The Office* and *Refrain*. The world of bureaucracy was in itself an inexhaustible source of repetitiveness. Kieślowski emphasised this through cinematic structures and devices, such as the panning camera movements between the customers and the clerks. As a further example of repetition I shall analyse Kieślowski's most poetic documentary film, *Seven Women of Different Ages* (Siedem kobiet w róznym wieku, 1978). This non-political and lyrical work should be called a short film rather than a documentary. Repetition is here a part of a philosophical and metaphorical presentation of the course of human life.

The protagonists are seven female ballet dancers. We are given no personal details, not even the women's names. They represent something more general than themselves. Kieślowski describes a moment in each dancer's day - or life - starting with the youngest and concluding with the oldest, a ballet teacher in her sixties. The order of narration follows the days of the week, with each episode taking place on a separate day. In each episode Kieślowski singles out one dancer. On the first day, Thursday, little ballerinas are training under the instruction of an encouraging, elderly teacher. As the girls grow their training becomes tougher. On Saturday the girls must meet much more exacting demands. The Sunday episode depicts dancers performing at the peak of their careers. The next two episodes stress the hard physical and mental work entailed by ballet training. The first signs of aging appear. An exhausted dancer's breathing and the stamping of her feet are heard on the soundtrack. In the last but one episode the principal character must be content to look on as younger dancers are chosen for a rehearsal. In the last episode, the role of a dancer has changed into the role of a teacher. A circle has closed.

The film's structure, which is chronological with respect both to time and age, conveys an impression that we are actually watching a single aging woman. This impression is heightened by the resemblance between the women. The film paints a picture of the course of human life and the experiences of curiosity, ambition, fulfilment, and loss associated with it. (Cf. Bondebjerg (2002); Green (2002.) A feeling of irrevocability is present in the film even in the episode which depicts the fleeting moment of success. The episodes' shortness underlines the fugitive nature of our lives. Individual episodes are joined together into a whole which is more

than the sum of its parts. This is a film less about these particular women than about life in general.

In *Seven Women of Different Ages* repetition is connected with universal ideas. In *Hospital* it has once more a critical function. *Hospital* was born out of Kieślowski's desire to make a film about a group of people who as a collective strive to do something good (Stok 1993, 103). The protagonists are bone surgeons in a Warsaw hospital. Once a month they work a 31-hour shift. The film follows the surgeons through one such long shift (which actually combines material filmed during several long shifts). They must do their job in miserable conditions - technology keeps breaking down, there is a shortage of tools and electricity - but a sense of humour and a spirit of solidarity give them the strength to carry on. New patients arrive, new technical problems turn up, and the surgeons grow tired. A few times they have a chance to take a quick nap.

The film is divided into sections according to clock time. The time shown at the bottom of the frame marks the start of every hour. This device highlights the hard labour involved in the surgeons' work and the stamina displayed by the surgeons themselves. In the last shot they are starting the morning round while a text informs us that the shift will go on for seven more hours. A circle closes again, only to start anew. In other words: the film ends, but the doctors' routine continues. A similar logic of "and so on" brings also *The Office* and *Refrain* to an end.

The camera records events from a stationary position. Kieślowski does not interfere with the action in any visible way. The surgeons talk among themselves without giving any sign that they would be aware of the presence of the camera. A sense of dynamism arises from Kieślowski's way of cutting from one situation to another without showing any situation to an end. This generates a feeling of a hectic atmosphere despite the camera being static almost all the time. This is observational cinema, close to direct cinema, because there is a sense that as spectators we remain onlookers instead of being drawn into the thick of the action. It is not quite direct cinema, however, because the film has an emphatic formal structure whereas in direct cinema, as well as in cinéma vérité, reality was allowed to speak with its own voice as much as possible while narration and editing were de-emphasised. Some inferences can be made from the film's structure, which works according to the principle of accumulation and repetition. Kieślowski veils his criticism by incorporating it in the film's structure, which emphasises the surgeons' perseverance on the face of adverse conditions. Both *Seven Women of Different Ages* and *Hospital* describe a situation in order to make the spectator think. It is for the spectator to create a synthesis and draw conclusions.

Kieślowski (1980, 30) has said that in certain situations it can be sufficient to simply record things: "If you have the luck to find a phenomenon which or a person who can be understood clearly enough and if the situation depicted includes enough generalisations, then the filmmaker can limit his role to reproducing it. Reproduction means showing the presence of the surrounding reality in quite small details."[38] This is a matter of referring to things, or showing

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[38]   A little idealistically, Kieślowski claimed that nothing was directed in *Hospital*. He insisted that he had spent so much time with the protagonists and learned to know them

things, which according to Plantinga (1997, 137) is an indirect form of persuasion. The filmmaker's intention will then be revealed through contextual features. Such are Kieślowski's tactics in *Hospital*.

The logic of repetition operates at its simplest in the documentary film *Talking Heads*. The irony in the title refers to the film's form, a set-up typical of a television Gallup poll where one talking head follows another.[39] At that time, in 1980, television documentary was already on the way of superseding the traditional documentary film made for the big screen. (Marszałek 1997, 17.)[40] The irony does not extend to the subject matter, though, for all the interviewees take the questions presented to them very seriously. In the film 79 Poles, from a baby to a 100-year-old woman, answer two questions: "What are you? What is your dearest wish?" The answers are remarkably similar. The interviewees all want very non-material things, asking for the common good. Almost every interviewee hopes for a more just society, an opportunity to live their lives more freely, and mutual respect between people. These wishes are expressed in an elaborate but indirect manner. Haltof points out that Kieślowski had given the questions to the interviewees beforehand. Because of this, most of the answers are carefully considered. (2004, 22.) Most of the interviewees answer the first question by saying that they would like to be better persons. The replies reflect the moderately hopeful atmosphere of the early Solidarity era.

The repetitions and circular and serial structures of these and other documentaries by Kieślowski (*The Factory, X-Ray*) recur in one form or another in the narrative structures of his later fictions. Kieślowski's way of constructing a synthesis out of material shot in a matter-of-fact style is already evident in these documentary films. What may at first seem a description shifts, through synthesis, to another, abstract or conceptual level. The aim is to persuade also the spectator to participate in this synthesis. Kieślowski's documentaries are structured in a very precise manner. Each cut and shot has its place and significance. In Paul Coates' (1999, 40) analysis:

> The majority of Kieślowski's documentaries are very firmly *punctuated,* broken up and sectioned, apparently for two reasons. One is analytical: the material is to be ordered in accordance with an idea. (...) The simplicity, elegance and rigour of the punctuation dissolve the problems of construction that bedevil so many post-*vérité* documentaries. A second reason is the desire for relief and release. Films focusing on suffering (*X-Ray*) or bureaucratic routine (*Office*, *Refrain*) may require interruption by the image of an elsewhere, a place where suffering and oppression disappear.

Coates' "image of an elsewhere" refers to the view of the street in *Refrain* and the view of a forest in *X-Ray* where tuberculosis patients talk about their hopes and fears.

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so well that during the shooting the presence of the camera had no effect whatsoever on them. (Anttila 1989, 18-19.)

[39] The title was also a response to the Polish critic Zygmunt Kałużyński, who accused Kieślowski and his friends of using television style, that is, dialogue and medium shots of characters talking to the camera (Haltof 2004, 21).

[40] In Poland, documentaries were prepared for the big screen and shown as short films before the main feature. There were separate documentary film studios.

In most of his documentaries Kieślowski shows ordinary people speaking about what they hope about and plan for their lives. He shows people working, holding meetings, protesting and having their simple celebrations. Especially the early documentaries, such as *Workers '71: Nothing About Us Without Us* (Robotnicy '71: nic o nas bez nas, 1971), convey powerful communal feelings. Workers are represented as nameless representatives of their social class, talking about matters common to them all. The same applies also to his diploma film *From the City of Łódź* (Z miasta Lodzi, 1969) except that it relies more on images than on words.

Even those documentary films by Kieślowski which are built around a single individual, such as *Bricklayer* (Murarz, 1973), *I Don't Know* (Nie wiem, 1977)[41], and *From the Point of View of the Night Porter*, give the impression that these individuals represent ways of thinking common in Polish society. Usually, Kieślowski sought to capture prevailing social tendencies; as a result, his protagonists often represent the hopes and problems of a larger group. *From the Point of View of the Night Porter* presents a man who works as a night porter in a factory, as the title indicates. This anti-heroic character has fanatical, not to say fascist views about discipline and about how people should be controlled. Even his free time is devoted to disciplinary pursuits. He keeps a sharp lookout for unlicensed fishermen on the riverbank and patrols the streets for truants. The man tells us proudly that he will be rewarded with a medal and a small amount of money for 30 years' voluntary work as an inspector. This individual's story is also meant to illustrate a wider trend. Kieślowski said that he had noticed an atmosphere of intolerance and hostility gaining strength in Poland and in the world in general. He wanted to find a person who would exemplify such thinking. At that time a series of diaries written by ordinary citizens was being published in Poland. By going through these diaries he found a suitable person, a night porter. The porter in the documentary is not his original discovery, however, for that man turned out to be too difficult a person to be filmed. (Stok 1993, 109-110; Wach 2000, 95.)

Looked as a whole, Kieślowski's documentary films paint a melancholy picture of ordinary people; victims of society and bureaucracy. It is a dispiriting image. The general atmosphere of these documentaries is reflected in the night porter's opinion that "Rules are more important than people." The films, even those depicting courageous people, show us what looks like a dismal life. The images recount a subdued tale about people who often have no names, not even a voice of their own. They appear as black-and-white mirages from the past; a past to which one does not wish to return. As Tadeusz Sobolewski (1999, 25), a Polish critic, sees it, Kieślowski's documentaries wake memories of the communist times: "We inhabited a Socialist world, a communal one. Although viewed in the perspective of time, it seems to have been a community of 'proles', petitioners crowding in front of office windows, as in Kieślowski's early documentaries (...)".

The pessimistic humanism typical of Kieślowski is present from the start of his career. Even when there is hope there is also a melancholy undertone; a feeling of powerlessness, even of despair. This feeling is a consequence not only of the

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41   In the film, a former factory manager confesses that he was the victim of a mafia-like organisation in his own workplace.

films' content but also of their form. Especially as regards the later fiction films, I shall show that this pessimism is linked with narrative structure. Without doubt, Kieślowski hoped that his films would make a positive impact of some kind even though he did not believe that they could have an influence in the public sphere. He believed in individuals instead; believed that his films might affect individual viewers in some ways. (Anttila 1989, 23.)

3.3 Focussing on individual protagonists - the early fiction

The new wave directors tackled social problems both in documentaries and fiction films. This is true also of Kieślowski, for he took up similar topics in documentaries and fictions. Until 1980 he continued directing both. Thus, his documentary films were distinguished from his fiction films not by their subjects or themes but by their ways of presentation. More precisely, the first fictions are very close to the documentaries even in their form. The realistic style of Kieślowski's early fictions reflects his striving for truth and a direct approach, considered more important than artistic explorations.[42] Agnieszka Holland, one of the most important directors of the new wave, has said that for her and her fellow filmmakers, describing the way things were was more important than subjective expression. They were suspicious of formalism and complex dramaturgies because they were afraid of distorting reality. (Wach 2001.)[43] Because of their straightforward style, their films were criticised for being boring and aesthetically undeveloped (Michałek & Turaj 1988, 73; Warchol 1986, 190-191).

Kieślowski's first fiction films, *Pedestrian Subway* (1973), *Personnel, Scar, The Calm*, and *Camera Buff* may be described as a manifestation of the dramaturgies of reality. The stories are fictional but they could equally well be true. Their narrative style can be said to be a variation of the observational style of the documentaries. There are no superfluous stylistic devices. From the start there is a strong point of view associated with an individual protagonist in the sense that social issues and the political situation are always looked at from an individual perspective. How events affect an individual's life is more important than how they affect society as a whole.[44] Narration in these films, however, is mostly objective, less strictly limited

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[42] In this respect the Polish new wave differed from many other European new waves, especially from the French but also the Czech schools, which showed more interest in formal experimentation. Besides, *nowa fala* was born about ten years later than the other new waves.

[43] During Communism, formalism was met with disapproval, or at least looked at with suspicion. Formalism reminded the censorship officials of experimental cinema, which was not a good thing, for new, dangerous thoughts might arrive along with the avant-garde. Initially, attempts were made to persuade formalist filmmakers to serve the state ideology. Later on there were demands that they give up form-related questions in favour of party doctrine. In this way, questions of form became entangled with ideology. Thus, the communist government's preference for a realist style derives from the aesthetics of socialist realism (see p. 44 above). (Iordanova 2003, 35-37; Liehm & Liehm 1977, 2.)

[44] An interesting point of comparison regarding this aspect of Kieślowski's oeuvre is offered by Andrzej Wajda's political films of the 1970s and 1980s, in particular *Man of Marble* (Człowiek z marmuru) (1976) and *Man of Iron* (Człowiek z zelaza, 1981). Both films place an individual in a larger historical context. (See Falkowska 1995.)

to the main character's point of view than it was to be later in *A Short Film About Love* and *Blue* for example.

Point of view can be discussed in terms of the concept of *focalisation*. Focalisation is related to the question concerning the extent to which narrative information is filtered through or shaped by protagonists. It is bound up with character experience, not character speech or action. (Branigan 1992, 100-104; Bacon 2000, 232.) According to Genette, the concept refers to the mood, modality of narration (1980, 190-194). His two main categories are *internal* and *external focalisation*. Internal focalisation can be further divided into two levels: superficial and deep *internal focalisation*. Superficial focalisation involves seeing story events through the protagonist's eyes and possibly also hearing them through her ears. A narrative with deep internal focalisation gives us access to the protagonist's thoughts and feelings. The protagonist is usually shown, but not necessarily. Narrative information may be coloured by a protagonist's consciousness without her being visible in the image. In such cases the spectator must work out for herself that story data is being filtered through a character's consciousness. In external focalisation we see the characters' actions because we follow them from close by but we do not know what the characters are thinking and feeling. Thus, externally focalised narration hides key information about the protagonist's thoughts and feelings from the spectator. Genette points out that focalisation normally varies in the course of a particular narrative. One section may be internally focalised and the next one externally focalised. (Bacon 2000, 232; Branigan 1992, 100-104; Genette 1980, 190-194.)

Kieślowski's documentary-like narration never markedly distances itself from the protagonist, whom the camera follows almost constantly. The camera is often placed on the protagonists' shoulders so that most of the time we see and hear what the protagonist sees and hears (external focalisation). As spectators we rarely gain access to places where the main character does not go herself. The protagonist is seen as part of an environment where we are shown her acting in a variety of situations. What we are not shown is how she experiences these situations inwardly. There are a few moments of deep internal focalisation, however, when we see in a flashback, or flashforward, what goes on in the character's mind. In *The Calm* there is one such flashback and a recurring image of mysterious galloping horses. We never learn where the horses came from, but the best explanation seems to be that they belong to the mind of the main character, Antek Gralak. Jacek Petrycki, who shot the film, explained that the horses symbolised freedom. Petrycki adds that the film crew was initially against Kieślowski's idea of incorporating these images into the narrative, feeling that they did not fit in with the documentary way of thinking. (Petrycki 1997, 183.) *Camera Buff* is a mild example of Genette's multiple focalisation, for there the only dream image belongs to the main character's wife. In fact, this image is the only time in the film when we are seeing with a protagonist's mind's eye, that is, the only true example of deep internal focalisation of the kind which was to become a recurrent feature of Kieślowski's late fiction films.

Kieślowski's narratives in the early fictions could be said to be taking place in the third person. They could thus be described in terms of Bruce Kawin's (1978, 18)

definition of a third-person narrative voice: "(...) (the) point of view (is) a variety of third-person cinema in which the 'grand image-maker' presents the experience of a single character, subjectivising the world but not the narrative." In his later fictions Kieślowski subjectivises also the narrative. There are already signs of this in *No End*, where we cannot any longer distinguish between internal and external focalisation (see p. 66 below).

The stories of the early fictions were usually built around strong conflicts and confrontations that the protagonist is trying to cope with. Without exception, the main character finds herself on a collision course with other people. (Bren 1986; Lubelski 1999; Michałek & Turaj 1988.) In the 1970s Kieślowski's protagonists were mainly working class. Michałek points out that Kieślowski sensed that the most important conflicts in the country would be fought between the ruling powers and the working class (Michałek 1990, 2). In Kieślowski's fictions these conflicts materialised mainly on the level of ideas and concepts, which meant that they were solved through discussions. There is very little physical action in these films. The new wave cinema was a cinema of endless conversations; a fact often considered a dramaturgical fault. Even in Kieślowski's own *Short Working Day* (Krótki dzień pracy, 1981), a film about the Radom demonstrations and how they were violently crushed, most of the time is spent in negotiations.

Pedestrian Subway is Kieślowski's first fiction film, made for television. This 30-minute work tells about a divorced couple's attempt to get back together. The events take place during one night in a newly-constructed pedestrian subway in Warsaw, where the woman works in a small shop as a window dresser. One evening her ex-husband arrives, hoping that they might patch things up. The narrative unfolds in intimate close-ups, in fact the only possibility in such a compact space. Once in a while the characters peep through holes in the paper covering the windows to see what is happening in the subway. In the morning the man leaves alone. Nothing very much has happened. The film relies on the approach of observational documentaries.

Personnel, another work created for television, recounts the experiences that a young man, Romek, has of working as a costumer in Wrocław Opera. It is one of Kieślowski's most autobiographical films, for he graduated from a college for theatre technicians, afterwards working for a while as a costumer in Teatr Współczesny in Warsaw. As mentioned above, *Personnel* is a docudrama. It was shot at real locations and among real workers and artists in Wrocław Opera. Real opera workers and actors appear in the same scenes.

Like many of Kieślowski's documentaries, *Personnel* has a strong metaphorical dimension. When young Romek starts working at the opera, he has great expectations. The young idealistic boy has an exalted idea of art. Soon, however, opera reveals its true face. The world of art turns out to be a world of intrigue where people elbow their way ruthlessly through. Romek is also taught the distinction between an artist and a technician. He is told to use the back door. He learns, further, that artists may complain but that the technical staff may not. Kieślowski has said that opera functions in the film as a symbol of Polish society. Both in opera and in Polish society, those holding the highest positions seek to manipulate those beneath them. As the story unfolds, Romek's illusions are

shattered. One scene in particular serves as a metaphor for his awakening. Those above him are trying to persuade him to join a Communist organisation. Romek has shown some interest in improving the position of the workers and has befriended a self-willed worker, so this is evidently meant as a countermove to bring him back into line. In the midst of the recruitment drive Romek puts on his new glasses and says: "Now I can see more clearly." According to Lubelski, this gesture symbolises his intellectual illumination. Later, Romek suggests that the technical staff start their own cabaret. Lubelski observes that in the Polish context cabaret has always represented counter-culture, a critical voice, while opera stands for stagnant official culture. Romek's interest in cabaret is an indication of where his sympathies lie. Romek can be seen as a symbol for the Young Culture generation, as Lubelski calls the new generation of artists who established themselves in the early 1970s. This was a short period of hope during the Edward Gierek era when things seemed to be improving. (Lubelski 1999, 55-61.)

Kieślowski's first full-length fiction film, *The Scar*, is the story of the manager of a big chemical factory. He tries to do his job to the best of his ability. His solidarity extends to all parties: the local inhabitants who are resettled as a result of the building of the factory, the workers, the government officials and young sociologists researching the project for their dissertations. His good intentions are doomed from the start, however. Just like later in *The Calm* and *The Camera Buff*, the main character is caught up in conflict in both his professional and family life. The environment is foregrounded as a communal and political setting. Local people's homes will be demolished to make way for the factory, and they are not happy about working in the plant. This is not a good starting point for the director's career. Neither *The Scar* nor the later *A Short Working Day* (1981) reveals much about the protagonist's private life. Official meetings and festivities, demonstrations and strikes are given the main role. Both films are based on reportages typical of the day. The films were exceptional in that the stories were written by someone else, while normally it was Kieślowski himself who came up with the original idea on the basis of which he then prepared the script. Kieślowski later denounced *The Scar* as pure socialist realism. (Stok 1993, 125.)

The main character of *The Calm* is released from prison and wants to start a new life. He has everything planned out, but his wishes are very modest. He wants a job, a place to live in, a television, homely food every day, and a wife to cook it. For a while everything seems to be going well. He finds a job on a construction site and even gets married. Then his luck turns. Against his will he gets mixed up in shady transactions with his boss. His reputation is ruined and he loses the trust of his workmates. The peace and quiet he was after is gone. The story is told in a very straightforward manner with the exception of the mysterious galloping horses already mentioned above.

In *Camera Buff* the protagonist, Filip, has bigger ambitions, and of a different kind. He buys a 8mm camera to make home movies about his newborn baby. From the start, his wife is a little suspicious of the hobby. Filip's boss asks him to film a party at the workplace. This turns out to be such an inspiring experience that Filip begins to shoot everything around him. He even starts a film club and enters a contest for film amateurs. All this is presented in a slightly comical light, for in his

enthusiasm and naiveté Filip is like a big child. Soon, however, it becomes evident that his ambitions are leading Filip into conflict in every quarter. This is because his social conscience has awakened. He does not realise that he is endangering his relationships both at home and at work. Finally he destroys the only copy of his last critical film. But it is not enough, and in the end he finds himself deserted by his wife. Finally Filip turns the camera on himself and starts telling his own story. This last scene has been interpreted as symbolising Kieślowski's turn towards the inner world (Haltof 2004, 42) and as an intimation that those who want to describe the world should start with themselves (Lubelski 1999, 63).

Camera Buff is also Kieślowski's critical look at film-making. Making (critical) films is described as a complex process where the artist must learn to take into account not only her own personal aspirations but also the wishes of the people whose lives her film-making activities affect. Kieślowski admitted that he did not think very highly of film-making as a profession. The older he grew the more he missed normal family life, from which the fictitious life of films had estranged him. (Hendrykowski 1996, 11-12.) In *Camera Buff* it is family life that suffers most from the consequences of cinephilia.

In 1980 Kieślowski published a personal manifesto, *Depth Instead of Breadth* (Głęboko zamiast szeroko), in which he presents the principles of a new kind of realism. Recording or describing external reality was no longer enough. He felt the need to look deeper into things from an individual's point of view. He was becoming aware of the limitations of the documentary method. In the manifesto Kieślowski says, speaking about the filmmakers of his own generation, that from now on everyone should go their own way. Kieślowski felt that he must find a richer cinematic language that would enable him to make films where those things which are necessarily external in film would form only the framework and not the whole content. Social problems should be presented as the problems of individual people, not as general problems. As a filmmaker he had to find a method that would allow him to express this human side of things. (Kieślowski 1981, 109-111.) I think Kieślowski's reference to the things that are necessarily external in film is an allusion to film's lack of direct means to show what people experience inside. There are, however, indirect means that make it possible to get closer to this inward sphere.

Kieślowski's style did not change immediately. His first fiction after the manifest, *Blind Chance* (1981), does not show any clear break from his earlier aesthetics or themes, but there are signs of new aspirations on the level of narration. In this respect, *Blind Chance* and *No End* (1984) constitute a turning point in Kieślowski's career. An analysis of *Blind Chance* reveals several new central thematic and formal features. Typically, Kieślowski's protagonist is a person trying to find their way in life. They face difficult choices and become embroiled in conflicts. There are more unhappy than happy incidents. This is the first one of Kieślowski's fiction films that was narrated in a markedly elliptic style.

The early 1980s were a difficult period in Poland. The hopes aroused by the Solidarity era had been crushed by Martial Law (1981-83), and the future seemed bleak once again. This atmosphere can be detected on the level of the implicit meanings of these two films. Pessimism, or resignation, in the face of external

forces is a dominant mood in Kieślowski's early fictions. This mood manifests itself in his narratives as anticipatory structures which in turn create a feeling of predestination. There are also glimpses of hope, such as the theme of alternative lives, which is most clearly present in *Blind Chance* but recurs in later films. Both *Blind Chance* and *No End* are a significant step towards the representation of personal experiences, the main point of Kieślowski's manifesto. I shall deal with the themes of personal experience and pessimism in these two films before going on to discuss the narrative structures of Kieślowski's mature works, starting with *The Decalogue*.

3.4   *Blind Chance* and *No End* – two turning points

Kieślowski said that in *Blind Chance* he tried to represent inner life and invisible forces: "It is a description of those powers that determine our fates, that push us in one direction or another" (Stok 1993, 140). Witek, the main character, is depicted more multidimensionally than any of Kieślowski's previous protagonists. At the start of the film, a sequence of episodes consisting of six flashbacks introduces Witek's history. These images are not presented as belonging to the consciousness of any of the characters. Rather, they are explanatory remarks directed by Kieślowski the narrator at the spectator. The content of several of these images becomes clear only later as Witek talks about his past and as we meet some of the people that appeared in the flashbacks. Even then, some of the images and remarks remain obscure; especially those referring to Poland's political history.[45]

Despite its metaphysical themes involving fate and predestination, the story takes place in a clearly defined social and historical situation, the late 1970s, when a political opposition was in the process of emerging. This is present in the film in the form of underground presses and "flying universities" that met in private apartments (Garton Ash 1985, 18). These phenomena are connected with Witek's story. Even though this story is at the centre of the narrative, *Blind Chance* turns out to be a description of the impact that *external* forces, mostly political, have on Witek's life. This effect is strengthened by narrative devices. In several scenes, for example in the opening episode sequence, what we first think is Witek's point of view (or, in some cases, a subjective camera) turns out to be an objective view, with the camera picking Witek up in another direction. This device creates the impression that things are happening *to* Witek without him being aware of what is taking place around him. Witek is indeed oblivious to what is going on, and in his naiveté he turns his activist girlfriend in to the Party. The fact that both the protagonist and the spectator are unable to anticipate events creates a feeling of

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[45]   One of the flashbacks shows Witek's childhood friend leaving Poland for Denmark. The date is obviously 1968, when most Polish Jews were expelled. Only later do we find out that the friend is Jewish. In fact, this is never spelled out and might remain unclear to foreign viewers. The episode sequence begins with a shot of dead bodies lying on a hospital floor. The image is filmed from the floor level, as if from a dead or injured person's point of view. Later the shot is cut into the middle of Witek's discussion with his girlfriend. He tells her that his mother died while giving birth to him. Witek was born in 1956, the year of the Poznan riots. According to Margarete Wach (2001), the shot of dead people refers to the riots, in which his mother was involved.

both subjectivity and predestination. In Chapter 6.3 in Part III I shall consider how this sense of a lack of control engenders in the spectator feelings of subjectivity.

Young Witek is trying to decide what to do with his life. He takes a break from the medical school because his father tells him just before his death that he does not want him to become a doctor after all. Kieślowski shows Witek's vacillation between different options by creating three versions of his future life. They are told one after another, and each version starts with the same scene, in which Witek is trying to catch a moving train at Łódź station. Depending on whether he manages to catch the train or not and how he behaves after that, his life takes three different turns. In the first version he catches the train, meets an old communist and joins the Party. Later he runs into his first love, Czuska (a girl from one of the flashbacks). The relationship founders because her activities in the opposition are endangered by his careless actions. Witek becomes disenchanted with politics.

The second version starts with Witek missing the train. He behaves insolently towards a railway guard and is sentenced to community service. There he meets people from the opposition. One of them is a priest, and Witek decides to become a believer himself. He runs across his old friend who had moved to Denmark and falls in love with his sister. He is expelled from the opposition group because he is mistakenly thought a traitor. Like the first version, the second one ends at an airport. Witek is supposed to take part in a trip for Catholic youth, but the flight is cancelled because of demonstrations in Poland. Here historical time catches up with the protagonist's personal time and affects his personal life.

At the beginning of his third life Witek misses the train again. However, he meets a girl from the medical school whom he was seen kissing at the beginning of his first life (this may also be a flashback). They graduate, get married and a child is born. This time Witek stays out of all political and social commitments. In the end he promises to travel to a seminar on behalf of his dean. His wife is pregnant again. During take-off his airplane explodes. The last image of the film is of Witek's screaming face, the same image that started the film.

Blind Chance is Kieślowski's first film which has not just a single story line but three lines arranged sequentially. The three stories are framed by the two images of the terrified Witek's face shown at the beginning and at the end. Only at the end of the film does the spectator become aware that the first image actually belongs to the present or is a flashforward, depending on how one chooses to interpret it. Retrospectively, this structure makes the events feel predestined. Witek's fate has already been decided when the film begins even though the film is supposed to deal with the unpredictability of life. When we look at the narrative of *Blind Chance* from the top down, as a spatial continuum, we can see its predetermined nature. This insight comes only after the film, but it might come even during the viewing if we are familiar with the conventions of storytelling and are able to anticipate the film's structure.

This narrative structure makes one wonder whether the film deals with fate rather than with coincidence. Such a definite construction seems to leave no room

for chance.[46] When effect is presented before cause, events seem to unfold according to a logic of unavoidability (Turim 1989, 17-18). A structure of this kind often involves an extended flashback. If the first and last images of *Blind Chance* are interpreted as representing the diegetic present, then everything between them is a flashback. In that case, it is the third version that represents what really happens while the two other versions are just unrealised possibilities. This is Žižek's (2002, 80) interpretation. It might also be argued that what happens is that a moment before his death Witek sees his life flash through his mind and thinks back to what he has done or should have done. In that case, we might interpret parts of the three versions as true, as something that really happened, and parts of them as unfulfilled plans. According to Kieślowski, each version shows that at bottom, one can be the same upright person regardless of whether one is a Communist, a Catholic opposition activist, or a politically uncommitted doctor (Stok 1993, 140). Kieślowski seems to be saying here that in the end it is not particularly important what Witek chose to do. With Kieślowski's autobiography as a point of reference we could perhaps conclude that the last version was the true one. Political disengagement was the road Kieślowski finally took himself.

Seen against the national context, the narrative acquires one more note. Kieślowski seems to be telling us that even though an individual is free to choose in her personal life, in the end she is trapped. She cannot avoid the repressive and standardising power of the state: No matter how Witek chooses, there is either failure or premature death awaiting him. The film's structure is metaphorical: Getting trapped in the narrative means being similarly trapped in society. As I noted above, Witek is not conscious of all the things happening around him, and involuntarily he betrays the oppositional activities of some of his friends. The elliptic nature of the narrative adds to this sense that things are happening to Witek without him being in control of the situation. The narrative ellipses could in a loose sense be compared to the gaps in Witek's own awareness of the events taking place around him. Kieślowski's pessimism is pointed here. Witek tries to avoid risks but is rewarded with death. The realisation that life is not fair comes up often in his films, one of the most obvious examples being *The Calm*. This may have to do with autobiographical facts again. Success came to Kieślowski fairly late. Perhaps this made him a little bitter about life in general.

As a story about coincidence *Blind Chance* is structurally somewhat mechanical. It does not really succeed in creating the feeling that coincidence could interfere with the protagonist's life at any moment. It is as if the moment when Witek tries to catch the speeding train were the one and only instant set aside for chance. The parallels between the three versions emerge at the same juncture of the story, repeated in each version. *Blind Chance* owes its repetitive structure to Kieślowski's earlier

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[46]   Critics have discussed whether the narrative structure of *Blind Chance* conflicts with its content. Garbowski (1996, 332) among others has paid attention to this question. A possible answer is offered by Dufrenne's view that the world of a work of art is always predetermined in the sense that the ending is always included in the beginning. For the artist there are no surprises. For the spectator the situation is different. Someone watching *Blind Chance* for the first time cannot possibly know that the first image is the hero's last moment alive. But surprises are possible only within the limits set by the artist and the work of art.

documentaries. He creates parallels between the story lines by repeating similar situations, actions. Besides the critical moment at the railway station these include Witek's meeting with his mentor, a person crucial for his future, his affairs with women, and the final scene at the airport. The theme tune is similarly repeated during the pivotal scene. In these moments the spectator makes comparisons between the story lines, connecting them vertically. Kieślowski remarked that in *Blind Chance* there are moments of remembrance during which the order of the events and the spectator's experience of time are reversed. Going back in time and recording the smallest incidents makes it possible to spot the determinism that rules life. (Marszałek 1987, 10.) Kieślowski seems to leave open the possibility that nothing is coincidental, that one thing inevitably leads to another.

Here the parallelisms between the alternative lives are quite obvious. They appear on the level of action. Only later did Kieślowski start to use stylistic devices and more complicated narrative structures to create parallels between situations and characters. The camera technique mentioned earlier, in which we mistake an objective point of view for Witek's, and perhaps also the elliptic structure, may be called a foretaste of the various devices he introduced later to portray his protagonists and their ways of being in the world.

The hopes of the Solidarity era were crushed when General Jaruzelski declared a state of war on 13 December 1981, imposing curfew and martial law. This lasted for eighteen months. During that time Kieślowski planned a documentary film about the political trials but nothing came of it, for he failed to get material of the kind he had planned to use. When the film camera was present in courtrooms, unjust sentences were no longer passed (Stok 1993, 154-157). Nevertheless, during the shooting he met Krzysztof Piesiewicz, a lawyer and his future co-scriptwriter. *No End* was their first film together. The events take place during Martial Law. Kieślowski's pessimism culminates in this film. Critics did not like a film that was utterly pessimistic and had neither winners nor heroes. *No End* is a description of general apathy and powerlessness. Kieślowski said that in the then political situation everybody had given up and bowed their heads (Stok 1993, 162). In Haltof's opinion the film's name refers, on the one hand, to the endless political and economic problems of the Poles and, on the other hand, to the heroine's love for her dead husband. Haltof considers *No End*, along with Agnieszka Holland's *Woman Alone* (Kobieta samotna, 1981), one of the grimmest narratives in the history of Polish film (Haltof 2004, 64; 72.)

In *No End* the political context represents a historical time common to all the characters, a time which determines all their fates. The film consists of several stories. Kieślowski said that it includes three films (Stok 1993, 162). One is a political story about a young worker imprisoned and awaiting trial for starting a strike, about his wife and his defence counsel. The main story concerns a young widow, Urszula, whose life has lost all meaning after the death of her lawyer husband, Antek. The husband was supposed to defend the young worker in court. The third, metaphysical story tells about communication between Urszula and her dead husband. Urszula visits a hypnotist in an attempt to forget Antek, but after the visit Antek starts to appear to her. Finally the desperate widow commits suicide, leaving behind a young son.

The centre position of Urszula's story indicates that the personal has become more important to Kieślowski than the political or the collective. The film reveals very little about the external conditions of the Martial Law period. Kieślowski emphasises the atmosphere by showing gatherings of private individuals. There are candles on the windowsills as a symbol of protest, people sing forbidden songs and read political cartoons. A voice coming over the telephone warns that phone calls are being tapped. These are details, however. Only the cartridge that Urszula's son brings home indicates that the army is involved. It is Urszula's growing desperation and her increasing detachment from everyday life that is the most important issue. The political story is given almost as much attention as Urzula's tale, but Kieślowski's representation of the court proceedings is dispassionate.

The fact that there are three story lines, not very well put together, seems to indicate that Kieślowski is a little unsure about which way to go. There are indications of the stylistic change he called for in his manifesto, but the political context is still there too. Kieślowski tries to bring out the views of all the parties involved: the young striker's idealism and his wife's anger, the old lawyer's cynicism and desire to opt for a bargain, and Urszula's total lack of interest– and these are only the most important attitudes involved. Because of this, the film has a great deal of talk and hardly any action. Another important thing to note is the director's growing interest in emotional states. As a result, the straightforward narration of the earlier films shows signs of transformation. There is more ambiguity, situations of which it is impossible to tell whether they are real or not. Inexplicable and irrational things happen. External reality is no longer the only one.

The film starts with a scene in which the dead Antek, sitting by his sleeping wife, recounts the circumstances of his death. Later a mysterious mark, a warning, appears on a paper. Antek is trying to tell Urszula that she should not choose a lawyer named Labrador to take up his case. After Antek's night-time visit in his cell the young striker decides to end his hunger strike. While Urszula is driving, her car suddenly stops only to start again after a few moments. Thanks to this she avoids a collision. Antek is also present when the depressing final verdict is given. Another ambiguous element is a black dog which shows up out of nowhere. In some scenes it appears that only Antek can see it, in other scenes Urszula and her son Jacek also notice it, but people who do not belong to the family do not see it. These strange occurrences seem to be Antek's doing. The function of the dog is similar to that of the horses in *Calm*: it indicates that the boundary separating subjective and objective realities is no longer sharply defined. In other words, we cannot be sure whether our seeing the dog is a matter of deep internal focalisation or external focalisation. One night the dog is seen sitting outside, in front of the family's apartment, as if keeping guard.

There are several long and evocative shots in which the camera slowly pans through space. Antek's presence is often indicated by these slow, revealing camera movements. Urszula is Kieślowski's first female main character, and the most anguished of them all. He frames her constantly in tight close-ups. Her inner turmoil is revealed by recurring shots of her nervous hands. *No End* introduces the themes of grieving, remembering and forgetting which Kieślowski develops

further in later films, in *Blue* in particular. Like Julie Urszula is a grieving widow tormented by the past.[47] Like Julie Urszula at first wants to forget, and this is why she goes to a hypnotist. This has the opposite effect, however, for Antek starts to appear to Urszula. *No End* situates Urszula's private tragedy within a wider, national context, whereas *Blue* takes place in a completely private sphere.

Kieślowski planned to call the film Happy End (Szczęśliwy koniec) because the heroine thought death a better option than life. Antek similarly describes his feeling after death as peaceful. He has no regrets about having to leave his family. The last scene shows the reunited couple walking through a green landscape. According to Kieślowski, Antek's death was a way of saying that he was too good a person to live in the times depicted in the film. (Stok 1993, 163.) Kieślowski explains his protagonists' choice as follows: "They have found a world which is a little better than the one into which we have sunk" (Stok 1993, 163).

4   Deeper into the personal

As Kieślowski moved little by little away from themes concerned with Polish society, his aesthetics changed. It might even be argued that only in this process did he acquire a style recognisable as his. As a part of the Polish new wave Kieślowski had fought for a more just society. It is evident that films had a different function then. Their subject matter required a more straightforward style of narration because content was considered more important than form. For example, in Kieślowski's interviews from this period there is little talk about style or aesthetics. Film had an instrumental function. The key theme in those films was the difficult life of the Poles. From *The Decalogue* on the focus will be on existential questions of a more universal kind. Kieślowski's stories retain a contemporary dimension, however, nor did he totally give up Polish questions.

In the television series *The Decalogue* and the two films *A Short Film About Killing* and *A Short Film About Love*, extended versions of Parts 5 and 6 in the series, Kieślowski begins to realise his thesis of "deeply instead of widely".[48] These intimate chamber stories centre on an individual with her personal ethical, moral and existential problems.[49] I shall not consider here how the *Decalogue* films are

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[47]   A link between grieving and music appears as early as in *No End*. Urszula is shocked by the music played by her son on the piano because it brings her memories of Antek.

[48]   *The Decalogue* has some typical features of television narration, such as a great many tight framings and close-ups and intimate interior spaces. Its visual style does not differ markedly from Kieślowski's other works, however. Because of this, the series can be analysed using the same approach as when examining his feature films. Kieślowski himself saw no significant differences in the narration of feature and documentary films except that television relies more on close-ups. (Stok 1993, 182-183.)

[49]   Eric Rohmer's two series of films, *The Moral Tales* (Six contes moraux) and *Comedies and Proverbs* (Comedies et proverbs), are often mentioned as the only project comparable to *The Decalogue*. The two directors' approach is different in that Rohmer states the moral of each story explicitly at the beginning while Kieślowski avoids putting things into words (Ciment & Niogret 1992, 31).

related to the Ten Commandments, for this topic has been widely discussed.[50]

The social context is present but has been relegated to the background and no longer determines the characters' actions as extensively as previously. Gone is the description of communal life that was present in the documentaries and the earlier fiction films. This must be partly due to the fact that most of the characters are well-to-do professional people. The further Kieślowski drew away from the Polish social context, the more the whole objective or external sphere shrank in his films. The key question in each film concerns the way in which the protagonists deal with their personal dilemmas and emotions and how they develop as human beings. This is the almost exclusive content of the later films, *The Double Life of Veronique* and *The Three Colours* trilogy. The problems they look at belong to the private sphere, inside the four walls of the apartments in which the characters live.

4.1   The stories told in personal time

As in the earlier films, but more emphatically now, Kieślowski's protagonists are trying to find their place in the world. Earlier, his characters were more active, doers. Now most of the action happens inside the characters' minds, for finding a solution to an existential dilemma does not necessarily require much physical activity. The characters spend a great deal of time thinking about their past, present and future lives. Time is condensed in scenes in which they do nothing in particular. They respond to their own feelings rather than to external events. Often there is little visible action going on. In order to represent his protagonists' personal experience, subjective truths, Kieślowski introduces new cinematic techniques and styles. Reality is seen through an increasingly dense stylistic filter. I shall return to questions of style in Part III.

All the ten films of the *Decalogue* series are contemporary stories, set in the Poland of the 1980s. The decade was another bad time for the country. After Martial Law the prospects were not good, and this gloomy atmosphere can be sensed from the films (Przylipiak 1997, 9). Kieślowski said that in the mid-80s he noticed that people, not just in Poland but also abroad, had lost their sense of right and wrong. People had lost their values and direction in life and this is what he wanted to deal with in the series. (Stok 1993, 173-174.) With the significant exception of capital punishment in Part 5, the series has no explicit treatment of specific social problems. In a limited sense the films are documents of the time when they were made. They capture something of the objective time, the general atmosphere. However, I shall not consider in detail how these films reflect external reality.

According to Garbowski, two temporal levels can be discerned in *The Decalogue*: *historical* (or contextual) and *existential* time. Garbowski's historical and existential time are close to the phenomenological terms objective time and subjective time described above, but Garbowski does not mention his source.

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50   See, for example, the books by Garbowski (1997), Loretan and Lesch (1993), Wach (2001) and the articles by Coates (1999b) and Perlmutter (1997-98). There are numerous articles in Polish on *The Decalogue* and, in particular, an interview with Kieślowski by Ciment and Niogret (1992).

Moreover, he uses his terms in a broader sense. Existential time covers not just personal time but also the events of inner life. Garbowski explains that the characters' conflicts ensue from the fact that their "existential clocks" are out of synchrony. Their emotions surface at different times, as in *Decalogue 6* (see Chapter 8.1) with the result that genuine contact with other people might be impossible. Similarly, Garbowski's historical time refers not only to world time but also to world events. (Garbowski 1997, 61-65.)

For Merleau-Ponty, existential time is historical time, that is, real, personal and subjective time. I think that unlike Merleau-Ponty, Garbowski uses the word historical as referring to events, not to the quality of time. To be precise, cinematic time, which is a part of a film's fictive nature, can be thought of as objective in two limited senses. First, the time of the cinematic apparatus, the time of projection is objective. Second, inside the fictive world (diegesis) we can distinguish each character's subjective time and the objective time of the "reality" surrounding them, but in actual fact both are, of course, fictional. I shall continue using the terms world-time (or objective time) and personal time (or subjective or inner time). Like Garbowski, I shall use them also about the events of external and internal worlds, for after all, time, as it emerges, is always bound up with some events.

Garbowski points out, quite rightly, that by keeping historical time to a minimum Kieślowski achieves a greater degree of universality (1997, 61-62). This has also to do with a prosaic fact; the filmmakers' aim to introduce the series to a world-wide audience. Kieślowski said that he wanted to spare the spectators the grimmest problems of everyday Polish life:

> Because life in Poland was difficult - unbearable in fact - I had to show it in my films. Yet I spared the spectators many unpleasantnesses of everyday life. First of all I spared them something as horrible as politics. Secondly, I did not show the queues in front of shops. Thirdly, I did not show the ration cards even though several products were rationed back then. And fourthly, I did not show boring and awful traditions. I tried to picture people in difficult situations. Everything that was connected with social problems or with life's everyday troubles was always somewhere in the background. (Stok 1993, 175-176. See also Ciment & Niogret 1992, 27.)

Even though Kieślowski spares us the most unpleasant details, the dreariness of everyday life in Poland comes through in the series. All the protagonists live in the same housing estate, Marymont, which Kieślowski chose because it was the least terrible of its kind. (In the films the housing estate is never mentioned by its name.) Nevertheless, the blocks are grey and depressing. People wear ugly clothes and look tired and unkempt.

The story is narrated in the present time as is usual in Kieślowski's films. The protagonists' past is important for the story, however, and it surfaces every now and then in conversations and through indirect references, such as photographs. Flashbacks are rarely used. The references to personal history are connected with world-time and the events of world history. In other words, historical events become significant for the story through personal experience and subjective time. Or to put it the other way round: World-time enters each story through an individual's personal experience. Because of this, we feel the presence of several

temporal levels. We are given only small fragments of the characters' past lives, but sometimes such fragments are crucial for the outcome. Things that happened several decades ago still affect the characters' lives. Here we see the role that time plays in the formation of identity.

Kieślowski tried, at least through brief references, to show where his characters were coming from so as to make it possible to understand the decisions they make in the present of his stories. Paul Coates observes that in Kieślowski's films, the lives of individual characters are never determined by their past or environment; instead, they have an existential freedom to develop and change every moment (2002, 42). Margarete Wach makes a similar point about *Blind Chance* (2001, 197). I think that what Kieślowski is implying is that even though history throws a person into one situation or another, it is the person herself who makes the final decisions about what to do.

Kieślowski's protagonists are credible because they have a past. This ability to create lifelike characters must be partly due to Kieślowski's long experience as a director of documentary films and to his experience of real people. At the same time, despite their significance Kieślowski uses very little narrative time to account for past events. Past events and decisions – even though they are not shown in the narratives – unfold their consequences in the narrative present. After *Blind Chance* flashback sequences disappeared from Kieślowski's films with the exception of a few solitary images from the past.

According to Henri Bergson (2000, 145-146), memories form temporal chains just as perceptions do. Our personal character, which is a synthesis of all our past states, is present in all our decisions. "In this epitomized form our previous psychical life exists for us even more than the external world, of which we never perceive more than a very small part, whereas, on the contrary, we use the whole of our lived experience" (2000, 145-146). The past is always present. It never disappears, but when it ceases to be useful our consciousness ignores it. However, memories are always there, available to participate in current perceptions and decisions whenever an occasion arises. The past is identical with *being*, but the present moment, instead of being, exists in a constant process of becoming. It *acts*. For Bergson, this is the qualitative difference between the past and the present. (Deleuze 1988, 54-56.) Kieślowski's films convey strongly the sense that the past is always present. The past gives his characters a background which affects their actions in the present moment. Bergson thought that a pure perception of the present is impossible because the past is always involved in our perceptions of the present. When we perceive the protagonists of a film on the screen, we imagine them a history. Bergson's argument is true for the way in which films are perceived in general, for narratives unfold in time and what we have already seen affects what we are about to see.

Even though *The Decalogue* was made for an international audience, it is still intimately connected with the Polish national context. This can be seen in the way in which Kieślowski leaves a great deal for the audience to work out. References to his country's often traumatic past are discreet, even unnoticeable to foreign viewers. Garbowski (1997, 62-64) pays attention to several details that explain the characters but whose significance might be missed by a foreign audience. For

example, a Western viewer may not register the fact that the female protagonist of *Decalogue 2*, Dorota, has a passport. For us it is normal to have passports. In the Polish context, a passport used to mean that its holder was economically privileged, for it indicated that she could afford to travel abroad.

In *Decalogue 2* an old doctor tells his life story little by little to his housekeeper. Every time the woman arrives he recounts a short episode. He narrates the events of the Second World War when he lost his family, a wife and a small child. He never married again. This vital information is delivered over a cup of coffee, consuming very little narrative time and without being underlined in any way. Such a lack of emphasis might make the life story seem rather unimportant, but it shapes the outcome of the story in a highly significant way. This incident in the doctor's life explains why later in the film he lies in order to prevent his patient from having an abortion. He cannot allow the needless death of a child because he once lost his own child. He finds it more important to save a child than to follow the ethical code of a doctor. A past experience motivates the story's crucial act.

The doctor's past is the channel that admits a historical event, the Second World War, into an otherwise intimate story. In Poland the Second World War touched almost every family. The war is a part of the collective memory. This is evident also in the almost wordless understanding between the doctor and the housekeeper. He does not have to tell her all the details because she knows what he is talking about. At one point the housekeeper asks him, "It happened *then*?", and the doctor answers with a nod: "*Yes, then."* The war is never explicitly mentioned. The doctor just says that when he returned from work his home did not exist anymore.

The characters of *The Decalogue* often find themselves in a situation that takes them back to the past and that reveals personal traits which they would rather forget (Campan 1997, 62). In *Decalogue 8* an elderly professor of ethics, Zofia, finds herself face to face with the past when she meets a woman from her youth. Again, the past referred to is the Second World War. During the war the professor refused to help a Jewish girl, Elżbieta, because she was concerned for her own safety and because she did not want to endanger the operations of the Home Army in which her husband was involved. Later in her life she presumably tried to atone for her refusal to help by committing herself to teaching ethics. Now their encounter re-opens old wounds. However, it proves possible to find reconciliation through mutual understanding.

Elżbieta's sudden arrival makes the painful past return vividly. It is felt in the film as a past present moment, a now-moment. Elżbieta attends the professor's lecture where ethical problems are discussed. There she describes her war-time experience in detail, as if it had occurred yesterday. She can even remember what kind of coffee cups Zofia had in her house 40 years ago. Later the women visit together the location where everything happened. Afterwards Elżbieta meets an old tailor who was also present when the events took place. The old man is a prisoner of his past. Even his designs are outmoded. He offers to make Elżbieta a coat but refuses to talk about the past.

The young protagonist of *Decalogue 6/ A Short Film About Love*, Tomek, is an orphan. It appears that his childhood experiences have traumatised him somehow

for now, as a young adult, he is unable to establish normal relationships with people of his own age. He does not have a girlfriend. Instead, he spies on a woman in her thirties who lives in a block of flats opposite his own. The small piece of information that he is an orphan enables the spectator to achieve some degree of understanding of his odd behaviour. (For more about this film see Part III, Chapter 8.) The young boy who kills the taxi driver in *Decalogue 5/A Short Film About Killing* is made a little bit more human by his confession at the last moment that he misses his little sister, who is dead.

Kieślowski often uses photographs to represent the past. In his films this is a more common device than flashbacks. Often it is family photographs that bring the past to the present. "Frozen" images from another time refer to the problem of presence and absence. (Garbowski 1997, 59.) This is an important point, for the main characters' portrayal depends in significant ways on absent relatives or family members. In almost every part of *The Decalogue*, families are broken. Somebody has died or is absent for some other reason. References to family members not physically there expand the narration with further temporal levels. The photographs are an indication that the absent ones are still present in the protagonists' lives.

The old doctor in *Decalogue 2* hides his photographs when a stranger, the woman who is considering abortion, enters his apartment. The photographs are a private and sacred possession, something that he does not want the stranger, whom he dislikes, to see. In *Decalogue 4* a daughter discovers that the man she has thought as her father and with whom she lives may not be her biological parent. Her mother died after giving birth to her, taking the secret to the grave. Or did she? The daughter, Anka, finds a letter from her mother which may contain the truth. The father, however, has written on the envelope "To be opened after my death." The daughter is tempted to open the letter. She puts her father to a test. She lies to him that she has opened the letter and found out that he is not her real father. She does this because she is attracted to this man who may or may not be her father. In the end she reveals her plot and they burn the letter unopened because they want to continue as before. They are left with an enigmatic photograph in which the mother is with two men. Neither of them is the present father. Might one of them be Anka's real father?

By the time he made *The Double Life of Véronique* Kieślowski had already laid aside social and political themes. The everyday life which was so important in *The Decalogue* has similarly disappeared. Now Kieślowski deals solely with emotions and presentiments that rule the lives of the two identical heroines.[51] (More detailed analyses of *The Double Life of Véronique* will follow in Chapters 6.4 and 8.1.) These two girls lead an "aesthetic life" (Sowińska-Rammel 1997, 158). The Polish Weronika devotes her life to singing even though she knows it is dangerous for her health. The French Véronique gives up singing because of her heart condition and

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[51]   A film about the emotions of two women was, on the one hand, Kieślowski's way of indicating that politics no longer interested him and, on the other hand, his answer to the criticism that women had only one-dimensional roles in his films. Therefore he made a film about intuition, for he considered women more intuitive than men. (Stok 1993, 203.)

most importantly because of her mysterious feeling that someone has disappeared from her life. Later she meets a writer and puppeteer who lures her to a Parisian café under the pretence of a romantic guessing game. The man takes advantage of Véronique for his artistic purposes. Art is present in the girls' lives also in many other ways.[52]

The dream-like scenes of *The Double Life of Véronique* include a few in which Kieślowski reveals his loss of interest in politics. These are the only scenes that refer to world-time and historical events. Otherwise the film takes place in a subjective time and space. There are two stories. The first one is set in Poland. In the beginning of this story there is a scene in which Weronika is returning from a choral concert in which she has performed. She runs in the street with other girls. In the same shot with the girls we see a truck carrying away a huge statue of Lenin. Weronika passes the car without even glancing at the big and dark statue dominating the image. Later Weronika walks through the Market Square in Cracow. She is deep in thought because she has just learned that she has won a singing contest. There is a demonstration on the square. People are running around and riot policemen are keeping watch behind their shields.

During the scene the camera follows Weronika at close range. The focus is on her, while the demonstration in the background is out of focus. There are no explanations about what is happening. A demonstrator collides with Weronika, scattering her notes all over the place. She collects them, still without reacting to what is taking place. The fact that the focus is on Weronika indicates that what is happening to her is more important than what is happening in the background. Weronika lives in her personal time and to her personal rhythm, unaware of the changes occurring around her. A moment earlier we have seen her walking dreamily in the sun and playing with a small ball. An important historical process, the fall of Communism in Poland, is ignored by the protagonist. Weronika wakes up only when she suddenly sees a girl looking just like her getting into a French tourist coach. The girl is enthusiastically photographing the demonstration. Weronika cannot take her eyes off the other girl. As the bus leaves, the camera makes an almost 360-degree circle with Weronika at the centre. In this shot/reverse-shot sequence, shots of Weronika's face and that of the other girl at the coach window alternate.

According to Wach (2001, 312), *The Double Life of Véronique* can be read as an allegory of the historico-political events of the year 1989. In this interpretation the main characters symbolise the East and the West and the new equality between them. Kieślowski himself insists that *The Double Life of Véronique* "is a film about emotions and nothing else" (Stok 1993, 218). I tend to agree with Kieślowski. I think it is *White*, rather, that could be read as an allegory of the relations between the East and the West. But if we take into account the circumstance that Weronika is Polish and Véronique French, we could suggest that the film stresses the universality of certain human experiences. On the other hand, there might be some

[52]   The protagonist Weronika/Veronique was inspired by a minor character in *Decalogue 9*, a young singer with a heart condition. The girl is about to have heart surgery. Her mother hopes that she will have a career in singing, but the girl says that she would be satisfied with much less herself.

banal production-related facts behind these emphases. Half the film's financing was French and half Polish. This is not a crucial issue for the purposes of interpretation, however.

After *The Double Life of Véronique* Kieślowski continued his depiction of emotions in *The Three Colours* trilogy. Here I shall make only a few comments on the way in which personal time and world-time appear in the trilogy. In *Blue* Kieślowski represents the very personal experience of Julie, a woman who loses her husband and daughter in a car accident. The sole reference to the external world concerns the unification of Europe. Julie's husband, a well-known composer, was writing a concerto to celebrate the unification. The narrative takes place in the present. References to the past are minimal because the story deals with Julie's attempt to forget the accident and her past life. Because of this, however, the heavy if invisible presence of the past is felt all the time. The past is a black hole hanging over the present moment. Here I shall pay attention only to one scene, a fragile and symbolic attempt to make Julie a part of a chain of generations. The scene takes place at an old people's home where she goes to visit her mother.

As the scene opens, the camera is inside the mother's room. There is a table with framed family photographs. The image of the mother sitting offscreen is reflected in the glass of one photograph, as are the small panes of the window behind her. As the take continues, we see through the same glass how Julie appears behind the window and looks into the room. The shot displays several temporal levels and generations, visible side by side and overlapping. Each generation is seen within a frame of its own, symbolising each person's own time. The frames of the photographs and the window panes form additional frames inside the shot, creating a montage within a shot.[53]

Julie is trying to withdraw from human relationships because she does not want to talk about her past. Visiting her mother feels less of a threat because she is demented and keeps forgetting who Julie is. First she mistakes Julie for her sister, Marie-France. When Julie asks if she was afraid of mice as a child, her mother answers: "No, you were not. Julie was." Her misrecognition may also be interpreted symbolically as a sign of Julie's transformation. She is determined to forget her past life and past self, and this has made her a stranger also to her mother. (See Wilson 2000, 39.) While we see a television programme showing an old man doing a bungee jump, her mother asks Julie to tell about her family and herself. Julie replies that her husband and child have died and that she no longer has a home. It is an irony of fate that now when she might be able to talk about the accident, her mother has drifted too deep into her own forgetfulness to be able to comprehend her daughter's situation. As we hear Julie saying that she used to be happy, that she loved and was loved in return, what we see are television images that have again captured the mother's attention. Julie asks her mother whether she is listening and she answers with "Yes, Marie-France."[54]

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53   See Valkola (1999) for more about montage. Valkola understands montage in a wider sense, with montages arising also from contrasts between areas of different kinds (of light, colour, texture) within an image. No editing needs to be involved.

54   The fact that the mother is played by Emmanuele Riva is of particular interest here. In Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) she acted the part of a French woman who

Both women have a disturbed relationship with their memories, the mother because of her illness and Julie because of her trauma. Little by little, Julie learns that it is impossible to go on without accepting the past. Memories and remembering, even if painful, are necessary for personal identity. By chance (or it may be destiny) Julie sees a family friend, Olivier, talking in television about her late husband. Olivier shows photographs in which the husband is seen with a lover. The shock proves crucial for Julie's recovery and return to normal life. More precisely, the film does not show Julie's recovery, but only hints at such a possibility at the end. (See Chapter 7.6. about the film's ending.)

The narration in *Blue*, of which I shall talk later, is highly subjective. The subjective point of view visualises Julie's desire to forget. The visual presence of the past is excluded except for the photographs. The photographs, however, offer only a narrow glimpse into the past. If flashbacks were used instead of frozen photographs, the past events and people would be contextualised in a more concrete way. As it is, the references to the past remain even more restricted than the image we get of the present through Julie's narrow mindscreen. The examples of *The Double Life of Veronique* and *Blue* show that Kieślowski's focalisation is increasingly becoming deeply internal. That is, more and more often we find ourselves looking at events through the characters' consciousnesses. The dramaturgical effects are interesting, as will be seen in *Decalogue 6* (*A Short Film About Love*) for example.

In *White* the national context, after having been relegated to the background in the previous two films, is once more a conspicuous element as Kieślowski sets his black comedy in a Poland that has recently freed itself from Communism. The year when *White* was released was the fourth year of democracy. Unlike in *Blue* and *Red*, the locations are of crucial importance for the story. The main theme, equality, is considered not only in terms of human relations but also as a part of relations between nations. The main characters, the Polish hairdresser Karol Karol and his French ex-wife Dominique, function as symbols of their respective countries.

Karol Karol has moved to Paris with Dominique. Then Dominique divorces him because in France he has suddenly become impotent. In court Karol tries to explain that the problem is only temporary, that in Poland nothing was wrong with him. His explanations are of no use, and Karol feels mistreated because of the language barrier. Deserted by Dominique, he wanders the streets of Paris penniless and homeless. In the Metro he meets a fellow countryman, Mikołaj. Because Karol has no passport, Mikołaj agrees to smuggle him back to Poland in return for a rather grim favour: Karol agrees to kill someone who no longer wants to live. That someone turns out to be Mikołaj himself. Karol returns home in a huge trunk. Falling into the hands of robbers, the trunk ends up in a dump outside Warsaw. Looking over the rubbish heaps, the beaten and humiliated Karol sighs: "Home at last!", and the first notes of a tango are heard.

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experiences the pain of forgetting her memories of a love affair she had during the Second World War.

In no time Karol notices the changes taking place in Poland. There is a brand new neon sign on the wall of his brother's hairdressing saloon. His brother explains: "This is Europe now!" What the image really shows, however, is that the journey to Europe is only beginning. The hairdresser's is located in a dilapidated wooden house along a muddy street. The flashing neon sign is the only modern thing to be seen. This ironic tone creates a distance between the spectator and the diegetic world.

Warsaw is becoming a different place. We are in the first wild years of the market economy. Going gets tough, but Karol learns to benefit from the situation, using it to his own advantage. First he works as a security guard for a dubious moneychanger, getting involved in a number of shady transactions. He buys land and starts a business. Once he has hit his stride again and earned a fortune he decides to get even with his ex-wife. He buys a Russian corpse, stages his own death and bequeaths his by now formidable property to Dominique in order to lure her to his funeral.

Despite the film's ironic and comic tone, Kieślowski's pessimism about the future of Poland comes through in *White.* In the early 1990s Kieślowski was of the opinion that Poland was not a part of Europe, nor would it be within the foreseeable future (Puukko 1997). In *White* Kieślowski makes fun of Poland through stereotyping and exaggeration. The sly but sentimental Karol represents Poland, the ruthless but elegant Dominique France. Does Karol's uncertainty abroad reflect Kieślowski's view of Poland as a country with low self-esteem? Relations between Poland and France have generally been close and warm. Throughout the 20th century, many Polish intellectuals lived in France. The film's ending shows Karol and Dominique falling in love again and, after some difficulties, becoming reconciled with each other, now on more equal terms. Thus, despite its pessimistic overtones *White* differs from Kieślowski's early fictions in one respect. In the early fictions the protagonists were powerless against the apparatus of the state, mere victims, as in *The Scar*. In *White* there is more freedom of action, and Karol does use this freedom to the full. Individuals may profit when society is in ferment if only they have it in themselves to be ruthless enough. Whether this is a good thing is another thing entirely. But it is the personal that matters most, and in that respect the end must be considered happy, for the true outcome of the story is revealed at the close of *Red* as Karol and Dominique are seen to be back together.

4.2   Narrative ellipses

Above, I have described in broad outline how Kieślowski's interest shifted from external to internal reality and how this shift affected the narrative point of view. So far, I have discussed his mature works only in general terms. Now I shall consider in more detail how Kieślowski's documentary narration and style shaped his fiction films from *The Decalogue* onwards.

Film narratives are always elliptic to a certain extent. Ellipses are necessary in all longer audiovisual narratives because they make narrative economy possible.

An elliptic cut condenses a narrative in both time and space.[55] It means leaving out the unimportant or irrelevant parts of action. Ellipses are typical in scenes which show characters moving from one place to another. A traveller who in the first shot arrives at an airport is in the next shot seen embracing her friends at the destination. Events and details that have no significance for the story and that the spectator can easily infer are not included in the visible narrative. At the same time, though ellipses are present in all narratives there are narratives in which they play a more prominent role. Chatman thinks that extensive and sudden ellipses are a typical feature of modern narratives (1978, 71). In them, ellipses are not just a necessity but a part of the intention to create narratives which are causally looser.[56]

It could be said that ellipses characterise Kieślowski's narratives just as continuity editing characterises the more classical Hollywood narratives. In their fairly straightforward plots and conflicts, his first fiction films were closer to the classical mode, but with *The Decalogue* Kieślowski began to approach the conventions of art-film narration. Especially in film criticism, it is often emphasised that the classical mode is an institutionalised principle or a set of rules, whereas art-film narratives are less bound by rules. At the same time, it needs to be pointed out that art films do have narrative conventions of their own, even if they are less well established. (I shall return to the narrative concerns of art films later.) Classical narratives define temporal and spatial relations between events more straightforwardly than art films. If the action is temporally continuous there are visual links, such as eyeline matches and match on action between scenes, indicating continuity. By contrast, in Kieślowski's narratives the temporal and spatial relations between scenes tend to be more ambiguous. The narrative context often helps to relate scenes with each other, but there is usually more scope for the spectator's own thinking than in classical Hollywood narratives. Kieślowski's narratives have gaps that are sometimes never closed.

Classical narrative was defined above as a process leading from an initial equilibrium to a conflict followed a new equilibrium achieved in the end. The absence of this logic from Kieślowski's narratives can be demonstrated by trying to analyse them using Noël Carroll's theory, devised as a description of classical narration and called by him *erotetic narration*. According to Carroll, classical narration is guided by the principle of question and answer. Later scenes answer questions that earlier scenes have raised in the spectator. This is not always a matter of explicit questions but, rather, of prospective developments and hints about what might happen which we, as spectators, expect to be cleared up later. The spectator's desire or unconscious wish to have all such questions answered keeps her interest up until closure, when things will be resolved. Carroll argues that the question-answer model can be proved correct by interrupting the viewing,

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[55] Seymour Chatman (1978) calls attention to a difference between a cut and an ellipsis. All ellipses involve a narrative discontinuity between story and discourse. In other words, story-time is usually longer than discourse time (or plot-time, to use Bordwell's terms). A cut, on the other hand, may be elliptic but can also represent, simply, a temporal displacement; that is, it may be connected with actions that follow each other.

[56] An ellipsis can be achieved through many different techniques. (See Bordwell & Thompson 1997, 283.)

because then all the questions and expectations, even unconscious ones, rise to the surface. (Carroll 1996, 88-89; 95-98.)[57]

All films bring up questions and arouse a desire to see how the story ends, but this varies depending on how plot-oriented a given film is. In art films the ending rarely means the achievement of some concrete goal. Rather, for art films, as Henry Bacon argues, the most important outcome is "the new social, psychological and most of all spiritual condition which has been reached" (2000, 126). When we watch Kieślowski's films, our eagerness to guess at the outcome is less intense than when we watch thrillers or romantic comedies. His narratives are not plot-centred but, rather, idea-driven. Because of this they do not fit Carroll's model. In *The Double Life of Véronique* or *Red*, for example, the action unfolds in a manner so difficult to predict that clearly defined questions never arise in our minds. The kind of viewing experience that Carroll describes is goal-directed, which that offered by Kieślowski's films is not. Another feature that prevents the formation of clear expectations is the fact that Kieślowski's films do not follow the conventions of any particular genre. Kieślowski's late films are generally defined as art films. I have done so myself earlier (Hiltunen 2001), but on its own, such a definition is loose and not very useful in the long run. Art film is not a clear-cut genre, because art films do not have a clearly defined narrative structure or subject matter.[58] The roots of art-film practice are more difficult to identify than the origins of classical narration. Art film is probably shaped more profoundly by its conditions of production than by any narrative or stylistic conventions.

In Western film culture, mainstream films based on classical narration are so widely known that viewing them has become an almost automatic process. Because of our familiarity with their narrative style, temporal and spatial structures are in most cases easy to recognise and understand. Paul Messaris points out that the temporal and spatial displacements of mainstream films are intelligible even to those viewers who watch films or television for the first time (1994). We start to process cinematic structures on a conscious level only when we come across, for example, temporal structures which do not conform to our expectations (Jackson 1989, 46). Time and space are connected with narrative structures and meanings in interesting but often unnoticed ways. Elisions or gaps created by ellipses and framings are often crucial for a work's meaning. Kieślowski does not always fill in the gaps present in his narratives.[59] Ellipses that are never filled in are called *diffuse ellipses.* According to Bordwell, an ellipsis is diffuse when the spectator's understanding of the story is not dependent on knowing exactly what happened during the ellipsis. On the other hand, if this information is

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[57]   Carroll constructed his theory on the basis of Vsevolod Pudovkin's thoughts. Carroll's theory has similarities to Bordwell's (1985) constructivist account of spectatorship. Both see the spectator's role as an active one in that she is continuously asking questions or formulating hypotheses, expecting to have her questions answered and hypotheses confirmed or proven false. Both theories represent cognitive film theory.

[58]   According to Ed S. Tan (1996, 128), in mainstream films genre conventions restrict the number of possible events and make it easier for the spectator to predict what is going to happen.

[59]   A narrative gap is not necessarily the result of an elliptic cut. It might be something that is alluded to in a conversation but never really explained.

important and is delivered later on or if the spectator must infer herself what happened, we are talking about a *focused ellipsis*. (Bordwell 1985, 55; 78.) Our viewing competence includes the ability to evaluate which gaps are just means of narrative economy and which gaps hide information that is crucial for the story and worth knowing (Bacon 2000, 50).[60]

The way we close up narrative gaps has to do with our previous experiences not just of films but of life in general. As spectators we may remain unaware of this until we come across a situation in which we do not know what to do with a gap or an ambiguous element. Such situations are relatively rare, however, because our memory during viewing is not very long. We cannot remember very far backwards. As long as the shots and scenes follow each other in a logical manner, a spectator does not bother to add missing details or look for explanations in earlier parts of the narrative. (Hochberg 1996, 380.) Grodal observes that only if film narration offers the spectator visual hints about what took place during an ellipsis does she want to know what happened. In the absence of such visual hints ellipses may not activate any perception that time is passing. (Grodal 1997, 140-143.)

Kieślowski does not use ellipses with the intention of confusing his spectators, but I have noticed that some spectators do become confused because Kieślowski does not explain sudden spatial or temporal displacements. The ellipses in his films are mostly diffuse. The key question is not about how these ellipses (or gaps) might be closed in the Bordwellian sense. As regards Kieślowski, the important thing is to see how his ellipses relate to his films' implicit meanings. There are a few permanent ellipses in *A Short Film About Killing* (or *Decalogue 5*). In Chapter 5.1. I shall argue that they reveal the director's attitude towards his theme. In this regard, Kieślowski's films require the spectator to be more watchful and think more actively than usual. Of course, his ellipses do not always hide meanings. Often they are a matter of narrative economy. In *Blind Chance*, for example, each of the three versions of Witek's life is remarkably condensed. Suddenly a conversation reveals that Witek has been in the Party more than a year even though he seems to have joined it only a moment ago. This means that more than a year has passed between the two scenes. Here we do not, however, feel a desire to find out what happened in the meantime. The film's structure makes it clear from the very beginning (the episode sequence) that the narrative concentrates on key moments in Witek's life, and because of this we know that we have missed nothing of importance.

The question of narrative gaps is problematic in many respects. Dufrenne saw works of art as necessarily incomplete. In fact, their incompleteness is for him a condition for their being works of art in the first place. Rudolf Arnheim (1933) made the same point about film. Films are works of art because of, not despite of their imperfections, such as their then lack of colour and sound. Since Arnheim wrote this film has acquired both colour and sound, but his basic point is still valid. However, I think that we can continue talking about gaps in a modified sense. I believe that anyone who is familiar with audiovisual works realises that

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[60]   Bacon mentions Robert Bresson's *Money* (1983) as an example of focused *and* diffuse ellipses "which really put the spectator's reasoning abilities to a test" (Bacon 2000, 25).

the incomplete artefact that we perceive is all that exists. Yet, our cognitive make-up is such that we feel a need to create complete stories, as I pointed out above. We must keep in mind that narratives of certain kinds cue us more insistently to infer what happened during gaps. It is obvious that Kieślowski tells stories, but at the same time it is evident that he wants to make a point. Often this point or idea is, in fact, more important than the story. In such cases it may be irrelevant to stop to wonder what occurred during a gap. It may be more important to ask about the purpose that the gap is serving.

Rhythm is a feature related to ellipses. A film's rhythm is born when shots of differing lengths are edited together. With the help of rhythm a filmmaker can create meanings and emotional effects. The manipulation of shot lengths and the adoption of a particular editing style make it possible to shape the spectator's experience in many ways. Bordwell has argued that by forcing the spectator to make inferences at a certain rate, narration determines *what* and *how* we infer (1985). I believe that rhythm affects us not only on a cognitive but also on an emotional level. According to Susan L. Feagin, it is easy to overlook the way in which durations and relations between durations help the spectator to understand what a film is about and why it is effective. She discusses these relations using the term *timing*. Feagin adds that the effect of a film sequence depends not only on timing but also on the film's content and the spectator's earlier experiences, attitudes, beliefs, feelings and other personal traits. Timing is a property of the film, but its effect on the spectator depends on her internal experiences during the relevant time interval. It is not always possible to pinpoint which of these three factors (timing, content, earlier experiences) is behind the cognitive and affective effects. According to Feagin, a more profound grasp of films can be achieved through a cognitive and affective understanding of their temporal structures. (Feagin 1999, 170-173.)

An analysis of Kieślowski's documentaries revealed that editing plays an important role in them; that it contributes strongly to how we interpret them. The same can be said of his fiction films. Kieślowski has remarked that he likes the editing phase best. For him, shooting was about collecting material for the editing process. The actual film is created on the editing table. (Stok 1993, 217; 233-235.) Kieślowski made twenty versions of *The Double Life of Véronique* before finding a satisfactory form. Though he gave the film seven different endings, none of them, not even the final one, satisfied him. (Rayns 1992, 22.) Kieślowski's search for the "perfect" structure leads to some interesting effects.

In his article on *The Decalogue*, Coates comments on the apparently random unfolding of events in Kieślowski's films. He sees this as an effect of Kieślowski's experiences as a documentarist. Kieślowski the documentarist's freedom with his material is reflected in the structure of the fictions he made later. In his documentary films Kieślowski had learned to cast away all unnecessary material, and he continued this practice in his fictions. This results in narrative mysteries because some things are left unexplained. The scripts and the final films sometimes differ greatly. Some events in a film may lack a rational explanation which was

included in the script. (Coates 1999b, 94-95.)[61] It seems that during the editing phase Kieślowski condensed his narratives, which also made them more ambiguous. Comparing the scripts for *The Three Colours* trilogy and the films themselves, for example, makes one appreciate that for Kieślowski, the script was just a starting point. Kieślowski was also open to suggestions and corrections by his collaborators, who did often influence the films' final form. He has given several examples of how actors came up with such suggestions. (Stok 1993.)[62]

Žižek similarly sees a connection between Kieślowski's documentaries and the late fictions. He points out that the mysterious quality of the late works is derived from the documentary approach that Kieślowski never gave up completely. Kieślowski treats documentary and fictive material in a similar fashion: most of the raw material is thrown away, and the remaining pieces never add up to an integrated and completely understandable whole. There is always something inexplicable about the end product. Žižek argues that the idea of alternative realities present in most of Kieślowski's works stems from the way in which the documentary raw material resists incorporation into a single narrative. This leads to several narrative lines. (2001, 76-77.)

A few ambiguous or downright strange scenes in *The Double Life of Véronique* might be explained as Coates and Žižek suggest. At one point, Véronique meets a strange man on the staircase of her block of flats. We cannot make out what the man is doing in the film. We have not seen him before, nor have there been any references to him. The scene nevertheless makes it clear that he and Véronique have met before. This is his only appearance in the film. There is also a sub-plot involving a friend of Véronique which seems unconnected with the rest of the story. According to Kieślowski, the friend originally had a bigger role in the film. During the editing most of the scenes with the friend were cut out. Two or three were left because it was impossible to remove them; hence what seems an isolated sub-plot. (Stok 1993, 215.) However, not all mysterious details in Kieślowski's fictions can be explained away as results of his documentary approach. The story of *The Double Life of Véronique* is meant to be mysterious in any case. As for alternative realities, they have similarly been the director's original idea in many

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[61]   In *Decalogue 1* a young boy drowns because the ice covering the pond on which he skates breaks. His rationalist father had done some computer calculations to make sure that the ice would bear the boy's weight. To assure himself further he tested the ice himself. The ice breaks anyway, and in the film there are no explanations. The suggestion seems to be that the drowning was God's punishment for worshipping other gods, in this case computers. Was the father too rational in trusting science and computers so much? Or maybe it was just bad luck, a chance event. In the script we are told, instead, that a nearby water treatment station had run some warm water into the pond without reporting it. Kieślowski chose a more ambiguous alternative so that the spectator can come to her own conclusions. Strictly speaking, the film does provide one possible explanation: A tramp is seen several times having a fire by the pond. Maybe his fire melted the ice. In fact, the film starts with a shot of the tramp sitting by his fire. (See Coates 1999b, 95; Rayns 1992, 23.)

[62]   Eight parts of *The Decalogue* present a mysterious, quiet young man. This character was added after the scripts had been finished because the literary director said something was lacking from the stories. The ending of *A Short Film About Love* acquired a more positive note than the shorter *Decalogue* version because the lead actress, Grażyna Szapołowska, said that people wanted to see a more hopeful ending. (Stok 1993, 187-189; 197.)

cases, for example in *The Double Life of Véronique* and *Red*; thus, the alternative realities are not just a consequence of montage.

4.3   *The Decalogue* and the drama of everyday life

In Kieślowski's films the camera persistently follows the protagonist, creating the impression that we, as spectators, are always present when something important happens. Charles Eidsvik compares narration in *A Short Film About Killing* and *The Decalogue 5* to nature documentaries in which the object is observed constantly from close range (1990, 51). Eidsvik's remark applies also to other parts of the series. And before *The Decalogue* this close monitoring of the main characters' every move was already a feature of the early fictions. As a result, the spectator may feel that she is being shown everything, thus missing the elliptic nature of the narration. This applies especially to *Blind Chance*, where the passage of time comes often as a surprise, as was mentioned above.

An intensive narration marks every part of *The Decalogue*, giving the series a narrative style of its own. The films' short duration, just under an hour, imposes some restrictions on their narrative structure. Narrative economy must be used to the full. At the same time, an intensity of expression is made possible also by the themes of *The Decalogue* themselves. According to Garbowski, the stories deal with "boundary-situations" in which the protagonists suddenly have to confront fundamental existential questions. Garbowski considers that stories of this kind do not require much story-time. (1997, 56-57.) Issues are solved mainly in the characters' minds, with little physical action, which contributes to their short durations. References to offscreen time and space explain a great deal about what is taking place, but as mentioned above, these references require little story-time.

At the start of each film the spectator is drawn quickly into the thick of a situation, but backgrounds are revealed only gradually. In *The Decalogue* the endings do not necessarily come with a solution. Because of this, we gain the impression that we have seen just a small slice of these people's lives; that we have been witnessing a brief moment in their lives. In relation to the total length of the films, Kieślowski uses a great deal of time to narrate seemingly unimportant, everyday things. We see the protagonists watering plants, warming up bath water, preparing supper, jogging, drinking coffee and reading papers. Because so much narrative time is spent on such routine actions, on keeping track of everyday details, the stories acquire a material quality. There is a feeling of immersion in the real world and of involvement with real people. This is not a surprising discovery when we consider Kieślowski's documentary oeuvre. However, the everyday is not all there is to these stories, for in the end they are just as much about the abstract and the spiritual.

Outwardly it may seem that nothing much is going on in these people's lives. At some point they head for a crisis - often it has already surfaced - which upsets their lives. All the protagonists live on the same grim housing estate in identical grey blocks of flats. Outwardly it might seem that the lives they lead are equally indistinguishable. Kieślowski, however, wanted to show that every person's live has something worth telling about. He shows that actually there is a great deal

going on inside the people cooped up in these concrete boxes.[63] Kieślowski concentrates on the darker side of human emotions. There is sickness, death, loneliness, jealousy and hate. People deceive and hurt each other, they lie, steal, spy on other people, and even kill. There is also love and compassion, but more positive emotions rarely lead to a happy conclusion.

Garbowski (1997, 57) thinks that Kieślowski succeeds in creating an impression that the things represented in the films are happening in a natural tempo - the tempo of everyday life. Kieślowski achieves this by delivering essential information in the midst of routine or even banal actions, narrated in rather long scenes. A feeling of real time is achieved. An important dialogue takes place at the breakfast table, over a cup of coffee, or during a lecture. In *Decalogue 1* little Paweł asks his father, in the middle of a breakfast, what death means. Surprised at his son's serious question so early in the morning, the father answers that it means that one's heart ceases pumping blood. While watching photographs at his aunt's place Paweł asks her, what is God? The aunt sits the boy onto her lap and asks what he is feeling. He answers, "Love". She says that God is in that feeling. Later in the same film the father's belief in the intelligence of computers is revealed during an ordinary lecture that he delivers at the university. Paweł is listening. In *Decalogue 6* Tomek is spying on a woman living in the housing block opposite his own. Between his voyeuristic sessions he takes the garbage out. His godmother, with whom he lives, seizes the opportunity and asks him to come watch the Miss Poland contest on television with her. Knowing what he is up to in his room, she asks if he has a girlfriend.

These films are narrated to what starts as a peaceful rhythm. Events progress unhurriedly until a crisis arises and the tempo increases. Synthetic sequences, that is, sequences in which things unfold rapidly, carry the narrative quickly and imperceptibly forward. In this context, Véronique Campan speaks about a double dimension of time. For a while time goes by evenly, and then suddenly there is a great deal of activity. Long static takes during which nothing particular happens (the protagonist is standing by a window, for example) are followed by a fast-paced montage sequence. (Campan 1997, 70.) I think that what Campan is talking about is quite normal in all narratives. The reason why it is worth mentioning in an examination of Kieślowski's films is because Kieślowski uses much narrative time to prepare the main scenes. Most of it, maybe more than two thirds in *Decalogue 1, 2* and *5*, is spent in this way. When the rhythm changes the contrast is marked but not as striking as Campan claims. Especially towards the end of the films there are quick turns of events, as an analysis of *Decalogue 2* for example will show in the next chapter.

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[63] The main characters of one episode may be glimpsed in either an earlier or a later episode, which gives us a chance to see them from another perspective, as just "one of us" or as someone about whom we already know something. For example, we meet Andrzej and Dorota from *Decalogue 2* again briefly in *Decalogue 5*, where they look like any other couple. In *Decalogue 8* an old man who collects stamps is seen in two scenes. By the time we come to *Decalogue 10* he is dead and the story is about his two sons fighting over his estate.

In the beginning of *Decalogue 8* Kieślowski introduces the aged professor of ethics, Zofia, in a long sequence which follows her morning routine. The camera finds her jogging and doing physical exercises in a nearby wood where she meets an acrobat. On the way back she buys flowers and meets a neighbour. At home she walks through her apartment arranging things. She eats her breakfast and then drives to work in her ancient car. We are given the impression that this is what she always does. Against this background, the later events - the meeting with the Jewish girl, Elżbieta, from her past - are seen to interrupt her peaceful existence. Kieślowski's characters rarely experience an upturn in their lives.

In *Decalogue 3* a peaceful life is similarly interrupted when an ex-lover returns to the male protagonist's life. He, Janusz, is spending Christmas Eve with his family. Colourful Christmas lights cast warm reflections everywhere. The rhythm of narration is unhurried. Camera movements are slow, observing people's expressions. However, there is tension in the air. Even before the opening image has come into focus we hear a drunken voice yelling out a Christmas carol. The drunkard is seen dragging a Christmas tree behind him while Janusz, shown for the first time, is putting on a Santa Claus mask in his car. At the door he meets a neighbour, the father from *Decalogue 1*, who is now alone. Ewa, another protagonist, whose only relative is a demented mother[64], is similarly lonely. While other people are celebrating with their loved ones, the companionless and the wretched suffer. Janusz and Ewa notice each other at Christmas Mass. When Janusz hears the doorbell in the evening, he knows who is behind the door. Ewa asks him to come and search for her husband who has disappeared earlier that day. Quickly he makes up a story for his wife that his taxi has been stolen. Janusz is not happy to see Ewa, but he goes with her anyway.

Until now the narrative tempo has been very peaceful despite the obvious tensions. Soon after the search starts the atmosphere grows tense. Painful memories surface and accusations are levelled as Janusz drives around the city like a maniac. Harsh headlights and shrill police alarms have replaced the mood lighting. In hospitals and detoxification centres, fluorescent lamps reveal more than is called for. At some point Janusz and Ewa attract the attention of the police, for they are driving a "stolen" car. The situation is becoming more and more strained. Angry words are spoken, brakes screech and tires howl. They almost crash with a tram.

This heated sequence is followed by a quieter one in Ewa's flat. At midnight a group of children come to the door to sing. The strange hour and the dissonant performance suit the spoiled Christmas-night atmosphere. Janusz and Ewa continue the search until Ewa tells the truth. The whole story was a lie. The husband had left her long ago. She had made a bet with herself: if she can keep Janusz with her until morning she will not kill herself. The two part on good terms and Janusz returns home. He promises his wife that he will never see Ewa again. She does not look convinced.

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[64] In one scene Ewa visits her aunt in an old people's home. The old woman asks if Ewa has done her homework. Then she falls asleep in her chair. It seems that this scene was an inspiration for the mother-daughter relationship in *Blue*.

Kieślowski has compressed what must have been an at least ten-hour search into about thirty minutes without the spectator noticing at which points the events are condensed. There are no noticeable ellipses. Yet the sequence of events has been compressed. During the intensive and emotional sequences time is condensed and different levels of time overlap. We lose our sense of time. Because of the strong emotions depicted, the scenes appear longer than they actually are. The nightly events are shown as affecting the main characters powerfully, and the spectator is drawn close to them in intimate and intensive shots. At one moment Ewa and Janusz are looking tenderly at each other, the next moment suspicion is aroused again. Just like they, the spectator forgets the passage of time. The night feels long indeed. In terms of the phenomenology of time experience we could say that the subjective time of the protagonists passes quickly and because of that, their now-moment lasts long (Pockett, 2003). They find themselves reminiscing about their relationship, which means that their minds are preoccupied all night long. Meanwhile, objective time passes. Suddenly they - and we as spectators - realise that it is already morning. *Decalogue 3* succeeds in arousing in the spectator a feeling similar to that experienced by Ewa and Janusz.

Narrative time can be compressed inside a scene, as in fact happens several times in the above example. Another instance is a lecture scene in *Decalogue 8*. During the lecture students are asked to describe some ethical dilemmas. The scene lasts only some five minutes, but on the experiential level it feels like the full 45 minutes. It includes almost all phases of a normal lecture. Garbowski points out that it is only their duration that is shorter than normally and that the spectator's sense that she has seen everything is genuine (1997, 57). There are no visible ellipses. Our spectator's expectations concerning the time it takes to complete this or that everyday action are not sharply defined. Grodal explains that within a scene, an action can be shortened by showing samples of the act-schema or the situation-schema. He adds that we do not have precise time-schemata specifying the time required to perform actions such as entering a room, walking up to a chair, sitting down, talking about problems, taking leave and so on. (1997, 143.) Because of this, we cannot be sure whether, or how much, actions of this kind have been condensed on the screen. The stories told by the students (Elżbieta among them) are examples of such actions. Because most of the activity in *The Decalogue* consists of normal everyday things, the stories can be condensed in a way that creates the impression that the actions presented are taking place in a natural tempo.

4.4 *Decalogue 2* - condensations and displacements

Decalogue 2 is a good example of narrative condensation and indirect methods of expressing things. I shall offer a rather detailed analysis of the last fifteen minutes of the film. During this sequence the events, which have hitherto unfolded slowly, come to a rather sudden conclusion. Tempo and rhythm are again closely linked with the protagonists' emotional experiences.

Kieślowski spends the first 40 minutes to make us acquainted with the main characters. We are introduced to the nervous, chain-smoking Dorota and the

privacy-loving doctor, who live in the same block of flats. Dorota's rooms are modern and cold, the doctor's full of flowers and birds. Dorota is a musician and obviously quite wealthy. The doctor, on the other hand, seems to live very modestly.

After about ten minutes, the reason for Dorota's nervousness is revealed. Her husband, Andrzej, has cancer and is not expected to recover. Dorota is pregnant with another man's child, and she should decide soon whether she will have the child or get an abortion. Because of her dilemma she starts to press Andrzej's old doctor to tell her whether Andrzej will recover. If he recovers she must have the abortion, if he dies she can keep the child. The doctor finds himself in a quandary. At first he simply cannot say how Andrzej will fare. Later Andrzej's condition starts to improve, but the doctor feels compelled to lie that Andrzej is going to die, for he wants to protect the unborn child.[65] The doctor is deeply affected by the situation on a personal level because he lost his own child and wife during the war. Therefore, he chooses to lie and break his professional code.

The sequence begins as Dorota visits Andrzej in hospital. She has decided to have the abortion. As usual, Andrzej is delirious and does not react to her presence. Depressed, Dorota finally informs the doctor of her decision. The doctor forbids her to abort the child, swearing that Andrzej will die. The conversation and the scene end with the doctor's final line that he would like to come and listen to the philharmonic orchestra where Dorota is a violinist. As Dorota leaves, sombre music begins to play.

The music continues throughout the next long take. Dorota is seen standing at her window. After a while the camera starts to track slowly along the wall of the building. Then we see the doctor standing at his own window. Strong contrasts of light and shadow indicate the emotional crises which both of them are going through. The camera stays on the doctor for a long time. Finally it continues tracking, now to the right. We see more dark windows flowing by. Then suddenly the pace quickens until the movement stops and we see Andrzej in a close-up in his hospital bed. The speeded-up tracking shot creates the illusion of continuous space and time between the two scenes. We do not know whether they follow each other immediately or whether there is a time interval. In any case, camera movement underscores the emotional link between the three persons. The connection at the level of thoughts is expressed better by camera movement than by a simple cut. We feel that the three characters are in this together; that the actions of one will affect the two others. Robert Kolker calls attention to an emotional link of this kind created by a panning camera in Jean Renoir's *The Grand Illusion* (1937): "The pan joins individual to group, making the revelation of space not only physical but emotional and communal, and the response more generally and genuinely human." (Kolker 1999, 47-48.) Panning (or tracking) connects and creates cohesion whereas a cut would, in a similar situation, be perceived as a

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[65]   Actually, the spectator cannot be quite certain whether his condition is improving or deteriorating at this point, for after some tests Andrzej's doctor says, "Progress" ("*progresja*" in Polish), which might refer equally well to recovery or to decline.

disconnection. The camera movement at the end of *Blue* has a similar function. (See Chapter 7.6.)

The moment we see Andrzej in the close-up he opens his eyes for the first time during the film. The music, which until now has sounded melancholy, becomes more cheerful. It feels full of hope now. Unlike the doctor's shadowed faces of Dorota and the doctor, Andrzej's features are bathed in full light, which seems a positive sign. Andrzej turns to look up and right and the camera continues its interrupted movement to the right, in the direction of Andrzej's look. The movement quickens again after a while, stopping suddenly when a glass of compote comes into view. The camera is tilted slightly to bring into view a bee. In an extreme close-up we see the bee trying to free itself from the liquid, wriggling its sticky legs as it climbs slowly up the handle of a spoon. It is as if we had suddenly entered a microworld. A cut reveals that Andrzej is following the struggle. Finally the bee manages to crawl out of the liquid and is saved. The "microscene" with the bee functions here as a metaphorical anticipation of Andrzej's fate.

The two accelerations of camera movement are interesting. They have nothing to do with narrative economy because they last only a few seconds. The tracking shot is speeded up in discursive time (as distinguished from story-time), indicating an intervention by the filmmaker. Valkola points out that instead of transforming diegetic time, slowing down is an analytic and interpretative device (1999, 66). The same can be said of the two accelerated movements here. Grodal draws attention to two dimensions of temporal duration in scenes: time correlated with "act-situation schemata" (fictive time) and time correlated with "perceptual time-space schemata" (time from the spectator's point of view). The first dimension is experienced as tempo, the second dimension as a modal quality of time. According to Grodal, this distinction is needed "in order to describe the 'expressive' and felt qualities of duration". (1997, 144-145.) It is time as perceived by the spectator that is speeded up or slowed down here because in the experience of the fictive characters time neither speeds up nor slows down. We wonder why the camera is in such a hurry to see first Andrzej and then the bee. Grodal (1997, 144-145) argues that besides stylistic qualities, speeding up and slowing down involve *psychomimetic* qualities, that is, qualities related to subjective experiences. Andrzej's recovery is never spelled out, but these devices act on us and make us notice a change of mood or atmosphere. The speeding up, the increasing amount of light and the change in the music express Andrzej's return to life.

The sequence continues with a cut to a concert of the philharmonic orchestra. When a live orchestra comes into view the music, which is still playing, is transformed into a diegetic element[66]. Dorota appears. A point-of-view shot from the audience indicates that the doctor must be present. Another close-up of Dorota smiling slightly assures us that this is so. Does the smile also indicate that she already knows that Andrzej is recovering? Throughout the sequence, the music has been used to create continuity between the scenes, but we do not know what the

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[66]   Diegetic music emerges from within the story world. That is, we are shown the origin of the music. Non-diegetic music is not seen to be played but only heard on the soundtrack.

actual temporal relations between them are. How long has passed between the first hospital scene and the concert scene, or between it and the second hospital scene?

As the last scene of the film starts, the music dies away. Andrzej, who is now recovering, enters the doctor's office to thank him. He describes how earlier everything seemed ugly in his eyes, as if falling apart. He tells the doctor, happily, that he and Dorota are going to have a child. He asks if the doctor knows what it is like to have a child. Touched, the doctor answers yes.

According to Michel Chion, a French theorist of sound, sounds vectorise and orient images. Music and other sounds can be used to raise expectations and direct the spectator's attention to the future. Sounds can be employed to transform the quality of an image. With the help of sounds images can be made to seem exact, detailed, concrete, direct or obscure, for example. (Chion 1999, 13-14.)[67] In *Decalogue 2*, music anticipates Andrzej's recovery, but it also follows the emotional logic of the scenes. For example, in the beginning of the sequence the music comes to reinforce the already mournful feeling. The music rarely functions alone. It is reinforced by visual hints to direct our expectations: the amount of light, facial expressions, the camera movements. We may say, following Chion, that in both expressive and informative sense, sound, in this case music, *adds value* to this sequence (1999, 5).

The music, which continues over the cuts and the ellipses, gives this sequence a feel of temporal and spatial continuity. It also emphasises the cause-and-effect structure of the events. (Chion 1999, 17-18.)[68] Following Tarkovsky, we might say that here music creates an organic connection between the scenes (1989, 160). When Andrzej in the end appears at the doctor's door, his recovery seems almost miraculous. This sense of a miracle is already present when Andrzej opens his eyes. This effect is strengthened by our unclear idea about the duration of the events. The temporal relations remain ambiguous, but on the emotional level the sequence is intense and coherent. It is made up of emotional pain spots affecting all the three persons. Kieślowski leaves it to the spectator to decide how, and in which order, everything happened. As for the gaps in the narrative, we never learn whether Dorota told Andrzej the truth. Does he know that the child is not his?

Decalogue 2, like Kieślowski's films so often, has little action. The narrative consists of intimate conversations and quiet but intense moments. For most of the time, the characters are seen in close-ups or medium close-ups. The drama takes place inside the protagonists' minds, just as was pointed out by Garbowski, and by Bacon with respect to art film in general. Kieślowski's desire to look inside his characters means that all activity comes to a standstill during moments when they just sit there thinking. These moments are full of tension and intensity, however.

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[67]   Chion draws on research on sound by earlier French theorists, such as Pierre Schaeffer. He has created a vocabulary of his own to describe the various kinds of sound and the relations between sounds and images. Claudia Gorbman has described him as "a poet in theoretician's clothing". (Gorbman 2005 (1993)) Chion has been criticised from a cognitive perspective for not being consistent, for sometimes seeming to contradict his own thesis that the relationship between sound and image is not simply associationist but *synergetic.* (Phillips 2005).

[68]   Alexander Sesonske (1980, 424) argues that sound has become cinema's most important means of expressing relations of before and after.

Time is condensed during such moments, which detach themselves from the flow of narration.

5   Cinema as a thought provoker - idea-based narration

Kieślowski said this about the birth of his films:

> I don't know how my ideas come about. (...) And where do they come from? From everything I have touched. I don't invent plots and events. I invent stories, but most of all I believe I sense and understand something rather than verbalise events. The events come later. (...) At some point I feel this desire to tell a certain story. (...) It expresses a certain idea (...). (Stok 1993, 93.)

Kieślowski deemed it more important to convey certain sensations, intuitions and emotions than to tell complete stories. *Blind Chance* showed that even though the protagonist goes through a great deal, what we see most of the time is conversations.[69] Even though Kieślowski foregrounds emotions, his films rarely make us react very powerfully as we empathise with the protagonists. Emotions are connected with the director's desire to get his ideas across. Obviously, this has implications for his narratives and the spectator's experience of them, as has already been seen above.

Carl Plantinga and Murray Smith's (1999, 5) observation about T.S. Eliot can be used to illustrate also Kieślowski's idea-based film-making:

> T.S. Eliot sounds something like a cognitivist when he claims that we express emotion in art "by finding an 'objective correlate'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events, which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion." However, Eliot made this intriguing observation not to suggest a means to study the emotions elicited by literature but to dissolve such emotions into the study of meaning, structure, and style

In the preceding quote Kieślowski says that "events come later". Both *The Decalogue* and *The Three Colours* trilogy started with large ideas or themes, the Biblical Ten Commandments in the one case, the slogans of the French Revolution - Liberty, Fraternity and Equality - in the other case. Kieślowski created situations to illustrate these ideas, and these situations never form an integrated narrative. It could be argued, as I do in Chapter 7.6, that in *Blue* the tragic situations are objective correlates for feelings of sorrow. The main character's tragic fate is a way of scrutinising the concept of freedom, and also cinematic language itself. The story serves as an illustration of the big themes.

Kieślowski's interest in cinematic language leads him to look at the events from a perspective detached enough to make the spectator conscious of the means of expression. It is so obvious that the stories and protagonists are being used as a

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[69]   For example, Witek is sent to settle a rebellion at a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts. The situation there is quite tense, but we are not shown how he handles the conflict in the end.

way of testing ideas that character identification ceases to be the central element of the spectator's experience. It was observed above that for Kieślowski, documentaries were about thinking with images. The same can be said about his fiction films. Watching Kieślowski's films is more an intellectual and aesthetic experience than an exercise in identification. Some critics have seen this as a flaw. Janusz Gazda describes Kieślowski's films as calculated and gives a sarcastic account of his process of creation: In the beginning there is an idea, after which follows the creation of a theme and a conflict (a premeditated thesis). Then some realities of life, such as character traits, social relations and acquaintances, are added. Finally some metaphysical elements are included as ornaments. Gazda thinks that Kieślowski presents extreme situations in order to put a single idea across. (1993/94, 90.)

Ed Tan talks about two kinds of emotion as factors in film experience. Emotions generated by the artistic character of the work he calls *artefact emotions*, or A-emotions. Emotions generated by the fictive world and events are termed F-emotions. F-emotions are related to the spectator's sense of being present in the fictive world. Feelings of identification and empathy belong to the F-emotions. (1996, 65-66.) In film theory, emotions have been considered mostly in connection with protagonists and their actions (see, for example, Carroll 1999 and Tan 1996). Theories of this kind are most useful in studies of canonical Hollywood films, which are plot-driven. The relationship of emotions with the film form and film style has received less attention. (Smith 1999.) However, it is questions concerning this relationship that arise when watching Kieślowski's mature works.

Henry Bacon points out that every narrative provides us with what are in principle two alternative ways of following the events. We may identify with the characters and their destinies, that is, we may follow the story from the protagonist's point of view. On the other hand, we may orient ourselves with the narrator's point of view. In the latter case we pay attention to the fact that the story events are presented to us in a certain order and manner, which can be determined either by dramaturgical or by thematic reasons. (2000, 19.) It may also be said that there are narratives that encourage us to identify primarily with the narrator. I argue that this is what Kieślowski's cinema does. The elliptic nature of his narratives is related to their being founded in ideas. This, again, means that it is the director's thought that organises the narratives.

Kieślowski's mature works deal with his protagonists' private, subjective experiences. Kieślowski often goes to great lengths to make us perceive things the way in which his protagonists perceive them. Nevertheless, their inner concerns are not the driving force behind his narratives. As spectators we are aware that the characters he presents are subject to the will of a narrator who wants not just to tell us about their lives but also to get his own ideas through to us. To sum up, narration in Kieślowski's films is not plot-driven but idea- or theme-driven. This means among other things that shot lengths are not necessarily determined by the protagonists' actions. A shot may continue longer than the completion of an action or a reaction requires. At the same time, Kieślowski's elliptical narratives reflect also his unwillingness to spell things out.

The thematic structure triggers the spectator's cognitive processes, prompting her to consider why a story is narrated in this particular manner. The spectator becomes engaged in inner speech of a kind, referred to by Sobchack above.[70]

5.1   *A Short Film About Killing* - a dialogue between theme and structure

In *A Short Film About Killing* the narrative is structured around the film's central idea or statement. This statement, which in this case deserves to be called the story's moral, can be verbalised as follows: Capital punishment is revenge rather than an attempt to prevent more crimes from happening, or to understand the reasons behind them. Capital punishment is murder committed in the name of the state.[71] More generally, the film is about hostility, about the coldness of people towards each other. Kieślowski uses the narrative structure and the film form to make these points. Parallelisms and ellipses are particularly frequent devices.

The story is about three men who do not know each other: a taxi driver, a young drifter named Jacek, and a freshly graduated lawyer named Piotr. Two thirds of the story takes place over an afternoon in a damp and cold Warsaw as the three people's fates become entangled with each other. A short synopsis of the plot is as follows: Jacek kills the taxi driver. Piotr is given the drifter's defence as his first case. Jacek is sentenced to death, which Piotr takes as a personal failure.

In a manner typical of him, Kieślowski starts the film with images that anticipate the outcome, two deaths. In a dark shot we see a dead rat lying in a puddle. Children's voices are heard offscreen, and the next shot reveals a hanged cat. This dismal prologue sets the tone for the rest of the film. Even the way the animals died resembles the way the two men will die: one killed on a riverbank and left lying there, the other executed by hanging in a prison. In *Decalogue 5* the thoughts about crime and punishment were presented as Piotr's inner monologue, after which the film undertook to prove their truth. In *A Short Film About Killing* these thoughts are presented little by little, as an analysis will show. (See Eidsvik (1999) about differences between the two versions of the film.)

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[70]   This is related to the idea of *inner speech* (or monologue), which derives from Russian formalists. Boris Eikhenbaum, a member of the group, introduced the concept to film theory in the 1920s. For Eikhenbaum, film was a conceptual and linguistic form of art that generated inner speech in the spectator. According to him, "the film spectator faces a novel reception situation which is the reverse of the reading process: here we proceed from the object, from the montage series of moving images, towards understanding them, naming - inner speech (...) The success of film is related partly to this brain activity of a new kind that does not happen in everyday life." (2001, 283.) Eikhenbaum talked also about "behind-the-mindness" as a characteristic of film. This is a feature of visual media; something that cannot be precisely formulated in verbal language (2001, 283-284).

Sergei Eisenstein dealt with inner speech in connection with his theory of intellectual montage. He was familiar with the formalists' ideas. Eisenstein thought that film should affect the spectator both on the level of emotions and on the level of the intellect. Images should arouse emotions and these in turn should lead to ideas and intellectual thought. Eisenstein's thinking on montage culminated in montage of the kind that, operating as a structure, reconstructs processes of thought. (Hietala 1990, 308-312; Eisenstein 1977, 103-107.)

[71]   When the film was being made, capital punishment was still in force in Poland. It became history along with the fall of Communism.

The film consists of three elliptically linked sequences. The first and longest sequence introduces the three characters through parallel editing. It ends when Jacek and the taxi driver meet and Jacek kills the driver. The second sequence is the shortest one. It comprises three short scenes which take place in court where the final judgment is pronounced: Jacek is condemned to death. The third sequence describes the preparations for the execution, the final conversation between the lawyer and his client, and the execution. The temporal gap between the sequences is not clearly defined. Below I shall examine the film's structure in more detail and consider how it is related to its meanings.

At the beginning of the first sequence the three characters are unaware of each other's existence. Parallel editing picks them up one by one, starting with the taxi driver. He starts his day by washing his car on a dreary-looking housing estate. The high-rise buildings create a claustrophobic atmosphere. Hardly any sky is seen in these shots. At the same time the gloomy drifter, who looks like a punk, is seen walking out on the town. The sound of church bells heard in both scenes indicates their temporal simultaneity. While the ill-humoured cabbie is guessing at the origin of a wet rag which almost hit him, Jacek is seen going to a cinema. He is not interested in films, however. Instead, he asks the attendant for the way to the nearest taxi stand. Somewhere else a youngish man, Piotr, is nervously waiting for his final examination to begin. Soon he is asked in. Once the three narrative lines have been established, the narration circulates among them. At this early stage we do not yet know how the characters relate to each other.

The three narratives are brought closer together in space little by little. It becomes evident that they are taking place in the same city at the same time. The protagonists never actually meet before the fatal encounter, but the taxi driver and Piotr do catch a glimpse of each other. Parallel editing enables the spectator to observe the three people's movements as if from above. Unbeknown to the characters themselves, at one point Jacek and Piotr almost meet in a café. Tension arises as it becomes clear that these people are to come together sooner or later; and it is obvious that the encounter is not going to be a pleasant one. The omniscient point of view allows the spectator to see the random, or fateful, course of the events. The point of view alternates between the three protagonists. In this sense, we are allowed to experience the events from three different perspectives. From the viewer's standpoint time is in a sense extended. As regards parallel editing, Branigan points out that its rhythm forces time into a tight mould, but at the same time we feel as if we were everywhere at the same time (1992, 64). Throughout the film, the spectator knows more than any of the characters. At the same time, now and again we are tied to their subjective perspectives. The viewer alternates between an omniscient perspective and a subjective one. In the course of the narrative the subjective perspective engenders some very intimate moments.

The editing creates parallels not only on the story level but also on the level of discourse. For the first five or ten minutes we might be a little confused about what is happening. The narrative starts to cohere as Piotr speaks in front of the examiners. He explains his choice of profession by saying that a lawyer's job will enable him to meet and learn to understand people whom he would not otherwise meet. As his speech continues it begins to overlap with the two other narrative

lines. Fragments of Piotr's speech are heard on the soundtrack while Jacek and the taxi driver are seen going about their separate business. During Piotr's monologue we learn that neither of the two is a very nice person. Both are constantly playing nasty little tricks, which in Jacek's case leads to rather more than that. The taxi driver takes off in front of waiting customers. He scares little poodles by tooting his horn, and stares rudely at a girl. On the other hand, he shares his sandwich with a stray dog and is very polite towards some schoolchildren.

Jacek has already been positioned as an outsider. He does not know the city and seems to be walking around aimlessly. One scene in particular underlines his outsider's status. He walks up to an artist who is drawing a portrait of a little girl. Jacek is not interested in art. He only wants to know where the taxi stand is. The artist feels that there is something strange about the boy, for he shakes his head, while the little girl's similar reaction is indicated by the long look she casts after Jacek when he leaves. The girl's gaze establishes his position as an outsider. It is as if the girl had sensed something. Jacek watches indifferently as someone is being beaten up and does not hide his own aggressions either. He knocks down a man who smiles at him in a lavatory, drops a stone from an overpass, thus causing a car accident on the highway, and scares an old woman's pigeons away.

Piotr's speech on the incompatibility of law and reality now becomes a series of comments on these events. He says that since the time of Cain, no punishment has been able to prevent crimes. He asks the crucial question mentioned above: Is punishment just revenge rather than an attempt to prevent crimes from being committed? Almost throughout the examination scene, Piotr is shown in a talking head-type of shot which makes him seem an external commentator on the events. Later he steps out of this documentary-like role, becoming a flesh-and-blood character himself.

Aggression and violence are present in the film from the very first images on the level of both the story and the narrative style. The first shots are mysterious, but little by little associations and parallels between the images and the three story lines start to emerge. According to Bacon, in elliptic narration coherence is created through repetition and variation. This is an alternative to the continuity editing of classical narratives. There are *repetitions* related directly to plot structure, and there are narratively and thematically emphasised *motives*. Such motives can be visual, aural or stylistic (camera angles, lighting, composition, etc.) elements. Motives are closely related to a film's style. (2000, 108-109.) By observing repetitions and motives we begin to understand how the narrative lines are connected to each other. On the other hand, it is our familiarity with the convention of parallel editing that enables us to notice these motives in the first place. This shows that it is often impossible to draw a line between bottom-up and top-down processes of perception.

The theme of aggression is the first similarity to emerge between the three narrative lines. The images of the dead animals, people behaving badly, and Piotr talking about crime express aggression and violence on a referential, that is, the most explicit level. Style works on a more abstract level, generating an atmosphere of negativity. The green filters make the environment look desolate and oppressive. The edges or one side of the images are dark almost all the time. In

some scenes an iris-like effect is created. Together with strange, distorting camera angles and melancholy music these devices intensify the ominous feeling. The hostility of the environment feeds people's aggression and vice versa. It seems that the beating that Jacek coolly witnessed has affected his own behaviour.

Almost from the beginning, small hints have been preparing us for the meeting between the taxi driver and Jacek. Only when the taxi sign of the man's car is revealed does the spectator realise that in the end, he might be the driver to give Jacek a ride. Jacek has been asking for a taxi stand and when he finds one, he cannot keep his eyes off it. During the first sequence the taxi driver arrives in the city centre. Then he sees Piotr driving his moped and celebrating his graduation. A little later, Piotr and his girlfriend are seen planning their future in the same café where Jacek is keeping an eye on the taxi stand and planning his deed. Meanwhile the taxi driver is seen avoiding customers, as he has been doing all day, and by now it is evident that he and Jacek are going to meet. Finally Jacek walks to the taxi stand, and a man who has spent his time evading unpleasant customers chooses to pick up his murderer. The sky is glowing in strange colours and ominous music plays as the taxi departs. In the same instant Piotr suddenly sinks into gloom, saying to his girlfriend that things might go wrong for him after all.

Outside the town by a river Jacek kills the driver. During the long and laborious process he suddenly realises what a terrible thing he is about to do. He cannot retreat any more, however. Kieślowski said later that he wanted to represent killing as both physically and mentally exhausting, unlike in action movies, where killing is quick and easy (Anttila 1989, 20).[72] After the murder Jacek goes back into town to meet a girl, Beata, whom the taxi driver ogled earlier. The first sequence ends as the suspicious Beata asks where Jacek got the car.

An elliptic cut takes the narrative forward to the day when Jacek's trial is coming to an end. A death sentence is pronounced and Jacek is taken away. Piotr is disappointed. He talks to the judge and the judge congratulates him for the best speech against capital punishment he had ever heard. The sequence includes also a short, silent scene in which Piotr confronts Jacek's relatives.

Another elliptic cut takes us to the day of the hanging. With documentary precision, Kieślowski shows us the preparations before the execution. The people involved arrive and make sure that everything is in order. Piotr meets Jacek for a last conversation, after which the boy is taken to be hanged. The coolly observing presentation of the events makes the spectator aware of how routine the procedure is. Everything goes smoothly until the last moment, when Jacek panics with the consequence that during the actual execution everyone is in panic. The film ends with an epilogue of a kind. Piotr is sitting alone in his car by some fields, crying: "I hate, I hate."

The film is a representation of and a comparison between two killing processes. The comparison (or analogue) arises out of the film's elliptic structure and becomes plainly visible only at its end. In the first sequence Jacek kills the taxi driver. In the second sequence the state imposes its punishment, carried out in the

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[72]   An American film scholar told Kieślowski at the Cannes film festival that he had made the longest killing scene in the history of cinema (Anttila 1989, 20).

third sequence. Both murders are represented in a matter-of-fact style; bluntly and unsentimentally. Differences are nevertheless pointed out. The first murder is slow and messy. The second is quick and clinical; a "purely bureaucratic death", as Kieślowski described it (Anttila 1989, 20).

Once again, Kieślowski uses a great deal of time to prepare the key confrontation. The sequences depicting the killings are similarly long. By contrast, almost no time is used to discover the reasons behind the murder. Kieślowski does not ask why this country boy kills in the town a man he does not know. Kieślowski does not show the trial either. Usually court-room dramas, both in films and in television series, concentrate on finding the motives and reasons that led to a crime. Kieślowski, however, excludes almost all those human reasons and feelings that might help us to understand the protagonists, maybe even feel empathy with them. Moreover, both the victim and the murderer are presented in such an unsympathetic light that it becomes difficult to take sides. The result is a representation in an almost documentary style (more about this in Chapter 7.4).

Only the conversation between Jacek and Piotr just before the execution hints at the circumstances behind Jacek's act. The boy talks movingly about his dead sister, obviously regretting what he did. During this long conversation scene the spectator may even feel some sympathy for him. Campan points out that by breaking an unwritten rule about how long a dialogue can be, the conversation disrupts the progress of the narrative. Finally their talk is brutally cut short as the guards arrive to take Jacek to be executed. Campan draws attention to Kieślowski's ability to lend time weight. During the long killing scenes it is not only the killer but also the spectator who is forced to realise the horror of what is being done. Now we feel that the conversation was too short. We would have liked to hear more about what Jacek had to say. But time has run out. (1997, 61; 69-70.)

Kieślowski described his film as follows:

> A *Short Film About Killing* is a story about a young boy who kills a taxi driver and then the law kills the boy. In fact, there is not much more to say about the plot, for we do not know why the boy kills the taxi driver. We know the reasons, based on law, which induce society to kill the boy. But we do not know the real, human reasons, and we will never know. (Stok 1993, 189.)

In the film Kieślowski speaks through Piotr. The humanity and desire to understand that Piotr represents feel powerless before the harsh reality represented in the film. The film exemplifies and confirms the thesis that Piotr introduces at the beginning. Kieślowski wanted to stress that punishment really is just revenge; that no one wins. He wanted to show the senselessness of violence in all its forms.

The durations of the scenes and the relations between them are essential for the presentation of Kieślowski's thesis. The film's narrative structure makes it seem that the relation between the two killings is causal. An impression is created that the second killing follows the first one almost automatically. This impression stems to a large extent from the film's lack of attention to the motives at the bottom of the killings and the conspicuous brevity of the middle sequence. The first sequence ends soon after the murder, and the preparations for the execution start after only

a short interval. If narrative time were spent considering the motives, there would not be an impression of automatism. Further, the second murder is made seem as senseless as the first one by being narrated in a style as objective as that used to present the first murder.

In this manner, temporality is linked with the way in which the film is understood cognitively. The impression of automatism is probably felt even without a cognitive analysis of the film's structure. I think, however, that in this case such an analysis enables us to grasp how the narrative makes the spectator feel certain things. *A Short Film About Killing* exemplifies Bacon's observation that in an art-film narrative it is common for time to be organised around a theme rather than around the actions of the characters. (2000, 124). Kieślowski has also deliberately structured the narrative in such a fashion that there is no time, or *not enough time*, to explain the motives behind the protagonists' actions and behaviour. He cuts short the final conversation which might have cleared up some of the mystery. In the first sequence the parallel editing suggests that the temporal and spatial relations between the protagonists are significant. This makes the spectator wonder whether what happened was meant to happen or whether it was just a random event. To sum up, *In A Short Film About Killing* the meanings and effects originate at least partly from the film's structure, the temporal and spatial relations between the sequences and scenes.

5.2   Challenging the viewer - the abstract core of *Red*

According to Grodal, we always perceive a film on a certain conceptual level, which can be more or less abstract. A film's conceptual level may be determined by the filmmakers, by the spectator herself, by narrative schemata, and by different cinematic devices. The most obvious level of perception is the denotative one, the level of literal meanings. Concrete action takes place on this level and is relatively easy to understand. There is usually a general agreement on what takes place on the denotative level. At the same time, on the connotative level perception activates partly non-conscious associations, which, in turn, trigger more abstract frameworks or themes. The filmmaker can draw the spectator's attention to particular conceptual levels, for example by using technical devices (such as camera movements and editing). (1997, 65-66.)

Grodal mentions *Intolerance* (1916) by D.W. Griffith as an example of a film that deals with an abstract theme which is manifested on a non-narrative level. The film asks its viewers "to focus directly at the high, propositional level of 'intolerance', and this may cause some problems, because the main focus is supposed to be at a level that is not visually existent" (1997, 66.) The difficulties arise because we are expected to grasp that what we are seeing is not really what the film is about. I think Grodal makes such cases seem rarer than they really are. But it is true that the more abstract the theme is, the more difficult it is for the spectator to put into words what the film is dealing with. Among Kieślowski's works difficulty of this kind is best exemplified by *The Three Colours* trilogy, especially *Red*. In these films the spectator is asked, in a sense, to see through the denotative level (the action and events) into the thematic core.

Before turning to *Red* I would like to call attention to Peter Wuss's proposal for a cognitive description of narratives not based primarily on causal relations. He calls such narratives *perception-based structures*. They are a way of organising a narrative based primarily on repetitions. Such a narrative structure is less obvious than a *conception-based structure*, which relies on causal chains. In perception-based structures, "narrational micro structures", which are not always perceived consciously, set the spectator off on a problem-solving process. Wuss' approach to theorising narrative underscores the viewer's role. As Wuss says, narration takes place not only on the screen but also in the spectator's mind. (Wuss 2000, 105-109.)

Narrational micro structures may be recurring and contradictory semantic elements, various conflicts and tensions that attract the spectator's attention. Such semantic elements involve contradictions that generate meanings which initially seem ambiguous. These meanings are difficult to put into words, engendering uncertainty.[73] Without the spectator being fully conscious of it, problem-solving processes are set in motion inside her. As the spectator recognises more and more of such micro structures, *cognitive invariants* emerge. This is a matter of schema formation on the perceptual level. As a result, "complex relationships are formed on a perceptual level leading to meaning" (2000, 109). Wuss calls such relationships *filmic topics.* Expectations about story events arise. The spectator asks herself: What is this film about? According to Wuss, the purpose of the problem-solving process is to reduce the tension and uncertainty generated by the events. (2000, 106-111.) The first sequence of *A Short Film About Killing* may be said to exemplify such a process of narration and problem-solving. We witness strange and aggressive behaviour without knowing, for a long time, what it will lead to.

The concept of *conflict* was mentioned above. Wuss draws attention to this concept, which was present in the thought of some early film theorists, such as Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Münsterberg, but which according to Wuss has later appeared only rarely in theorising about cinematic narration. In these early theories conflict is a dramaturgical category. It refers to narrative conflicts, especially to their emotional unfolding, which implies an inner dynamism in the narrative. It is an important point in this context that a conflict cannot be considered separately from the psychology of viewer response. Wuss points out that conflicts of this kind take place not only on the screen on the level of action (in the sense of dramatic collisions) but also in the spectator's thoughts. However, the spectator's experience is distinct from what happens on the screen. Sometimes a violent clash has no effect on us, whereas at another time minor conflicts can affect us deeply. (2000, 105-106.) Wuss's conception of conflict is wider than Eisenstein's. Eisenstein was thinking about a conflict between two images or shots but for Wuss, a conflict may take place on the level of action, on the level of the visuals and on the level of the spectator's thoughts. What the spectator is engaged in in Wuss's model is the kind of invisible action – a dialogue with a film – that has been referred to above as inner speech.

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[73]   Umberto Eco refers to meanings that are hard to verbalise using the term *aboutness* (Wuss 2000, 109).

Perception-based structures can be further illustrated by comparing them to conception-based filmic structures. A conception-based structure depends on the spectator's possession of previously acquired mental schemes, which make the structure more readily understandable as we encounter it during the viewing of a film. In other words, the causal chains on which it is based are already familiar to us as spectators. The two types of structure do not exclude each other; both may be present in a single narrative. In *A Short Film About Killing* the first sequence is predominantly perception-based, whereas the last sequence unfolds around a more obvious causal chain.

Red can be analysed as an example of a perception-based filmic structure. The film asks the viewer to operate on a high conceptual level, which makes it probably the intellectually most challenging of all Kieślowski's films. I shall consider how its main theme of alternative lives is expressed through its narrative structure and micro structures. *Red* is perhaps the most cinematic of Kieślowski's films in that in it he strives to make complex themes understandable through visual and structural means.

A plot synopsis would not reveal much about *Red*'s thematic core. The connection between the thematic core and the story events is not obvious. According to its cinematographer, Piotr Sobociński, usually it is the chronological working out of the action and the turning points that this involves that are the most important thing in a film. In *Red*, however, the meaningful action is hidden. (Sobolewski 1993b, 22-23.) This hidden level is referred to also by Sobolewski, who sees *Red* as a game taking place on several levels simultaneously. There is a second film inside *Red* which must be decoded. (1993, 16.) I assume that Sobolewski is speaking about the film's higher conceptual level. What, then, is the second film inside the first one that needs to be dug out?

The "visible story" of *Red* can be summed up as follows. Valentine, a student and model, lives alone in Geneva. Her boyfriend is abroad. She is distressed by the jealousy he displays during his phone calls. On the other side of the street lives Auguste, a law student. Valentine and Auguste do not know each other. Every day they walk in the same streets without noticing one another.

One evening, while driving home from a fashion show, Valentine bumps into a dog. The owner of the injured animal turns out to be a retired judge, Joseph Kern. He is cynical and embittered by life's disappointments. Because he shows no interest in the dog, she takes it with her. One day the dog runs away and returns to its own home. Valentine follows it there, where she discovers that he is tapping his neighbours' phone calls. Disgusted, Valentine leaves but returns later after having read in a newspaper that the judge has been brought to trial. She wants to tell him that it was not she who turned him in. Kern confesses that it was he himself, taken aback by Valentine's disgust, who turned himself in. The old man and the girl become friends. He hints that he would have liked to have met her when he was her age.

In parallel with Valentine and Kern's story we have been following Auguste's life. He graduates and soon afterwards surprises his girlfriend with another man. She had got to know the other man in court, for she is one of Kern's neighbours. As Kern tells Valentine about his life, it is revealed that Auguste is going through

similar experiences at the same moment. Despite an age difference of at least 30 years, the two men look strikingly similar in many scenes.[74] As Valentine decides to go and meet her boyfriend in England, the judge advises her to take the Channel ferry. She does so without knowing that Auguste is similarly planning to travel by ferry. During the crossing a storm breaks out, there is a terrible accident and only a few passengers are rescued. They include Valentine, Auguste and the main characters of *Blue* and *White.* The final scene shows Valentine and Auguste standing side by side but looking in different directions.

Kieślowski said that in *Red* he is asking whether a misfortune that happened to one person can be later repaired for another person. In this case, the misfortune is that Valentine and the judge meet too late. They should have encountered when Kern was young because they are made for each other. Could Valentine and Auguste's potential relationship remedy this misfortune? After all, Auguste seems to be reliving Kern's life. In other words, the question is: Can someone relive another person's life as a new, corrected version of it? (Stok 1993, 255.) The *Double Life of Véronique* poses a similar question: Can another person learn from mistakes made by someone else a little earlier?

According to Kieślowski, the script was based on the premise of a flashback paradoxically taking place in the present. That would mean that Auguste's life is a flashback unfolding in the present but visualising what happened to Kern years ago. Normally a flashback shows events that occurred in the past, displayed as someone's visualised recollection (Turim 1985). In *Red* the flashback takes place in the present as Auguste seemingly lives a new version of Kern's life. Is Auguste a real person, Kern's younger double, who might yet experience what Kern could not? Or does Auguste's life merely illustrate Kern's memories? Kieślowski leaves these questions open.

The narrative presents Auguste as a more remote character than Valentine and Kern. We seldom hear him talk, for example, and he is rarely shown in close-ups. This does not mean, however, that he is unreal. In general, questions related to the reality status of the film's events are not made explicit in the narrative. The narration establishes parallels in a very subtle way. As Kern talks about his life we come to realise that Auguste is experiencing similar things right then. Once again Kieślowski takes up the theme of alternative lives. In doing so he plays with the temporal structure. The judge can see and hear (by listening to telephone calls) his younger self in the present.

The spectator is not necessarily prepared to put in enough hard work to make out the key idea heavily intertwined with the narrative style. The film's ambiguity is heightened by, among other things, our uncertainty about whether we are following an ordinary narrative told in the form of parallel story lines or whether the judge's recollections of his youth are told in parallel to his present life. This question arises, if it arises at all, only after the spectator has passed the halfway point of the film. Kieślowski himself (Stok 1993, 258) seemed to doubt whether the spectator will realise what he wanted to say:

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[74]   They have in common at least the following things: both studied law, wear braces, own dogs, date blond women, and are deceived by them.

> *Red* has a very complicated structure. I do not know whether we succeeded in transferring my ideas on the screen. We had everything we were supposed to have. We had very good actors (...). I also had everything I needed to be able to say what I had to say, which really is quite complicated a thing. Therefore, if the film does not convey my original idea, it means that either film is too primitive a medium to present such a construction or that we were not skilled enough to present it.

The events of *Red* have been made to seem coincidental. The protagonists appear to lead ordinary lives. Valentine's acquaintance with the judge begins as a result of her accident, which happens as she tries to adjust her car radio while driving. Many other incidents seem equally fortuitous. According to Kieślowski, superficially the events seem insignificant (Sobolewski 1993a, 16). Kieślowski wanted the film to look like life; Sobolewski adds that it is *about* life but not lifelike. They are speaking about the obvious fact that everything in a film is a construction, that there are no coincidences. (Sobolewski 1994b, 23.) All elements of a completed film are not necessarily a result of careful planning, however. I am referring here to the earlier claim that Kieslowski's manner of constructing films at the editing table always lent the films elements of mystery. I think it can nevertheless be said that coincidence has less room in the practice of filmmaking than in real life.

This seeming randomness of the film's action makes Arto Haarala's observations about *Blue* relevant also to *Red*. As Haarala (1995, 12) sees it, in contrast to the narrational gravity of Kieślowski's films their dialogues are banal. Haarala argues that for Kieślowski story, instead of being the most important aspect of film, is only one facet among many others. His narration, which is lapidary, reduced to the essential, is anchored in the story only partly. The director's interest lies in the cinematic texturality, to which also the spectator's attention is directed. It is a texture where numerous associations are looking for expressible meanings, but some of these associations are inexpressible. Because of this, unsayable meanings continue to exist alongside the narrative, making the narration ambiguous. Nevertheless, this is not a question of defamiliarisation, or friction, but of a polyphonic tonality which arises from the coexistence of the different aspects of the medium.

There is no denying that to a certain extent Kieślowski does call attention to the cinematic medium. He is not making a film about film, however. That is, he is not trying to create a *Verfremdungseffekt* in the strong sense of the word. Instead, his aim is to narrate a story and convey his ideas in a manner that is as cinematic as possible. Kieślowski has said about *Red* that he could have used more literal modes of expression, such as internal monologue. But he did not want to resort to such "brutal means", to point his finger at things. (Sobolewski 1993a, 16.) He looked for methods that would be specific to cinema and that would not be too literary. Auguste's story functions on two levels: as an expression of Kern's stream of thoughts and as an autonomous story in the diegetic present.

Motives, events and film technique create associations connected with the film's hidden theme. The narrative abounds in parallels, of which the spectator is only half conscious during the first viewing. Parallel action is the key to the theme of alternative lives and the repeatability of life, a device that again enables the spectator to see the similarities within and between the temporal and spatial levels

of the narrative. Sobociński stresses that the parallel action was not easy to enact without revealing the filmmakers' intentions. For example, the meeting between Valentine and Auguste was to take place at the end, but it had to be prepared for by shrinking the distance between them, little by little, to a minimum. According to Sobociński, representing coincidence calls, paradoxically, for precise control over all the elements during shooting. (Sobolewski 1993b, 22-23.)

Just as in *A Short Film About Killing*, in *Red* the intention is to show the protagonists' simultaneous movements in space, and their eventual coming together, from an omniscient point of view. In *Red* the different story lines are even closer to each other, as the first scenes reveal. Valentine's and Auguste's paths almost cross several times. One of them arrives at a spot where the other was just a few seconds ago. From their apartments they have a view of the same street, but every time they are in each other's sight their attention is attracted by something else and they fail to notice one another. As Auguste looks out of the window he sees his girlfriend arriving but does not perceive Valentine, who is seen running to her car in the background. The two story lines are here captured in the same shot, one in the foreground, the other in the background. Kieślowski uses shifts of focus and camera movement to pick out the twin plot lines. The spectator may do this also by herself by shifting her gaze within the image/frame. These shifts within frames create a dynamism that would be impossible to achieve through editing. Temporal and spatial continuity is preserved and elements of the mise-en-scène call attention to themselves. This easy shift between the two story lines makes Valentine and August both seem real persons existing in the same time and space. I shall illustrate this with an example.

The first sequence begins in Auguste's apartment. He goes out with his dog. There is a cut to an exterior. In a long shot Auguste and the dog are seen walking to the right. When they reach the red awning of a café, the camera leaves them. A crane shot follows the sound of a telephone coming from a window above the café. The camera goes in while the telephone keeps on ringing on the table. Then a male voice leaves a message to the answering machine. Right then Valentine hurries in to answer the phone.

A shot from Valentine's window shows Auguste and the dog returning home. At first the shot may seem to represent Valentine's point of view, but this impression is dispelled as Valentine comes to close the window a little later, when Auguste has already gone. A cut takes us back to Auguste's apartment and then immediately back to the exterior. In a long shot Auguste is again seen leaving, this time by his car. Followed by the camera he exits the frame on the right. Immediately after this Valentine enters the frame from the same direction and walks to the left with the camera following from a distance. Garbowski points out that Kieślowski's shooting style is almost always documentary in that the camera follows the protagonists, finds them in a space, as opposed to leading the characters (1997, 42). *Red* is an exception in this respect, for here the camera clearly restricts the protagonists' movements, anticipates their arrival. This contributes to make the world in *Red* seem more closed than in Kieślowski's other films. In other words, *Red* calls attention to itself as a self-contained cinematic world. The ability given to us spectators to see a little more than the characters - not necessarily

anything important, though - serves to emphasise that someone, or something, is controlling them.[75]

A little later in the film there is a similarly structured sequence. Valentine is talking on the phone with her jealous boyfriend when an alarm goes off outside. A view from the window reveals that the sound is coming from Valentine's car. Again later than the camera, Valentine arrives to see whether it is her car that is giving the alarm. A cut elsewhere shows Auguste looking from his window. From his point of view we see Valentine running to her car in the background. This is not what Auguste sees, however, for he waves to his girlfriend who is seen walking towards his house in the foreground. The situation is shot in deep focus: all three levels of action can be perceived clearly.

The authorial point of view comes through in many different aspects of the film's narration, but perhaps most conspicuously in the continuous shifts of viewpoint, which make the protagonists seem pieces in the director's elaborate game. Several exceptional camera angles call attention to authorial control, but I shall discuss this matter in more detail in Chapter 7.5. Parallel action renders the theme of alternative, double, or parallel lives visible. Parallels are created not only between Valentine and Auguste but also between Kern and Auguste. After, or before, Kern has been heard talking about his life we see the same things happening to Auguste in the present. The connections are not too obvious, however, for they dawn on the spectator only gradually.

The narrative is filled with micro structures, tensions and cracks which from the very outset point to meanings that are not yet clear. The micro structures work simultaneously on several thematic levels, but in general they are associated with complicated human relationships and the difficulty of communication. Several scenes imply that something is not right. Connections emerge slowly through repetitions, as Wuss has it. We get a better picture of the chains of micro structures only retrospectively, when we look at the film as a spatial continuum. But not even then is the picture complete.

The tensions – or conflicts – present from the beginning lend *Red* a feel of a thriller. The first sequence is what may be called a technical description of a failed phone call, and it foreshadows things to come. We follow the signal through tunnels and wires from England to Geneva. It is Valentine's boyfriend trying to reach her. Later he manages to get hold of her but there is no real, emotional bond between them. The suspicious boyfriend, Michel, does not respond to Valentine's feelings. Later, after more phone calls, it becomes evident that he is calling only to control her.

The telephone has a central role also in Auguste's and Kern's lives. Auguste calls his girlfriend frequently. The judge listens to his neighbours' phone calls. He

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[75] In a few scenes the focus shifts as the character looking on moves her gaze. But before her arrival the spectator had already seen something that is excluded from the character's view. We, the spectators, are shown more. But why is this so, asks Coates (2002, 59), for the spectator does not seem to benefit from this knowledge. I think that the director is stressing, on the one hand, that he is in control, that he defines the scope for the protagonists' actions. On the other hand, this device calls attention to the fact that many things in life depend on just a few seconds.

does not seem to have any real human relationships. Kieślowski thought that despite new communication technologies, today's people are lonelier and have less to say to each other (Kompatzki & Voigt 1997, 40-41; Sobolewski 1994, 23). Kern's bugging device reveals that people employ the telephone to hide things from their fellow humans and to exercise power over them. A conversation between lovers appears to be a furtive discussion between a father and his male lover. Kern encourages Valentine to make a threatening call to a drug dealer living next door. The judge is using other people's phone calls to live what may be called a surrogate life. In *Red* the telephone is a motive with negative connotations. The judge calls a weather service to enquire about the weather during Valentine's Channel crossing. Despite a favourable forecast, a storm breaks out. Even when Valentine calls her brother, whom she loves, their talk is short and evasive. We see the telephone fails in its role of connecting people.

Valentine's relationship with her brother Marc is one source of tension. The spectator notes her odd behaviour from the beginning. She buys a newspaper and touches the front page with a meaningful look. A little later she plays the one-armed bandit at the local, wins and gives the bartender a thumbs-down sign. Her neighbour refers to a newspaper article about drugs, asking whether the person in the photograph is indeed her brother. Valentine does not sound convincing when she answers that it is just someone who looks like him. At the vet's she is startled when she hears "Marc" being called. There are other signs of nervousness, such as when Valentine almost tumbles down at a fashion show, and looks tired and sad after the show. Only much later, when Valentine tells the judge about her brother's drug addiction, do these hints become meaningful.

There are other small signs of tension or disquiet, heightened through suspenseful music and camera angles. Not all of the signs or, to use Wuss' term, conflicts lead anywhere. Somebody has stuffed chewing gum into Valentine's keyhole after she was seen posing in a huge chewing-gum advertisement. The scene raises expectations of more annoyance of similar kind, but it never occurs. During a scene in which Valentine is bowling with friends the camera suddenly wanders off to find a broken beer glass on a table. Later we are told that Auguste was there with his girlfriend. Did the broken glass presage their break-up soon after? There are other similar, almost unnoticeable anticipations. The film opens with a glimpse of an empty hoarding. Later it is adorned by Valentine's face. A poster on Auguste's wall depicting a ballet dancer presages Valentine's ballet exercises. We see the name Chez Joseph written on the red awning of the café that Valentine regularly visits. Later we learn that the judge's name is Joseph Kern.

Tension-building music accompanies several scenes, most markedly the one which ends in the car accident where the dog is hurt. But it has already called attention to itself during the fashion show right before the car ride. Such music feels slightly odd in a setting of this kind and seems to anticipate something. However, that something does not happen during the scene. After the fashion show Valentine leaves by her car. She listens to classical music on the radio. Just before she hits the dog, interference breaks off the music. Later we hear Kern's bugging device emit a similar sound. Possibly the interference was caused by the judge's preoccupations and in fact led her to him. There is a kind of retrospective

causality working here, but we can never be totally sure if it really was causality or just chance. The music generates tension, even an ominous atmosphere, in some scenes in which nothing extraordinary actually happens.

The relationship between image and music (and noise) is slightly ambiguous throughout the film. Paul Coates argues that in *Red*, visual and sound elements adhere to their own temporalities and that they are nonsynchronised. Sometimes a sound seems to precede its cause. He mentions the interference that Valentine hears first on her radio and soon afterwards at the judge's house, concluding that the two noises may be causally connected. (2002, 58.)[76] I agree in other respects, but I think it is an overstatement to say that the visuals and the sounds are nonsynchronous, for the sounds can always be interpreted as originating from within the situation. Sounds that could be taken as forebodings might just as well be considered everyday noises, belonging to the given scene. This is the case also with the radio interference. Michel Chion has two alternative terms for such sounds coming from the surroundings: *ambient sounds* or *territory sounds* (1999, 75). It is a part of the excitement of watching *Red* to speculate whether what one hears are just ambient sounds related to that particular situation or whether they serve also as anticipatory sounds. Sounds may have several simultaneous functions; in other words, they may be overdetermined (Chion 1999, 55).[77] This is one of Kieślowski's ways of creating ambiguity and setting problem-solving processes in motion.

A stone flying through a window interrupts Valentine and Kern's later conversation in his house. His strange behaviour makes the incident seem even more odd. He observes, calmly, that the stone was already the fifth one, placing it on the piano. During their long talk in the silent theatre a wind rises suddenly and slams a big window shut. Such sounds may be interpreted as anticipating the ferry accident. There are other curious incidents during their meetings, such as Kern pouring tea water on the floor. At some point Valentine tells him about her feeling that something important is happening around her and that it scares her. What this something is, exactly, is never spelled out.

It is clear that *Red* is not a film that opens up for us if we just sit back and relax. It requires us to relate its elements, and to do that we must remember earlier sections of the film. We cannot throw away perceptual material, for it will be developed further as the narrative proceeds. Instead of being purely anticipatory, the viewing of a film so rich in associations as *Red* requires thinking backwards. *Red* is a film that must certainly trigger a very wide range of spectator responses. A part of the audience will fail to notice some of the conflicts and tensions, and in any case they are experienced with differing intensities and interpreted in different ways. In this context Eisenstein's theory of vertical montage, and Leo Charney's

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[76] Coates claims that the sound of a fog horn is heard during the photo session, as if anticipating the ferry journey. Because the photo session takes place in Geneva, far from the English Channel, Coates concludes that the sound is in counterpoint to the image. (2002, 58.) Despite my efforts I have not been able to discern this sound.

[77] Overdetermination may be a property also of visual motives. See the discussion about Žižek's *sinthoms* in Chapter 7.3.

elaboration on it, can be used to illustrate the temporal character of films and the way in which the spectator makes sense of them.[78]

The theory of *vertical montage* is the context where Eisenstein introduced the idea of the spectator's active involvement. He is better known for an earlier theory of montage in which the spectator did not have much say. In 1929 he wrote that the director's job was to provoke conflicts in the spectator's mind by creating a collision between two shots with opposing contents. Dialectically, this would generate a third meaning. (Eisenstein 1977, 45-46.)[79] Later his montage theory developed in a more spectator-friendly direction. The spectator was no longer just an object of manipulation but an individual and an active constructor of meanings. According to Charney, the fleeting moments of narrative continued to be important for Eisenstein's conception of the spectator's activity. (Charney 1998, 133-134.)

It is in *Film Sense* (1968) that Eisenstein puts forward the idea of vertical montage, where meanings arise not only in a horizontal, linear movement but also in a vertical movement as the spectator connects narrative lines.[80] Narrative lines do not here refer to separate story lines which are told in parallel. Rather, Eisenstein thinks that there are several lines that make up the major narrative line. The final image is formed in the spectator's perception. Within montage sequences there are several separate but interdependent narrative lines which the spectator synthesises in her mind. Eisenstein cut his film *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) following this new montage principle, but uses also his earlier film *Old and New* (1929) to exemplify the function of the lines. In a certain sequence of *Old and New* there are the following lines among others: the line of heat, the line of close-ups, the line of mounting ecstasy, the line of women's "voices" and the line of men's "voices" ("voices" because *Old and New* is a silent film). Together these lines form a complete, unitary movement which progresses in time, in the fourth dimension. As can be seen, Eisenstein's "lines" can be visual, aural, or thematic. All the lines are not present all the time. They may be interrupted but do not cease to exist, joining the forward movement again later on. (Eisenstein 1968, 33-34; 74-76.) Eisenstein talks here about montage sequences, but the same idea could be applied also to a whole film. So we might argue that in *Red* the line of suspenseful music emerges in certain sequences throughout the whole film. Here we encounter again also the idea familiar from Grodal that a film contains a great deal of information at many levels but that we cannot be conscious of everything all the time.

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[78] I am not, in this context, interested in pointing out analogies between Eisenstein's and Kieślowski's filmmaking; obviously there are big differences. Rather, it is Eisenstein's theory that interests me here. Eisenstein's theoretical thinking was closely related to his filmmaking, but I think that the idea of vertical montage is applicable to theorising about film in general.

[79] Eisenstein's conception of spectatorship was originally based on behaviourist thought and the results of Pavlov's experiments. Such a view is, of course, contradictory to cognitivists' thinking.

[80] Similar ideas appear also in Eisenstein's earlier writings, such as in the article *The Filmic Fourth Dimension* (1929). There he explains the difference between overtonal montage and orthodox montage on the dominant. In polyphonic montage, shots are linked not just on the basis of one indication, such as in montage based on the tempo or duration of the shots, but on the basis of several simultaneously progressing narrative lines. (1977, 64-71.)

Eisenstein compares the construction of such a montage sequence to orchestration. The relationships between the lines are reminiscent of an orchestral score. He explains:

> There are several staffs, each containing the part for one instrument or a group of like instruments. Each part is developed horizontally. But the vertical structure plays no less important a rôle, interrelating as it does all the elements of the orchestra within each given unit of time. Through the progression of the vertical line, pervading the entire orchestra, and interwoven horizontally, the intricate harmonic musical movement of the whole orchestra moves forward. (1968, 74.)

Similarly in film narrative, each line progresses horizontally but produces meanings in a vertical relationship with the other lines. A simple example would be the relations between an image and sound (Eisenstein 1968, 78-79). Charney (1998, 134) sums up the central idea: "The film's elements produce meaning through their vertical relations as they progress horizontally; at any point, the horizontal lines engender vertical relations among themselves. No one shot, in other words, is fully present to itself at any one time." It is the spectator's responsibility to make the connections. This is exemplified by *Red* in which simultaneous, parallel thematic lines are developed. Strictly speaking, this principle works in all narrative films, but *Red* is a good example of a film that really makes the spectator add elements on top of one another to see the whole picture that will be formed in time. Charney (1998, 135) argues that by seizing narrative moments and establishing vertical connections the spectator forms "momentary clusters of meaning that anchor the film as it moves continuously forward". Depending on the moment at which she makes such interventions, each viewer gains a unique experience. Such seizing of moments is characteristic of Kieślowski's narratives, which rely on parallels and associations. I shall elaborate on the function of narrative moments later on, particularly in Chapter 6.3.

5.3   Anticipations and circularities

As mentioned above, Dufrenne considered that the future of a work of art is included in its beginning, that nothing in it is coincidental. Their outcome is the only future that narrative arts such as film have. The outcome is rarely revealed in full at the beginning, but it is often alluded to. In Kieślowski's films the beginning often anticipates the outcome, or some other crucial stage of narrative development. Such anticipations make no explicit reference to the future, so that the spectator may not realise that she was actually offered a revelation, as was seen in *Blind Chance*. *Camera Buff* is another early film that starts enigmatically with a scene in which a hawk catches a chicken. Approximately one third through the film the main character's wife relates a nightmare she had just had, which turns out to be this opening scene. The nightmare proves a metaphorical omen presaging the main character's fate. This subjective anticipation in an otherwise straightforward narrative seems itself an anticipation of the direction in which Kieślowski's narrative style was to develop. Over time, anticipations of one kind or

another seem to become a rule rather than an exception in his films; I consider that this device is related to the rather pessimistic view on life pervading his stories.

The Decalogue features more such anticipations. *Decalogue 1* opens with a shot of a frozen pond with a mysterious young man who looks like a tramp sitting by a fire close to the pond.[81] He looks sorrowfully at the camera. Melancholy music is heard on the soundtrack. In the next scene a woman stops in front of a shop window to watch television. A TV programme shows a boy running towards the camera. The image freezes at close-up, and the woman starts to cry. This scene turns out to belong to the narrative present, when Paweł, the boy on the television, is already dead, having drowned in the pond. The crying woman is his aunt, and the programme was made earlier at Paweł's school. The freeze-frame has captured a moment of joy in Paweł's life. As the image is seen to freeze, it acquires duration and is transformed into a memory. Giuliana Bruno (2004, 24) crystallises the idea of the freeze-frame in a way pertinent to this example: "Film (...) can even freeze the body, as only death can, transforming it into a *nature morte*. (...) By freezing time in space, the cinema, at some level, can preserve body images, propelling them into a future they would not otherwise be able to enjoy." After the scene in front of the shop window the events leading to Paweł's death are told in an extended flashback.

The dead animals at the beginning of *A Short Film About Killing* were mentioned as anticipating the two shocking human deaths. Piotr's inner monologue at the start of *Decalogue 5* is an argument or thesis that the film sets out to verify. *Decalogue 8* begins with a shot of a girl walking hand in hand with a woman. This is not a flashforward in the normal sense of the term, for there will be no visual continuation for it. On the discursive level the shot is indeed a flashforward of a kind since it refers to events that will be discussed later in the film. When Elżbieta and Zofia meet we are led to understand that the opening image refers to the day when little Elżbieta came to look for shelter at Zofia's place. On the story level the image is actually a flashback, referring to something that happened in the past, but understandable only in the light of later story events. It is not represented as belonging to any particular character. Rather, it is narratorial information offered to the spectator, just like the episode sequence at the beginning of *Blind Chance*.

The brief episode that opens *A Short Film About Love* is a flashforward of the ending. (*Decalogue 6* begins differently.) The episode shows hands; a hand tries to touch another, bandaged hand. Then a third hand appears and stops the first hand from reaching the second one. A close-up of a sleeping boy's face follows, and after that a long shot of a woman sitting alone in an apartment. The meaning of these enigmatic shots will be revealed at the end. Annette Insdorf observes that the hands anticipate the film's complex relationships, conflicts and jealousies related to love. Insdorf thinks that this structure makes it impossible for the story to develop

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[81]   The young man appears in all episodes of *The Decalogue* except for Parts 7 and 10. This character, who never says anything but only looks on, was added to the series because someone in the film crew said that something was missing from the stories. Often he turns up at crucial moments when a protagonist is about to do something important or fateful. (Stok 1993, 187-188.)

beyond a certain point. The end point has been given in advance and there is no going beyond. (*A Short Film About Love* dvd.) This structure lends the film a feeling of predetermination just as happens in *Blind Chance*. The story is closed, with the end given in the beginning and with time seeming to flow in a circle. Its image of love is rather pessimistic despite the small glimpse of hope at the end. Again, we come to realise this fully only as the film ends.

Decalogue 9 offers the spectator constant anticipations of events about to occur. Only a few seconds before Roman throws himself from a ramp the narrative anticipates his act with a flashforward of the spot where it happens. The flashforward is a partial one because it does not show the action itself. There are other similar anticipations, such as a glimpse of a stony slope down which the suicidal Roman is about to ride with his bicycle. (I shall take *Decalogue 9* up again in Chapter 8.1.) *Decalogue 10* opens with an enigmatic shot of an aquarium with dead fishes. A little later we learn that the fishes' owner has recently died.

The two short episodes that start *The Double Life of Véronique* introduce the two protagonists as three-year-old girls. In the narrative present we meet them as adults. When, in the end of the film, we hear the puppeteer narrate the story of two little girls, we are reminded of this "prologue". Even before the prologue, during the credits, we glimpse Weronika, in a hazy image, dropping her papers at the Cracow Market Square. This flashforward foreshadows not only the events but also the film's many similarly amorphous images.

The beginnings of *The Three Colours* are all anticipatory in different ways. An extraordinary close-up of a car tyre arouses expectations at the start of *Blue.* Soon enough the car develops a fault, crashes into a tree and kills two of its three passengers. The shot of a trunk on a conveyor belt which opens *White* foretells Karol's return to Poland about half an hour of projection time later. The opening sequence of *Red,* described above, is something of a summary of the film's theme; people's often failed attempts to make contact.

Several anticipations were already mentioned in the above analysis of *Red.* In the film they generate a feeling of déjà vu. The anticipations concern the parallel stories of Kern and Auguste in particular. Kern's memory of the moment when he found out that his girlfriend is deceiving him echoes what we have already seen Auguste experience. As Kern tells Valentine the story about the books that he dropped from the theatre balcony, we recognise the incident, for we have already seen Auguste dropping his books on the street. The younger man's life serves to visualise the judge's verbal accounts of his memories. Wilson remarks that in viewers such a structure creates a feeling of uncanniness. But what can such anticipation mean, for the judge has, after all, experienced these things before Auguste. And if Auguste is just a virtual character, why are we shown the visual version first and the verbal account later? As we are not certain about Auguste's reality status, we are left with the impression that lives can overlap and that our memories of what happened to us can be mixed with other people's memories and experiences. (Cf. Wilson 2000, 99-101.) Moreover, the character of Auguste is one of the most curious examples of Kieślowski's way of mixing the objective and the subjective. A viewer who has not read Kieślowski's comments about the film's theme might never question Auguste's existence.

Despite the circular structures and ellipses of his narratives, Kieślowski does not mix temporal relations like some other modern filmmakers.[82] The films' pessimistic, or fateful, tone seems to provide the most important context for considering their circular structures and anticipations. Narrative structure is an integral part of Kieślowski's views of human life. In the early works the depressing political situation formed the biggest obstacle to individual happiness and success, and this was reflected in the narrative structures. Bolesław Michałek (1990, 3) notes, perceptively, that for Kieślowski life was filled with difficulties *in any case*, not only in the early films: "In Kieślowski's representations, problems are a part of human life on earth, especially in Poland. Problems are not solved with one simple act, one crucial decision. People live with problems. They are an inseparable part of our existence." *The Decalogue* brought the problems of private life, unconnected with politics, to the foreground. Individual people's morals and ethics are of course shaped also by the values and attitudes prevailing in society at large, as *Decalogue 5* (and *A Short Film About Killing*) makes depressingly clear.

The difficulties of human existence are reflected most clearly in family life. Kieślowski's families are always incomplete, as Garbowski (1997) points out. Someone has died (*Decalogue 2, 4, 6* and *10, The Double Life of Veronique, Blue*) or is absent for other reasons (*Decalogue 1, 3, 8, Red*). Marriages break down (*Decalogue 3* and *9, White*) and conflicts spoil almost all relationships, especially those between parents and children (*Decalogue 4* and *7*). People do not find happiness in love, (*Decalogue 3, 6, The Double Life of Veronique*), or if they do, never in our sight. The couples of *The Three Colours* trilogy are shown together at the end of *Red,* but ironically in the middle of a catastrophe.

In films after *The Decalogue* living conditions have improved. Kieślowski's characters are well-to-do, even rich people. They have good jobs and many of them are good-looking. In fact, the characters of *The Decalogue,* with a few exceptions, lead privileged lives – at least in economic terms. This does not prevent doubts, loneliness and conflicts from filling their lives. Life in Geneva or Paris is not any happier than in Warsaw despite the pretty exteriors. *White* meant a partial return to a national and political context almost ten years after *No End* and *A Short Working Day.* Kieślowski's pessimistic view of Poland's future comes through in *White*.

Again and again, Kieślowski asked about the extent to which our future is in our own hands. The anticipatory structures of his films suggest that someone has done the job for us. Who this someone is, Kieślowski the agnostic does not tell us. Whatever or whoever it is, it is a severe being. People are allowed to choose, but often they are too weak to make the right choices, as Valentine says in *Red*. Often people's good intentions lead to unhappy or unsatisfactory results. Unlike in Hollywood films, in Kieślowski's works good people are not destined to find happiness. He has few genuinely happy endings. A glimpse of hope is the most Kieślowski concedes his characters. When an interviewer described the end of *Blue*

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[82] For example, Quentin Tarantino in *Pulp Fiction* (1997), David Lynch in *Lost Highway* (1999) and *Mulholland Drive* (2001) and Julio Medem in *The Lovers of the Arctic Circle* (1999) and *Lucia and Sex* (2002).

as optimistic, Kieślowski answered ironically: "Is that what you think? In my opinion, an optimistic scene would rather have the lovers, holding each other, receding towards the setting sun (...)." (Trémois & Remy 1995, 6.)

The above examples from Kieślowski's oeuvre show that he did not spell everything out for the spectator. The further his career progressed, the tighter became the link between form and content. This requires the spectator to involve herself in his narratives on both the intellectual and the emotional level. I think that Kieślowski's films often affect us first on an intuitive and emotional level and that grasping their conceptual ideas calls for additional viewings and more thinking. The idea of narration as a dialectical process between the spectator and a film has been exemplified in many ways, and the following chapters will offer additional instances.

But what role does the construction of the story out of plot and style play in Kieślowski's late work? I do not think it is the best way to describe the activity of a spectator viewing these films. Krzysztof Piesiewicz, Kieślowski's scriptwriter, points out that their films are about ideas, not about action constructed according to a cause-and-effect logic. They are narrated by means of details, signs, and montage. The guiding principle is to choose a shorter way of telling a particular story. (Sobolewski 1994a, 10-11.) The recreation of a coherent story is not a primary concern. It is more important to become aware that the gaps in the narrative may provide keys to meanings, to see not their negative but their positive contribution to the artist's achievement of his purpose. Understanding cinematic form makes it possible to understand cinematic content. Precise construction is an important characteristic not only of Kieślowski's documentaries but also of his fictions.

III VISUALISING EXPERIENCES - INNER REALITIES

6   The legacy of art film

In this third part of my thesis I consider how Kieślowski uses narration and style to express subjective experiences, or inner life. I do this in the context of theories of art-film narration and theories about subjectivity in film. I ask also what it is that makes the spectator experience something as subjective. Moreover, drawing mainly on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and Grodal's theories I ask what exactly does subjectivity mean in films. I shall question simple dualisms of objectivity and subjectivity. Some contrasts between the cognitive and phenomenological views of film will emerge. The emphasis will shift, in this section, to questions of style. I understand style in Bordwell and Thompson's sense as a recurring and systematic use of certain cinematic techniques. A film's style is created by the repeated use of certain techniques, chosen within the constraints of historical circumstances. This understanding of style stresses its connection with meanings. Therefore, the spectator should ask about the function and meaning of stylistic devices. (Bordwell & Thompson 1997, 355-357.)

6.1   From speech to images

According to Kieślowski, "(t)he realm of superstition, foretelling, feelings, intuition and dreams belong to humans' inner life. It is the most difficult subject for film." (Stok 1993, 224.) He was of the opinion that film as a medium was too literal on the one hand and too imprecise on the other for the representation of things that pertain to inner life. That is, cinematic images are on the one hand literal and very precise, but on the other hand their unlimited capacity to generate connotations makes them imprecise. All the same, he thought that inner life is the most interesting subject for film even though film cannot make as much of it as literature. (Stok 1993, 224.)

Kieślowski's goal was to go beyond literalness, to find cinematic means to express the unutterable. He searched for visual methods of film narration to

replace words and other vehicles that he considered too literal for cinematic expression. In his mature works Kieślowski allowed images to speak for themselves, while the early fictions, such as *Scar* and *Camera Buff,* were full of talk. Mirosław Przylipiak points out that in his early fictions Kieślowski tried, pedantically, to use speech to articulate different opinions and attitudes. In Przylipiak's opinion, these films were weighted down by such relativism. Behind this talkativeness was undoubtedly the Polish new wave, which has been characterised as a cinema of conversations.[83] After *Blind Chance* Kieślowski found less literal means to convey the protagonists' differing points of view. Przylipiak notes that in *The Decalogue*, similar problems are expressed in ten different ways that reflect the different personalities involved in each case. In *The Double Life of Véronique* the two girls' personalities and attitudes are articulated through narrative rhythm and style, as I shall show. Przylipiak sums up that in his late works, Kieślowski's attitudinal relativism comes across not only through explicitly voiced opinions and structure but also on the visual level as Kieślowski emphasises different ways of looking at reality. (Przylipiak 1994, 15.)

Thus, the role of dialogue as a way of conveying emotion diminishes and that of images and music grows. I think this is what Haarala means with his above comment that as compared to his narratives, saturated with meaning, Kieślowski's dialogues are banal. Yet, I am not sure if banal is the most appropriate term. Some expressions in *Blue*, to which Haarala mainly refers, are a little clichéd, but on the whole I would, rather, describe Kieślowski's dialogues on the one hand as cryptic (*The Double Life of Véronique* being the best example) and on the other hand as terse. Letting images speak for themselves, Kieślowski now privileges visual perception. Cutting down on speech is a conscious means of directing attention to the visual level. Prolonging moments where there is no action gives more time and room for the spectator's perception, thought and imagination. This contributes to the spectator's experience of subjectivity as I shall argue in more detail later.

The role of sounds other than speech must not be overlooked either. They are more than an accompaniment to the images. In *The Double Life of Véronique* and *Blue*, his most musical films, music is a part of the dramaturgy and theme. The three heroines, Weronika, Véronique and Julie, all live through music: Weronika is a singer, Véronique teaches music, and Julie is a composer. Music is not just a part of the diegesis, something people play or produce, however. It is related to deeper meanings and subjective realities. It even takes on commentary functions. One of its tasks is to create associations and narrative coherence. As Iwona Sowińska-Rammel observes, music is here more than an ornament: it has an existential rather than an aesthetic value (1997, 157). The last four films are, even without the music, what might be called visual symphonies.

A look through the history of film reveals the impressionist movement of the 1920s as an interesting point of contact. On the basis of the impressionists' theoretical writings – mainly those of Jean Epstein and Germaine Dulac – it seems

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[83]   Even before Kieślowski, Krzysztof Zanussi had brought philosophical conversations into Polish cinema with films such as *The Structure of Crystal* (Struktura kryształu, 1969) and *Illumination* (Iluminacja, 1973).

to me that both the impressionists and Kieślowski were interested in conveying the mood and atmosphere of fleeting moments: moments of recognition, of meeting glances, of falling in love. Of course, this cannot be said to be Kieślowski's main objective, but such aspirations come through in his late films, especially those with female protagonists. Kieślowski himself did not draw such comparisons. He was not a particularly theoretical filmmaker; at any rate, he did not reveal such preoccupations in interviews. Nevertheless, some similarities can be detected between his interests and the aspirations of the 1920s artists, justifying a short digression.

The 1920s were a golden age of cinematic experiments. Many filmmaker-theoreticians, such as Epstein and Dulac, emphasised the visual and movement as the most important attribute of film art. Dulac accused cinema of having become "an outlet for bad literature" (1988b, 391). She hoped to see plot-based "action film" replaced by films grounded on an interest in the visual forms and movement of life. She called for cinematic impressionism: capturing fleeting moments and impressions, light and movement. She had in mind not just physical movement but also the activity of psychological life, made visible especially by close-ups, in her words "a psychological shot". A cinema of allusions, impressionism creates emotional states by prolonging moments. For Dulac, the essence of film as art lay in inner life and in making it visible "without words, without phrases". (1988a, 305; 310.) On the eve of sound Dulac emphasises film as a visual art form that has no need for words.[84]

Dulac's characterisations of her ideal cinema as "visual symphonies" or "symphonic poems" might, then, be used as a starting point for a discussion of the most musical and visually rhythmic of Kieślowski's films, or at least segments of them. It might even be argued that music contributes significantly to making these films more "universal" and easier to approach than Kieślowski's earlier works. In his cultural theory, Johan Fornäs argues that music exceeds sociocultural boundaries and connects people because music can reach the earliest forms of experience. According to Fornäs, the roots of music lie in the symbiotic relationship between mother and child. Music is a symbolic form which can sometimes be shared by people who have no common verbal language. (Fornäs 1998, 204-205.) In Kieślowski's early fictions sometimes even the music, diegetic music in particular, was linked with specific social and political periods. Such is the case in *No End*, where the characters sing and play popular songs from the Solidarity period. In *Blind Chance* young people sing protest songs. In the late films the music is apolitical, unless we consider the concerto celebrating the unification of Europe in *Blue* a political piece. The growing role of music is connected with the greater ambiguity of the films on the level both of the stories and the visual appearance.

Like Kieślowski, Epstein envisioned film as a medium primarily for other things than telling stories. He saw mobility in time and space as film's most

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[84] Some of Dulac's methods, such as her use of superimposition to convey the thoughts of the heroine in her film *La Souriante Madame Beudet* (The Smiling Madame Beudet, 1923), seem old-fashioned today.

cinematic characteristic. He discussed this quality under the concept *photogénie,* originally formulated by Louis Delluc. When Epstein says that *photogénie* is a property of the mobile aspects of film, he means mobility in the widest possible sense, referring to all the three directions of movement that the human mind can perceive. In addition to the three spatial dimensions Epstein brings up the fourth dimension, time. (Epstein 1988c, 314-317.) Epstein argues that cinema allows the spectator to visually perceive the development of things and events in time. He describes, excitedly, how time becomes tangible when, in a close-up, we see a smile spreading on a face (1988a, 235-240). According to Leo Charney, for Epstein cinema was about irrationality and indefinability, "qualities that a film theorist cannot specify, quantify, or describe. (...) Cinema's essence relies on its elusiveness, its always-moving-away. The essence of cinema occurred not in its narrative capacities but in the moments of powerful feeling that certain images provide. *Photogénie* marks the place of these uncanny effects." (Charney 1998, 150.) I shall return to the concept of *photogénie* in Chapter 8.2.[85]

In Kieślowski's films these visual changes were at least partly triggered by the new and different context where they were produced. Kieślowski's development from a predominantly national filmmaker into a European one affected all aspects of his filmmaking. He started to create films in a completely different production context. The fall of Communism had transformed the working conditions of Polish filmmakers. They were no longer state employees because the film industry had ceased to be a state monopoly. State funding fell sharply and filmmakers were forced to look for financing in the private sector and abroad. The role of producers grew in importance. The nature of filmmaking in general changed when artists lost what had been a clearly defined political or social mission. The old sense of community or solidarity had disappeared because the common enemy was gone. Filmmakers were not sure anymore why to make films. Kieślowski's leaving Poland and participation in international co-productions was not a singular case in Polish cinema in the early 1990s. (Haltof 2004, 108-110; Iordanova 2003, 143-146; 153-154.) Themes and style underwent a transformation which was not, however, sudden. From today's perspective it seems natural that in his new "European" films Kieślowski chose to deal with general existential questions. There are good grounds for arguing that Kieślowski's late works blurred the outlines of national cinema. As regards both their production and themes, *The Double Life of Véronique* and *The Three Colours* trilogy might be said to represent pan-European cinema. Their Polish roots, however, always remained visible.

6.2   The ambiguity of art film

The concept of art-film narration formulated by Bordwell provides the starting point here for a consideration of Kieślowski's narration and protagonists. Bordwell

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[85]   Epstein and Dulac's definitions must be seen as a part of the early theorists' attempts to prove that cinema is a form of art. Because the new medium was based on movement, it was natural to consider mobility as its defining characteristic. Movement, or mobility, set cinema apart from static arts such as photography, painting and sculpture.

defines art-film narration as distinguished from classical Hollywood narration mainly on the basis of formal qualities of films, but does not attempt to draw categorical distinctions. The main difference seems to be that in art films, vague motivation and elliptic structures break down the tight causal structures – continuity narration – of Hollywood cinema. (1985, 206.) An alternative way of creating coherence depends on parallelisms and associations, as was already seen in the cases of *A Short Film About Killing* and *Red*.

These elliptic and episodic narratives are peopled by characters who drift around and wander from one situation to another. Instead of taking the initiative and furthering a plot they observe events from a distance, contemplate their surroundings and react to other people's actions. On the level of external action art films deal with smaller-scale problems than mainstream films, in which the hero's mission is often larger than life. In classical narratives the protagonists are doers who actively change things, shaping their own destinies. Typically, they act to eliminate threats against their loved ones. Normally they succeed in disposing of such menaces and live happily ever after. In art films, by contrast, endings are if not more pessimistic then at any rate more open.

Kieślowski's main characters are people trying to find out who they are and what they want. His stories of people who are looking for their own place in the world join the tradition of European art films. Modern European cinema knows a great many such protagonists. They can be found in different forms in films by, for example, Ingmar Bergman, Michelangelo Antonioni, Eric Rohmer, Robert Bresson and Andrei Tarkovsky that concentrate on existential and moral questions. These characters, a little lost, find themselves in narrative landscapes marked by fragmented temporalities and open structures. The stories' connection with specific places has loosened: they could take place almost anywhere.[86] Kieślowski's cinematic references extend beyond the circle of European cinema; for example to Hitchcock through the recurring theme of voyeurism. However, as interesting as it would be, in this study I shall not trace these links.

When protagonists are passive, narratives unfold through unplanned and unexpected events, such as chance meetings. As the significance of plot diminishes, style may become so important that it can be said to function on a distinct level of its own. The spectator's attention is deliberately directed to the characters' inner worlds and the present moment instead of the outcome. The characters' feelings and motives are often fuzzy, which is, of course, related to the general atmosphere of aimlessness that these narratives generate. Even though art films often take emotions as their main concern, the emotions that they are concerned with are rarely defined with clarity. Classical narratives ensure their spectators' appropriate

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[86] Gilles Deleuze has described the characters of modern European cinema in the context of his theory of the time image. He argues that the Second World War has led to a proliferation of situations and spaces in which we do not know how to react. He calls these empty, dehumanised and deserted spaces *any-spaces-whatever*. They are disconnected from the narrative flow and other spaces represented in film. He mentions Antonioni's images of empty cities and industrial areas in *The Red Desert* (Il deserto rosso, 1964) as an example. These spaces brought with them protagonists of a new kind - drifters. The first impetus for this development was provided by neo-realism and the films of Orson Welles and Alfred Hitchcock. (Deleuze 1989, 1-9.)

orientation on the level of emotions (Smith 1999, 116), just as they create sufficient redundancy to ensure that we follow the story. Art films give the spectators more responsibility, inviting top-down thinking. In fact, according to Branigan art films strive for ambiguity, uncertainty, emptiness and illusion "(...) so as to provoke (top-down) thought about unseen, deeper, and felt realities." In art films it may not be possible to draw any direct conclusions from the seen. (Branigan 2003, 71-72.)

The Double Life of Véronique, for example, deals with emotions that are hard to grasp. According to Kieślowski, it is a film purely about emotions. Even the protagonists are unable to put their undefined emotions or emotional states into words. Veronique says, mysteriously, "It's as if I mourned over someone", and: "I feel like suddenly I wasn't alone in the world." When Weronika's boyfriend Antek declares his love to her she does not respond because she is not sure of her feelings. Similarly, Alexander tells Véronique that he loves her and she says that she loves him too. Yet she does not sound convincing. It is as if she only wanted to hear those words spoken aloud. Another enigmatic and intuitive girl is Valentine, about whose true emotions we know very little.

Kieślowski spends much narrative time familiarising us with the main characters. As the analysis of *Decalogue 2* showed, he keeps us a long time in a state of expectation by declining to tell us what is the matter with Dorota, who is nervously trying to approach the doctor. The same could be said of many other parts of the series. In *Decalogue 3* it is only in the end that Ewa's true motivations are revealed. *The Decalogue* featured innumerable close-ups of faces, in part because television narratives prefer close-ups to long shots but also because close-ups are essential for the emotional content of these stories. It was actually *No End* with its close-ups of the woman in agony that started this development. After *The Decalogue* close-ups become increasingly frequent, for they actually reveal more than the enigmatic words of the earlier films, of which there are less and less. This applies to *The Double Life of Véronique* and *The Three Colours* trilogy.

According to cognitive film theory, a film in which emotions are indeterminately expressed cannot have a goal-oriented narrative. In the cognitive framework emotions are categorised according to how closely they are related to action. A general definition of emotions is provided by Greg M. Smith (1999, 103): "Emotions (...) are functional action tendencies that motivate us toward goals and that are shaped by our situational expectations." Smith sums up earlier cognitive approaches to emotions, where the concept of *prototypical emotion* has been central. A prototypical emotion is intentional, oriented towards action, an object, or a goal. But as Smith points out, there are also messier emotions which have no clear orientation and which do not find release in action. Some cognitivists argue that these emotional *states* are not emotions proper. Because of this, they have been excluded from filmic theories of emotion. (Smith 1999, 104-107.) The division into prototypical emotions and emotional states is a little vague, but the distinction can be used to pinpoint some differences between plot-centred narratives and narratives more concerned with moments and atmosphere. It is only logical that a film dealing with hazy emotional states is not very clearly motivated or goal-oriented.

Kieślowski's films seem to lend support to Smith's suggestion that "(...) the primary emotive effect of film is to create mood" instead of intense emotions (1999, 115). Smith defines mood as a preparatory state for emotions proper. It "is a longer lasting, but less forceful emotional state" that films sustain by bursts of emotion. Mood encourages us to express emotions of certain kinds. (1999, 113-114.) Emotional vacillation is a typical feature of Kieślowski's protagonists, who are constantly reflecting on their lives. In *The Decalogue* it is still relatively easy to name some of the emotions that the characters go through. In *Decalogue 7*, Majka is clearly jealous of and angry at her mother who adopted her child when she was still a teenager. Roman in *Decalogue 9* displays jealousy and desperation because he is impotent and his wife has taken a lover. But when we consider *The Double Life of Véronique*, *Blue* and *Red* we realise that in them emotions have indeed become messier. It is as if the films were preparing us for something that never happens. We can forget here the concept of prototypical emotions, which I find doubtful in any case.

When a film refrains from underlining emotions, the spectator has more interpretive freedom. Some spectators experience such films as rewarding, others as disturbing, which depends on what kind of films a viewer is accustomed to and what she expects from cinema in general. One spectator may be looking for affirmation of experiences and emotions familiar from previously seen films. Another one finds it more satisfying to come up against ambiguous events which require independent reasoning. For Kieślowski, the most important thing was that his films would offer viewers spiritual and intellectual nourishment and that they would be able to discover themselves in the films (Stok 1993, 225; 248). The ambiguity of his late films is heightened also by the remarkable role music plays in them. Music is a semantically less precise medium than words, which necessarily broadens the spectator's interpretive scope. A correlation between music and emotions is also clear. The more the focus shifted to emotions the bigger was the role that music assumed in the films.

The great interest that Kieślowski's protagonists take in self-definition is one reason why his films belong spiritually to the tradition of art films. It may also have something to do with Polishness, with being Polish, and also with the director's own personality, but in this study I am not concerned with autobiographical connections. Nor am I going to start speculating about matters such as the representation of national character in his films, except for one consideration. Under Communism individuals had little say in society. People's hopes for a brighter future were repeatedly crushed. It is obvious that Kieślowski's mentality was shaped by those harsh times, as was that of the rest of the nation. This may be one source of his characters' weakness and lack of decision. In the early fictions they are still striving to make things happen both in their private and in their public lives. In most cases they fail, but the stories provide their actions with conclusions of a kind. In the mature works the protagonists' goals are not put into words, or if something is said it expresses nothing but hesitation. Weronika, for example, asks her father, "What do I actually want?" "A lot, I'm sure", the father replies. The main characters of the mature films do not personally set themselves goals, as Antek did in *Calm,* nor are goals imposed on them as happened to factory

manager Bednarz in *Scar*. Rather, they are adrift, or end up in situations which demand spiritual endeavour rather than concrete effort. Such roles make them seers and witnesses who react emotionally and intuitively rather than by engaging in tangible action. While we may assume, to simplify a little, that in the early stories the force that affected the characters' fate was ideological, in the mature works its make-up is much harder to define.

According to Bordwell, classical and art-film narration rely on different conventions of realism. Classical narration is marked by *objective realism*, which manifests itself in consistent action and clear cause-and-effect relations. The realism of art film is primarily *subjective realism*, but objective realism is not foreign to it either. Subjective realism is about finding expression to protagonists' inner realities by presenting changing mental states and trivial everyday situations. (1985, 205-207.) As a result, in art films time may break with real, objective time and instead represent the inner time consciousness of its characters. Scenes may last longer than what is required to finish an action. It is equally possible that there is no action at all, just a person deep in her thoughts. In this sense, time is used more uneconomically in art films. In art films, the details of the mise-en-scène serve to express their protagonists' character traits. Bordwell calls this *subjective expressiveness.* Subjective and objective sequences tend to intermingle in art-film narratives, whereas in classical narratives they are marked off with conventional stylistic means. Despite their subjectivity, art films are often experienced as more realistic than classical films because in art films, events often appear to unfold with the spontaneity of real life. However, Bordwell stresses that in principle, art films are just as conventional as classical films. (1985, 205-207.) He does not go more deeply into the nature of subjectivity; subjectivity as it relates to the spectator in particular is barely touched on. Subjectivity is the question I shall take up in the next sections of my thesis.

6.3   Emphasised moments of narration

When the emphasis is on seeing and feeling instead of dynamic action, narration is slowed down. When narration unfolds without clearly defined goals, moments of narration gain weight. In such moments time condenses, ramifies, and becomes visible as duration. Different levels of time (past and present) and different modes of time (subjective and objective) are present in the same moment. But how does narration that dwells on moments affect the viewing experience? The moments enable the spectator to enter the story in a way different from plot-oriented narratives. Even when a narrative progresses linearly we become conscious of a vertical axis, connections between narrative moments. The narrative appears to consist of several layers. My first look at the questions involved in narrative moments and layers shall be from a cognitive perspective.

Grodal thinks that differences between modes of narration are not only stylistic. He stresses that different narrative modes make the spectator experience things differently because modes of narration are connected with emotional-cognitive processes. Grodal sets out to analyse the relationships between various narrative devices and the spectator's cognition and emotions. Instead of examining

films for static stylistic devices anchored in particular historical periods, as he sees Bordwell doing, Grodal asks why and how the spectator reacts to the means of representation. Grodal considers that definitions of narrative forms must be related to both the film form and the viewer's experience. He argues that film generates in viewers mental and physical states by bringing into play means of representation linked with their experiences outside the media. (Grodal 1997, 9.)

Grodal recognises two kinds of narrative process, associated with distinct temporal experiences. He evaluates these processes also in terms of their perceived subjectivity or objectivity. Narratives that are *forward-directed*, where the represented events are working towards a specific goal, cue tense spectator expectations concerning their outcome. When the spectator's experience of time is forward-directed and tense, it is called *telic*. Forward-directed processes are typical of *canonical narratives* which proceed dynamically, following the logic of cause and effect, towards an outcome or a closure. The experience of objectivity is here related to the viewer's ability to construct mental models of the seen that draw on unambiguous "person-act-time-space schemata". The spectator is able to construct such mental models because these schemata possess "inner 'logical' relations". That is to say, we are able to construct mental models when the story events are clearly motivated and occur within a coherent time structure. The narrative is perceived as objective when it responds to our built-in attempts to use schemata to make sense of what we see, that is, when there are schemata available to us that are relevant to the narrative actions we are viewing. But if relevant schemata "are missing, feelings of subjectivity and dreaminess will be created." (1997, 135-136; 148.)

There are other narrative mechanisms driven by other types of temporality. If the narrative process is not goal-directed even in its most salient episodes, it can be described as *process-oriented*, and the spectator's experience of time becomes *paratelic*. Moments, the means of narration, and meaning understood as a process rather than as an end result become, in the viewer's perception, more important than any goal towards which the events might be directed.[87] Grodal's terms forward-directed and process-oriented and the temporal forms associated with them bring to mind Bordwell's distinction between classical and art-film narration. But unlike Bordwell, Grodal is not concerned to define separate styles of narration belonging to films of certain kinds or particular periods of film history. Moreover, a single narrative may display both goal direction and process orientation. Process orientation appears a particularly useful characterisation of Kieślowski's narratives, especially because I am examining their subjective aspects. Not that they have no goal-directed sequences. The general impression conveyed by the mature narratives is, however, that they advance in a process-oriented manner.

Process-oriented narration typically involves sequences and moments during which the spectator is unable to make sense of the events by exploiting her mental models because there are no relevant schemata available to her. This is related to the *felt* subjectivity and objectivity of narration:

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[87]   Against these two narrative processes Grodal recognises an associative form. It is common in experimental films and replaces a sequential structure with an associative one. (1997, 148-149.)

> The existence of schemata of acts plays a key role in felt objectivity; if they are missing, feelings of subjectivity and dreaminess will be created. (...) The subjectifying blocking of enaction by the modification of normal causal relations takes place, for example, in ghost stories, (...) positive experiences can also provide a 'dreamy' experience. (Grodal 1997, 135.)

When the spectator is unable to connect the seen with any narrative schema, the link between perceptual input and sense-making schemata is blocked. This occurs when causal relations between the events of a film are weakened and attention is drawn to its visual details instead. Grodal names the experience resulting from this uncertainty, or ambiguity, double subjective *saturation*. "Double" because it stems from two different sources. The first source is the many associations engendered by narrative events which the spectator is unable to reduce to unambiguous sense. This generates an intensity of meaning. The second source of saturation is the blocking of schemes. This results in a feeling of subjective meaningfulness where meanings are experienced as a process that is interesting in itself rather than as an end result. The viewer's sense of the meaningfulness of a moment is similarly subjective and may be inversely related to the amount of actual meaning present. Saturation is caused by representations of curbed emotions, but also by emotionally laden moments, for when we are overcome by emotions we are passive also in the motor sense, as is indicated by passive verb forms such as 'touched' and 'moved'. (Grodal 1997, 136.) When the narrative flow is blocked while an emotional state persists, we are left in the middle of unresolved situations. The traumatic moments in *Blue* exemplify such situations, as will be seen in Chapter 7.6.

We might stop here for a moment to ask what exactly are the actual meanings referred to by Grodal. More precisely, I think there is reason to ask whether there are any actual meanings in the first place. Grodal does not make clear what he has in mind, only adding that "(t)he feeling of meaningfulness is a motivational force that can often be mistaken for meaning, as in the dream situation, in which the brain desperately tries to find meaning in bizarre associations and is driven by this very feeling of meaningfulness" (1997, 136). This implies that there are situations where valid interpretations are possible, that is, situations in which we can find the actual meaning. Such a situation is, presumably, one in which the spectator is able to use narrative schemata to form mental models. As I see it, the crux of the matter is that at times there is wider agreement on a meaning whereas at other times there is less agreement. We might contrast Grodal's idea with the phenomenological view, according to which actual or real meanings are those that the spectator feels to be actual or real. Merleau-Ponty (1968, 157) observes: "The discontinuous images of the cinema prove nothing with regard to the phenomenal truth of the movement that connects them before the eyes of the spectator." How is it, then, possible to claim that something in the flow of cinematic images is more actual while the rest is more imaginary?

To return to Grodal's theory, the extent to which events are experienced as subjective or objective depends, then, in part on whether we have schemes for making sense of them. The question of subjectivity and objectivity is thus linked to spectator cognition. Subjectivity and objectivity are not purely stylistic elements

present only in the films the spectator is seeing. This is what Grodal means when he says that they are *felt* qualities (1997, 135). Grodal has later modified his theory and stresses now that the experience of subjectivity depends on how much control someone watching a film feels she has over the narrated events. Thus, the degree to which the protagonist is in control of the events affects the spectator's experience. Grodal argues that an experience of control or of a lack of control plays a more important role in generating a feeling of subjectivity than the perceived reality of the events. From this it can be concluded that the more difficult the events are to predict, the stronger is the feeling of subjectivity. (2003, 87-88.) This argument fits well Bordwell's description of art-film narrative and its undecided protagonists. We will see later that the narration of *The Double Life of Veronique*, for example, is experienced as subjective because the characters follow their intuition, preventing us from ever knowing the direction in which the narrative will go next. However, the unpredictability of events alone is not sufficient to define narration as subjective.

As mentioned above, process-oriented narration generates a specific temporal experience. While in canonical narrative there is a relatively smooth flow from scene to scene, the flow of process-oriented narration is more uneven because of its moments of saturation. During these intensive moments the spectator's sense that the events are working towards a goal is blurred, and time loses its dynamic, linear quality. Instead, there is what Grodal calls a "dynamic 'now'". A dynamic now arises when an image is highly charged and when there is a delay in linking it with the narrative flow. Such images cue the spectator to engage in visual analysis and association but remain themselves isolated from the surrounding images. (1997, 148.) In such moments the plot is suspended. The role of visual perception is heightened as we become aware of the aesthetic qualities of the images. In this context, dynamism refers not to the tempo of narration but to cognition - the invisible activity - as the viewer connects images with other images and narrative moments.

When an image is cut off from the narrative flow, we become aware of the frame and what is happening within it. We notice aspects of the mise-en-scène, the elements filling the image space. We also become aware of duration, the length of the shot. Time appears as duration, which in Grodal's words is "(...) a 'spatial' way of understanding time as extension, not as a sequential process of change". Even rhythm becomes a percept. As represented objects are detached from goal-directed processes, they become objects of concentrated perception, which may engender lyrical effects (1997, 214-215.)[88]

If the relations between images are not given in advance in the narrative, the spectator constructs them on her own by forming associations to link them, thus participating in the creation of narrative coherence. Association is a mental phenomenon in which the viewer becomes conscious of connections and similarities between two or more phenomena. When one phenomenon is activated,

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[88]   Process-oriented narration makes states of tension last longer than canonical narratives, in which they tend to be released sooner. It depends on each spectator's own needs and experiences which type of narration is perceived as more pleasurable. Grodal argues that the release of states of tension is related to a human need to maintain bodily homeostasis. (1997, 100-102.)

this activates another related phenomenon (Grodal 1997, 64). Such connections between shots and scenes bring into simultaneous play several temporal levels, resulting in a many-dimensional time experience that Grodal (1997, 148) describes as follows: "(...) both short- and long-term memory are activated. Earlier segments of the film are not thrown away as merely input to fabula construction: the memories are kept active by association. The present is experienced as a 'now' and at the same time as an 'echo' and 'mirror-image' of the past via metaphoric or metonymic associations." Relations between images are no longer simple. Referential relations between images and the things they denote are broken as spectators enrich the images with their own mental associations.

Even though the intensive moments of saturation, or the dynamic now-moments, do not advance the plot, narrative does not halt. Only on the level of external action does forward movement cease. Chatman points out that what happens in such moments is not that the time of narrative stops but that its progress ceases to matter (1990, 49). The spectator's thoughts are in ceaseless motion, especially during such moments, for attention turns to invisible things such as the protagonist's thoughts. According to Leo Charney, such empty moments are privileged moments of narrative because they open up a space for the spectator and her imagination, making her a part of the story. It may not be quite accurate to talk about empty moments, though, for the only sense in which such moments are empty is that there is no character action. Moments of saturation are subjective in two senses: On the one hand, they refer to the protagonists' emotions and, on the other hand, they make room to the viewer's imagination and emotions. They are moments for thinking both within the fictive world and among the audience. Generally speaking, it might be suggested that the purpose of art films is to trigger thinking, especially thinking less heavily predetermined than in mainstream films, dependent on conventional means to elicit automatic reactions.

Narration that emphasises moments is manifested in a variety of ways in Kieślowski's films. *The Double Life of Véronique* relies on associations that link moments in the two protagonists' lives. The narrative is full of moments of recognition and intuition. *Blue* has abundant moments of intensive sadness and recollection. The black and blue moments burst forth without forewarning, halting the advance of the plot several times. The characters of *Red* engage in intimate conversations during which time seems to stop. Sudden camera movements detach us from these situations and make us aware of time. I shall now pick up for closer consideration the narrative of *The Double Life of Véronique,* rich in parallelisms and associations.

6.4   The play of parallels in *The Double Life of Véronique*

Of all Kieślowski's films, *The Double Life of Véronique* has the most enigmatic narrative structure. It is a play of associations and parallels on both the visual and the auditive level. The film is an attempt to visualise ambiguous emotional states and sensations.

It starts with two short episodes presenting the two heroines, Weronika and Véronique, as little girls. At this point we do not know who they are, however.

This is a prologue of a kind, whose meaning will become fully clear only at the end of the film. The prologue functions in it like the beginning of a fairy tale: "Once upon a time there were two little girls …". The first episode shows the Polish Weronika looking at stars, the second one the French Véronique examining a leaf through a magnifying glass. In both episodes we hear a sweet female voice - most probably that of the girls' mothers - coming from offscreen, encouraging the girls to taste the wonders of nature. This is essential information, for in the present moment of the story the young women are still curious about life's mysteries. Their mothers are already dead.

The temporal relationship between these episodes is not specified, but the fact that they are presented in succession implies that they occur one after another in the story. The prologue is a condensation of the film's total structure: two stories told one after the other but bound together with many parallels. The central visual motives are already present in the prologue: reflecting and transparent surfaces, optical instruments, stars.

The parallels and the maze of associative images open up for the viewer little by little. The film requires more than one viewing before all the parallels and details can be spotted.[89] For Kieślowski, the decision to make a film of this kind was a conscious one, his way of playing with the spectator. He created puzzles and enigmatic references because he thought that spectators like to solve such riddles. Ed Tan (1996, 33-34) remarks that films' formal qualities offer pleasures similar to those provided by games and aesthetic experiences in general. Both films and games may be said to feed our cognitive curiosity and create pleasure on a purely non-pragmatic level.[90]

The parallel structure starts to emerge when Weronika's story ends and Véronique's begins. Only then do we get some clues as to what the two girls' relationship really is. The last two scenes of Weronika's story and the first scene of Veronique's story form a sequence which makes the transition between the two stories and narrative points of view quite mysterious. After winning the singing contest Weronika appears before a big audience. There have been hints all the time that she is not well. The concert is seen mostly through Weronika's eyes. In the middle of her performance she starts to stagger and her singing goes out of key. The camera simulates her dizziness and stagger. When she finally falls down, the camera makes a spinning movement and we hear a thump. Everything turns black for a moment. Then the image fades in, followed by a rapid tracking shot high above the audience and the stage. Maybe this is Weronika's soul flying away, for in

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[89] When we must process a great amount of visual stimuli we are able to concentrate only on a small portion of it at a time. What we consciously consider important is only a small part of the activation going on at the limits of consciousness, argues Grodal. (1997, 62; 66.) On the level of images we must shift our gaze many times in order to perceive all the details present in them because the human eye is able to focus only on a small area at a time (Valkola 2000, 29; 60).

[90] According to Valkola (2000, 24), we can learn aesthetic skills by examining the sensory, formal, expressive and technical aspects of aesthetic objects. Valkola calls such activities *aesthetic scanning*. Aesthetic skills thus acquired can be further developed by engaging not only with aesthetic objects but also with one's visual environment in general.

the next shot, a close-up of someone feeling Weronika's pulse, we learn that she is dead.

This is followed by an elliptic cut to Weronika's funeral. The whole scene is seen from a disquieting point of view: from inside the coffin at the bottom of the open grave. The point of view seems to suggest that Weronika is not totally gone. As people start throwing sand on the coffin, the view fades out. As the image again fades in, the patter of falling sand is transformed into a faint murmuring sound. Gradually we perceive Véronique making love with someone. This gradual shift, which includes an aural bridge, implies that a part of Weronika continues to live in Véronique. As Haltof (2004, 119) remarks, the film may be interpreted as Weronika's rebirth as Véronique. The film's original title, *Podwójne życie Weroniki*, suggests that the film may indeed deal with the two lives of Weronika.

During the lovemaking scene some kind of connection is established between the two girls. The point of view remains strange. The scene is filmed through some transparent object which distorts the view. There is a heavy sound of breathing but other noises are faint, which suggests that we are hearing with Véronique's ears. It is as if we were simultaneously external observers and inside someone's - Véronique's or Weronika's - mind. For a while everything in the scene is amorphous, alluding to things taking place on the mental level. The distortions of the image might be interpreted as a visualisation of the process through which Weronika becomes a part of Véronique. This brings to mind Dulac's comment about the impressionists' attempt to make nature and physical objects an equal part of the action: "We strained out (sic) ingenuity to make things move, and by using our knowledge of optics, we tried to change their outlines to correspond to the logic of a state of mind" (1988b, 394). After the lovemaking the image normalises and Véronique says that she is feeling sad. At the very moment a cut reveals a photograph of Véronique hanging on the wall. Later she tells her father about her sudden feeling that she was alone in the world. Weronika had earlier said to her father that she feels as if she were not alone in the world.[91]

Until Weronika's death the two young women lead parallel lives, only vaguely aware of each other's existence. Then causal relations begin to emerge, as Weronika's death affects Véronique's life. From then on Véronique knows intuitively what she must do. She benefits from Weronika's mistakes and learns to avoid things that caused her harm. Weronika devoted herself to singing - to art - against her better judgment, abandoned her boyfriend and died.[92] Véronique gives up singing and has her heart examined. She fulfils her passion for music by teaching children instead and lives on.

Véronique's story echoes Weronika's in many respects. Different levels of time are cross-cut as earlier moments are relived in enigmatic ways. The puppet show during which Véronique falls in love with Alexandre the puppeteer can be interpreted as an allegory of the relationship between the two girls. The puppet

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[91]   A more worldly interpretation of Véronique's sadness is possible. She has just had an orgasm, which has been described as a "small death" (see Hiltunen 2001, 185).

[92]   Žižek interprets Weronika as an allegory of Kieślowski's life. In spite of his heart condition he similarly devoted himself to film art and then died during a bypass operation. (Žižek 2001, 137.)

story is about a ballet dancer who dies, or breaks her leg, in the middle of a performance. A white sheet is drawn over her, but when it is removed, the dancer has turned into a butterfly and flies away. Right then Véronique meets Alexandre's gaze in a mirror and falls in love. Later Véronique tells Alexandre how just before falling asleep she saw a white sheet drop over her. It seems that she had recognised something in the ballerina story. It is almost immediately after this that Alexandre finds the photograph Véronique had taken of Weronika in Cracow. Véronique is horrified when she understands that the girl in the photograph is her double and that she is not unique.[93]

Véronique is even more shocked when Alexandre shows her the two puppets he has made. They look like Weronika and Véronique. He tells a story of two identical girls who lived in different countries. One of the girls touched a hot oven and burned herself, but when the other girl found herself in the same situation a little later she had the wit to avoid the oven. Véronique says nothing, but her expression reveals that she has understood the story. She leaves Alexandre, who has used her life for his artistic purposes. Alexandre's story is like an epilogue that makes us see the events in a different light. Many of the connections, including the prologue, become visible. The story may also prompt the spectator to ask whether all the events were just a story invented by Alexandre.

The film features a great number of parallels, and I do not intend to list all of them. One of the major recurring motives is the view of a small town with a church in the middle. It is shown in different variations and on different levels of reality inside the diegesis. It appears for the first time as a small picture hanging over Weronika's bed, a drawing of a small town clustered around a church. In this scene Weronika wakes up with a start and goes to talk with her father who is drawing in his study. A similar townscape is taking shape on the paper, suggesting that the earlier picture may have been done by Weronika's father. In the next scene Weronika is travelling to Cracow by train. The view from the train window resembles the earlier pictures: a distant small town and a church in the middle. The window pane makes the scene bubble, rendering it unreal.

The view, or the church in particular, is repeated in Véronique's story as a verbal reference and as a dream image. Véronique tells her father: "I guess it was a dream. I saw a drawing. It was simple, not to say naive. A descending road in a small town. Houses on both sides and a church at the end." "Chagall?", the father asks. "No, not Chagall. A high, narrow church made of red brick." Later, in a dream, she sees an upside-down view of such a church through a transparent ball similar to the one Weronika used to play with. Earlier the father's drawing was also shown through his spectacles. The central motives, lenses of different kinds (spectacles, contact lenses, magnifying glasses, camera lenses), various transparent objects and reflecting surfaces, are related to seeing and knowledge. Throughout

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[93]   According to Paul Coates, meeting with one's double is fateful for one's identity. He refers to legends according to which one sees one's double just before one's death. Weronika does die soon after she sees Véronique on the Cracow Market Square. As the scene with the photograph indicates, Véronique did not see Weronika and was probably saved because of that. (Coates 1985, 11-13.) Or will she die after the film ends? Is this why she returns home?

the film such transparent devices and surfaces make the world seem an exciting and mysterious place. A different view of the world can be obtained through them. These motives were introduced in the prologue.[94]

Music is an important means of establishing parallels in the film. The same tune, credited in the fictive world to Van den Budenmeyer, a Dutch composer, is repeated throughout the film in different versions. It is heard for the first time when Weronika goes to listen to a choir rehearsal in Cracow. The tune's most important manifestation is Weronika's performance of it in the concert. However, because of her tragic death the composition is not heard in full. Later the piece of music reappears in Véronique's story. As Sowińska-Rammel remarks, Weronika's interrupted song echoes in Véronique's story (1997, 158). It is as if Weronika, unable to rest in peace, was trying to tell Véronique something. The music is played during the last scene of the puppet show when the ballet dancer dies and turns into a butterfly, thus indicating that it is a reference to Weronika's death. It breaks at the same point as in the concert. After the puppet show Véronique teaches the song to her pupils, but they make mistakes. Then she hears it on the telephone at night as Alexandre calls her anonymously. At the end of the film, after Alexandre has told Véronique the story of the doubles and she returns home, the music continues from the point where it was broken off when Weronika died, but now it is non-diegetic.

The music is heard during moments when a connection of some kind is established between the two girls. It may, in fact, be the music itself which arouses something inside Véronique. The anonymous phone call she receives in the middle of the night after the puppet show is crucial, for it initiates the whole guessing game between her and Alexandre. She hears the now familiar music from the telephone. As if triggered by the music, the image suddenly turns deep red and a blurred image of Weronika singing appears in the upper right-hand corner. As Weronika sinks to the ground we realise that this is a flashback of the concert. The image stays red for a long time, until the music ends and the confused Véronique replaces the receiver. Here a connection is established between two temporal levels; in fact, they coexist in the image. A sound from the immediate past intrudes into the present. During a moment of saturation like this the narrative loses its forward pull. We have no way of telling what will happen next. At such moments we become aware of Weronika's continued existence in the narrative present and see that Véronique would not be there without Weronika. Maaret Koskinen calls attention to this in her analysis of the film. As she interprets it, during moments reminiscent of déjà vu Véronique seems to sense the other girl's presence, the contours of an alternative life. Kieślowski builds correspondences across time and space. (1991, 67.)

Only in the midnight scene do we actually see, even if fuzzily, Weronika as she dies. The eerie image fills the gap that was created when Weronika suddenly passed away and the first part of the film ended. When she died the spectator was left curiously dangling on her point of view; a little confused. We were still seeing

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94   Emma Wilson (2000, 3-6) argues that as in many of his films, in *The Double Life of Véronique* Kieślowski thematises representation itself.

things from her viewpoint at a stage when she was lying in the bosom of the earth. Obviously this image belongs to the film itself, so to speak, for as far as we know Véronique was not in the concert and thus cannot have a mental image of it. It is as if the film anticipated the spectator's recollection, on hearing the film, of Weronika singing. Or possibly this is an indication of some kind of telepathic contact between the girls, for the film tells about mysterious connections.

Bruce Kawin is concerned with a similar question in his analysis of Bergman's *Persona* (1966). According to Kawin, it is impossible to attribute the film's dream images to one or the other of its heroines, Alma or Elisabeth, and continues: "Much of *Persona*'s excellence lies in its decision not to pinpoint the origin of these visions, but to offer them as *in some way* 'happening' - as if the film itself had in these moments shifted the territory of its exposition from the surface of the story to its eerie undercurrents." Kawin adds that it might be a question of some kind of telepathy. (1978, 124-125; emphasis in the original.) Similarly, the attraction of *The Double Life of Véronique* lies in the fact that we never know where such images originate from.

The Double Life of Véronique is a film that can be interpreted in countless ways. Its meanings are to a great extent dependent on how individual viewers associate its images with each other. The repetition of motives creates the impression that in the end, a greater whole might be constructed of them. However, this remains an unfulfilled promise. Grodal's comment that the sense of meaningfulness generated by process-oriented narratives is often subjective is true here. Instead of a plot we are offered scenes and episodes related in ways that we cannot always pin down. Because of this we start to think about the film on a higher conceptual level. We feel that we ourselves are playing a significant role in the process of the film's unfolding, making also the content seem meaningful (Grodal 1997, 64). Grodal argues: "Many associations are not meaningful in the ordinary sense of the word. Basic aesthetic phenomena, such as rhythm or melody in music, group-structure in visual art, or alliteration in literature, represent mental associations in the addressee, but need not have any strict meaning." (Ibid.)[95] There is no real need to identify all the connections. The structure itself, the parallels and associations, tells us something. There is always someone living a life similar to but not identical with ours, someone whose life we affect in ways we are not conscious of.

A film like *The Double Life of Véronique* that plays with associations and parallels encourages detailed interpretations, for it seems that everything in it is meaningful. In his analysis of Kieślowski's films Žižek calls attention to features recurring both inside one film and from one film to another. Such features circulate, so to speak, around meanings without attaching themselves to any single stable sense. Žižek calls such features *sinthoms*, "as opposed to symptoms, bearers of a coded message", as they are understood by Lacan, and interprets them as signs of the "raw Real" penetrating ordinary reality. *Sinthoms* emerge when interpretation is pursued far enough. We cannot be sure whether to read them as signs or not because they lack stable meanings. Žižek describes *sinthoms* as "(...)

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[95] According to Grodal, a meaningful association exists between the words "roots", "trunk", "branches" and "leaves" because together they refer to "tree" (1997, 64).

'tics' and repetitive features that merely cipher a certain mode of *jouissance* and insist from one to another totality of meaning". (2001, 98.) He defines them as follows:

> Underlying the 'official' narrative development, these *sinthoms* form a dense texture (of visual motifs, gestures, sounds, colours) that provides substantial 'tensile strength' to the narrative line. Therein resides the link between *sinthoms* and alternative narrative universes: *sinthoms* are real in the precise sense of that which *remains (returns as) the same in all possible (symbolic) universes*. (2001, 98. Emphasis in the original.)

As an example of *sinthoms* Žižek mentions the references to death preceding Paweł's drowning in *Decalogue 1*: the dead, frozen dog that Paweł finds outside close to his home, the frozen milk, Paweł's questions about what death means, and the breaking ink bottle. Typically, in some cases we can find a rational explanation for these incidents, in some cases not. (I have already mentioned the possible reasons behind the breaking of the ice.) Milk is one *sinthom* repeated throughout *The Decalogue* series. Sometimes milk seems an ordinary everyday thing, sometimes it acquires a symbolic meaning, as in *Decalogue 6* (and *A Short Film About Love*), in which Magda spills the milk. Given her circumstances her clumsiness seems to make symbolic sense, for she has many men but is unable to form a family with any of them.[96]

Žižek's ultimate question, to which his analysis of *sinthoms* among other things leads, is whether there are meaningful interconnections underlying these seemingly contingent details and repetitions, or whether all is indeed pure contingency. That is, "(...) is there a deeper meaning beneath contingency, or is the meaning itself the outcome of a contingent turn of events?" (Žižek 2001, 101). He asks about the role of chance in Kieślowski's universe: "(...) does it point towards a deeper fate secretly regulating our lives, or is the notion of fate itself a desperate stratagem to cope with the utter contingency of life" (Žižek 2001, 107)?

Žižek makes the point that form (*sinthoms*) is used to create content (the theme of alternative universes, or lives). I think that essentially the same observations can be made without Lacan. It seems to me that Wuss's perception-based structure with its filmic topics leads to a basically similar point. As I remarked in connection with *Red*, sounds are sometimes over-determined, that is, more than one meaning can be attributed to them. This is true also of visual

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[96]   Kieślowski has rejected such symbolic interpretations of his films. In fact, he uses milk as an example of an element that has no symbolic meanings. "For me, a bottle of milk is a bottle of milk, and when milk is spilled, it means that milk is spilled. It means nothing else. It does not mean that the world has collapsed or that the milk symbolised mother's milk that the child could not drink because the mother died early. When milk is spilled it is spilled, and that's life. Unfortunately it means nothing else". (Stok 1993, 225.) In the same breath Kieślowski admits that only a few directors, such as Bergman and Tarkovsky, have succeeded in infusing objects with symbolic meanings and that he is himself incapable of doing the same (ibid.). Kieślowski's words about mother's milk may in fact refer to the milk spilled by Magda. A director cannot, of course, prevent her audience from finding symbolic meanings in her films. The difference between Kieślowski's late and early films is that in his early films he did intend some objects and stories to be read as symbols.

elements, for as I have pointed out, some of the film's events can be explained rationally while some cannot.

It is important to note, as Žižek suggests, that all this is not just a question of playing with the spectator's attention but that these elements carry meanings[97]. The overall meaning is not the sum of all the elements brought together and added up. Rather, Kieślowski's style of narration is meaningful in itself. His way of constructing narratives containing elements which are open to many interpretations and which make us ask again and again whether all this is purely random or whether it has a deeper meaning, is his way of articulating his central theme: To what extent are we are in control of our lives? As Wuss and Žižek both observe, we become aware of such a theme only by watching the films carefully.

7   Mindscapes and cinematic self-consciousness

Above, I have made some remarks about subjectivity as a property of narration, in particular of art-film narration and narration marked by a process orientation as opposed to a goal direction. The visual aspects of films also contribute to a feeling of subjectivity. Next I shall consider how subjectivity is created by stylistic elements. Related to this is the question of who sees in films, that is, whose is the point of view from which the story is narrated. After some observations from a cognitive perspective I shall move on to a phenomenological discussion about how films enable representations of individuals' experiences and ways of being in the world. This calls for a distinction between a physical eye and a mind's eye. This distinction is related to but not identical with the one made between internal and external focalisation

Representations of subjectivity usually involve an increased awareness of cinematic form, cinematic self-consciousness. Kieślowski's efforts to approach inner lives raise questions about what cinema is capable of. How far is it possible to go using cinematic means? Nevertheless, I do not see cinematic reflexivity or estrangement as Kieślowski's most important concern here. Even though Kieślowski seeks to make spectators aware of the means of representation, simultaneously he endeavours to create emotionally arresting experiences. As a result, his viewer may feel as if she were floating between the story and the discourse.

7.1   Ways of expressing subjectivity

As seen from Grodal's cognitive viewpoint, narration is interpreted as subjective when the stimulus behind the represented experiences is internal, that is, when their representation is a process taking place within the perceptual system; in other

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[97]   Kieślowski admitted that he added to his films small details, such as anticipatory objects, for discerning spectators to find (Ciment & Niogret 1992, 34).

words, when the experiences have no obvious source in external reality.[98] Such intraperceptual experiences include dreams, fantasies, memories and hallucinations. Cinematic representations of subjectivity are most emphatic in situations in which the protagonist encounters something uncommon or unexpected and this makes her act in an unusual way. Subjectivity appears when the protagonist is not fully in control of a situation, for example because of physical or mental disturbances. This in turn makes the events more difficult for the spectator to anticipate. (Grodal 1997, 129-135; Grodal 2003, 95-96; 100-101.)

A subjective camera is often used in exceptional situations to highlight the fact that we are now seeing the world through a character's point of view. According to Branigan, narration is subjective when the way in which a space is framed turns out to derive from a fictive character. The link between the character and the frame may be direct or indirect. If the link is direct, we are being presented with an optical point-of-view shot, and we talk about *optical subjectivity*. In an optical point of view the character's and the viewer's experiences coincide temporally. (Branigan 1984, 64.)

It is common to use the subjective camera to give an impression of dizziness or drunkenness or of a sense of panic, for example. The subjective camera implies limitations to what can be seen, for the purpose is to make the spectator see through the protagonist's eyes, and a single protagonist cannot be omniscient. The limits of subjective vision are often heightened by means of staging, such as lighting and props, or by technical means, such as camera angles, to stress that instead of seeing the events from an omniscient viewpoint we are perceiving them from one person's point of view and that this person's physical and mental state affect what and how we see. Grodal argues that the more obscure the image is, the harder the viewer tries to make sense of it. In such cases the feeling of subjectivity is partly a result of the spectator's own emotional state and her sense that she has become personally involved in the construction of meaning. Grodal argues that the more a film deviates from "normal, prototypical visual categorization and depiction", the more *dreamlike* the representation is. A moderate alteration of the normal results in subjective representation. (Grodal 1997, 129-135; Grodal 2003.) Grodal mentions German expressionism as an example of films in which visual distortions are related to deviant mental states (1997, 133). A great many examples can be found in other experimental films.[99]

The subjective camera is not the only way to convey subjective experiences. If the subjective camera is used a great deal, it may even create the opposite effect, for during subjective camera shots the character's face, an important source of emotional knowledge, is not visible.[100] Stephen Heath stresses that in a real subjective image subjectivity is visible in the image itself; an image which merely

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[98] Grodal (1997, 131) calls such stimulus "proximal" as against "distal" stimulus, which originates from objects in the exterior world.

[99] For example, in Germaine Dulac and Antonin Artaud's *La coquille et le clergyman* (1928) and in Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943).

[100] This was demonstrated by Robert Montgomery's *Lady in the Lake* (1947). Subjective camera is used throughout the film with the result that the main character is glimpsed only a few times in mirrors.

pretends to show the world from a subjective position is not a real subjective image. The only subjective thing about such images is the spatial position of the shot, that is, the coincidence of the subject and the camera. (1981, 47.) An image may be experienced as subjective even if no face is present at all. Yet the importance of a face for the experience of subjectivity cannot be denied. Subjectivity is related to emotions and we normally look at a person's face when seeking hints about her mental state.

When the connection between a protagonist and the frame is indirect, Branigan talks about *character projection*. Here space is linked with a character by other logical or metaphorical means. Details of the fictive world are used to reveal character traits, "to externalize aspects of character." (Branigan 1984, 122.)[101] This is a matter of *mental subjectivity*. Branigan points out that it may be difficult to separate character projection from elements of what we call the objective world (the diegetic world surrounding the character) and from the filmmaker's comments (1984, 137-138). Drawing such distinctions in Kieślowski's films is often difficult but also unnecessary, as I intend to show. Before going into the more indirect means of representing subjectivity I shall look at a few sequences from Kieślowski's films to illustrate the above points.

As I have observed earlier, *Decalogue 2* is very intensive as an emotional experience. One reason for this is its heavy reliance on close-up narration. Moreover, it includes a strongly subjective sequence, which may be said, in a sense, to combine optical and aural subjectivity and character projection. Here subjectivity is connected with exceptional physical and mental states. In the scene I shall analyse here Dorota is visiting Andrzej in hospital. Andrzej is in a hallucinatory state throughout the scene. He does not react to his wife's presence and talk. Images of Dorota's and Andrzej's faces alternate in a shot/reverse-shot sequence as she sits by his bed trying to reach him. During a close-up of Andrzej's trembling face the sounds start to change. Andrzej's breathing grows louder, which indicates that we are entering a subjective sequence in which we hear with his ears. Sounds of dripping water become audible and a close-up reveals water dropping loudly into a pail. A cut to Andrzej's sweaty, shivering face confirms that we are still inside his mind. A camera movement (tilt) along a wall shows in close-up water dripping from cracks and pipes. Thick white paint is peeling off the surfaces. The camera movement ends with a view of a pail half filled with disgusting reddish liquid. A return to Dorota's face and normal sounds indicates the end of the subjective sequence. There is no sign that Dorota has seen or heard these things. The strange images are explained at the end of the film when Andrzej describes his experiences during his illness. It had seemed to him that everything around him was disintegrating just as he was. In this sequence we saw with Andrzej's mind's eye rather than with his physical eyes. Andrzej's physical and mental state is projected onto external reality.[102]

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[101] In film noir, deep shadows and a generally sinister atmosphere may be interpreted as projections of their unpredictable, mysterious and ill-fated protagonists.

[102] Other writers, such as Véronique Campan (1997, 69) and Paul Coates (1999, 99), mention the dropping water and flaking paint but do not describe it as subjective. They do not say it in so many words, but they do seem to imply that the hospital really is

White is in many ways the most straightforward of Kieślowski's late works. By Kieślowski's standards it includes a great deal of action. This is partly because it is a comedy. Sobolewski remarks that comedies rarely represent their protagonists' inner lives (1994, 11). For the hero of a black comedy Karol Karol[103] has a surprisingly full-blown inner life, which Kieślowski depicts with rather traditional cinematic means. Karol's emotional life is articulated through sentimental flashbacks and both visual and aural motives. *White* is more subtle in its character projection than Kieślowski's other mature films.

The first images reveal the tragicomic emphases of the story: The very first image, opening from Karol's feet, shows his ducklike walking style (see Lis 1994, 16). A moment later a gull shits on Karol's shoulder as he is on his way to court. With the help of a fellow countryman the homeless and penniless Karol manages to get back to Poland where he continues to long for his ex-wife. He seems to be more attracted by Dominique's good looks than by her less than charming personality. This makes Karol seem a little naive. He has stolen from an antique shop in Paris a white alabaster bust which resembles her. He cherishes the kitschy object as a sentimental souvenir and a substitute for his ex-wife.

A recurring romantic flashback serves to remind us of happier days – or maybe the only happy day. In the flashback, the newly married Karol and Dominique emerge into bright daylight from the dusk within a church. The point of view is Karol's; in fact, this is a subjective camera shot (Dominique turns to kiss Karol/the camera), which indicates that the memory belongs to him. In some scenes it seems that both of them are remembering the moment. This is a classical way of referring to a character's past. The romanticism and over-exposure of the flashback reflects Karol's emotional side, in other words, it is another example of character projection. Karol's sensitivity and sentimentality come through in a slightly comic light at times. The burst of brisk tango music in particular that accompanies Karol's rejoicing over his homecoming at the rubbish dump is quite comical.

White, the dominant colour of the film, has at least two principal meanings in the flashbacks. White is the colour we normally associate with weddings. It is the colour of purity, innocence and a new beginning. In the context of the film it does not connote merely positive feelings, however. The acrimonious divorce may make the spectator ask whether the relationship had a chance in the first place. The white, almost transparent images seem creations of a nostalgic mind. Instead of the just mentioned positive qualities the white colour connotes, rather, emptiness and nothingness; qualities describing also the spiritual condition of Poland. In court and afterwards Dominique behaves in a very cold and calculating manner. It is almost impossible to imagine her and Karol as a loving couple. Throughout the film white appears as a colour of calculation and scheming which marks both personal and business relations. Warsaw is a cold, empty city in the early days of the market

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dilapidated. This is also quite likely and credible, but to me it appears that Andrzej's subjective state of mind is making the conditions at the hospital seem worse than they actually are. At any rate, the sequence is not a documentary-like representation of wretched hospital conditions.

103   This name alone, which refers to Karol's American ancestor Charles Chaplin, makes it clear that Karol is a comic hero.

economy. The atmosphere of negativity lifts only once, in the scene in which Karol and Mikołaj rejoice on the ice of the river Vistula on a sunny winter morning. The previous night Karol has helped Mikołaj become aware of the fact that he does not want to die after all, and now they are both feeling like it was the first day of their lives. In this scene white is associated with positive things, such as light.

As the example of *White* indicates, visual distortions or emphases are not always products of a particular mind. They do not necessarily represent a single person's mental or physical state or her outlook on life. Moreover, they may stand for qualities of the fictive world itself. Equally well, they may be authorial comments. Such ambiguity makes it difficult to draw clear distinctions between subjective and objective images and narration. Kieślowski's films may not even have a point of reference that would make it possible to judge what is subjective and objective.

The documentary *From the Point of View of the Night Porter* is an early and as such an exceptional example of Kieślowski's employment of stylistic features to externalise his protagonist's personality and attitudes. Kieślowski used Orwo, East German film stock which reproduced colours badly, making skin look bright red for example. Witold Stok, the cinematographer who shot the film, comments that the choice of film was deliberate because it highlighted the porter's fanaticism and fascist opinions (Macnab & Darke 1996, 18). According to Kieślowski (Stok 1993, 110), "(...) the distortion typical of the film stock created a distorted image of the world. This porter was a kind of distortion as a human being, and we wanted the colour to emphasise the grotesqueness of the world surrounding him."

In his later fictions Kieślowski put colour and light to such use many times. From *The Decalogue* on in particular, colour and lighting are used more expressively and even unrealistically to convey emotions, attitudes and atmosphere. Merleau-Ponty writes that colours express modalities, such as different ways of being in the world (1982, 5). This is a particularly interesting aspect of Kieślowski's mature works, although I shall not make a detailed analysis of colours in this thesis.[104]

In Kieślowski's late fictions colours, lights, reflections and shadows are no longer mere natural properties of things but projections of character traits and states of mind. Grodal remarks that the nature of light is one element that can be used to evaluate the reality status of images. In "realistic" representations light is an immanent property of solid objects. In subjective narration, light and shadows become primary elements, with objects relegated to the status of reflecting surfaces rather than autonomous objects. In other words, they exist so that light can be made to reflect from them. The same applies to space, which has become a setting for purely visual perception and contemplation, not for potential action. Its lyrical

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[104]   Colour psychology might serve as one possible starting point for an analysis of Kieślowski's late films. Such an approach is problematic, however, for the meanings attributed to colours differ from one cultural context to another. I shall restrict myself to making some general observations about colours, such as the association between blue and melancholy and sadness, assuming that such links are understandable within a European context.

and passive, in other words melodramatic aspects become obvious. (Grodal 1997, 152-153.)

Kieślowski's mature works are filled with scenes in which visual activity seems to be the most important content. *The Double Life of Véronique* abounds with images within which the play of light and reflections creates an internal rhythm or pulse. Michel Chion remarks that such "micro rhythms" "(...) create rapid and fluid rhythmic values, instilling a vibrating, trembling temporality in the image itself" (1999, 16). When Weronika and Antek meet in a gateway, rain and light form a sensuously rippling background for their amorous encounter. Arto Haarala points out that a "Kieślowski yellow" colour shrouds everything (1995). It makes even the air look like a liquid substance that one could dive into. Yellow filters show us a world where everything seems to be covered in golden dust. Cracow, Clermont-Ferrand[105] and Paris are almost transformed into towns from a fairy tale. In this film the filters engender a mood opposite to that in *A Short Film About Killing*.

In some scenes the characters are just surfaces on which light can play. As the protagonist is going somewhere or is just contemplating the mysterious things happening around her, the surrounding space is filled with a play of light, shadows and colours. Such impressionistic lighting and colouring blurs distinctions between the inside and the outside, mental and physical spaces. The source of the light is rarely revealed because its function is to generate atmosphere. In one scene Weronika hits the ceiling with her small ball, loosening fine dust. The golden dust falls in a ray of light on Weronika's raised face.

One enigmatic scene concentrates exclusively on the play of light. Véronique is asleep in an armchair. A spot of light appears on her face, waking her up. She walks to the window, shielding her eyes against the bright light. In the house next door a little boy is playing with a mirror. Then the shutters are closed and the light disappears. Véronique remains by the window and after a while the light reappears, but now its source has vanished. As if realising something, Véronique stays still and music starts to play. After a moment she goes back to the garbage bin where she had, not long before, thrown a shoelace sent by Alexandre. Possibly she has just understood the meaning of the shoelace. Such vaguely motivated scenes do not appear out of place in this film, for the narration seems to follow the two girls' intuition.

7.2   The sense of being in between

In Kieślowski's films the feeling of subjectivity arises only partly from the use of the subjective camera and conventional subjective sequences, such as flashbacks and memory images. The protagonists' inner worlds are revealed, or alluded to,

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[105]   Eric Rohmer's *My Night With Maud* (Ma nuit chez Maud, 1969) was also shot in Clermont-Ferrand. There are other similarities between the films despite Rohmer's much more realistic style. Both are concerned with young adults who wonder what they should do with their lives. Disappointment in love is also a central theme in both. But the two films' ways of dealing with these themes are strikingly different: Rohmer's film consists almost exclusively of explicit conversations. Kieślowski's heroines hardly ever put their search for identity into words. Weronika's "What do I actually want?" is the only direct reference to the theme.

through various means. In principle, almost any element of the staging may be used to refer to the inner world. At the same time, that relation may be seen as a two-way link: not only does the world take on the subject's qualities but the subject, in turn, assumes the world's qualities. In these films, style operates between these two levels. Moreover, style is connected with meanings, the author's comments and cinematic self-consciousness.

In his book *Mindscreen: Bergman, Godard and First-Person Film* (1978) Bruce Kawin introduced the concept *mindscreen* to theorise a particular form of cinematic subjectivity. Whereas the subjective camera shows what a person sees through her physical eyes, mindscreen shows what she thinks or feels. Mindscreen is a mind's eye. (1978, 10.) Kawin (1978, ix) defines his concept thus: "A mindscreen is a visual (and at times aural) field that presents itself as the product of a mind, and that is often associated with systemic reflexivity, or self-consciousness." Kawin stresses that a mindscreen is always the product of a *particular* mind, that is to say, it is narration in the first person. Mindscreen is distinct from voice-over and should not be confused with the fact that films are always products of their makers' minds. Kawin's words about an image seeming to be the product of a mind refer to the camera's ability to imitate consciousness. Film does not have a consciousness in a literal sense, but an image may be "coded" in such a way that it appears to be seen or created by a consciousness. (1978, xi; 10-12.)[106] The phenomenological basis of Kawin's thinking can be seen in the way in which he connects a gaze with a consciousness. By comparing the camera, or film, to consciousness he comes close to Vivian Sobchack's thinking, although as will be seen shortly, Sobchack is more radical in her claims for film.

To illustrate what he means by first-person narration Kawin compares mindscreen to the conventions of literature. The pronoun I of literature is comparable to cinematic mindscreen in that "I" and "mindscreen" are those places (or devices) that allude to subjectivity and which can give the impression of self-awareness. Mindscreen and the pronoun system both make manifest the authority behind the work but with the difference that in language the signifier "I" is a visible part of the text whereas in film the signifier mindscreen is a contextual element. That is to say, there is no single unchanging element from which the spectator can conclude whom the mindscreen belongs to. The film viewer understands, however, that images originate from a consciousness or a presenter situated offscreen. (And this is in fact the case even when a mindscreen is attributed to a fictitious character.) Kawin uses this comparison to emphasise that as a medium, film is as flexible and has as extensive powers of articulation as literature. Like literature, film is capable of expressing interaction between different minds – the artist's, the audience's and the film's. (1978, 113-115.)

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[106]   Kawin lists four different narrative voices as a part of which a mindscreen may appear. They are: 1) third-person narrative with no apparent narrator, except for the "grand image-maker"; 2) point-of-view narration in which the grand image-maker presents one person's experience, subjectivising the world but not the narrative; 3) first-person narrative where the first-person character presents her own view of herself and her world; 4) self-consciousness, which can appear as a part of any of these voices and in which the film itself, or the fictitious narrator, is aware of the act of presentation. (Ibid., 18-19.)

The camera cannot literally take us into anyone's consciousness, but as Kawin points out: "No system can include what is outside its own limits: language acknowledges the ineffable, but cannot define it. Nevertheless, some of the things that cannot be explained or 'known' within or by the system display themselves as aspects of the system's coherence. (...) They make themselves manifest." (1978, 54.) Kawin believes that film's potential for articulating the ineffable lies in mindscreen. At the end of his book Kawin writes that many of the possibilities of mindscreen remained unexploited (1978, 193-194). Kieślowski may be seen as a director who took up this task.

It is interesting to consider Kawin's approach in relation to Kieślowski's opinion that the means at film's disposal to represent an inner world are limited as compared to those available to literature. Another thing that makes Kawin's approach fascinating is that it is quite original in film theory. Sobchack appears to come closest to it with her book *The Address of the Eye: Phenomenology of Film Experience*, in which she presents a theory of film experience based primarily on Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. Sobchack stresses that film is a dynamic and synoptic gestalt which cannot be reduced to its mechanisms, just as human perception cannot be explained purely from a physiological and anatomical point of view. According to her, the specific form of cinematic being and meaning, the question about *what* film is, has not been adequately addressed. (1992, 170.) She, and Kawin, at least started asking such questions. The most interesting aspect of her book is what she says about film's ability to mediate embodied relations. Curiously, however, Sobchack makes no mention of Kawin.

Kawin discusses two types of self-conscious narrative which may be brought into play in combination with mindscreen. Both modes flaunt their artificial nature, foregrounding narrative as an *authorial construct*. The audience is reminded, with varying degrees of emphasis, that it is watching a film. The two modes differ in their attribution of such self-consciousness. In one mode it is ascribed to the filmmaker. This is illustrated by, for example, *Hair-Raising Hare* (1946) by Chuck Jones, in which Bugs Bunny shows that he is aware of being in a film, for example by addressing the audience. Kawin terms this *third-person self-consciousness*. In the other mode, self-consciousness is ascribed to the work itself, in other words presented as originating from within the work. In Kawin's (1978, 113) words, the work "(...) gives the definite impression of being a self-actualising system (...) struggling to name *itself*." Its potential linguistic focus cannot be identified as belonging to the fictive characters or the filmmaker, amounting instead to what may be called a "generalized mindscreen". Such a narrative unfolds in the first person and "speaks itself". Kawin analyses Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* as an example of such *systemic self-consciousness* but mentions also Dziga Vertov's *The Man With a Movie Camera* (1929). Self-consciousness can take many forms; political, semiotic, or purely formal. It can be used to put forth metaphysical claims, as Bergman does in his many speculations about the existence of God. It can also serve as a device of psychological drama. (1978, 92-93; 113-114.)

Kawin points out that the subjectivity and objectivity of particular images can only be determined in their specific context. A spectator cannot distinguish between a subjective and an objective image placed next to each other. Subjectivity

or objectivity are not qualities just of images. As Kawin says, all films are "*mentally presentational*", that is to say, "The mind reaches out to film and finds its own landscape, a version of its own process" (1978, 192). Kawin formulates here an idea similar to Grodal's. Both argue, from different perspectives, that subjectivity and objectivity are relative phenomena; they do not depend only on film texts but also on the interaction between the film text and the consciousnesses perceiving it.

The way in which Kawin distinguishes between self-conscious and non-self-conscious, first-person and third-person and mindscreen narration is not always clear; sometimes he seems to be splitting hairs. I am not going to apply Kawin's categories rigorously but shall use his ideas as a guiding principle. One of the most obscure but at the same time most interesting aspects of Kawin's theory is the distinction between authorial and systemic self-consciousness. I have stressed that Kieślowski's films are self-conscious in many different ways. One of the most obvious signs of the self-consciousness that marks his works is their intertextuality. Kieślowski refers frequently to his own films. Like most artists, he recycles themes, situations, stylistic and narrative devices and so on. He is known among other things for his frequent use of coloured filters. Moreover, there are a few motives that he repeats explicitly, self-consciously enough for these motives to have developed into inside jokes. Such is the fictitious Dutch composer Van den Budenmeyer, who is first introduced in *Decalogue 9*. Later he reappears in *The Double Life of Véronique*, *Blue* and *Red*. Another recurring motive is the figure of the old woman (and once the old man) who shows up in different forms in *Decalogue 9* (an old woman at the litter bin), *The Double Life of Véronique* (an old woman carrying heavy bags whom Weronika wants to help, and another old woman whom Véronique notices) and is seen in every part of *The Three Colours* trilogy as an old person returning a bottle to a recycling bin.[107]

Kieślowski's works form a dense texture of innumerable cross-references which enthusiasts like to identify and list. The number of such cross-references is so great that it is something more than a matter of a normal auteur film revealing its maker's personal touch to his spectators (preferably familiar with his other works). Yet, in my opinion, such references are not enough to justify using the term authorial self-consciousness in Kawin's sense. The spectator is not told "you are watching a film now!" Kawin's second mode, systemic self-consciousness, seems to fit Kieślowski's case better. It appeared to match *The Double Life of Véronique*, where the mysterious image of Weronika was attributed to the film itself. The image's precise status is difficult to pinpoint. It exists in between different realities, so to speak. Or, to use Kawin's terms, it is systemic self-consciousness taking on characteristics of a mindscreen. This seems to be what also happens in *Red* when the camera starts to explore space on its own.

Here I want to introduce a concept of my own to theorise such ambiguity of Kieślowski's films. I propose to define Kieślowski's narration and the spectator's

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[107] This figure is not merely a part of an intertextual game, for it is linked with a deeper meaning. Wach observes that the figure acts as an indicator for the slogan Liberty, Fraternity and Equality. In *Blue*, the self-absorbed Julie does not notice the old woman struggling with the bottle. In *White*, Karol gives the old man a malicious smile. Only in *Red* does Valentine, in the spirit of fraternity, help the old lady. (Wach 2001, 344.)

experience of it with the concept of the *in-between*, or *being in between*. As can be seen, the concept has been influenced by Kawin's theory, but it has come into being as a synthesis of many ideas, with Merleau-Ponty's existential philosophy as perhaps its most important source. It applies to the spectator's experience, for it is hard to picture a film narrative as existing without a spectator, but also to the narrative representations, that is, the images. Kieślowski's fictive worlds are syntheses of external and internal realities. The protagonists' subjective, internal experiences are written on the images. In this way they become a part of the represented, fictive, external reality. As we perceive these fictive realities, what we see is not just a number of objective views produced by a grand image-maker. Here, subjectivity is visible in the images themselves, as Heath argued it should be in an authentically subjective image. This idea is close to Kawin's mindscreen. Kawin does not say much about the spectator's experience, however.

When the spectator perceives these images she is aware that what she is seeing is a composite of the protagonist's subjective world and the fictive reality around the protagonist. This becomes clear when the spectator starts to look for the meaning of the stylistic elements. She has to ask what purpose they are serving. Style forms such an obviously separate level alongside the narrative that it cannot be ignored. This can be put in yet other way: The spectator is aware of both the presented reality and the act of presentation. In Kieślowski's films the pull of the story (the presented reality) is always stronger, so that the experience is never that of detached contemplation, unless, of course, the spectator consciously decides to adopt such a stance. This side of the matter is connected with Kawin's discussion about narrative self-consciousness. It is evident that Kieślowski's films do not yell at the viewer, "You're watching a film." Rather, they hint that this is what the spectator is doing. It is an acknowledged fact which need not be spelled out. The spectator's position could be described as involving a liminal state of a kind in which she finds herself. She does not quite identify with the protagonists and the diegetic universe, but neither is she a detached and aloof observer. Kawin's idea that film refers, on the one hand, to a real, three-dimensional world and, on the other hand, to a metaphysical one is relevant to what I mean by being in between. Kawin (1978, 92) writes: "Film is a dream, a language (a signifying system) and a world which refers to two directions – to the 'physical reality' recorded (or 'rescued') by the camera, and the 'metaphysical' narrator – without incorporating either."

Given his style of narration, Kieślowski can be seen to exemplify, in certain ways, Merleau-Ponty's late ideas about the intertwining or reversibility of the subject and the world, their reciprocal relationship. From the point of view of the philosophy of reversibility, issues concerning the subjectivity or objectivity of narration need not be settled unambiguously. The ambiguity of the situation as such – the sense of being in between – can also be accepted as a fact. If this is done, such questions as what originates from a protagonist's mind and what belongs to external reality cease to be very interesting. We do not have to decide the extent to which the ugliness of the world in *A Short Film About Killing* is a projection of Jacek's character traits, an "objective" quality (a quality not dependent on the protagonists) of the world, or the filmmaker's comment about the state of the

world today. Likewise, distinctions between character projection and the filmmaker's comments need not be all that important. My purpose is to suggest an approach that may offer a new perspective on film's ability to represent the inner world.

Kieślowski admitted that dreams had always fascinated him, but more as expressions of humans' inner life than as themselves. According to him, films cannot do justice to dreams because dreams are private and impossible to describe. (Coates 1999c, 161-162.) This is probably the reason why Kieślowski did not really try to represent dreams as we experience them. In fact, there are no more than three or four actual dream sequences in his films. In *Calm*, Antek sees the mysterious horses both awake and in a dream. Filip's wife in *Amator* dreams about a hawk killing a chicken, but the scene is shot in a completely realistic style. *The Double Life of Véronique* contains some shots which may be interpreted as dream images, but we cannot be sure. Instead of constructing traditional dream sequences Kieślowski creates dream-like states; in fact, he fashions narratives that resemble a dream state or a mental state in their entirety. *The Double Life of Véronique* and *Blue* in particular are journeys through their heroines' mindscapes.

Merleau-Ponty says that the difference between a perception and a dream is not absolute and that from time to time we may unconsciously withdraw from the world of actual perceptions (as in dreams). Because of this we can never be certain that what we see is real. For the same reason, we have a right to call both perceptions and dreams our experiences. As for guarantees for their authenticity and their ontological function, those must be sought on a higher level than that of perceptions. (1980, 6.) Kieślowski seemed to embrace the idea that we live on more than one level of reality simultaneously. In *The Double Life of Véronique* he encourages us to take intuitions, feelings, moods, dreams, sensations and all other ambiguous experiences seriously.

In Kieślowski's late films the world appears as it is experienced from personal viewpoints. This is true particularly of visual perception, but sometimes also of hearing and the experience of time. Kieślowski approaches big existential and social themes from the points of view of contemporary, often solitary, individuals. In *The Decalogue*, the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament are exemplified through dilemmas facing several individuals. In *The Three Colours* trilogy the slogan of the French revolution is treated in a similar though what may be called more international manner. Kieślowski himself emphasised that his role was to ask questions, not to teach or offer knowledge (Trémois & Remy 1995, 5). He said that he was afraid of people who think they know everything and people who want to teach him something (Stok 1993, 67). The limited personal viewpoints presented by Kieślowski are closer to our experiences of the world and in that sense more real to us than large-scale or epic narratives that make sweeping statements and involve many protagonists. For Kieślowski, the individual was the primary consideration.

As he began his career, Kieślowski thought that making truthful representations of the world was the most important thing to do. He believed in film's ability to add to our information about the world and in that way make peoples' life more bearable at least. But as can be read in his diploma thesis, he was aware that in the process of making a film knowledge passes through the

filmmaker's subjective mental filter. In other words, he granted that filmmaking is always necessarily subjective. In the early 1980s Kieślowski began to think that film's significance has to be evaluated in the context of an individual's life. A narrative should be told from an individual character's point of view. All the same, a film's importance still lay in its ability to make viewers become aware of things, as is revealed by an anecdote associated with *The Double Life of Véronique*:

> Then there was this girl in Paris. After one occasion a 15-year-old girl came up to me and said she had seen *The Double Life of Véronique*. She had seen it once, twice, three times, and she really wanted to say only one thing - that she had understood that the soul exists. Earlier she had not understood it, but now she saw that the soul exists. There was something very beautiful about this. *The Double Life of Véronique* was worth making for this girl's sake alone. (Stok 1993, 244.)

There is a certain affinity between Kieślowski's attitude and Merleau-Ponty's thought. Merleau-Ponty stressed that knowledge of the world is possible only from a personal and in that sense limited perspective. In terms of individual experience, such knowledge is more meaningful than objective, scientific knowledge that makes generalisations. Kieślowski wanted to reach individuals, not the masses. In the end he did reach the masses - probably because viewers felt they were being personally addressed.

7.3   Film as a place where gazes converge

The gazes of the spectator, the protagonists, the camera and the projector converge in films. The French film theorist Christian Metz argued in the 1970s that because the gazes of the spectator, the camera and the projector coincide in cinema, viewers feel that they are psychically at the centre of all the action. From this Metz concluded that viewers identify primarily with the camera, or the cinematic apparatus as a whole, and only secondarily with the fictive characters. (Aumont 1996, 220-221.) However, as I see it, the simple fact that often we know very little about what is going on prevents the spectator from feeling that she has been placed at the focal point of everything. Usually the settings of a story are unfamiliar to us. Moreover, we do not really have a sense that it is our own heads turning when the camera pans or tilts. I at least have never felt anything like that myself.

The camera becomes a part of the act of perceiving, but we never confuse our own gaze with that of the camera. The camera's gaze is different; it transforms the perceptual experience by both extending and diminishing it, as Sobchack points out. (1992, 181.) Speaking in concrete terms, a direct, physical contact with things is beyond film. When perceiving things on the screen we are not looking directly at reality as against when we look out of a window. It is the filmmakers who decide for us what and how we will see and hear. We have only limited freedom to shift our gaze. From the sensuous point of view, the camera diminishes our perception as compared to direct sensation. There are fewer senses involved: we cannot smell or touch the image.

Sobchack (1992, 183) describes the filmmaker's experience as she looks through the camera: "Seeing the world through the camera realizes the filmmaker's

touch *only* as it in-forms sight - for the camera (...) does not have literal touch (...)"
On the other hand, the camera enables us to see things we would otherwise not
see. Moreover, it makes us see them in ways that would otherwise be impossible
for us: as slowed down, speeded up, from extraordinary angles and so on. The
camera makes textures and small objects better discernible. Thus, we do not
picture ourselves as cameras or projectors, but they do become a part of our bodily
engagement with the world (the visual space we see before us). Sobchack
described this engagement using the term *embodiment relation.* Such relations
extend the spectator's (and the filmmaker's) intentionality into the world and the
result may be a sense of a *new realism.* What is realistic here is the viewer's
perceptual experience of the world; it is not a question of realism in the sense of
making truth claims about the world. (Sobchack 1992, 181-185.)

A protagonist's always necessarily mediated act of perception may be
experienced as realistic. This is not realism in the sense of a representation of
fictional reality being experienced as objectively real. Here realism has to do with
the act of perceiving, not the object represented (or perceived). Our relationship
with machine-mediated perception is twofold: on the one hand, it makes us feel
that we are involved in a real, direct process of perception; on the other hand, we
are conscious that the machine transforms the seen. (Sobchack 1992, 181-182.)
Sobchack (1992, 199) sums up: "(...) the represented world and the activity of
mediation are encountered in the same visual and visible space." In other words,
the spectator sees a mediated version of the world. The camera becomes a part of
both the spectator's perception and that which is perceived, but it is never itself
visible (1992, 199). From this point of view, narration that adheres to a subjective
perspective is just as realistic as objective narration untied, within the fictive world,
to anyone's vision or experience in particular. The new realism Sobchack talks
about might also be called *subjective realism*, the expression Bordwell uses about
art-film narration, as was noted in Chapter 6.2.

According to Grodal (2000, 96), images that express subjectivity are felt as
more mediated than prototypical depictions.[108] At the same time, there is a sense
both of immediate perceptions and of perceiving a mediated perception.
Kieślowski deliberately highlights the physical and mental origin of views, thereby
emphasising that we are seeing the world from someone's personal perspective.
Kieślowski could be said to *mediate unmediated* perceptions by lending us the eyes
or ears of his characters. As mentioned above, the moments when this happens are
often intensely emotional or involve disturbing events. In *Blue* we are given Julie's
misty view as she wakes up for the first time after the accident, and later, when she
is lonely and afraid, we hear scary noises with her ears. In *The Double Life of
Véronique* we see the world through the dying Weronika's eyes. But this is not a
question just of the subjective camera.

Kieślowski embodies his representations, makes bodily existence visible in
the images. To achieve this he uses lights, shadows, objects (props), extreme close-
ups and so on. The sense of unmediated perceptions arises partly from the

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[108]   Grodal's examples of dreamlike and subjective narration are Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet
of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (Smultronstället, 1957).

sensuousness, an element of our own encounter with the world, tangibly present in many of his images. Extreme close-ups and images deviating from the normal generate a sense of tactility, as was already seen in *The Double Life of Véronique*. In his essay on *Blue* Haarala remarks that Kieślowski makes the film text tactile by deforming image surfaces and by associating images with touch. *Blue* creates an experience of touching the cinematic surface. This is not a question of just aesthetics of the surface but of "experiential aesthetics". (Haarala 1995, 12-13.)

In her book *The Skin of Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* Laura U. Marks talks about haptic visuality. She has adopted the distinction between optic and *haptic images* proposed by Aloïs Riegel in the field of art history. Unlike optical visuality, haptic visuality does not depend on a separation between the viewing subject and the object viewed. Haptic images draw the spectator close to the object by evoking bodily associations and memories. Instead of giving the viewer a good overall impression of the object from an optimal distance a haptic image focuses, rather, on surface textures, details. Because of this, haptic images retain an "objective" character. In Marks' description a haptic image "(…) is more inclined to move than to focus, more inclined to graze than to gaze." (2000, 148; 162.) Haptic images evoke other senses besides vision, such as touch and smell – engendering, in her words, a "multisensory experience" (2000, 131).

Haptic images open up a micro world of a kind, and because of this it may take some time before the spectator realises what they represent. Marks points out that haptic images are mimetic in the sense that they highlight the materiality of things (2000, 138-139). She compares the haptic image to Deleuze's time image, arguing that both force "the viewer to contemplate the image itself instead of being pulled into narrative." The haptic image is related to the time image also in that it activates sense perception directly without the involvement of intervening sensory-motor schemata (unlike the movement image) (2000, 163). I see a link between these thoughts and the idea of process-oriented narration and the experience that such narration evokes, a concentration on the present moment; not on forward-directed action but on feelings and atmosphere. It is haptic visuality of this kind that Kieślowski deals with in his most subjective narratives.

There are still other devices Kieślowski uses to tie the spectator to the characters' mental viewpoints. He constructs frames (within image frames), puts up barriers, inserts filters, and brings into play things of every description through and between which we see the events. In his article on *The Decalogue* René Predal observes that the series is filled with scenes in which the protagonists have been shot against light, or in darkness, which prevents us from seeing them clearly. Objects, walls and other elements of the mise-en-scène are similarly used to partially obstruct our view of the events. In the case of *The Decalogue*, such stylistic devices emphasise the fact that the protagonists are emotionally and morally lost and that they do not trust each other. They doubt themselves and other people. Communication is difficult and they are afraid. (1994, 288.) In an analysis on *Decalogue 9* in Chapter 8.1 I shall show how such experiences are visible in the images. Stylistic devices of the kind described above strengthen the viewer's feeling that the gaze, or view, belongs to some particular character, or to something/someone situated outside the diegesis.

Sobchack argues that among the gazes that cross in a film is that of film itself. Film as such is a seeing subject, another perceiver, whose perception we perceive. Sobchak goes so far as to claim that film has a body and a consciousness, and she is not speaking metaphorically. She (1992, 290) explains: "Vision is meaningless, however, if we regard it only in its objective modality as visibility. As phenomenological description reveals, both the spectator and the film function existentially not only as objects for vision, but also as subjects of vision." In this approach, a film is a synthesis of many gazes and perspectives. It synthesises the gazes (or visions) of the viewer, the protagonist, the filmmaker and even of film itself. This web of gazes blurs the limits between the subject and the object, subjective and objective.

It is common in film phenomenology to compare the relation between the camera and its object to that between consciousness and the object of consciousness. Usually it is acknowledged, by Kawin for example, that the camera or the cinematic apparatus itself possesses no consciousness. This is also my view. The camera can produce a view similar to that generated by our own eyes, but only if a human being operates it. Such a perspective on film is linked with a strong ethical dimension. Sobchack implies this when she calls attention to the invisible activity going on during the viewing of films. When we watch films we try to see and understand things from other people's perspectives. Sobchack considers cinema an expression of perception and intentionality.[109] She (1992, 141) observes:

> The purpose of visual communication is to share sight - to see as another sees, or to get another see as I do. Yet, however small, there is always a distance between the self and the other self that necessitates communication in the first place and subsequently inaugurates and institutes a dialogue and dialectic of visions.

I think this captures quite well Kieślowski's aspirations, particularly in his late films. He explained his choice of profession by saying that as a filmmaker he could meet people that he would not otherwise learn to know. His documentary output is evidence of a desire to understand people - even people whose actions he disapproved of. His interest in people and human behaviour persisted throughout his career, the only change being that a fictive context replaced real life. Later on his interest turned from real-life characters to fictional ones. It is this attempt to understand people that prompts him to put us, his viewers, into the position of his characters and make us perceive the world as they perceive it. Nor is perception here limited to seeing. As Sobchack (1992, 133) again notes: "(...) vision is informed and charged by other modes of perception, and thus it always implicates a *sighted body* rather than merely transcendental eyes."

Joseph Scott Streb, discussing the issue in his dissertation *Prolegomenon to a Phenomenology of Film*, is among those who make the comparison between the film camera and consciousness. As he sees it, from a phenomenological perspective this is a question of pre-reflexive perception; in other words, in films we look directly

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[109] For the ethics of film as considered from a phenomenological perspective see also Janet Stadler's (2002) article *Intersubjective, Embodied, Evaluative Perception: A Phenomenological Approach to the Ethics of Film*.

at an unreflected, non-conceptual view of reality. (1982, 110.) In his words, "(...) an immediate relation to 'things' is formed" (1982, 110). Streb refers to Merleau-Ponty, who in his essay *The Film and the New Psychology* explains film's compelling effect by saying that it gives us directly humans' special way of being in the world. Unlike literature, film does not give us characters' thoughts but their behaviour, which we can see "in the sign language of gesture and gaze". Because of this, our relationship with the presented reality is a direct one. (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 58; Streb 1982, 110.) I think that Merleau-Ponty exaggerates the immediacy of filmic experience, for our knowledge of other films always intervenes in and affects our perception of a film to a certain extent.

In another text Merleau-Ponty writes that film, which was born to reproduce movement, has found a new way to symbolise thought and the movement of thought. Montage and changes of perspective celebrate our openness towards the world. (1963, 78-79.) Film has also shifted from objective movement towards internal movement: "The film no longer plays with objective movements, as it did at first, but with changes of perspective which define the shift from one person to another or his merging with the action. In this respect especially, film is still as far as ever from offering us all that we might have expected of it." (Merleau-Ponty 1963, 78-79.) Cinematic devices may be used to express thought, not to represent it directly. Thus, everything that films can tell us about our inner world is indirect; something we must interpret.

In his late philosophy Merleau-Ponty's thinking became more radical as he strove to undo the immanence-transcendence dualism. He introduced the concept *flesh* to describe the reversibility of our relation with the world, which surfaces in, for example, touch and perception. Simply put, to touch means to be touched and to see means to be seen. *The intertwining* and *the chiasm* are alternative terms to describe this reciprocal nature of our existence. Flesh means a general visibility and bodily reflexivity. Flesh is not matter, substance, or anything psychic. It is not a mental representation. Merleau-Ponty points out that there is no name for flesh in traditional philosophy. The elements earth, water and air are the closest entities it can be compared to. (Merleau-Ponty 1980, 139; 155; Dillon 1988, 101-102; 153-176.)

Flesh is the basis for *intersubjectivity*, that is to say, our ability to picture ourselves in other people's positions. In Merleau-Ponty's philosophy flesh came to replace consciousness, unworkable as the basic concept of an ontology seeking to overcome dualism. Merleau-Ponty pushed consciousness, the soul, the spirit or the ego away from the sphere of immanence, thereby turning them into worldly phenomena. According to Merleau-Ponty, the difficulty of seeing into the Other's consciousness disappears when we cease to think of other people as minds and instead start to think of them as incarnated in their bodies. (Dillon 1988, 102; 113-129.)

We experience other people as living bodies similar to ourselves because of our own bodily existence in the world. I interpret other people's perceptions by means of *corporeal schemata*. By projecting my own corporeal schema onto the Other I am able to assume her bodily position, through which I am able to experience her humanity. In this reversible process I project my own intentions onto the Other and internalise her intentions. It is because of this reversibility that

the world is common to us all. Experiences of alter egos and other people's humanity are likewise possible only in an intercorporeal world, a world where we confront other people as "animate organisms rather than as mysterious consciousnesses". I can see the Other because I am myself visible and touch the other because I can myself be touched. (Dillon 1988, 113-129; 157.) Reversibility is never total, however but is, instead, always on the point of happening. We are simultaneously individual beings and part of the general being, the flesh of the world. These two aspects of reversibility are not dialectically reversible: "(...) we do not have to reassemble them (the two aspects) into a synthesis: they are two aspects of the reversibility which is the ultimate truth" (Merleau-Ponty 1980, 155). Dillon (1988, 128) sums up the idea of intersubjectivity thus: "As a phenomenon, the body I live is both an immanent subject and a transcendent object of my experience, and that is how you see me, because my subjectivity is incarnate in the body you see."

The perceiver is always implied in the object of her perception. Seeing is intertwined with being seen. All seeing is thus inherently narcissistic. The feeling that we have of being seen by those we see at the same time as we see them indicates the passive aspect of perception. In his essay *Eye and Mind* Merleau-Ponty refers to Paul Klee, who said that a painter is sometimes overcome by a feeling of this kind. It is a curious feeling that may emerge in a forest when one suddenly feels as if the trees were looking back at one. (1993, 129.) A similar feeling arises sometimes when viewing films, but here it involves the relationship between the protagonist and the film (the film apparatus). Even when a protagonist is alone in a situation, the spectator may have a sense of someone or something watching her. Usually this happens when the view is not quite normal, "objective"; when the situation is seen from a lightly distorted wide-angle perspective, for example. In other words, this sense of being watched arises when the narrator makes her presence felt. These situations also tend to engender a feeling of subjectivity, as we have seen above. I shall consider this point shortly in an analysis of *A Short Film About Killing.*

As the term corporeal schema indicates, Merleau-Ponty's thought originated in Gestalt psychology. It is the source of his idea that we do not see atomistic entities but phenomena or *gestalts*, which are the smallest perceivable entities. This is what Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the primacy of phenomena means. In his late thought flesh had the same structural meaning as gestalt had had earlier. Gestalt is a relation between "a perceiving body and a sensible, i.e. transcendent i.e. horizontal i.e. vertical and not perspectival world". (Dillon 1988, 165.) Thinking of this kind does not seem too far from cognitivists' use of schemata. There is one crucial difference, however, for while cognitivists talk about *mental* schemata, Merleau-Ponty speaks about *corporeal* ones. He (1968, 206) points out: "All psychology that puts *Gestalt* back to the framework of 'cognition' or 'consciousness' is mistaken about the significance of *Gestalt*." Merleau-Ponty rejects the idea that the structures of thought, or cognition, precede experience (Dillon 1988, 174). This is contrary to the cognitivist view.

There are many aspects of Merleau-Ponty's thinking that are not directly applicable to film experience. He discussed mainly everyday perception, which is somewhat different from our perception of films in that we come to films with

more clearly defined expectations of what we shall see. This is different from our everyday life, where our senses are bombarded by a greater amount and wider variety of stimuli. I believe that mental schemata need to be considered as an element of film experience, in particular as an element of the way in which we make sense of films. We come to cinema armed with knowledge of codes, conventions and genres for example. The concept of corporeal schemata and the idea of reversibility can, however, help to describe the experiential nature of viewing films, as Sobchak's example shows. Reversibility can be made to work, with certain modifications (fewer senses are involved than between people interacting in a real-life situation), also in accounts of the relation between the spectator and the protagonist. From this perspective, our ability to put ourselves into the Other's position does not depend on some particular cinematic means, such as the subjective camera. We may experience a film as subjective if we are able, with the help of corporeal schemata, to imagine ourselves in the protagonist's position. Merleau-Ponty (1964, 52-53) also stresses that the Other's feelings are seen from the outside, in her expressions and gestures. In other words, if we choose to accept Merleau-Ponty's claim that the soul, or the mind, is located in the world, there is no need to make the effort to see inside the Other's mind and find her soul there. There is always something subjective/internal to be seen in the objective/external view of things.

It seems to me that in *The Double Life of Véronique* Kieślowski has created a world which exemplifies the idea both of intersubjectivity and reversibility. The relationship between Weronika and Véronique is surely more mysterious than our usual experiences of being in contact with other people. *The Double Life of Véronique* is a film about exceptionally sensitive people who register all the changes taking place around and inside them. We see the heroines in situations in which they become gradually aware of things. It is by sensing the presence of an other, someone important to them, that the two girls start reflecting on their own lives. In the key scene in the Cracow Market Square they learn, or at least one of them learns, what it means to see and be seen at one and the same time. The film's viewer knows no more than they do; as a result, like the two girls she must try to grasp what is going on. In this regard the film illustrates Merleau-Ponty's (1964, 57-58) observation that "(...) the joy of art lies in showing how something takes on meaning."

7.4   The drifter's encounter with the city

A Short Film About Killing is a startling experience not only because of its horrible events but also because of its style. The yellowish green and dark filters lend the whole film an eerie ambience. Its cinematographer, Sławomir Idziak, said that the purpose of the dark filters was to save the spectator from seeing everything and avoid an impression of a pornography of disgustingness. The yellow-green filters were meant to connote urine. (Eidsvik 1999, 85.) The gloomy palette brings into being an oppressive and threatening atmosphere. Poisonous smog seems to be hanging over the city of Warsaw. Tightly framed images of puddles, mud and other unpleasant details only intensify the sense of oppression. The colossal tower

blocks of a local housing estate obstruct almost all view of the sky, making the place seem like a trap. In this cityscape it is no wonder if people treat each other uncouthly. In cinema, cities are frequently represented as nests of evil. Rob Lapsley remarks that most fictive representations of cities portray the city as inimical to human happiness (1997, 195). *A Short Film About Killing* is no exception.

The disturbing ambience that pervades the film is a sum of many things. There is the representation of how people look at each other, there is the curious feeling that even when a protagonist is alone in a scene someone or something is present. The scenes centred on the drifter, Jacek, have the most disquieting quality. The hand-held camera follows Jacek as he wanders around. The further the narrative develops, the more appalling are the things that happen, and gradually we realise that we are seeing the world through the eyes of someone about to become a murderer. However, we are not tied to a single character's point of view, for Kieślowski interrupts scenes by sudden cuts to other protagonists. At times such changes of perspective create a documentary-like feel. The scene in which Jacek witnesses a beating in a side alley is lent a feeling of presence and unpredictability by sudden camera movements and tight framing. The scene begins with Jacek approaching the camera along the narrow back street. Suddenly three people rush into view from offscreen. The camera follows them and observes the mugging at close range. In a close-up feet are seen kicking the victim furiously. A cut to Jacek reveals his aloof, indifferent look. He turns back and the scene ends as abruptly as it started. The dark areas where the image is shaded out by the filters, a slightly distorted wide-angle view, the sudden camera movements, the characters' unpredictable movements into the image and out of it, and Jacek's unconcerned reaction to the violence of the scene all add up to an atmosphere of threat.

Even though the cinematography engenders a documentary sense of being on the spot, a feeling of subjectivity is also there. As Grodal might say, the images do not conform to a normal, prototypical representation of reality. The slight distortion created by the wide-angle views of Jacek makes the presence of the narrator felt, but at the same time it symbolises Jacek's own distorted view of the world. As Vincent Amiel observes, the sudden shifts from one moving object to another, from close-ups to long shots, give expression to the protagonist's psychological volatility (1992, 11).

In many scenes the iris effect produced by the filters generates, within the images, internal fields of tension and focal points. This is one aspect of the self-consciousness of the narration, particularly pronounced when Kieślowski cross-cuts between Piotr talking about law and punishment and Jacek playing his nasty little tricks. Because the edges of the image are darkened, attention is focused on Jacek in the middle. This visual effect strengthens the feeling that Piotr is talking about someone like Jacek. (The same applies to the taxi driver in a couple of scenes.) The rest of the world is wrapped in the dim veil of the filters - people in the background are small dark figures - while Jacek seems to walk in a beam of light, standing out as though in relief. It is as if he were under a magnifying glass. This makes him appear very lonely and out of place in the city. During such moments, when he is in a close-up or a mid-shot, the spectator feels the presence of a gaze directed at Jacek. In rational terms, it is the presence of the camera that is

sensed in such situations. What it feels like, however, is as if the surroundings were looking back at Jacek – somewhat like the trees looking at the wanderer in Klee's example.

Sobolewski sees the filters as a dark halo above the protagonists. The halo follows the future murderer as he walks along Krakowskie Przedmiescie, the royal road through the centre of Warsaw. (1988, 9.) The dark patches may be read as referring to Jacek's limited vision: he is interested only in carrying out his plan. Stalking in the Old Town, the most beautiful part of Warsaw, he is blind to its visual pleasures. He is like a caricature of Baudelaire's *flaneur*. The spectator is similarly denied the pleasures of the city, for the filters obstruct most of the view. This is Jacek's intentions visualised. As Sobchack (1992, 88) says: "(...) when my visual field is unintended by me, it fades to a certain indeterminacy in which its visible contents are all equivalent." The fact that a part of the visual field is blocked out, hidden from our vision, makes us even more conscious of that which has been blocked out. The excluded parts make us aware of what the character is intending and what not: "(...) what is taken up as seen by the act of seeing is taken from what will remain unseen. The *invisible* thus provides the grounds for the *visible* and is not only a *condition* but also a content of the act of seeing." (Sobchack 1992, 86.)

Kieślowski employs several stylistic devices to produce meaning. In particular, style serves to externalise character traits. *A Short Film About Killing* is highly expressive, even expressionistic, in this sense. The specific way in which he uses colour is one means of establishing mindscreens, or first-person narration. The colour scheme in *A Short Film About Killing* is very limited because the filters make colours fade into each other. The palette is a mixture of dirty greens, yellows, browns and greys which creates a general atmosphere of indifference. Just like the dark filters which blur the edges of the visual field, this colour scheme makes everything appear uninteresting and indistinguishable. What we do not see must be even more awful than what we do see.

Against this background, the few splashes of colour become charged with meaning. They are provided by the red coats of the female characters: Beata, the girl at the greengrocer's, Piotr's girlfriend, and the two little girls (one at the Old Town Square and the other behind the café window). The red spots serve to direct the spectator's attention to what is important to Jacek; to show where his intention is aimed at. This is never made explicit, only hinted at in the end when Jacek talks about his little sister who was very dear to him. In the light of this knowledge we may become conscious that the eye-catching red colour is associated with girls and young women. Indeed, the only time when Jacek laughs in the film is when he fools with the two little girls. The girl at the marketplace gives him a searching look, as if realising something. We have also seen him gazing at photographs of girls receiving their first communion and taking a similar photograph of his sister to be enlarged.

The red colour may be interpreted as marking the positive things that Jacek sees around him. This is how the world appears to Jacek. We, the spectators, are given these hints about what is going on inside him. Similar observations apply to the two other protagonists, but their mindscreens are not as distinct as Jacek's. The world looks dismal also in the scenes belonging to the taxi driver and to Piotr, but in this longer version of the film Jacek is the central character, and his point of view

dominates. There are a few images in which no characters are present, but the world looks no less dreary in them. This encourages us to interpret the visual style not just as a mindscreen but also as authorial intervention. Thus, the film makes visible also the filmmaker's intentions: conveying the desolate atmosphere pervading the Polish reality at the time.

Besides the iris effect Kieślowski uses strong contrasts between the foreground and the background to emphasise that Jacek is an outsider. This is most marked in the scene where Jacek is eying the taxi stand in the Castle Square. He is shown in a close-up, standing in the foreground with the large square, crossed by small dark walking figures, opening behind him. On the right-hand side space seems to recede into infinity. The lens provides a great depth of field in this scene. The composition is very strong, reminiscent of the surrealist paintings of Giorgio de Chirico with its expressionist shadows and straight lines formed by the buildings. The image communicates a sense of existential loneliness. This and a few similar scenes, or single shots, contrast with the more documentary-like sequences. The simultaneously documentary-like and stylised cinematography produces a peculiar effect. Some aspects of the style, most of all the strange colours, encourage us to question the represented reality by presenting it as strongly subjective, while others ask us to take it as a truthful depiction of reality. Some commentators stress the defamiliarising effect of the filters (Wach 2001, 295). However that may be, they generate a very intensive experience because what we see is, so to speak, filtered through someone's mind.

A Short Film About Killing makes its viewer aware in many ways of the inner and outer realities and different consciousnesses involved in the events. At the same time as the spectator is drawn into the intensive story and the characters' perspectives, she is conscious of the act of presentation and the filmmaker's attitude. The film keeps the spectator in between. In Kawin's terminology, this is a case of systemic self-consciousness. His point that sometimes a film seems to speak itself is relevant here. Pertinent is also his observation about the aims of the expressionist film of the 1920s: "Expressionist cinema had two occasionally overlapping intentions: to stylize the world in such a way as to portray, in Balázs's term, its 'latent physiognomy', or truest, often hidden, nature, as perceived by the artist; and to reflect in both gesture and physical environment the psychological tensions experienced by the characters." (Kawin 1978, 45.)

7.5 Reflexive camera movements in *Red*

Red calls attention to its constructed nature in a different manner. Filters are absent, or at least their effects are not as marked as in *A Short Film About Killing*, *The Double Life of Véronique* and *Blue*. The visual look is more normal, so to speak. The depicted events are distanced primarily through the narrative structure but also through conspicuous camera work. Sudden camera movements interrupt closely observed situations a few times. In the middle of Valentine and Kern's conversation the camera suddenly detaches itself from the situation. The quick travelling shot ends in the neighbouring room where we see a billiard table filled with junk of all kinds. There appears to be no connection between the protagonists'

talk and this shift. It cannot represent their gaze or movement, for they sit still while the camera wanders around. The travelling shot seems most likely to function as a gaze of the machine.

A similar reflexive gesture occurs later during another of Valentine and Kern's talks, which takes place in front of a window. Suddenly Kern asks Valentine to stay still, for "the light is so beautiful". Right then, sunlight pours in through the window on Valentine's face. Music starts to play quietly and we hear Kern's bugging device pick up a conversation. Just then the camera unexpectedly backs up and shows the situation from high above.[110] We see the light flooding in as the two sit there quietly. Kern's seeming anticipation of the light makes the moment appear magical. The scene is closed by a shot of the sun sinking behind a roof. Grodal talks about the feeling of subjectivity which arises when a cosmic dimension becomes a part of an intimate human situation in *E.T* (1982) (2003, 95). A cosmic dimension is sensed here too, but the effect is much less overpowering. In this scene Kieślowski steps back from the situation, as if asking us to take a better look at these people from a slightly different perspective.

In another scene Valentine is bowling with her friends when the camera suddenly leaves them. A lateral tracking shot crosses the bowling hall. On a nearby table we see a broken glass and empty cigarette cartons. Earlier we heard Auguste and Karin planning to go bowling. We never learned whether they did go. Maybe they did, and had an argument which later led Karin to become attracted to another man. I think that here the camera movement serves to point out that Valentine and Auguste have once again been close to each other. The broken glass is an anticipation of Auguste and Karin's break-up.

There are a few other shots or scenes in which the situation is seen from a very high angle. There are such shots of Auguste and Kern standing at the traffic lights, and the fashion show in which the judge is present is also shown from a high angle. Some critics, for example Lis (1994, 27), have interpreted these angles as symbolising the viewpoint of God, because clearly they are impossible for any human being. Whether we consider them to belong to the artist or to God, they convey the impression that the world below is in his control. Whoever is looking on from these points of view seems to be reflecting critically on what he is seeing.

A few times the camera also appears to enact the protagonists' thoughts. When Valentine and Kern are in the theatre he tells her how he once dropped his books from the balcony. As if to confirm his words, the camera simulates the dropping of the books with a fast crane shot. Kawin's observation about camera movements in Alain Resnais' *Last Year at Marienbad* (L'Année dernière à Marienbad, 1961) seems pertinent here: "As the characters fantasize, remember or concentrate on certain places and events, the camera acts out the movements of their attention" (1978, 8-9).

In the above examples the viewpoint cannot belong to any of the characters. Nevertheless, these scenes engender a feeling of subjectivity because somebody's presence is felt. Grodal remarks that an experience of subjectivity may arise simply because in a certain situation the point of view deviates from normal (2003, 95).

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[110] The movement is achieved by a crane.

Many critics and researchers (Wach 2002, 370) have called attention to the fact that in *Red* Kieślowski reveals his cinematic devices. He himself did not see this as a question of cinematic self-consciousness. When he was asked whether the all-seeing gaze in *Red* belongs to the film itself, he answered enigmatically: "Maybe it is someone, someone who sees all that, a technocrane; someone with a camera in her hand, with a steadicam, and watching from every corner. I don't think it is playing with the film, but with that someone." (Sobolewski 1993a, 16.) Kieślowski obviously wants films to have a certain mystical quality, but the answer also alludes to the possibility that this someone might in fact be the filmmaker himself.

Kieślowski's use of stylistic elements produces a dual effect: on the one hand it brings us closer to his characters' inner world, on the other hand it creates distance. The stylistic balance shifts constantly between the two poles. As noted earlier, Kieślowski does not go nearly so far in reflexivity as, for example, Godard. Charles Eidsvik points out that Kieslowski's films do not have much room for reflexivity. His films are about people, not about films. (1990, 51.) I would allow reflexivity a little more room that Eidsvik. Even then, I think that in the end it is the story and the ideas that are the most important thing in the films. Haarala has drawn attention to this in his essay on *Blue*, but what he says applies to most of Kieślowski's late works:

> When striving to represent a particular reality Kieślowski penetrates the cinematic imaginary space to return not to the conditions of its presentation but to the narrative material once again calling for an explanation of itself. How does this narrationality, tracing its course from the narrative across the imaginary space and back to the narrative, resolve the question about that space and about how the distance present in it could be subdued? (1995, 12.)

According to Haarala, Kieślowski invites the spectator to participate in cinematic texturality, not to step out and assume the position of an external observer. This relativises the relationship between the spectator and the screen. In Kieślowski's films this relationship is less obvious than in many postmodern discourses that stress the opposition between the spectator and the screen. I have already mentioned Haarala's pertinent description of Kieślowski's aesthetics as aesthetics of experience. (1995, 12-13.) In fact, Haarala also says that Kieślowski's films invite the spectator into an in-between space of a kind.

7.6   Aesthetics of emotions in *Blue*

In *Blue*, Kieślowski takes the representation of subjective experience further than in any of his other films. This seems to represent a culmination, for in *White* and *Red* narration is no longer as intensely subjective as in the first part of the trilogy. Kieślowski had abandoned documentary film partly because he felt that it did not enable him to look inside people. He explained that the closer he tried to approach someone with his documentary camera, the more the person withdrew into herself. Kieślowski admitted that he was also afraid of real tears. He doubted whether he had the right to film them in the first place. In fiction such ethical problems would disappear. (Stok 1993, 114.)

Such questions clearly continued to occupy him, for in *Blue* he seems to consider how far a filmmaker can go in the representation of inner realities. For almost the whole duration of the film the spectator is tied to the heroine's subjective and extremely limited point of view. Here I am not using the term point of view literally, as referring to an optical vantage point, but in the sense of a mental point of view - a mindscreen. The subjective perspective makes us aware also of the heroine's subjective time consciousness. Simultaneously, however, the narrative denies us access to her innermost world. *Blue* can be looked upon as a cinematic study into the means available to cinema for representing subjective experiences, such as memories and emotions, and into the limits of its ability to represent them. The following analysis will return to and elaborate further many aspects of Kieślowski's films considered above: process-oriented narrative, intensive moments, emotions, gazes, temporality, and, finally, subjectivity, related to all these.

Blue is about a young and rich widow, Julie. Her husband, Patrice, a famous composer, and little daughter, Anna, are killed in a car accident at the beginning of the film. Julie survives with minor injuries. Her ensuing problems are more mental than physical. Able neither to commit suicide nor to deal with her sorrow, she tries to forget all of her previous life. She sells everything, drops her old relationships and starts an anonymous and lonely life in central Paris. A total break is not possible, however, and soon the past begins to haunt her in the form of a melody, a concerto Patrice was in the process of composing. One day Olivier, a friend in love with Julie, manages to track her down. In order to shake her back to life he tells her that he intends to complete the concerto. When this has no effect, he reveals in television that Patrice had a lover. The shock finally restores Julie to her former self. She starts composing with Olivier and even presents Patrice's pregnant lover with their old family home. She begins a relationship with Olivier.

The first sequence until the accident is elliptic, condensed into key images of the car ride. The point of view is omniscient, but the feeling is subjective right from the first image. The film opens with a close-up of the tyre of a moving car. The odd angle raises expectations while the muted sounds that combine with the movement generate a subjective mood. A hand sticking from the car window waves a blue paper in the blue night air. A little girl travelling on the back seat sees a sea of lights behind as the car dives through the darkness. The moving street lights and headlights accompanied by the low whizzing of the traffic produce a feeling of drowsiness. There is a strong sense of a subjective perspective, leading us to believe that the girl might be one of the main characters.

The next scene unfolds by the roadside as the travellers stop for a short break at dawn. While the girl runs out for a pee, the camera reveals a leak at the underside of the car. As the girl returns in the background, we see a close-up of brake liquid dripping down. There is no close-up to introduce the characters. The only voice is Julie's as she asks the girl to come back to the car.

In the next scene someone is playing with a stick and a ball by the roadside as a car is seen approaching through the mist. The stick-and-ball game is being played by a young boy waiting for a lift. He puts his thumb up but the car does not stop. Just as the boy manages to manipulate the ball on the top of the stick and

smiles at his skill, a big crash is heard. Kieślowski's cruel sense of irony is displayed here. A long shot from the boy's point of view shows a car up against a tree at a bend in the road. A dog runs lightning-fast across the image.[111] In a long shot the boy starts running towards the car. The image fades out.

When the image returns we are at hospital and learn that Julie is the only survivor. From now on we are inside Julie's mind. During the sequence we were kept at a distance from the characters. We never saw the family together properly. In fact, all we saw was the little girl's face and the man's profile. At the moment of the accident the image shows us a stranger. This sequence is in obvious contrast to the tight first-person narrative which begins the moment when Julie wakes up in the hospital. The scene starts with an unfocused extreme close-up. Something white sways in the foreground while in the background there is some light and movement. A doctor in a white coat approaches and puts his hand into the foreground, in focus now, and asks, "How are you?" The point of view belongs to Julie, who is lying on her side in the bed. The image is unfocused because she has just regained consciousness and cannot yet see clearly.

The first two sequences of the film, the car ride and the hospital sequence, establish the unpredictability of the narration. The spectator is encouraged to form hypotheses, but it takes time before they are confirmed.[112] As Grodal remarks, a feeling of subjectivity arises partly because we cannot anticipate the film's events. During the hospital sequence this feeling is consolidated further because we are confined to Julie's point of view and often have to wonder what the images depict and what their narrative function is. From now on the narration relies mostly on close-ups and medium close-ups. Julie occupies most of the image space.

The scene with the doctor continues with an extreme close-up of Julie's eye, in which the tiny figure of the doctor standing offscreen is reflected. We hear the doctor tell Julie that she has lost her family in the accident, after which we see Julie's face in a close-up for the first time. She presses her head against the pillow and closes her eyes, but says nothing. The almost microscopic close-up of Julie's eye is a symbolic gate into the heroine's inner world. We have shifted to Julie's perspective, from a macro world into a micro world. The shot of the eye is intriguing, for it contains its counter-shot, that is, it includes both the origin of the gaze and the thing perceived. Why such a configuration? According to Žižek, the shot/counter-shot structure expresses Julie's desire to disconnect from the rest of the world, to retreat into her shell. Žižek sees Julie's eye as an example of interface (see Chapter 1) (2001, 51-52). He suggests:

> Is this not the ultimate (reversal of the) shot which contains its own counter-shot? It is no longer (diegetic) reality which contains its suture-spectre; it is reality *itself* which is reduced to a spectre appearing *within* the eye's frame. Interface thus operates at a more radical level than the standard suture procedure: it takes place when suturing no longer works - at this point the interface-screen field enters as the direct stand-in for the "absent one" (...) (2001, 52.)

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[111]   Janusz Gazda points out that the dog that we have barely time to see may be the real cause of the accident (1993/94, 98). Possibly Kieślowski added such details specifically for sharp-eyed critics.

[112]   See an analysis of the first 12 minutes of *Blue* by Henry Bacon (2000, 52-59).

The "absent one" is the cruel reality that Julie has just had to face. She has lost her loved ones, finds it impossible to accept what has happened and withdraws from external reality. After her loss she sees the surrounding world as a reflection that she thinks can be ignored, only to eventually realise that this is impossible. Žižek argues that *Blue* deals with an individual's effort to build a screen between herself and raw reality (2001, 176). When Olivier visits Julie their meeting is again shown through her eyes, which still cannot see clearly.

Julie reacts to the terrible news by falling silent. She does not cry. Her feelings are expressed most clearly in a sequence following the breaking of the news in which she smashes a hospital window and tries to swallow a handful of pills. We observe at close range as she watches the funeral on a mini television. She touches the screen and bites her lip, but holds her tears back, determined to wear a brave mask. The surface of the television screen is shown in extreme close-up. As if sensing that she does not want to see, the television image soon disappears. As later in the film and in *Red*, the media seem to be a source of bad news and a poor substitute for close relationships. Kieślowski observes Julie's face insistently as if hoping for the mask to drop, even for a second. Her face draws the camera like a magnet, but only tiny expressions suggest her feelings.

Carl Plantinga has remarked that the human face is crucial for the spectator's ability to feel empathy towards the protagonist. In order for her face to be truly expressive the protagonist must be seen in a situation in which her expressions are unselfconscious and thus not misleading. This is possible when she is alone and free from social pressure. (1999, 239-255.)[113] The situations where we see Julie most of the time are essentially of this kind, but even then her own willpower prevents her emotions from showing. Plantinga's remarks are better applicable to mainstream cinema. Kieślowski is not interested in unambiguous portrayals of emotion. In this respect there are similarities between Kieślowski's and Tarkovsky's ways of presenting their characters. As described by Vlada Petric, Tarkovsky establishes a direct, self-referential and intimate contact between the audience and the protagonists' emotions. Instead of communicating rational thoughts the human face intensifies the empathy between the spectator and the protagonist's inner world. (1989/90, 32.) This implies that the emotions depicted need not be clear for empathy to arise. Discussing Jean Epstein's concept of *la photogénie*, Petric points out that kinesthetic movement and photographic resolution enable the film camera to extract the psycho-emotional intensity of a human face, which is the true spirit of cinema (1989/90, 32. See also Chapter 8.2). Epstein talked about film's ability to capture the soul of things. Maybe this was also Kieślowski's goal. We remember Merleau-Ponty's assertion that emotions exist on the face and in gestures; that they are not something hidden (1964, 52).

However, Kieślowski seems to be more calculating than Tarkovsky in that he deliberately constructs a story in which the heroine refuses to reveal her feelings. (This applies to a lesser extent also to *The Double Life of Véronique*.) Kieślowski transforms emotions into aesthetic forms, into beautiful images, in order to

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[113]   Seymour Chatman notes that we may be said to share a protagonist's emotional point of view when she is in the image (1981, 130). See also the discussion on p. 165 of this thesis.

examine how they, hidden sorrow in particular, can be represented through cinematic methods. Stylistic means turn out to be better at revealing emotions than the face. Even the film's name - *Blue* - implies that its approach is self-conscious. Hidden sorrow is projected onto details of the setting. At times sorrow seeps forth a little at a time as little blue spots of light or quiet fragments of music, at other times it breaks out in the form of blue and black moments filled with loud and bombastic music. The melancholy blue colour in its many forms and the music are the film's main motives; elements that contribute to its cohesion.

Some critics, such as Grazyna Stachówna (1997), have remarked that *Blue* follows the pattern of classical melodrama. Julie's tragic story does have elements of melodrama, its plot structure: first the accident, then the suicide attempt, followed by the revelation about the husband's affair and the heroine's magnanimous gesture towards the husband's mistress. In the end the altruistic heroine finds love herself and fulfils her ambitions. The way this comes about does not, however, fit the classical pattern, at least if we follow Greg M. Smith's cognitively oriented thinking. According to Smith, in melodrama the role of emotions is to motivate the protagonists to work towards goals; the more canonical the story the more this is true. Narrative comprehension and emotional experience are closely connected. (1999, 105.) In *Blue*, however, emotions are kept back, they are not discussed, and after Julie has moved to central Paris she does nothing. In this context it is more to the point to speak of moods. A melancholy mood is maintained by stylistic and narrative means. The bursts of music and the accompanying fade-outs imply that there is inner turmoil that may surface any time. The expectations thus aroused are never really fulfilled, for all that we actually see is one tear falling on Julie's cheek in the end. Some of the most dramatic moments (the accident, the funeral and the revelation of the husband's adultery) are played down. Catharsis is not awaiting us at the end either, for even though Julie is now together with Olivier, the ending is hopeful at most. As *Red* closes Kieślowski uses an ellipsis of a kind to give us a glimpse of Julie and Olivier, revealing that they are still together.

Julie fulfils the criteria of an art-film heroine: her life is without activity. She is rich enough not to need to do anything. All she wants is to be left alone in her secret apartment. From her old home she keeps only a mobile made of blue beads. Full of memories, it symbolises her past life and the fact that we have only the most fragmentary knowledge of it. Twice she visits her demented mother in an old people's home. Julie finds her mother's forgetfulness on the one hand a blessing, for it means that she does not have to talk about painful things. On the other hand it is in itself painful, for her mother does not always remember who Julie is. The two are not really able to make contact with each other. When Julie arrives, the mother is busy watching bungee jumping on television. An old man is about to make the jump. This might be read as a commentary on modern existence: people must go to extremes to find meaning and emotions in their lives. The mother says how happy she is to live there because she has a radio and a television. Instead of offering intimacy, these meetings highlight both women's existential loneliness.

Julie's point of view involves restrictions of many kinds, particularly as regards space and time. We see the world almost all the time as Julie sees it from

her shrunken perspective. Only a few times does the narrative point of view depart from that of Julie, and then we see something that Julie's viewpoint blocks out. This makes us realise that there must be a great many other things taking place around Julie that she fails to notice.[114] What she sees are things close to her and fleeting impressions coloured by memories. It is Julie's embodied existence that manifests itself in the images.

All the time she is afraid that something - people, memories, even the mice in the closet - will intrude on her privacy. This fear is expressed in the narrative by means of offscreen space, through framings that make us aware of the unseen space. Many times, things enter the frame unexpectedly from offscreen: a journalist comes to see her in the hospital, children come running to the swimming pool, Olivier finds her in a café. This creates the impression that Julie is so occupied with her own thoughts that she is slow to react to the outside world.

There are scary things in the offscreen space. We may hear sounds but we are not shown their source.[115] In the scene in which Julie first sees someone being chased in the street, then hears banging at her door and finally listens to someone being dragged down the stairs we experience the situation from Julie's position and through her ears. The person behind the door remains hidden from our sight. When Julie goes out to the landing to find out what happened, the draught bangs her door shut behind her back. In the night she lies awake listening to the sounds of the mice nesting in the closet. The mouse family serves as a reminder of the family that Julie no longer has (Andrew 1998, 30). Paul Coates (2002, 47) captures the soundscape of *Blue* nicely: "The sensory mode of hearing is most deeply associated in *Blue* with shock, discontinuity, and the experience of being the object rather than the subject of action." Julie reacts to things rather than initiating them.

Julie frequents a local café. We see her in a close-up, sitting deep in her thoughts, listening to familiar-sounding flute music played by a street musician. Obviously, the music conjures up memories. A close-up of a coffee cup conveys the way in which Julie's point of view compresses time. As shadows pass across the coffee cup we see time, or duration, spatialised. The shadows are speeded up, which indicates that time goes by, but Julie is not aware of its passage. In her subjective time consciousness she is concentrated on the now-moment. Things that take an instant in Julie's subjective time last much longer in objective time.[116] The shot of the coffee cup could be called a psychological shot. It serves to indicate that Julie's attention is on things that are in her immediate vicinity. She does not care what happens out in the world.

Another café scene begins with a close-up of a spoon reflecting Julie's face. As the view widens, we see that she is again in the café. We are never given a larger

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114 Because Julie does not want to meet Olivier, she is unaware that he has found photographs that would interest her. Later it is revealed that they depict Patrice together with his mistress. She similarly fails to see the old woman trying to return a bottle because she is sitting with her eyes closed, enjoying the sun and listening to the by now familiar flute music.

115 Michel Chion calls such noise *acousmatic* (1999, 71-72).

116 Susan Pockett (2003, 55) argues that from a phenomenological point of view, the question "how long is 'now'?" is subjective. She calls now a *specious present* because it is not a matter of any precisely measured duration.

view of this place or of any other setting in the film. Julie is staring at the spoon, again withdrawn into herself. Suddenly Olivier arrives and Julie reacts as if she had been awakened from sleep. During their conversation Julie is not really there, for she hears the familiar melody again. After Olivier has gone she dips a lump of sugar into her coffee. An extreme close-up shows the lump absorbing the coffee and Julie dropping it into her cup.[117] We can almost smell the coffee here. This might be called an example of a haptic image.

Such concentrated images, detached from space and time, serve to emphasise Julie's inward state of mind, from which she now and then wakes up to the normal rhythm of life. Her subjective time is not synchronous with world-time (Flaherty 1992, 141-155). In Emma Wilson's view, Julie wants to live in the present, forget the past and refrain from planning the future. Julie's trauma and process of healing is the film's sole focus. (1998, 350-352.) There are other concentrated images of the kind illustrated above, images of time and thinking, in which nothing much happens externally, with only light playing on Julie's inexpressive face. She is just a surface on which lights and reflections can dance. Ellipses and fade-outs between scenes lend such moments weight and cut them off from the narrative flow. Narrative repetitions, such as Julie's regular swimming, visits to the café, fragments of the familiar melody, and the internal bursts of music, also serve to make the experience of time less linear. The healing of Julie's scars and the pregnancy of Patrice's mistress are the only external signs of the passing of time. The outbreaks of music, the black and blue moments, come as shocks which briefly interrupt the progress of the narrative.

Julie's inactivity fatally hampers her attempt to forget. Patrice's concerto starts to haunt Julie by invading her consciousness without warning, pitching her out of the present time and place. In her catatonic (Coates 2002, 47) state she is completely unguarded against these outbursts.[118] The traumatic moments come in three forms. At their most violent the image turns either blue or black while loud music is heard. During a less severe version of the fit the image does not disappear, but blue spots appear on it while the music plays quietly. The fits come all of a sudden, without any forewarning. The first attack makes the viewer ask, "What is happening?". They rupture the progress of the narrative and are taken as authorial interventions. But it soon becomes clear that these black gaps and blue moments refer to Julie's state of mind because the other characters do not notice anything. They are "the return of the repressed"; the re-emergence of the memories Julie does not want to have. These recurring fits are the price she pays for refusing to deal with her loss.

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[117]   In the documentary *I'm so so* Kieślowski says that he tested various brands of sugar in order to find the right consistency; one that would absorb the coffee neither too quickly nor too slowly.

[118]   Deleuze's words about the change that the advent of the time image brings about in protagonists could be used to describe Julie's state: "(...) the character has become a kind of viewer. He shifts, runs and becomes animated in vain, the situation he is in outstrips his motor capacities on all sides, and makes him see and hear what is no longer subject to the rules of a response or an action. He records rather than reacts. He is prey to a vision, pursued by it or pursuing it, rather than engaged in an action." (1989, 3.)

The first such attack takes Julie unawares as she is resting on a terrace at the hospital. She lies with her eyes closed when a blue spot appears on her face. Immediately the whole image turns blue and the music bursts out. After a few seconds the image comes back but stays blue. Horrified, Julie looks to her right as if the music was coming from there. Then she turns her head back, the music stops and the blue colour disappears. From offscreen someone says, "Hello." As Julie looks towards the voice, the music starts again and the image turns black. When the image comes back the scene picks up from the moment at which it was interrupted. A journalist has come to visit Julie.

The second traumatic moment occurs when a hitch-hiker wants to meet Julie to return a necklace he had found at the scene of the accident. The boy says: "Would you like to ask something. I arrived immediately after (...)". "No!", Julie answers quickly, and the image fades out and we hear the music again. When the image comes back, Julie says, "I'm sorry." Again, no time is lost in the diegesis. The next, and most frightening, traumatic moment happens while she is swimming alone in a pool. When she is about to climb out, the music bursts forth with great force. As if stunned by it, she sinks back into the water. As the scene ends, she is floating with her head under water and with her hands covering her ears. The blue colour does not appear this time, but the whole image bathes in the deep blue colour of the pool. After Julie learns about Patrice's mistress there is only one more fit, less dramatic than the preceding ones. The knowledge that her husband had had an affair finally brings Julie back to life. As she starts composing with Olivier, the concerto becomes a part of her present life, possibly even of their shared future.

Only Julie and the spectators are aware of the traumatic attacks. The other characters do not hear the music or experience the sudden blackouts. The fits take place on a temporal level of their own. It seems that Julie perceives them as longer than the other people present. Obviously time comes in different forms. Here we have, clearly, an example of subjective time, a time of mental acts. It appears that a great deal can be experienced in what may be called a compressed form during short intervals of subjective time. For Julie and the spectator these moments seem to last longer than for the other protagonists.

Bergson remarked that consciousness has its own duration and follows its own rhythm that is not identical with objective duration. According to him, the time intervals of our consciousness can store as many phenomena, such as memories, as we want. (1999, 20-206.) Bergson said that inside one, singular time "(...) there is an infinity of actual fluxes (...) that necessarily participate in the same virtual whole." These fluxes differ qualitatively from each other; there are "differences of contraction and expansion". (Deleuze 1988, 82-83.) From this we can conclude that Julie's traumatic fits may contain a great many of her memories. Narrative time necessarily flows by, but it appears that the interval is too short for anything to happen in fictive reality. This can be said in yet other words: Julie's subjective experience of time and its cinematic representation cannot coincide. Cinematic representation can only achieve an approximation of subjective experience.

In cognitive terms the moments of trauma may be described as moments of saturation. After the first fit the viewer is likely to be taken by surprise, because here the narrative refuses to conform to her expectations. Because of this she

cannot immediately make sense of what she is seeing. Even though it soon becomes clear that what is happening is related to Julie's mental state, we continue to experience the attacks as intensive and their meanings as ambiguous.

The black gaps and blue moments symbolise Julie's trauma. Possibly she remembers and sees things from the past with her mind's eye, possibly she just goes through a black-out. We have no way of knowing more than what we are shown. In fact, the gaps may be interpreted as Kieślowski's way of saying just that. What can films reveal about our inner lives? What are the ways in which they can achieve such revelations? Kieślowski is testing the limits of cinema in this respect. He said that no matter how hard we try, we cannot see what happens inside a human being. *Blue* is a film about this difficulty, but simultaneously it proves that films do have a great number of means to represent inner experiences indirectly.

Remembering and memories are a central theme also in Alain Resnais' film *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959), which is one of the landmarks of subjective narration in modern cinema. Referring to Bergson's conception of the birth of recollections, Jussi Hietanen argues that the film is about the transformation of memory into a recollection-image, about replacing oneself in the past, and this is reconstructed on the level of the film's visual narrative.[119] As Hietanen interprets this narrative, the spectator cannot be sure that what she sees in the flashbacks are the same images that the heroine sees as she reminiscences about war-time events in France. (1996, 158.) Hietanen's conclusions are similar to mine: "Ultimately, the only thing that she (the viewer) can depend on is that the images are constructions just as many images of Hiroshima after the atom bomb are (re)constructions. Accordingly, recollection and its representation to the spectator seem to generate two separate though interconnected and interlaced visual discourses, one originating in the woman's, the other in the spectator's gaze." (1996, 159.)

In *Blue*, memories never appear as images. Kieślowski refuses to show us what Julie is thinking. It is left for the viewer's imagination to decide what her thoughts are. The blue colours, the black moments and the music are offered as substitutes for concrete images. Possibly Julie indeed sees something more meanwhile, possibly she sees memory images. One has the feeling that Kieślowski's refusal to present memory images is partly an ethical choice. He wanted to protect his heroine by keeping her most private concerns secret. Kieślowski talked a great deal about respecting people's privacy. It was the major ethical dilemma that a documentarist had to face. How much can one show without harming the protagonists? He thought that he had no right to film real tears and intimate moments, such as death, or to intrude into people's bedrooms.

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[119] Merleau-Ponty disagrees with Bergson on how memory works. Merleau-Ponty does not believe in the psychological storage of memories, that we preserve memories in our consciousness, as Bergson did. He argues that when we perceive something which brings past events to our mind, we do not transfer ourselves to the past. These perceptions are new and take place in the present. (2002, 478-480.) He writes: "A preserved fragment of the lived-through past can be at the most no more than an occasion for thinking about the past, but it is not the past which is compelling recognition; recognition, when we try to derive it from any content whatever, always precedes itself. Reproduction presupposes recognition, and cannot be understood as such unless I have in the first place a sort of direct contact with the past in its own domain." (2002, 480.)

He found it difficult to draw such limits, and this was one reason why he moved to fiction films. (Stok 1993, 114; Ostria 1992.) But perhaps the dilemma continued to trouble him. Maybe he thought that even fictive characters need to be protected against an intruding gaze.

In fact, the viewer has been excluded from the private sphere right from the beginning, for we never became acquainted with Julia's family or learned what their life was like. The stylistic elements – the tight framings, the blue details of the mise-en-scène, the music and the fade-outs - give us only an approximation of Julie's emotional life. They are what is offered to the spectator as Julie's mindscreen. On the other hand, the loud bursts of music may even be seen as the director's protest against his own protagonist. He is trying to make her understand that she has to face her loss; that she cannot hide forever.

I wrote above that style is a means of expressing emotions indirectly. Here we should remember that in *The Film and the New Psychology*, Merleau-Ponty asserts that emotions are not something hidden:

> We must reject that prejudice which makes 'inner realities' out of love, hate, or anger, leaving them accessible to one single witness: the person who feels them. Anger, shame, hate, and love are not psychic facts hidden at the bottom of another's consciousness: they are types of behaviour or styles of conduct which are visible from the outside. They exist *on* this face or *in* those gestures, not hidden behind them. (...) we have to say that others are directly manifest to us as behaviour. (1964, 52-53.)

This implies that we do not need to interpret stylistic elements and conclude Julie's emotional state from them; instead, it is directly visible in her behaviour and her relations with other people. There is truth in this. We do learn a great deal about Julie's mental state by just observing her face and behaviour and listening to her words. But if we take this attitude to extremes, we might have to conclude that style is superfluous, that it does not tell us anything that we do not already know. Style serves to add nuances to and heighten the emotional states or moods expressed. When we pick up stylistic clues we feel that we are acting in a meaningful way and involved in the making of meanings. But Merleau-Ponty's comment is a positive contribution in that he gives film credit as a means of expressing internal states.

I have noted that the spectator is largely restricted to Julie's point of view and knowledge (internal focalisation in both its external and deep form) and that because of this, we catch only glimpses of the places in which she finds herself. Thus, the film reveals very little of the physical surroundings in which the events occur. Despite this confined narrative point of view the film offers a great deal of mental space where our thoughts can move freely; where our imagination can create both mindscapes and landscapes.

The lamp or mobile made out of pieces of blue glass is one of the key motives in the film, and the way in which it is presented in different phases of the narrative is connected with Julie's changing state of mind. We encounter it first as Julie goes to see her old home for the last time. She enters her daughter's blue room where the mobile is hanging from the ceiling. Angrily she pulls at one of the chains of

beads, loosening it. She devours the blue lollipop that her daughter Anna used to eat and lets the lid of the piano fall closed with a crash. Later she takes the mobile to her new apartment. She hangs it in the middle of her living room and then stares at it, biting her lip and clenching her fist. When her neighbour asks where she got it from Julie cannot answer, because she is afraid to cry. She is not angry anymore, just grief-stricken, but unable to express her sorrow. Near the end, as Julie prepares to leave for Olivier's place, the scene is shot from behind the mobile. The blue spots are moving in front of Julie's face. The symphony has been completed and Julie has calmed down. This time the blue colour does not trigger the loud music but seems, instead, to indicate that Julie is slowly coming to terms with the accident. This visual element is linked with the temporal and thematic development of the narrative.

Along the way we have heard fragments of the music. Julie heard the music in her head when she read the score sheets. Even when the notes ended on the staff she continued to hear the music. Then she destroyed the sheets, but the music started to haunt her. Close to the end there is a scene in which Julie and Olivier work on the composition. The music is no longer a frightening experience, but it is still connected with colours and abstract shapes. This is a very tactile scene. As it begins, Julie and Olivier are trying out different instruments. We hear a fragment of each version (as non-diegetic music). Extreme close-ups show us Julie's finger following the notes as the music plays. It is as if the music was coming out of her finger. This is one example of a haptic image, evoking the sense of touch. Then the situation is seen in a medium long shot. Julie and Olivier are by the piano. As the music plays on, the image goes slowly out of focus. Finally there are only red and blue spots. This is like an excerpt of a visual symphony of the kind, an interaction between image and sound, that Germaine Dulac wished cinema would be like.

During the last sequence the concerto is finally heard in full. A pan starting from Julie's face links all the film's protagonists and seems to bring them into a single space. The pan may be interpreted as visualising Julie's thoughts. For the first time after the accident she stops to think about the people around her, accepting them and maybe even thanking them in her mind. From the blue twilight the camera picks, one by one, the individual people with whom Julie has formed a connection: the hitch-hiker wakes up and touches the pendant around his neck, Julie's mother closes her eyes and a nurse comes into the room, Lucille, Julie's neighbour and a new friend, performs in the striptease club, and Sandrine, the mistress, is being given an ultrasound scan. The pan ends on Julie's face. The words of a song provide a comment on Julie's situation and, in fact, on the human situation:

> Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,
> but have no love, I have become a sounding brass
> or a clanging cymbal.
>
> And though I have the gift of prophecy,
> and understand all mysteries,
> and though I have all faith,
> so that I could remove mountains,
> but have no love,
> I am nothing. (1 Corinth 13.)

Two motives, water and the eye, recur at the end. First water, as we see Julie and Olivier embracing each other in an aquarium-like space. They are not exactly in water, but their movements make it seem as if they were floating in water. The image of Julie and Olivier in the "aquarium" is a crystallisation of an ambiguous art-cinema image: dreamlike and subjective. As Margarete Wach points out, water symbolises rebirth (2001, 326). Earlier water was for Julie a refuge from memories and people. Now she no longer runs away from people but is able to look back.

The other motive, the eye, returns in the end as well. Wilson points out that now we see Olivier's eye in a close-up, and in that eye a reflection of Julie, who is facing away from him (1998, 361). However, the reflection in the eye is so unclear that the eye might just as well be Julie's. The eye shot is followed by a close-up of Julie. She is sitting still and a tear falls on her cheek. It is finally time to grieve. If the first eye at the hospital signified withdrawal, this eye signifies a new start, or at least its possibility. At the end of *Blue* it is difficult to say what has really been achieved. The most important change has happened inside Julie, and we still do not know what that is. According to Wilson's interpretation, Julie survives in the end by holding back her memories and trauma (2000, 55-56). I tend to think that the process of mourning is only about to begin here at the end, for Kieślowski's films often close at a moment when an insight has been reached but when its consequences are yet to unfold. They are for the spectator to think about.

Earlier I referred to Janusz Gazda's observation that Kieślowski sets up extreme situations to get his central ideas across. I do not think that this observation can be generalised to cover all of his films, or even all his mature films. I do not see him setting up extreme situations in *Red* and *The Double Life of Véronique,* for example. Julie is indeed in an extreme situation of a kind. She is in a position to live her life in any way she wants, but gradually she realises that relationships are much more important than personal freedom, which is in fact impossible. However, I do not think that Julie's situation serves to bring only one idea home. *Blue* should not be viewed as a film only about liberty. It has more levels, such as love, communication, recovery, memories, family relations and loneliness. It deals with a wide range of human emotions.

8   Representations of space

I have touched Kieślowski's representations of space above, especially as connected with his protagonists' mental states. Now I shall consider representations of space further in order to show how space is linked, in Kieślowski's films, with mental realities and central narrative conflicts. The focus is still on the metaphorical rather than the literal sense of "space". The distinction between spaces and more concrete *places* is pertinent in this context. Keeping in mind the metaphorical sense of space, it could be argued that the spaces and places that we see pictured in Kieślowski's late films are always in part reflections of mental spaces. In the early films, such as *The Scar,* the depictions of towns for example are close to documentary representations of real places, whereas in *The*

Double Life of Véronique for instance, a dense stylistic filter creates a dream-like atmosphere. However, if we continue to look at these matters from a Merleau-Pontyan perspective, drawing sharp distinctions between the reality statuses of the places and spaces represented is not the most important point.

In his essay *Real Space Images*, drawing on phenomenology and existential philosophy, Pauli Tapani Karjalainen remarks that such either-or thinking would make metaphorical representations of places impossible:

> Because of the ongoing cultural interplay between the physics of the 'land' and metaphysics of the mind, the image of place resides somewhere in between. In this case it would be a daunting task to try to employ the rule of the excluded middle, the basic logical assumption that something either is the case or is not. To do that would eliminate the locus - or place of birth - of the metaphoric. (1998, 105.)

Architect Juhani Pallasmaa writes in a similar vein about architectonic spaces:

> Lived space is always a composite of external space and the inner space of the mind and of actual and mental images. In an experience of lived space, memories and dreams, values and meanings blend with sense experience. Lived space is space integrated into the current life situation of the experiencing subject. (1996, 26.)

In Kieślowski's films the surroundings are carefully constructed to reflect the personality of the protagonists. Details receive most attention in the *Three Colours* trilogy with its colour schemes matching the protagonists' moods. But even in *The Decalogue,* which could be described as more realistic in its representation of space, elements of the mise-en-scène reflect character traits.

As for the spectator's experience of cinematic space, we do not enter a film in the way that we enter real, physical places. In her encounters with cinematic space the spectator relies on her experience and imagination. Branigan observes that our perceptions of cinematic space are based on imagining movements that we or someone else could execute between various places (1989, 313). The immobile spectator sitting in front of mobile images projects her inner space onto the screen (Bruno 2002, 167). Thus, it is obvious that there is a crucial difference between the ways in which we experience cinematic spaces on the one hand and physical spaces on the other. [120] We imagine what it would be like to inhabit and move in the spaces represented by a film. Merleau-Ponty (2002, 352-353), again, writes:

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[120] Yet, Bruno considers that our experience of cinematic space is related to our experience of architecture, which involves several senses. She puts emphasis on the haptic, touch-related aspect of film experience. According to Bruno, there is dynamism and interactivity between film, the body and architecture. Cinematic space simultaneously creates a space for consumption and involves an act of consuming space. The viewer is, as it were, written into the field she observes. Bruno remarks: "Such an observer is not a static contemplator, a fixed gaze, a disembodied eye/I. She is a physical entity, a moving spectator, a body making journeys in space." (2002, 56.) Therefore, Bruno insists, a viewer lives a film just as she lives the space she inhabits: as a concrete space of everyday movement (2002, 65).

> (...) each attitude of my body is for me, immediately, the power of achieving a certain spectacle, (…) and each spectacle is what it is for me in a certain kinaesthetic situation. In other words, my body is permanently stationed before things in order to perceive them and, conversely, appearances are always enveloped for me in a certain bodily attitude. In so far, therefore, as I know the relations of appearances to the kinesthetic situation, this is not in virtue of any law or in terms of any formula, but to the extent that I have a body, and that through that body I am at grips with the world.

It is because of our bodily existence in the world that we are able to imagine what it feels like to move in the represented spaces of a film.

8.1   Double spaces and boundary crossings

The above analyses of *A Short Film About Killing*, *Blue* and *Red*, for example, have shown how narrative time and space are divided in different ways. Parallel editing reveals the protagonists co-existing in space and time without being aware of each other. We have also seen how time forks into subjective and objective dimensions and how past and present enter a single image through various cinematic devices.

This doubling, or multiplying, applies also to representations of space; it calls attention to the protagonists' separate and distinct existence within the same fictive universe. "Doubling" is used here not only in the concrete sense of narration with parallel story lines but also in the symbolic sense that elements of the mise-en-scène serve to express the mentally separate existence of two characters who may even be shown in the same frame.

Veronique Campan calls attention to Kieślowski's doubling of space in her essay on *The Decalogue*. She points out that in Kieślowski's films, diegetic time and space are never one, but appear always as double. She observes that each of the ten films represents two opposed or otherwise different ways of living, of expressing opinions. This is conveyed through elements of the mise-en-scène, such as lightning, objects and character traits. (1997, 61.) Her observation is related to Christopher Garbowski's remark that the protagonists of *The Decalogue* construct a self-image in a dialogue with other people (1996). Moreover, we must also remember the continuous dialogue between the story and the discourse – the nature of space, in Kieślowski's films, as an in-between state.

Coates writes about *Red* that in it, the dialectic of foreground and background is linked with a concern with the relations between inner and outer realities, that is, the inside and outside of the diegesis (2002, 60). The dialectic of foreground and background is obvious in the early stages of *Red* when

> (…) many images feature looks outward through windows. The invisibility of glass is perhaps the main reason why it forms so fragile a border. Later the film will connect inner and outer systematically, becoming fascinated by interiors that open onto exteriors or interiors that are both "interior" and "more interior," multiply framed or revealed by doors opening inward in a process of complication. *Often, and on so many levels, Kieślowski's film work means problematizing borders.* (2002, 60. Emphasis added.)

Coates sees the foregrounding of framing as an indication that Kieślowski the documentarist is constantly looking for different, and more appropriate, ways of

framing the characters (2002, 60). This interpretation is confirmed by Kieślowski himself when he talks about the role of windows in his films.

Kieślowski said that windows are excellent vantage points; positions that he, as a documentarist, has always looked for. A window is like a camera behind which he can safely observe events from a distance. A window, or a camera, separates the observer from reality even though simultaneously she is in the middle of it. (Takahashi 1993, 12.) What Kieślowski says here about himself applies equally well to the spectator and the protagonists of his films. The spectators are reminded of their position as outside observers by the various transparent and reflecting surfaces - not just windows - that Kieślowski places between his spectators and the diegetic world and between his protagonists and their life-world.

Windows are Kieślowski's most typical way of framing people. A person looking out of a window is perhaps the most representative single image in Kieślowski's films. Often looking out means looking into oneself, into the mental landscape, for what the characters see is often related to their current situation. What they see are reflections of their hopes and fears. As we observe, in *Decalogue* 2, the doctor and Dorota standing by their windows and staring into darkness, we know that they are searching their souls. In *Decalogue 9* the impotent Roman sees a little girl playing outside – the child he cannot have. Before her fateful performance, Weronika sees an old woman carrying heavy bags under her window and offers to help her. Immediately afterwards she feels a pain in her heart. The figure of the old woman foreshadows Weronika's imminent death. The mugging Julie witnesses through her window reflects her own fears of living alone.

For the protagonist, looking out of a window means contemplating her relationship with external reality. Kieślowski's protagonists are going through boundary situations in their lives, and this condition is implicated in their relationships with windows. Campan (1997, 64) has discussed this in her essay on *The Decalogue*. In the series, people live cooped up in small flats in identical concrete housing blocks, trying to define their relationship with the world outside and attempting timidly to establish contact with other people. Campan's characterisation of such lives as autistic existence may be going a little too far. Kieślowski's characters do have problems with communication, but in most of the ten films they manage to overcome the barriers that separate them from their fellow humans and establish at least some minimum contact with them. Windows provide sheltered vantage points, as will be seen in the analyses below.

One of the main points of Garbowski's thesis on *The Decalogue* is that its protagonists achieve self-transcendence in a dialogue with another person. Garbowski uses Bakhtin's ideas among other sources to theorise the representation of space in the series. For the "dialogic protagonist" space has an axiological dimension. This is the space where the protagonists encounter other people, themselves and their surroundings and where a dialogue with a fellow human makes self-transcendence possible. Garbowski also considers the inner aspect of this space. According to him, point-of-view shots are the most common way to express the inner reality of a subject. A point-of-view shot puts us in the protagonist's position with the result that what we see is the mirror of her soul. Kieślowski uses such shots in key scenes to make us empathise with his characters

and to position us in a character's "inner body". Further, point-of-view/reverse shot sequences serve to emphasise the dialogic aspect of space. Garbowski argues that in several such sequences, the person who has the inner body is in a stronger position with respect to knowledge, experience, or seeing than the other characters. (1997, 40-56; 116.) This is true in some cases, but, in *Decalogue 6* for example, not all the time, as will be seen. Garbowski makes a great many insightful observations about space and Kieślowski's protagonists, but he strays into overstatement when he incorporates religious symbolism into his analyses of spatial forms. (See Garbowski 1997, 55-56.)

It is indeed in a dialogue with the Other that Kieślowski's protagonists learn about themselves and other people, that is to say, grow as human beings. In this sense, *Red* is not the only film where Kieślowski deals with fraternity. Merleau-Ponty writes that in order to become genuine subjectivities we must open ourselves to Others and go forth from ourselves. This is a continuous process, taking place in time. (2002, 495.) This opening of ourselves and encounter with the Other does not happen without resistance, however. A better understanding of oneself and other people is the most important outcome of Kieślowski's films, but this enhanced understanding is a fragile condition. In his narratives, moments of understanding, solidarity and closeness are often short-lived. Kieślowski rarely if ever allows us to feel that a final state of equilibrium or peace and quiet has been achieved. Such pessimistic conclusions are in keeping with Kieślowski's public statements. He longed for peace and normal life but did not believe that his hopes would ever come true.

In *A Short Film About Love* the meeting or, in fact, confrontation, between the two characters is a painful process which eventually yields only a little goodwill. In *The Decalogue* version the conclusion is much more pessimistic. Kieślowski's deployment of space in it is bound up with the central theme of loneliness and the search for love. The narrative space is divided in two as the two protagonists observe each other in turn. During the first half of the narrative the point of view belongs to Tomek, a boy who spies, with a telescope, on Magda, a woman in her thirties living opposite.[121] Secretly and from a distance, Tomek loves this woman whom he has met only in the post office, where he works as a clerk. Both in the post office and in his room, glass separates Tomek from Magda. From his room Tomek sees Magda on the other side of two windows and across a large yard. He sees her every move, but does not hear her voice. Campan points out that the absence of sound creates a sense of loneliness (1997, 64). In order to hear her he phones her, but says nothing. He even calls the gasworks simply to disturb her lovemaking with one of her suitors. He takes up delivering milk to get closer to her. He can do such tricks because he knows he is safe, knows that there is a distance between him and Magda.

In the post office he can safely communicate with her from behind the glass partition. He keeps sending her fake notices about arrived mail just to make her come where he can see her. He wants to narrow the distance between them with

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[121] The name Tomek may be an allusion to Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960), a film dealing with voyeurism.

his childish game, but he is really thinking only about himself. When Magda finally has an argument with the post office manager, Tomek runs after her and confesses his actions. When Magda asks what he wants from her, he declares his love. Out of pity, Magda agrees to a date with him. Later she brings him to her apartment and humiliates the shy and inexperienced boy sexually. She says, cynically, that love is nothing but a physical thing. Tomek is so upset that he slits his wrists. Meanwhile Tomek's godmother witnesses the episode, or at least a part of it, through Tomek's spyglass. Kieślowski turns the usual relationships structuring a voyeuristic film: ironically, the voyeur himself ends up being spied on. His would be doubly humiliated if he knew about his godmother looking on.

The point of view shifts while Tomek is in hospital. Magda feels guilty about what she has done, misses Tomek, and wishes that he would watch her again. Up to this point, we have seen Magda's apartment only through Tomek's telescope. Now we are inside and witness Magda, in her turn, trying to see if Tomek is home. The spectator is tied first to one protagonist's point of view, then to another's. It is always the viewpoint of the protagonist whose feelings are not reciprocated. People's feelings rarely coincide, and this makes love difficult. To return to Garbowski's argument about point-of-view shots, it must be added that here point-of-view is not connected with a stronger position with respect to knowledge, experience, or even seeing.

With all kinds of signs Magda beckons him to call her. But there is no trace of Tomek. The female character is denied access to the position of a voyeur, and in this sense Kieślowski can be seen to confirm the status of the man as the subject, of the woman as the object of the act of looking. Finally, growing desperate, Magda goes to visit him at his place. Tomek is not in but his godmother shows her Tomek's room and everything is revealed. *Decalogue 6* and the film version end differently. In *A Short Film About Love* Magda comes back when Tomek is at home. He is asleep and she would like to touch his hand. Then we see the godmother preventing her from doing so. This is what was shown at the beginning of the film (see Chapter 5.3). Magda looks through the telescope and fantasises about herself crying at the kitchen table, as Tomek saw her earlier, with the difference that now Tomek is there to comfort her in her loneliness. At least in dreams, the distance has been closed.

At the end of *Decalogue 6* Magda goes to see Tomek at work. He is sitting behind the partition just as when the story started. We are still confined to Magda's point of view. She would like to make up with him, but he says only "I won't watch you any more." The distance between them has opened up again. Magda is standing offscreen but her face is reflected in the pane behind which Tomek is sitting, just like in the earlier post office scene. When we first saw the image it was a reflection of Tomek's hopes, now it is a reflection of crushed hopes – both Tomek's and Magda's. As I see it, what Kieślowski makes visible here is Tomek's fantasy about him and Magda being together. In the pane their faces are shown side by side, but as will become clear, this is probably possible only in a reflection, in a dream.[122] A circle closes here again. Thus, in *The Decalogue* version the space

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[122] Žižek uses the post office scenes to illustrate his concept of interface (see Chapter 1). In his interpretation this reflection - a magic moment of interface - serves to make the

remains double, but in *A Short Film About Love* a step across the (transparent) boundary has been taken.

In *The Double Life of Véronique* two externally identical girls live parallel but different lives. Their lives are in many ways similar, but their personalities and experiences are different. In Chapter 6.4 I discussed the different narrative strategies that Kieślowski uses to establish links and parallels between the two girls' stories. Now I shall make some further comments about how the film's narrative spaces reflect the two characters. Despite the two girls inhabiting separate narratives almost all the time, the distinction between the two mental spaces is not always clear.

Weronika is happy and spirited. In spite of her heart disease she leads a full life. When it starts to rain in the middle of a choir performance and the other choristers take shelter, she remains standing in the rain, her face raised towards the sky. This is the first view we get of her. She is a free spirit and unsure about her feelings towards her boyfriend, who loves her. She is not certain what she wants from life, but this does not worry her too much. Véronique, on the other hand, is more thoughtful and introverted. She ponders over things in her mind and follows her intuition. Weronika's death makes her more sensitive to all the signs around her.

Kieślowski said himself that in the film, narration was a means to express the girls' personalities. Weronika's story is narrated synthetically, Véronique's analytically. (Stok 1993, 215.) The first part of the film is episodic; a synthesis of key moments in Weronika's life shortly before her death, told in just 27 minutes. The episodic structure resembles Weronika's behaviour and aspiring nature. Fade-outs add weight to the episodes, making them stand out from the narrative flow. Each new scene involves a temporal jump and spatial displacement. Time and space within the scenes and the images considered as compositional units are highlighted, but the temporal and spatial relations between the scenes remain obscure despite the linear narrative structure.

We do not follow Weronika from scene to scene. Rather, we always find her in a new situation without knowing how much time has elapsed since the last scene. Summer turning into autumn is the only sign of the passing of time. According to Kieślowski, the first part of the film is a synthesis of one or one and a half year's events (Stok 1993, 214). This surprised me, for I had been thinking that the first part might cover no more than a few months. The duration is not relevant, however. Especially in the first part, stylisation and mysterious events lend the narrative a fairytale atmosphere. Because of this, the represented world hovers somewhere between internal and external reality. Places and spaces are seen as projections of mental states, as mindscreens, rather than as concrete, physical locations.

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spectral dimension present "in the middle of an utterly plain scene" (2002, 39-40). What Žižek means is that the point of view brought into play in the shot of Magda is not sutured, that is, it is not shown that the Gaze belongs to her, and this is felt as disturbing and uncanny. In this way, Žižek claims, Magda's reflection renders perceptible a fantasmatic dimension. (2002, 33-35; 39-40.) I do not find this interpretation a fully convincing account of either the story world or the spectator's experience: I at least have not sensed the uncanniness Žižek speaks about.

The Véronique sequence is about 40 minutes longer than the Weronika sequence. Narration pursues Véronique step by step, or so it appears. Unlike in Weronika's story, here it seems to be Véronique rather than the author who is carrying the narrative forwards. As spectators we feel that we are shadowing Véronique everywhere as she follows her intuition. There is more continuity between the scenes than in the Weronika sequence, which creates the impression that we are now seeing more. It is Véronique's movements that establish continuity. After the mysterious phone call discussed above Véronique enters into an enigmatic game with the puppeteer. From then on in particular, the narrative follows her premonitions and guesses. If Weronika's story is remembered for its tableau-like views, Véronique's story is memorable for its uninterrupted movement. Views are constantly being transformed by mobile framing, revealing new space. Analytic narration means also cutting into close-ups and revealing details, whereas in Weronika's story framing is more static.

The difference between the two stories is that the first foregrounds space and the second time. Chion's words about mobile and static framing help to put this experience into words. "Vision under these conditions (of mobile framing) occurs more along the flow of time, since it has no stable spatial referent. In the case of a sequence composed of static (or less constantly moving) shots, we can identify each shot by a certain composition, mise-en-scène, and perspective, and so we find it easy to represent this spatial arrangement in our memory." (1999, 43.) Indeed, it is as a series of rather static images that we remember Weronika's story. Frame edges darkened by filters make individual shots conspicuous. All the scenes are quite short, of approximately the same length, emphasising their equal importance. The key scenes - the encounter between the doubles and the concert scene leading to Weronika's death - stand out because of the dynamic movement and subjective camera used in them. In both scenes we are inside the protagonists' gazes.

Strong, expressionist shadows, extraordinary camera angles and pans, odd looks, quivering light and emotional music serve to create a slightly eerie undertone in this part of the film. These stylistic devices allude to the approaching death. Weronika seems to sense what is going to take place, but she does not want to stop to think about it. Strange things happen, betokening that something is not right. Adopting Wuss's term, we might call these signs microstructures. Weronika steps into a puddle when running home. Back at home she wakes up with a start, touching her chest. In her aunt's place she feels uncomfortable when a dwarf enters and sees her in a nightgown. In a fit of pain she bends down among autumn leaves and sees a man exposing himself. During an audition she looks overly strained. As she learns that she has won the singing contest, a woman in a big hat gives her an angry look. Most shockingly of all, she sees Véronique in the marketplace, and we as spectators assume that somehow all the previous things anticipated this encounter. In Véronique's story such expressionist shadows have disappeared. Her fairytale world seems safer and gentler than the world where Weronika lived, but Véronique herself often looks sad.

In *The Double Life of Véronique* style and narrative manner are used to create mental spaces. The boundaries separating these two mental spaces around Weronika and Véronique are constantly blurred, not as in a normal dialogue

between two human beings but through a telekinetic or supersensual connection of some kind; a connection that transcends death. In one way or another, all of Kieślowski's late films deal with either crossing or drawing boundaries. There are boundaries between the self and the other, the inner and the outer, the visible and the invisible, the real and the unreal. By calling attention to such boundaries and limits, and by crossing them, Kieślowski makes metaphysical issues manifest; issues that cannot be expressed within the cinematic system or through its language, but which can be alluded to. As Kawin observes, cinematic self-consciousness is about testing the limits of the system: "(...) the question of self-conscious narration takes on metaphysical proportions rather urgently" (1978, 55).

8.2 Microworlds

In his documentaries Kieślowski zoomed in on small sections of Polish reality; small worlds within a bigger whole. In his late fiction films Kieślowski looks into people's intimate spheres. With the exception of *White,* larger contexts have been excluded from the stories, but even in *White* the references to Poland's social situation are made to serve a personal story. Kieślowski's narratives take place in a subjective time and space. At the level of images this means tight framings and a great many close-ups. Only the immediate vicinity of the protagonist is included in the image. For most of the time, we find Kieślowski's characters occupying dusky interiors in contemplation of their lives. These intimate spaces are in many ways expressions of the protagonists' mental states. Even the exteriors seem to be extensions of inner landscapes. Because of this intimate approach on the thematic, visual and narrational levels alike, the worlds Kieślowski created could be called microworlds. In Kieślowski's early films there was a strong link between the places depicted in the narratives and places existing in the real world. Here this connection has become looser.

The dialectic of inside and outside, of foreground and background in *Red* was analysed above as a function of narrative structure. Now I shall consider this dialectic in terms of the mise-en-scène, especially as it relates to the characters living in the microworlds of *Decalogue 9* and *Red*.

If *A Short Film About Love/ Decalogue 6* is about an attempt to establish a relationship, *Decalogue 9* is about an attempt to restore a marriage, to prevent it from collapsing. Hanka and Roman's marriage has drifted into a crisis because Roman has become permanently impotent. As the film opens, the couple are reunited after Roman's return from a trip during which he had the diagnosis confirmed. Despite Hanka's insistence that love is more than five minutes in bed, it is clear that the two are torn asunder. This is revealed by the visuals. Roman encourages his wife to find a lover, but she protests. When Roman does find out that she already has one, he becomes jealous enough to start spying on Hanka, and finally, because of a misunderstanding, attempts to commit suicide.

Kieślowski employs style to set off the mental distance between the couple. Three aspects of the mise-en-scène stand out, giving the film a distinctive look: the use of deep shadows, the shift of focus within a frame, and the use of depth of field. An analysis of a few scenes will illustrate these features.

When Roman returns home, it is raining heavily. Hanka meets him downstairs and they enter a lift. In the confined space of the lift they stand close together, but a dark shadow creates a gap between them. Light coming inside illuminates now one and now the other protagonist, but they are never visible at the same time. Between them lies a gulf of unspoken things that does not close even in the most intimate of places, the bed. There they talk about the situation, but the dark shadow remains between them. As will become clear, neither of them is speaking sincerely. The shadows are used here as a kind of internal montage; to divide the space into two, Roman's space and Hanka's space. At the end of the bed scene Kieślowski frames the couple in the doorway, as if saying, "Look at them."

Throughout the film, views of Hanka are better and more evenly illuminated, whereas Roman appears among strong contrasts of light and shadow. The shadows express Roman's growing desperation. Hanka, by contrast, does not yet know that Roman is aware of her liaison. Their gradual estrangement is also reflected in the use of depth of field. Kieślowski stages the action in several scenes in a way that makes the most of the three-dimensionality of space. Roman has just received a phone call from someone he suspects is his wife's lover. As Hanka comes home he would prefer not to confront her. He is sitting in the foreground with his back to Hanka, who enters in the background. When they talk, the focus shifts between the foreground and the background. Mental distance is maintained. Such distinct planes of action feature in several scenes in which Roman is spying on his wife. Roman taps the phone in the foreground while Hanka is talking on it in another room in the background. Roman is in the foreground behind a corner when Hanka, in the background, leaves a flat after a meeting with her lover. This game culminates in a scene in which Roman is hiding inside a closet in the flat where Hanka and her lover have their meetings. This time Hanka wants to see her lover only to tell him that their relationship is over. Slits in the closet door allow Roman to listen to their conversation and observe the departure of the lover. It is when she is alone that Hanka realises that Roman is hiding in the closet. In all these scenes we see things from Roman's point of view, or rather the camera is placed on his side of the space.

Mirrors appear in *Decalogue 9* even more prominently than elsewhere in Kieślowski's oeuvre. Mirror images are one of the key motives in his films, images reflected not just in an actual mirror, but in reflecting surfaces of all kinds. This makes sense in films whose protagonists are constantly reflecting on their own lives. Discussing Merleau-Ponty's reversibility thesis, Dillon (1988, 161) talks about the role of mirrors as an Other that can be used to construct an image of oneself. "They provide, at the level of perception, the literal reflection that will culminate, at the level of the cogito, in the figurative reflection of thought turned on itself." (1988, 162). This is exactly what happens in *Decalogue 9*. After coming home Roman, who wants to be alone, goes to the bathroom, whose walls are covered with mirrors. He is annoyed when Hanka comes in and wants to touch him. He feels exposed in the middle of all the mirrors that reproduce his image. It is as if he was wondering whether his impotence can be seen from the outside. Unlike his wife, he is shown looking in a mirror several times during the film. At one moment of desperation his face is reflected in the surface of a table, on another occasion in

his car windows. Merleau-Ponty thinks that mirrors may indeed reveal something of our inner selves:

> (…) the mirror image anticipates, within things, the labour of vision. Like all other technical objects, such as tools and signs, the mirror has sprung up along the open circuit *between* the seeing and the visible body. Every technique is a "technique of the body", illustrating and amplifying the metaphysical structure of our flesh. The mirror emerges because I am a visible see-er, because there is a reflexivity of the sensible; the mirror translates and reproduces that reflexivity. In it my externality becomes complete. Everything that is most secret about me passes into that face (…) (1993, 129.)

Kieślowski's frequent use of mirrors and other reflecting surfaces is related also to cinematic self-reflexivity. This is the case in *The Double Life of Véronique*, for example, as Wilson (2000, 3-29) observes. The boundaries between reality and fantasy are constantly blurred in the film. Moreover, the reflections serve to remind us that cinema itself is similarly nothing but a reflection of reality of a kind; a play of shadows. Throughout Kieślowski's oeuvre mirror images are linked also with the theme of doubling and alternative lives; most prominently in *The Double Life of Véronique* but also in *Red*.

In *Blue* there was a strong sense of offscreen space excluded from our view. In *Red* the frame is more mobile, but confinement comes also in other forms, such as houses. *The Decalogue* is a study of a range of different characters, and Kieślowski uses their flats to express character traits. Interiors are mental and existential spaces. They are lived spaces, revealing a great deal about those who dwell in them. They contain a great many memories, temporal layers.

Giuliana Bruno makes a rather surprising comparison, arguing that cinema, like the cemetery, are heterotopias because "(t)hey inhabit multiple points in time and collapse multiple places into a single place". She asserts that they are sites without a fixed or geometric notion of geography. They are "systems of opening and closing" that refer to all other imaginable spaces. (2002, 147.) Bruno defines such heterotopias as follows:

> They are capable of juxtaposing in a single real place segments of diverse geographic worlds and temporal histories. In fact, a heterotopic space can hold indefinitely accumulating time and fleetingly transitory aspects of time, which reside in the architectonics of the place itself as well as in the historicity of the bodies that inhabit the site. Like the city of the dead, the city of images is funerary: its moving stillness monumentalizes the body and, holding the trace of its historicity, gives body to memory. (2002, 147.)

This comparison between the geographical character of cinema and the cemetery appears a little far-fetched. The similarity that Bruno sees between their temporal natures is more apt. In *Red*, Judge Kern's house is truly an accumulation of time and memory, and thus a comparison between the house and a cemetery might be more appropriate. The house symbolises the old man's mind, filled with bitter memories. Cynical and lonely, he has kept everything bottled up for decades. From the outside the house looks introverted, if this is something that we can say of a house. It stands surrounded by tall old trees and a fence. Both literally and symbolically, the house is a storeroom. It appears that in the course of the years

Kern has collected things of all kinds without ever discarding anything. When angry neighbours throw stones through his windows, he collects even the stones.

The maze inside is exposed to our view as Valentine enters the house for the first time. She opens several doors, revealing always new spaces. She goes deeper into the judge's dark home, uncomfortable about intruding into someone's privacy. Finally she finds a man sitting by a small lamp in the middle of the maze. (The effect is similar to that at the end of *The Double Life of Véronique* when Véronique wakes up in Alexandre's house, walks through it and finds him in his study behind several closed doors.) The house is like the big nest of a man withdrawn into himself. The earthy colours, the different shades of brown, reinforce its nest-like atmosphere. It is from within this hiding place that the judge invades other people's privacy, making enemies, for later they threaten his peace. We never gain a coherent image of the house. Doorways, shelves, mirrors, picture frames and windows create montages inside shots and fragment the space.

The dim rooms provide intimate places for Valentine and Kern's discussions. It seems that every time Valentine comes calling the house has become darker. Indeed, during the last visit a lamp breaks down, turning the space pitch-dark. Just as in *Decalogue 9,* Kieślowski frames the protagonists by shooting them from another room through a doorway or by filming them from behind a shelf. In the early parts of the narrative the camera entered through Valentine's and Auguste's windows and there were a great many views through open windows. Now windows stay closed, for Kern does not want to be seen. He is helped in this by the trees, which provide shelter by being reflected in the windows. From within the building Kern spies on his neighbours and even encourages Valentine to do the same. He seems to think that he can control everything from inside his house. The end of the film proves him wrong, for he cannot predict the storm on the sea.[123]

Kieślowski's concern with small details, everyday objects and actions makes the depicted worlds feel very concrete. We see his characters living in a world filled with personal belongings and curiosities of all kinds. By paying attention to such minutiae Kieślowski heightens the reality of the world represented world and makes the characters seem creatures of flesh and blood. Yet often these details are staged in slightly odd or unexpected ways that prompts one to ask whether some of these objects are more than they seem to be, and whether material reality is all there is. Close-ups of objects and surfaces also shift interest from the linear progression of the narrative to emphatic moments; moments of contemplation and wonderment. How is it possible for the computer to activate itself in *Decalogue 1*? Why are we repeatedly shown the ethics professor straightening the painting hanging on her wall in *Decalogue 8*? Why does the physics notebook keep appearing in strange places and what is wrong with the glove locker which gives trouble in *Decalogue 9*? What is the meaning of the small transparent ball in *The*

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[123] Just like the lonely house full of material things is a metaphor for Kern's state of mind, so is the empty family home in *Blue* for Julie's. Her first act after returning from the hospital is to clear out the big country house. After having thus tried to purge her mind she asks Olivier to come over and sleep with her there. In the morning she walks away, deliberately scratching her hand on the stone wall. With these acts she is doing her best to destroy any tender memories of her life with her family there.

Double Life of Véronique and why does Karol keep fingering the franc coin in *White*? Often it is tempting to credit such details with symbolic meanings, to read them as signs. Does the painting serve to remind the professor that there are things in her life that should be put to right, or is it just an object causing her nuisance? In this sense, details of this kind are overdetermined. Riddles like this give Kieślowski's stories a mysterious feel and hint that there is more to such things than what we see. Yet I tend to think that in most cases the objects denote only themselves.

This aspect of Kieślowski's microworlds brings to mind Jean Epstein's delight at cinema's ability to reveal phenomenal worlds. Epstein argued that the film camera is capable of displaying aspects of things that are invisible to eyes dulled by experience. The camera makes visible the personality, the spirit or the soul of objects. This is the *photogenic* aspect of things. (Epstein 1988b, 244-246; 1988c, 317-318; Charney 1998.) Kieślowski did believe that filming can reveal to us facets of reality that we would not otherwise notice. In the beginning of his career he acted like a phenomenologist describing his surroundings, but he was not a mystic of Epstein's kind.

In the writings of Kieślowski's critics *photogénie* (not necessarily used in the sense given to it by Epstein) has acquired some negative connotations. Some commentators have expressed the opinion that in his last four films Kieślowski is interested only in the glossy surface of things in his last four films. According to Mateusz Werner in *The Three Colours* trilogy the advertisement-like images are there in the films merely for their photogenic value (1994, 73). Likewise, Marek Haltof criticises Kieślowski for substituting a realistic style with the aesthetics of the surface and metaphysical enigmas: "(...) in Kieślowski's new films, colourful postcards from Kraków, Paris and Geneva replace the portrayal of the unrefined Polish reality of the 1970s." (2004, 111-112). Haltof also refers to what he calls the "photogenic nudity" in *The Double Life of Véronique*. (2004, 112). Mariola Jankun-Dopartowa (1995) has accused Kieślowski of being superficial and kitschy. I think this interest in surfaces should be understood in the light of haptic visuality. Kieślowski is interested in concrete material things and in how they appear to persons looking at them from close range.

These critics seem to assume that the image of reality given in Kieślowski's early films was necessarily more faithful. In his early films he emphasised the uglier side of life, which no doubt did exist. But are the early films more realistic in their presentation of an individual's experience and perception of reality? They present the world as it appears to an objective observer standing behind the camera or beside the protagonist; in a manner similar to that of Kieślowski's documentaries. It is again the director's view that we see in the new films, but here Kieślowski attempts to present the world as perceived by a protagonist existing in the fictive world. In terms of subjective experience these worlds might even be said to be more real than those depicted in Kieślowski's previous work. But a proper treatment of such an argument would require us to define carefully what is meant by "real" and "realistic" here. That, however, is a subject for another thesis.

CONCLUSION

My first encounter with Kieślowski was in 1992, when I saw *The Double Life of Véronique* at the small student union cinema at the University of Jyväskylä campus. Afterwards I felt puzzled. The film had touched me deeply, but in a way that was - and still is - hard to put into words and, most important of all, in a way that no film had affected me before. I recognised something very familiar in the story, yet I could not pinpoint this something. In an intuitive way I understood the film but could not explain my understanding in rational terms. I could not get the film out of my mind, so eventually I had to see it again - and again.

It was about five years later that I embarked on my research on Kieślowski. Despite having, since then, dissected this film many times, I still watch it enthusiastically. I am still unable to analyse its appeal, but I am sure that it has to do with the film's mysticism; with Kieślowski's idea that in some inexplicable ways we are linked with other people and the universe and that we are not alone. The film says that it is good for us to pay attention to our intuitions, for our existence consists of more than visible and rational things. All this is very fascinating, but also very vague, far removed from rational academic talk. Yet it was these vague feelings that prompted me to find out more about Kieślowski and film in general. Perhaps I was captivated by the magical, photogenic quality of cinema. In this study I have endeavoured to give credit to Kieślowski's films as, on the one hand, intellectual and, on the other hand, as experiential and emotional encounters.

I have examined narration and style in Krzysztof Kieślowski's late fiction films. I have discussed also the spectator's experience of the films because I do not think that a purely formalistic analysis would do justice to a director who wanted to enter into a dialogue with his audience. I have considered both cognitive and phenomenological perspectives as useful in this undertaking; each for different reasons. The cognitive approach is relevant when analysing how films generate meaning. The spectator puts forth an intellectual effort as she seeks to understand how narrative structures and cinematic style are related to meanings. Such an analysis has its limitations, however, for there is more to cinematic experience than cognitive processing. I do not think that a film such as *The Double Life of Véronique*, despite its formal sophistication and puzzling nature, is primarily meant as a

challenge to our brains; as a puzzle provided with a correct answer. Rather, it engenders a multisensory and emotional experience. A phenomenological approach helps to account for such more immediately felt qualities of films.

As a filmmaker Kieślowski, although not an openly theoretical director, was extremely conscious of the means of presentation. In order to get his ideas through to the spectator he imbues the film form with meaning. His films are idea-driven rather than plot-driven. It is the director's thinking that organises the narratives. As Marek Haltof (2004, 111) points out: "The spectator identifies with the author of the film more than with the characters populating the cinematic screen." Because of this, I have considered it essential to ask how narrative structures and style create meaning. Kieślowski has been criticised for constructing beautiful but shallow images. I have argued that the formal, particularly stylistic aspects of his films add up to more than an aesthetics of the surface. When elements of style recur throughout the oeuvre, they begin to generate themes. In order to be understood on this deeper level under the narrative surface (the level of action), Kieślowski's films require more active spectator participation than an average narrative film.

Kieślowski's point of departure was making the unrepresented world of socialist Poland visible. In his early documentaries and fiction films social awareness was more important than an aesthetically refined style. This attitude was put into words in *Camera Buff,* where a producer comments approvingly on Filip the amateur filmmaker's work: "You film that which exists." From the very beginning, Kieślowski adopted a strategy where arguments and opinions, instead of being discussed explicitly, are conveyed through the organisation of the material and where the conclusions are left to the spectator. Such indirection was originally a necessity dictated by the political circumstances. In his mature films Kieślowski similarly preferred not to spell everything out. Now, however, when there were no longer constraints on the freedom of expression, the reasons were artistic. At the same time, Kieślowski's switch to art films and their conventions did not happen overnight. The change of style was gradual. There is a continuum between the early and the late films in terms both of style and themes.

Though he did not explicitly thematise such issues, Kieślowski speculated constantly on certain existential questions. How far are we in control of our lives? How should we live our lives? To whom are we responsible for our actions? A central and perhaps the most characteristic feature of his oeuvre is its profound pessimism, which emerged first in the face of a depressing socialist reality which seemed to make individual happiness impossible. The early stories were primarily about individuals trying to cope in difficult social and political circumstances. But Kieślowski's vision remained sombre even after the external conditions of life improved. In his films, life is difficult and happiness hard to come by in any case. Wealth, beauty or fame does not make life any easier. Every human being is up against a fundamental existential crisis. There are so many contexts in life where disappointment is possible: love, friendships, family relationships, politics - there are traps everywhere. This was the point Kieślowski wanted to make by placing privileged characters at the centre of his mature films; he was not interested in the lives of rich people as such.

The purpose of my study was not to analyse each of Kieślowski's late films in detail to see how they deal with existential anxiety, for there are already enough such studies. Instead, I have examined the narrative forms in which this theme, or attitude towards life, manifests itself. The sense of hopelessness and pessimism that the films generate is partly due to their recurring narrative structures, such as the anticipations and closed form of *A Short Film About Killing* and *A Short Film About Love*. In these films as in many others, the outcome is always included in the beginning even if not explicitly indicated. We have seen that Kieślowski often emphasises the closed narrative structure by anticipating the outcome in the beginning. Usually the spectator will realise the anticipatory nature of the opening only at the end, which creates the impression that the protagonists are incapable of realising their wishes and plans and that their destinies are predetermined. Their entrapment in the narratives is thus symbolic. The present moment in which the stories take place is haunted both by the past and the future, which engenders a layered sense of time. The past is most of the time an invisible presence, but sometimes it penetrates the present moment in the form of flashbacks, family photographs or verbal accounts. Things about to happen are anticipated through visual and verbal allusions.

Again, elliptic structures, sudden and ambiguous temporal and spatial displacements, arouse a sense that unexpected things may happen. Characters sometimes make important decisions during ellipses with the result that the relevant information is revealed to the spectator retrospectively or indirectly. By refusing to tell the full story Kieślowski seems to be saying that we can never be aware of everything taking place around us. Kieślowski's narratives are often structurally closed, and in that sense self-conscious, but diegetically they are open. Narrative moments are connected through associations and parallels, further contributing to a layered, vertical sense of time. The precise nature of the connections is, however, often left ambiguous. Kieślowski's films suggest that our lives are linked with invisible forces, that we are a part of bigger things. Our lives may affect other people's lives without us knowing it, and those people may in fact be leading lives that parallel ours. This connectedness is articulated by some of his protagonists, for example by Valentine when she says that she feels as if something important is happening around her, and by Weronika and Véronique, who feel that they are not alone in the world, because their kindred spirit exists somewhere. In some of the films, such as *A Short Film About Killing* and *Red*, parallel editing is used to make the spectator perceive events and connections that the characters themselves are not aware of. In *A Short Film About Killing* the newly graduated Piotr suddenly turns sombre and says that maybe he will not be happy in his life after all. As he is feeling this twinge of anxiety, the killer is seen nearby preparing for the act that will indeed affect Piotr's life.

Kieślowski's narratives are filled with intensive moments during which time seems to slow down and condense as the protagonists reflect on their own lives. Mental processes unfold in a subjective time and to a subjective rhythm. The question of time as an element of Kieślowski's narrative structures and as a factor on the experiential level of his films has been a key theme running through this thesis. A related theme is that of space: mental and symbolic space on the one hand

and external or representational space on the other. In my study the focus has been on the symbolic dimension of space. I have identified in my material two aspects of subjective time and space. In the early fiction films Kieślowski set the stories in private life as opposed to the public sphere, foregrounding personal experience. Here, subjectivity means, basically, that the stories centre around an individual character. In his mature works Kieślowski added to this preoccupation with individual life a search for cinematic means to give expression, both visual and aural, to the characters' inner lives: their memories, emotions, dreams and presentiments. Here, subjectivity means that the way the world looks is dependent on how a character experiences it. However, at the same time the films maintain a certain distance to the represented world. For example, despite all the subjectivism in *Blue*, the extraordinary way in which it uses music and colours cannot but make us perceive the film as a *work of art*, orchestrated in a remarkable manner.

Kieślowski gives us the embodied perspectives of his characters by representing reality as they experience it. Most of what we see on the screen is in some ways filtered through the protagonists' minds. It is their mindscreens, or mindscapes, rather than images of particular spaces and places existing in a real world that we see. Each part of *The Trilogy* is set in a different country and city, but it is not really as images of countries and cities that we recall their settings. Instead, they resemble emotional states: *Blue* is an image of sorrow, *White* one of jealousy and revenge, and *Red one* of regret and longing.

I have illustrated the subjective aspects of narration and cinematic experience in Kieślowski's mature films by means of Torben Grodal's term process-oriented narrative, referring to a type of narrative in which the sense of time is less linear and causality more equivocal than in a goal-oriented narrative. We may find it difficult to predict the events and feel that they are beyond our control because we do not possess schemata that would enable us to make sense of such ambiguous occurrences. Seen from Grodal's cognitive point of view, the feeling of subjectivity characteristic of these films arises in part as a result of this absence of appropriate explanatory schemata.

The spectator's sense that the incidents of a film are meaningful to her personally and that she is making a meaningful contribution to the process of their unfolding is another factor that serves to make cinematic experience subjective. Quiet moments and an equivocal course of events enable the spectator to enter the film, to find there her own truth.

Cognitive approaches to narration in film have defined a film narrative as a two-way process between the spectator and the narrative. The spectator engages in what may be called inner speech as she negotiates with a film. The idea of such a dialogue is, however, not new. It points in the same direction as the concept of inner monologue adopted by Russian formalists from psychology and further elaborated by Sergei Eisenstein among others. Despite ambitious theories of subjectivity constructed by Grodal for example, a cognitive perspective alone is not enough to explain what makes cinema such a potent mediator of inner experience. A rational approach of this kind can account only for one side of what it is like to watch and make sense of a film. How we experience films depends not only on mental schemata but also on how we exist in the world as multisensory creatures.

This is especially relevant when considering representations of the subjective dimension of human existence.

Merleau-Ponty teaches us that we can understand other people's experiences because of our bodily existence in the world. He talks about corporeal schemata which enable us to project our own intentions onto other people and introject theirs. For Merleau-Ponty, subjectivity is not something invisible but a quality manifested in our external behaviour. Subjectivity is visible, incarnate in the body that other people can see. We can assume that this principle works at least partly also in the process of viewing films, although Merleau-Ponty does not explicitly extend his theory of intersubjectivity to film. Instead of literally entering other people's experiences we transfer their experiences into ourselves. This is possible because we know that other humans are similar organisms living in a shared world.

Kieślowski was aware, even painfully aware, of cinema's limitations as regards the depiction of the inner world. Nevertheless, he accomplished much in an area explored by many filmmakers. This is also his great achievement. I believe that his success is partly due to the way in which his films shift our attention from the story to ourselves; they make us think about our own lives. Kieślowski's filmmaking is ethical in the sense that his films do not lull us into the comfortable feeling that the incidents presented on the screen could not possibly touch us, that they take place somewhere far away. In his films we identify more with the protagonists' predicaments than with the protagonists themselves, for there is a certain generality about the situations he represents.

Above I introduced a new term, the in-between, with the aim of describing our sense, when watching a film by Kieślowski, that what we see on the screen belongs simultaneously to an objective (external) and subjective (inner) reality. The term covers also our experience of being simultaneously drawn into a diegetic world and being asked to consider the events from a distance, from outside the diegesis. This dual character of our viewing experience stems from Kieślowski's refusal to hide the constructed nature of his films. It is also accepted by the viewer without making the experience of watching a film by him any less absorbing.

Kieślowski's conception of realism changed from the early days of his career. What he first wanted, indeed felt obliged to do, was to be as true to external reality as possible. But even back then he was aware that cinematic truth is always coloured by the filmmaker's own truth. His later conception of realism stresses the truth of individual, internal experience. This is realism of a kind that cannot be externally verified. Such realism is not about making truth claims about the world in general but about providing an objective, approximate correlate for something individually experienced. It might also be termed realism on the level of sense perceptions.

As an examination of Kieślowski's films this study is not exhaustive. The wider context of European filmmaking, for example, is excluded from it with the exception of a few remarks. Now, almost nine years after Kieślowski's death, is a good time to start comparing his works with a wider range of films and to consider the influence that his films have had on younger filmmakers. Kieślowski was an auteur who left his mark on film history as regards both style and content. At the

same time, traces of earlier auteurs' work can be seen in his films. Kieślowski's mental landscapes echo those of Antonioni's. His moral concern is prefigured in the cinema of Eric Rohmer, albeit in a very different manner. Metaphysical strands have featured previously in the films of Bergman and Tarkovsky among others. Similar themes, especially questions related to morals and a certain austerity of vision, unite Kieślowski also with Robert Bresson. Emma Wilson has recently examined Kieślowski in the context of the French new wave and Marek Haltof in the context of Polish cinema. Wilson's perceptive study limits itself to the French context, which makes it only a starting point for a wider contextual analysis. Haltof similarly makes only a few tentative remarks about Kieślowski's influence on younger Polish filmmakers. Thus, there is an obvious need for further contextual and comparative research.

Kieślowski was a filmmaker who asks us to think about such basic questions as what can be achieved by cinematic communication and what is truly cinematic. In this sense he continues the pursuits of the makers of art films; both those of the first wave of art film, the avant-garde of the 1920s, and those of the modernist filmmakers of the post-war era. What the later art film directors, Kieślowski among them, share with the early innovators is a desire to explore the creative and unique possibilities of the medium.

Continuing to delve into these possibilities, in the late 1980s Kieślowski gradually found the full potential of audiovisual expression in his fiction films. His mature works show that film is well equipped to convey subjective experiences and make perceptible our inner lives. Because of his interest in inquiring into the cinematic form in connection with many challenging themes, Kieślowski's films are a rewarding object of study also from the point of view of issues of film theory. Questions related to the concept of realism and cinema's ability to communicate sense experiences, for example, might provide future entries into Krzysztof Kieślowski's films.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Ajan, ajattelun ja tunteiden kuvia. Kerronta ja katsojan kokemus Krzysztof Kieślowskin myöhäisfiktioissa.

Käsittelen tässä tutkielmassa puolalaisen elokuvaohjaajan Krzysztof Kieślowskin (1941–1996) tuotantoa kerronnan ja tyylin näkökulmasta. Ymmärrän kerronnan katsojan ja elokuvan välisenä kohtaamisena, minkä vuoksi kiinnitän erityistä huomiota elokuvien muodon ohella katsojan kokemukseen. Kieślowskin kerrontaa on toistaiseksi tutkittu lähinnä yksittäisiä elokuvia käsittelevissä artikkeleissa; laajempi esitys puuttuu. Kerronta ja tyyli ovat kuitenkin tärkeitä Kieślowskin tuotannossa, koska ohjaajana Kieślowski oli enemmän kuin "näyttämölle asettaja". Hänen tutkiva otteensa näkyy elokuvallisena itsetietoisuutena ja hän halusi haastaa katsojan dialogiin elokuvan kanssa. Ymmärrän tyylin David Bordwellin ja Kristin Thompsonin mukaisesti siten, että tyyli syntyy, kun tiettyjä teknisiä keinoja käytetään toistuvasti ja systemaattisesti. Tyylin avulla luodaan merkityksiä, minkä vuoksi katsojan on pohdittava tyylikeinojen funktioita.

Tutkielman keskeinen kysymys koskee ajan ja elokuvakerronnan suhdetta; yhtäältä ajan ilmenemistä kerronnan rakenteissa ja toisaalta katsojan kokemuksessa. Kysyn, miten aika kytkeytyy elokuvien tematiikkaan ja merkitysten muodostumiseen sekä subjektiivisen kokemuksen esittämiseen, joka oli Kieślowskin keskeinen tavoite myöhäistuotannossa. Tarkasteltavina ovatkin erityisesti myöhäistuotannot, eli elokuvat televisiosarjasta *Kymmenen käskyä* (Dekalog, 1988) alkaen.

Kieślowski aloitti uransa yhteiskuntakriittisenä dokumentaristina 1970-luvun alussa, mutta ryhtyi pian tekemään myös fiktioelokuvia. Kenties tärkein hänen työskentelyään ohjaava periaate oli uskollisuus todellisuudelle. Hän oli aina kiinnostunut ihmisen sisäisestä maailmasta ja yhteiskunnallisella kaudellakin korosti yksilön näkökulman tärkeyttä. Vuonna 1980 Kieślowski julkaisi henkilökohtaisen manifestin, *Syvyyttä laaja-alaisuuden sijaan* (Głęboko zamiast szeroko), jossa hän esitti tavoitteekseen pureutua yhä syvemmälle yksilön kokemuksiin. Tämä ei kuitenkaan tarkoittanut luopumista realismista, vaan näkökulman muutosta. Sisäinen kokemus sai enemmän sijaa jo elokuvissa *Sattuma* (Przypadek, 1981) ja *Ei loppua* (Bez końca, 1984), mutta politiikka oli yhä vahvasti niissä läsnä.

Selkeä esteettinen ja temaattinen muutos tapahtui kymmenosaisen televisiosarjan *Kymmenen käskyä* (1988) ja sen osien 5 ja 6 pohjalta tehtyjen *Lyhyt elokuva tappamisesta* (Krótki film o zabijaniu, 1988) ja *Lyhyt elokuva rakkaudesta* (Krótki film o miłości, 1988) myötä. Näissä puolalainen todellisuus painui taka-alalle ja keskeisimmiksi nousivat yleisinhimilliset eksistentiaali- ja moraalikysymykset. Nämä painotukset vahvistuivat edelleen elokuvissa *Veronikan kaksoiselämä* (Podwójne życie Weroniki, 1991) ja *Kolme väriä: Sininen, Valkoinen ja*

Punainen (Trois couleurs: bleu, blanc, rouge, 1993/94), jotka toteutettiin eurooppalaisina yhteistuotantoina. Puolalaiskansallisesta ohjaajasta oli tullut eurooppalaisten taide-elokuvien ohjaaja.

Kieślowskin elokuvien esteettisiä ja temaattisia muutoksia tarkasteltaessa on otettava huomioon taustalla olevat yhteiskunnalliset tapahtumat, tärkeimpänä kommunismin sortuminen Puolassa vuonna 1989. Tällä murroksella oli vaikutuksensa paitsi sisältöön myös tuotanto-olosuhteisiin, sillä elokuvateollisuus siirtyi pois valtion omistuksesta ja rahoitus oli löydettävä muualta. Tuolloin Kieślowski siirtyi tekemään elokuvia Ranskaan.

Tutkielman teoreettinen viitekehys muodostuu kognitiivisesta elokuvateoriasta ja fenomenologiasta, joiden avulla kerrontaa ja katsomiskokemusta voidaan valottaa eri näkökulmista. Kognitiivisessa elokuvateoriassa korostuu näkemys katsojasta älyllisenä ja rationaalisena toimijana. Se avaa mielenkiintoisia näkökulmia Kieślowskin elokuviin, jotka nimenomaan herättelevät katsojaa aktiiviseen tulkintaan ja yleisempäänkin pohdintaan elokuvan keinoista. Mutta katsomiskokemus ei ole kaikilta osin järkeistettävissä ja siksi fenomenologinen näkökulma on hedelmällinen tarkasteltaessa elokuvaa kokemuksellisena, aisteihin ja tunteisiin suoremmin vetoavana ilmiönä. Kieślowskin myöhäistuotannoista välittyy vahvana yksilön ja maailman kohtaaminen monine siihen liittyvine aistikokemuksineen. Kieślowski kuvaa niissä todellisuutta yksilön perspektiivistä nähtynä.

Kieślowskin elokuvien kannalta kiinnostavaksi muodostuu fenomenologiassa muun muassa Maurice Merlau-Pontyn ja Mikel Dufrennen ajattelussa esiintyvä erottelu subjektiiviseen eli henkilökohtaiseen ja objektiiviseen eli maailman aikaan. Kieślowskin subjektiivinen näkökulma merkitsee henkilökohtaisen ajan korostumista. Taide-elokuvalle tyypilliseen tapaan hänen henkilöhahmonsa ovat eräänlaisia harhailijoita, oman itsensä etsijöitä. Tällaisissa tarinoissa ulkoinen todellisuus fyysisine paikkoineen, tapahtumineen ja objektiivisen ajan kulumisineen jää taustalle. Merkityksellistä on se mitä saavutetaan henkisellä tasolla. Kieślowski keskittyy tunne-elämän ja päähenkilöidensä välittömän elämänpiirin kuvaukseen ja luo eräänlaisia mikromaailmoja. *Kymmenen käskyä* –sarjan moraalisia ja eettisiä valintoja pohtivat tarinat sijoittuvat tavallisen arkielämän rutiinien lomaan.

Henkilöiden keskittyminen itsensä määrittelyyn näkyy kerronnassa hetkien merkityksen korostumisena. Tärkeää ei ole toiminnan kulkeminen kohti päämäärää, vaan matka ja kerronnan prosessit sinänsä. Tällaista kerronnan prosessia kognitiivisen elokuvateorian edustaja Torben Grodal kutsuu prosessiorientoituneeksi erotuksena päämääräorientoituneesta. Se on vaikeammin ennakoitavaa, koska se ei etene selkeiden syy-seuraussuhteiden mukaisesti. Kun tapahtumien merkitys ei avaudu välittömästi eivätkä otosten ja kohtausten väliset suhteet ole itsestään selviä, katsojassa syntyy helposti vaikutelma subjektiivisuudesta. Subjektiivisuuden tunne tulee osittain siitä, että katsoja joutuu pohtimaan tapahtumien hänessä itsessään synnyttämiä assosiaatioita ja mielikuvia. Hän kokee itse olevansa tärkeä merkitysten syntymisen kannalta.

Esimerkiksi *Veronikan kaksoiselämässä* diegeettinen maailma on unen ja aavistusten maisemaa ja kerronta seuraa päähenkilöiden intuitiivisen etsinnän logiikkaa. Puolassa tapahtuvat poliittiset muutokset, joihin viitataan muutaman kerran, eivät kiinnitä päähenkiöiden huomiota. *Sinisessä* päähenkilö Julien traumaattisia kohtauksia ilmentävät "mustat hetket", jotka osoittavat, että päähenkilön subjektiivinen aika ei ole synkroniassa maailman ajan kanssa. Taju ajan kulumisesta hämärtyy molempien elokuvien elliptisyyden vuoksi. Kuten David Bordwell sanoo, taide-elokuvissa päähenkilöiden motivaatioita ei useinkaan eksplikoida ja myös heidän tunne-elämänsä on epämääräisempää kuin klassista kerrontaa myötäilevissä Hollywood-elokuvissa, joissa tunteet ovat paitsi selvemmin määriteltyjä myös kytkeytyvät toimintaan selkeämmällä tavalla.

Elokuvassa aika on strukturoitua. Elokuvantekijä manipuloi aikaa pyrkiessään vaikuttamaan katsojaan haluamallaan tavalla. Toisaalta kerronta imaisee katsojan mukaansa ajan liikkeeseen, jolloin elämme siinä mukana. Toisaalta pystymme ottamaan etäisyyttä välittömästä tapahtumisesta; ajatuksissamme voimme liikkua kerronnan nykyhetken ja menneen välillä. Elokuvassa aika tilallistuu ja voimme katsoa sitä ikään kuin ylhäältä käsin, epäsuoraan. Kognitiivisen teorian mukaan katsomisen aikana suora ja epäsuora, eli käsitteellinen, havaitseminen limittyvät toisiinsa. Kerronnan rakenteita analysoidessa aika tulee havaittavaksi tilallisena ilmiönä. Elokuva näyttäytyy aikajanana, joka muodostuu erimittaisista ja rytmiltään erilaisista osista ja niiden välisistä ajallis-tilallisista suhteista.

Kieślowskin kerrontatyyli muokkaantui hänen työskennellessään sensuurin alaisuudessa. Hänen pyrkimyksensä oli kuvata sitä todellisuutta, jossa hän itse eli ja joka ei vielä ollut saanut totuudenmukaista kuvausta taiteissa. Koska asioista ei voinut kertoa suoraan, oli kehitettävä erilaisia kiertoilmauksia. Myöhäiselokuvissakin näkyy hänen haluttomuutensa ilmaista asioita suoraan. Elokuvakoulun diplomityössään Kieślowski puhui todellisuuden dramaturgioista tarkoittaen, että elokuvantekijän tuli etsiä muotoja suoraan todellisuudesta. Tämä näkyy varsinkin dokumenttielokuvien kerronnassa. Esimerkiksi byrokratiaa käsittelevissä *Virastossa* (Urząd, 1966) ja *Kertosäkeessä* (Refren, 1972) kerronnallinen toisto kuvastaa sitä puuduttavaa toistuvuutta, joka sisältyy byrokratian kyllästämään arkielämään itseensä. Tällä tavoin Kieślowski rakensi argumentin sisään elokuvan muotoon ja samalla pyrki olemaan todellisuudelle uskollinen.

Varhaiselokuvien toinen keskeinen piirre on tiivis ja ekonominen ilmaisutapa, kaiken turhan materiaalin pois karsiminen. Dokumenttien perintö näkyy myöhäistuotannon vahvasti elliptisenä kerrontatyylinä. Kyse ei siis ole yksinomaan taide-elokuvan kerronnalle tyypillisestä elliptisyydestä. Esimerkiksi *Veronikan kaksoiselämä* on kaukana dokumentaarisesta kerronnasta, mutta sen arvoituksellisuus johtuu osittain Kieślowskin dokumenttikaudelta periytyvästä tavasta rakentaa elokuva leikkauspöydässä.

Dokumenttikaudelle voidaan jäljittää myös taipumus rakentaa kertomukset pikemminkin temaattisesti kuin juonellisesti, syyn ja seurauksen logiikalla. Tällainen idealähtöisyys näkyy myös siinä, miten Kieślowski pyrki löytämään hienovaraisia visuaalisia keinoja sisäisen kokemuksen ja muidenkin teemojen

esittämiseen sen sijaan, että olisi pukenut asiat sanoiksi. Esimerkiksi *Punaisessa* Kieślowski ei ilmaise sanallisesti vaihtoehtoisten elämien teemaa, vaan ilmentää sitä kerronnan rakenteen kautta. Kahden henkilön samanlaiset elämänkulut rinnastetaan paralleelikerronnan avulla ajassa ja tilassa.

Kieślowskin koko tuotannon läpäisee pessimistinen ja epäilevä pohjavire. Hänen henkilöhahmojensa elämä on vaikeuksien täyttämää, elettiinpä sosialistisessa Puolassa tai nykypäivän Euroopassa. Henkilökohtainen onni sosialismissa oli Kieślowskin näkemyksen mukaan mahdotonta, ja myöhemmin muissa oloissa mielenrauhan saavuttamisen esteenä olivat eksistentiaaliset ja moraaliset ongelmat. Kerronnan rakenne luo osaltaan tätä tematiikkaa. Kieślowskin tapa vihjata lopputulokseen erilaisin ennakoinnein usein vaikutelman ennalta määräytyneisyydestä ja yksilön voimattomuudesta hallitsemattomien voimien edessä. Tällaisen vaikutelman syntyyn vaikuttaa monien elokuvien kehämäinen rakenne, painokkaimmin *Sattumassa*, mutta myös elokuvien *Lyhyt elokuva tappamisesta* ja *Lyhyt elokuva rakkaudesta* alussa olevat ennakoinnit luovat vaikutelman kohtalonomaisuudesta. Kieślowski pohti paljon sitä, mitä ovat elämäämme ohjaavat voimat, mutta jätti kysymyksensä avoimiksi. Hän korosti yksilön vastuuta, mutta näyttää toisaalta ajatelleen, että ylemmillä voimillakin on vaikutusta elämässämme. Kohtalonomaisuus ilmenee *Lyhyessä elokuvassa tappamisesta* kolme tarinalinjaa rinnastavan paralleelikerronnan kautta: kolme päähenkilöä näyttää väistämättä ajautuvan synkkään kohtaloonsa. *Punainen* näyttää niin ikään kaikkitietävästä näkökulmasta, miten päähenkilöiden tiet lopulta kohtaavat. Lisäksi yllättävät irtiotot tilanteista korostavat jonkin ulkopuolisen, arvioivan, tahon läsnäoloa. Kieślowskin elokuvat kutsuvat katsojansa eräänlaiseen *välitilaan*. Ideapohjaisuudessaan ja tyylittelyssään ne ovat siinä määrin itsetietoisia, että seuratessaan tarinaa katsoja on alati tietoinen esittämisen keinoista. Katsojan on kysyttävä jatkuvasti tyylikeinojen funktiota, niiden suhdetta merkityksiin. Katsoja ei samastu diegeettiseen maailmaan yhtä vahvasti kuin klassista Hollywood-elokuvaa seuratessaan, mutta ei myöskään ole etäinen tarkkailija. Kieślowskilla elokuvallinen itsetietoisuus ei merkitse ensisijaisesti pyrkimystä katsojan vieraannuttamiseen, koska useissa elokuvissa meidät sidotaan hyvin tiukasti päähenkilön näkökulmaan. Kieślowskin tuotannossa on paljon sisäisiä viittauksia, joista osa, kuten keksitty säveltäjä Van den Budenmeyer, on vitsinomaisia, mutta päällimmäiseksi vaikutelmaksi ei kuitenkaan jää postmoderni leikki. Kaikki palautuu viime kädessä tarinaan. Tietoisuus välineen läsnäolosta on ikään kuin katsojan ja elokuvantekijän keskinäinen, hiljainen sopimus.

Välitilalla on toinenkin ulottuvuus. Myös esitetty todellisuus näyttäytyy välitilana siinä mielessä, että se on samanaikaisesti kuvaus maailmasta subjektin mielen silmin nähtynä ja kuvaus niin sanotusta objektiivisesta, päähenkilöä ympäröivästä maailmasta. Tätä subjektiivisen ja objektiivisen, sisäisen ja ulkoisen todellisuuden sekoittumista lähestyn Merleau-Pontyn filosofian kautta. Merleau-Pontyn mukaan subjekti ja maailma, havaitsija ja havainnon kohde, ovat aina toisiinsa kietoutuneita. Ruumiillinen olemassaolomme ja paikantumisemme maailmassa sekä mentaalinen tilamme vaikuttavat havaintoihimme. Kieślowski pyrki visualisoimaan henkilöidensä mentaalisen ja fyysisen tilan

kerronnassaan luoden tällä tavoin mielenmaisemia. Juuri tällaista subjektiivisuuden ilmentämistä Bruce Kawin tarkoittaa käsitteellään *mindscreen*. Se on ensimmäisessä persoonassa tapahtuvaa kerrontaa, joka näyttää kuvassa sen, mitä henkilö ajattelee tai tuntee erotuksena siitä, mitä hän silmillään näkee. Tällaiseen subjektiivisuuteen liittyy yleensä myös itsetietoisuus, koska se saadaan aikaan erilaisin tyylittelyn keinoin, jotka kiinnittävät itseensä huomiota.

Lyhyessä elokuvassa tappamisesta tyylittelyn keinoin, erityisesti värillisillä suotimilla, luotu julma ja vieraannuttava todellisuus voidaan tulkita sekä päähenkilöiden mielenmaisemana, heistä riippumatta olemassa olevana todellisuutena, että Kieślowskin näkemyksenä maailman tilasta. Murha-aikeissa liikkuvaa päähenkilöä seuraava tumma varjo ilmentää katsojalle hänen intentionsa kohteet: emme näe sitä mihin hänkään ei kiinnitä huomiota. *Sinisessä* katsojalle ei visualisoida Julien muistoja, koska Julie ei itsekään halua muistaa. Tiukat rajaukset ilmentävät naisen sisäänpäin kääntynyttä mielentilaa ja haluttomuutta kohdata ympäröivää maailmaa. Tässä elokuvassa Kieślowski problematisoi subjektiivisen kokemuksen esittämisen elokuvalla ja samalla vie sen kaikkein pisimmälle.

Kieślowskin kiinnostus elokuvan keinojen tutkimiseen, erityisesti sisäisen elämän kuvaajana, tekee hänen tuotannostaan kiinnostavan monien elokuvateorian kysymysten, kuten realismikäsitysten, kannalta. Varhaistuotannossa Kieślowski piti tärkeänä uskollisuutta ulkoiselle todellisuudelle, myöhäistuotannossa taas korostuu ihmisen sisälle katsomisen tärkeys. Kummassakin lähestymistavassa on kyse tietynlaisesta realismista. Jälkimmäisessä ei ollut enää kyse todellisuutta koskevien totuusväittämisen esittämisestä, vaan realismista subjektiivisen havainnoinnin ja kokemuksen tasolla.

Kiinnostus elokuvan mahdollisuuksiin taiteena yhdistää hänet moniin sodanjälkeisen taide-elokuvan ohjaajiin, kuten Michelangelo Antonioniin ja Andrei Tarkovskiin. Kieślowskista on mahdollista nähdä linkki myös 1920-luvun avantgardisteihin, jotka tutkivat elokuvan luovia ja ainutlaatuisia mahdollisuuksia. Tämän tutkimuksen puitteissa minulla ei ole ollut mahdollisuutta vertailla Kieślowskia muihin ohjaajiin muutamia huomioita lukuun ottamatta. Tämä tärkeä tehtävä jää tulevaisuuden tutkimusten aiheeksi.

FILMOGRAPHY

1966

Tramwaj (The Tram). 35 mm, black and white, short film, 6 min. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski. Cinematography Zdzisław Kaczmarek. Cast Jerzy Braszka, Maria Janiec. Production Łódź Film School.

Urząd (The Office). 35 mm, black and white, documentary, 6 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski. Cinematography Lechosław Trzęsowski. Editing Janina Grosicka. Production Łódź Film School.

1967

Koncert życeń (Concert of Requests). 35 mm, black and white, short film, 17 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski. Cinematography Lechosław Trzęsowski. Editing Janina Grosicka. Prodcution Łódź Film School.

1968

Zdjęcie (The Photography). 16 mm, black and white, documentary, 32 mins. Cinematography Marek Jóźwiak, Wojciech Jastrzębowski. Editing Jolanta Wilczak. Production Polish Television.

1969

Z miasta Łodzi (From the City of Łódź). 35 mm, black and white, documentary, 17 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski. Cinematography Janusz Kreczmarski, Piotr Kwiatkowski, Stanisław Niedbalski. Editing Elżbieta Kurkowska, Lidia Zonn. Production WFD (Documentary Film Production Studio).

1970

Byłem żołnierzem (I Was a Soldier). 35 mm, black and white, documentary, 16 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski and Rysard Zgórecki. Cinematography Stanisław Niedbalski. Editing Walentyna Wojciechowska. Production Czołowka Film Studio.

Fabryka (Factory). 35 mm, black and white, documentary, 17 mins. Cinematography Stanisław Niedbalski, Jacek Tworek. Editing Maria Leszczyńska. Production WFD.

1971

Przed rajdem (Before the Rally). 35 mm, black and white/colour, documentary, 15 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski. Cinematography Piotr Kwiatkowski, Jacek Petrycki. Editing Lidia Zonn. Production WFD.

1972

Refren (Refrain). 35 mm, black and white, documentary, 10 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski. Cinematography Witold Stok. Editing Maryla Czolnik. Production WFD.

Między Wrocławiem a Zieloną Góra (Between Wrocław and Zielona Góra). 35 mm, colour, promotional documentary, 19 mins. Cinematography Jacek Petrycki. Editing Lidia Zonn. Production WFD, commissioned by the Lubin copper mine.

Podstawy BHP w kopalni miedzi. (The Priciples of Safety and Hygiene in a Copper Mine). 35 mm, colour, instructional documentary, 21 mins. Cinematography Jacek Petrycki. Editing Lidia Zonn. Production WFD, commissioned by the Lubin copper mine.

Robotnicy '71: nic o nas bez nas (Workers '71: Nothing About Us Without Us). 16 mm, black and white, documentary, 47 mins. Directors Krzysztof Kieślowski, Tomasz Zygadło, Wojciech Wiszniewski, Paweł Kędzierski, Tadeusz Walendowski. Cinematography Witold Stok, Stanisław Mroziuk, Jacek Petrycki. Editing Jacek Szymański, Alina Hojnacka. Production WFD.

1973
Murarz (Bricklayer) (released in 1981). 35 mm, colour, documentary, 18 mins. Cinematography Witold Stok. Editing Lidia Zonn. Production WFD.

Przejście podziemne (Pedestrian Subway). 35 mm, black and white, short film, 30 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski and Ireneusz Iredyński. Cinematography Sławomir Idziak. Editing Elżbieta Kurkowska. Production Tor Film Studio. Cast Teresa Budzisz-Krzyżanowska (Lena), Andrzej Seweryn (Michał).

1974
Prześwietlenie (X-Ray). 35 mm, colour, documentary, 13 mins. Cinematography Jacek Petrycki. Editing Lidia Zonn. Production WFD.

Pierwsza miłość (First Love). 16 mm, colour, documentary. Cinematography Jacek Petrycki. Editing Lidia Zonn. Production Polish Television.

1975
Życiorys (Curriculum Vitae). 35 mm, black and white, docudrama, 45 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski and Janusz Fastyn. Cinematography Jacek Petrycki and Tadeusz Rusinek. Editing Lidia Zonn. Production WFD.

Personel (Personnel). 16 mm, colour, drama, 72 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski. Cinematography Witold Stok. Editing Lidia Zonn. Production Tor film studio, Polish Television. Cast Juliusz Machulski (Romek Januchta), Michał Tarkowski (Sowa), Tomasz Lengren (Romek), Włodzimierz Boruński (technical director), Irena Lorentowicz (designer), Andrzej Siedlecki (opera singer), Janusz Skalski (head of department), Tomasz Zygadło (party activist).

1976
Szpital (Hospital). 35 mm, black and white, documentary, 21 mins. Cinematography Jacek Petrycki. Editing Lidia Zonn. Production WFD.

Blizna (The Scar). 35 mm, colour, feature, 104 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, based on Romuald Karaś's story. Cinematography Sławomir Idziak. Editing Krystyna Górnicka. Production Tor Film Studio. Cast Franciszek Pieczka (Stefan Bednarz), Jerzy Stuhr (Bednarz's assistant), Mariusz Dmochowski, Jan Skotnicki, Stanisław Igar, Stanisław Michalski, Michał Tarkowski, Halina Winiarska, Joanna Orzeszkowska, Agnieszka Holland.

Klaps (Slate). 35 mm, colour, compilation film (out-takes from The Scar), 6 mins. Editing Eugeniusz Dmitroca.

Spokój (The Calm, released in 1980). 16 mm, colour, drama, 82 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, based on Lech Borski's story. Cinematography Jacek Petrycki. Editing Maryla Szymańska. Production Polish Television. Cast Jerzy Stuhr (Antoni Gralak), Danuta Ruksza (wife), Izabella Olszewska, Jerzy Trela, Michał Szulkiewicz, Jerzy Fedorowicz.

1977
Nie wiem (I Don't Know, released in 1981). 35 mm, black and white, documentary, 46 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski. Cinematography Jacek Petrycki. Editing Lidia Zonn. Production WFD.

Z punktu widzenia nocnego portiera (From the Point of View of the Night Porter). 35 mm, colour, documentary, 17 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski. Cinematography Witold Stok. Editing Lidia Zonn. Music Wojciech Kilar. Production WFD.

1978
Siedem kobiet w róznym wieku (Seven Women of Different Ages). 16 mm, black and white, documentary, 16 mins. Cinematography Witold Stok. Editing Alina Sieminska, Lidia Zonn. Production WFD.

1979
Amator (Camera Buff). 35 mm, colour, feature, 117 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski. Cinematography Jacek Petrycki. Editing Halina Nawrocka. Production Tor Film Studio. Cast Jerzy Stuhr (Filip Mosz), Małgorzata Ząbkowska (Irena Mosz), Tadeusz Bradecki (Filip's friend), Jerzy Novak, Ewa Pokas, Stefan Czyżewski, Marek Litewka, Krzysztof Zanussi (himself), Andrzej Jurga (himself).

1980
Dworzec (Station). 35 mm, black and white, documentary, 13 mins. Cinematography Witold Stok. Editing Lidia Zonn. Production WFD.

Gadające głowy (Talking Heads). 35 mm, black and white, documentary, 16 mins. Cinematography Jacek Petrycki, Piotr Kwiatkowski. Editing Alina Siemińska. Production WFD.

1981

Przypadek (Blind Chance). 35 mm, colour, feature, 122 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski. Cinematography Krzysztof Pakulski. Editing Elżbieta Kurkowska. Music Wojciech Kilar. Production Tor Film Studio. Cast Bogusław Linda (Witek), Tadeusz Łomnicki (Werner), Bogusława Pawelec (Czuszka), Zbigniew Zapasiewicz (Adam), Jacek Borkowski, Adam Ferency, Jacek Sas-Uchrynowski, Marzena Trybała, Irena Burska, Monika Goździk, Zbingniew Hübner.

Krótki dzień pracy (Short Working Day, TV premiere in 1996). 35 mm, colour, feature, 79 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, Hanna Krall. Based on Krall's report. Cinematography Krzysztof Pakulski. Editing Elżbieta Kurkowska. Music Jan Kanty Pawluśkiewicz. Production Tor film studio for Polish Television. Cast Wacław Ulewicz (First Party Secretary), Tadeusz Bartosik, Lech Grzmociński, Elżbieta Kijowska.

1984

No End (Bez końca). 35 mm, colour, feature, 107 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski. Cinematography Jacek Petrycki. Editing Krystyna Rutkowska. Music Zbigniew Preisner. Tuotanto Tor Film Studio. Cast Grażyna Szapołowska (Urszula Zyro), Jerzy Radziwiłłowicz (Antoni Zyro), Aleksander Bardini (Labrador), Maria Pakulnis, Artur Barciś, Michał Bajor, Marek Kondrat, Tadeusz Bradecki, Krzysztof Kremiński, Daniel Webb, Jan Tesarz.

1988

Siedem dni w tygodnia (Seven Days a Week). 35 mm, colour, documentary, 18 mins. Cinematography Jacek Petrycki. Editing Dorota Wadruszkiewicz. Production City Life Foundation, Rotterdam.

Krótki film o zabijaniu (A Short Film About Killing). 35 mm, colour, feature, 85 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. Cinematography Sławomir Idziak. Editing Ewa Smal. Music Zbigniew Preisner. Production Tor Film Studio, Polish Television. Cast Mirosław Baka (Jacek), Krzysztof Gobisz (Piotr), Jan Tesarz (taxi driver), Aleksander Bednarz, Zbigniew Zapasiewicz, Zdzisław Tobiasz, Jerzy Zass,, Artur Barciś.

Krótki film o miłośći (A Short Film About Love). 35 mm, colour, feature, 87 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. Cinematography Witold Adamek. Editing Ewa Smal. Music Zbigniew Preisner. Production Tor Film Studio. Cast Olaf Lubaszenko (Tomek), Grażyna Szapołowska (Magda), Stefania Iwińska (Tomek's landlady).

Dekalog 1 (Decalogue 1). 35 mm, colour, TV drama, 53 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. Cinematography Wiesław Zdort. Editing Ewa Smal. Music Zbigniew Preisner. Production Polish Television. Cast Henryk Baranowski (father), Wojciech Klata (Paweł), Maja Komorowska (aunt), Artur Barciś.

Dekalog 2 (Decalogue 2). 35 mm, colour, TV drama, 57 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. Cinematography Edward Kłosiński. Editing Ewa Smal. Music Zbigniew Preisner. Production Polish Television. Cast Krzysztyna Janda (Dorota), Aleksander Bardini (doctor), Olgierd Łukaszewicz (Andrzej), Artur Barcis.

Dekalog 3 (Decalogue 3). 35 mm, colour, TV drama, 55 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. Cinematography Piotr Sobociński. Editing Ewa Smal. Music Zbigniew Preisner. Production Polish Television. Cast Daniel Olbrychski (Janusz), Maria Pakulnis (Ewa), Joanna Szczepkowska (Janusz's wife), Artur Barciś, Krystyna Drochocka.

Dekalog 4 (Decalogue 4). 35 mm, colour, TV drama, 55 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. Cinematography Krzysztof Pakulski. Editing Ewa Smal. Music Zbigniew Preisner. Production Polish Television. Cast Adrianna Biedrzyńska (daughter), Janusz Gajos (Michał), Artur Barcis, Adam Hanuszkiewicz.

Dekalog 5 (Decalogue 5). 35 mm, colour, 57 mins. Television version of *A Short Film About Killing*.

Dekalog 6 (Decalogue 6). 35 mm, colour, 58 mins. Television version of *A Short Film About Love*.

Dekalog 7 (Decalogue 7). 35 mm, colour, 55 mins. TV drama. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. Cinematography Darius Kuc. Editing Ewa Smal. Music Zbigniew Preisner. Production Polish Television. Cast Anna Polony (Ewa), Maja Barełkowska (Majka), Władysław Kowalski (Stefan), Bogusław Linda (Wojtek), Ktarzyna Piwowarczyk (Ania), Bożena Dykiel.

Dekalog 8 (Decalogue 8). 35 mm, colour, 55 mins. TV drama. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. Cinematography Andrzej Jaroszewicz. Editing Ewa Smal. Music Zbigniew Preisner. Production Polish Television. Cast Maria Kościałkowska (Zofia), Teresa Marczewska (Elżbieta), Artur Barciś, Tadeusz Łomnicki (tailor).

Dekalog 9 (Decalogue 9). 35 mm, colour, 58 mins, TV drama. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. Cinematography Piotr Sobociński. Editing Ewa Smal. Music Zbigniew Preisner. Production Polish Television. Cast Ewa Błaszczyk (Hanka), Piotr Machalica (Roman), Jan Jankowski (Mariusz), Artur Barciś, Jerzy Trela, Jolanta Piętek-Górecka.

Dekalog 10 (Decalogue 10). 35 mm, colour, 57 mins, TV drama. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. Cinematography Jacek Bławut. Editing Ewa Smal. Music Zbigniew Preisner. Production Polish Television. Cast Jerzy Stuhr (Jerzy), Zbigniew Zamachowski (Artur), Henryk Bista, Maciej Stuhr, Jerzy Turek, Olaf Lubaszenko.

1991

Podwójne życie Weroniki/La Double vie de Véronique (The Double Life of Véronique). 35 mm, colour, feature, 98 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. Cinematography Sławomir Idziak. Editing Jacque Witta. Music Zbigniew Preisner. Production Leonardo de la Fuente; Tor Film Studio, Sideral Productions, Canal Plus. Cast Irene Jacob (Weronika/Véronique), Aleksander Bardini (orchestra conductor), Władysław Kowalski (Weronika's father), Philippe Volter (Alexandre), Halina Gryglaszewska, Kalina Jędrusik, Sandrine Dumas, Claude Suneton (Véronique's father), Jerzy Kudejko (Antek).

1993

Trois couleurs: bleu (Three Colours: Blue). 35 mm, colour, feature, 98 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. Cinematography Sławomir Idziak. Editing Jacque Witta. Music Zbigniew Preisner. Production Marin Karmitz; MK2 SA/CED Productions, France 3 Cinema, CAB Productions, Tor Film Studio. Cast Juliette Binoche (Julie), Benoit Regent (Olivier), Florence Pernel (Sandrine), Charlotte Very (Lucille), Emmanuelle Riva (mother), Philippe Volter, Helene Vincent, Claude Duneton, Hugues Quester, Jacek Ostaszewski, Florence Vignon, Yann Regouet.

1994

Trois couleurs: blanc (Three Colours: White). 35 mm, colour, feature, 92 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. Cinematography Edward Kłosiński. Editing Urszula Lesiak. Music Zbigniew Preisner. Production Marin Karmitz; France 3 Cinema, MK2 Production, Tor Film Studio, CAB Productions, Canal Plus. Cast Zbigniew Zamachowski (Karol Karol), Julie Delpy (Dominique), Janusz Gajos (Mikołaj), Jerzy Stuhr, Cezary Pazura, Grzegorz Warchoł, Jerzy Nowak, Aleksander Bardini, Jerzy Trela.

Trois couleurs: rouge (Three Colours: Red). 35 mm, colour, feature, 99 mins. Written by Krzysztof Kieślowski, Krzysztof Piesiewicz. Cinematography Piotr Sobociński. Editing Jacques Witta. Music Zbigniew Preisner. Production Marin Karmitz; France 3 Cinema, MK2 Productions, Tor Film Studio, CAB Productions, Canal Plus. Cast: Irene Jacob (Valentine), Jean-Louis Trintignant (Joseph Kern), Jean-Pierre Lorit (Auguste), Frédérique Feder (Karin), Samuel Lebihan, Marion Stalens, Teco Celio.

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