

characters lost in their thoughts, alien, brusquely separate. One is continually surprised that another scene follows, that two-shots do not vanish entirely amidst the proliferating shots of characters isolated even when conversing – that life and communication do not gutter entirely. As the film nears its end, however, and Ula's identification with and awareness of Antek intensifies, the attitude to the dead comes to resemble Zbigniew Herbert's in his fine poem 'Our fear' ('Nasz strach', 1961): 'Our fear / does not have the face of a dead man / the dead are gentle to us.' At Antek's graveside Ula stares at the camera – that representative of the invisible – and says 'I love you'. The dead offer solace, their felt, unseen presence showing that even after death and defeat something persists. A living death has prepared one to find their company congenial.

Given the theme of co-presence and separation, it is hardly surprising that *No End* displays the glass imagery more thoroughgoingly present in later Kieślowski. Here the glass is primarily that of receptacles of communion: the glass containing the graveside candle; the unnecessary second glass of coffee Ula makes near the beginning; the glass round whose edge Antek runs his fingers as Ula undergoes hypnosis (the strange ringing that results should be added to the repertoire of eerie noises that signal his presence); the empty glass the hypnotist hands Ula when she revisits him; the half-full glass she drops in slow motion – already passing beyond most mortals' time – as she stands in the kitchen near the end. But there is also the glass of Labrador's watch, which falls and breaks as Antek sweeps past unseen, or the shattered windscreen of the car whose crash is seen from a shocked distance like that in *Trois couleurs: Bleu* (*Three Colours: Blue*, 1993). Its final form is the glazed door separating us from the dead whose backs are turned. And since the film also dramatises questions of fidelity, its interest in dogs – also foreshadowing later Kieślowski – is no surprise. A black dog nuzzles up to Antek as he sits unseen on a park bench alongside Ula; it peers into the Volkswagen as she visits Joanna; a dog sits outside as she weeps on discovery of the pornographic photos; and the lawyer who takes Darek's case is named Labrador. The poem he quotes, a wolf's monologue, belongs here also. Various elements will recur in later Kieślowski films, particularly *Three Colours: Blue*, which also begins with a widowing, while Ula's definition of love as she hugs Jacek is reconjugated by Irena, hugging Paweł, in *Decalogue 1*.

The recurrences of the imagery echo the title: there is no ending. No end to the state of misery of which they are part; no end – the viewer has to hope – to the exasperated spirit's capacity to survive. A *dur désir de durer* is embodied in the film's solemn, wary, stubbornly courageous progression, however deep its respect for, and empathy with, Ula's final choice. For in the early 1980s it was Kieślowski alone – rather than his more renowned compatriots, Wajda and Zanussi – who summoned the courage to contemplate the legacy of martial law in Poland. If others preferred to avert their eyes from it, it was because at the time it appeared to be so devastating. For if Solidarity had melted the ice of the cold war, confounding conventional distinctions between right and left, opposing the *soi-disant* socialist state in the name of the socialism that very state repressed, the imposition of martial law precipitated a massive haemorrhage in Poland of hope for the feasibility of socialism. This total divestment from the idea of socialism left stranded the notion of socialist self-criticism, which had provided both a motor and an alibi for the Polish cinema of the late 1970s. In its aftermath, criticism ceased to be reformist and became total, even apocalyptic, and only the strongest spirits had the stomach for it. Kieślowski was clearly such a figure. But it is something greater than Solidarity that Kieślowski mourns, for he recognised that Solidarity embodied it only in part: it is the dream of the ideal represented by Antek. The film is less the incoherent *mélange* of genres several

reviewers perceived than the process of one genre's absorption and supersession of all the others. As Ula's yearning takes her beyond this world the political becomes the metaphysical.

IMPLICIT POLITICS: A SHORT FILM ABOUT KILLING

A Short Film About Killing – described as Kieślowski's masterpiece by Tadeusz Sobolewski (1999: 28), and his first film to gain tumultuous acceptance in the West, winning the Félix (Europe's Oscar for best film) for 1988 – bristles with ironies. They set in as the titles roll: a dead rat in a puddle and a hanged cat dangling before oppressively serried apartment blocks. Varsovians would instantly recognise the irony that juxtaposes the dead animals, evoking an urban inferno, with blocks that in fact contained the apartments of many of Poland's best-known television and film stars: Kieślowski remarked that he had tried to pick one of the best-looking housing complexes. The title itself secretes a deadly irony, as this 'short film' will show how lengthy and arduous is the process of doing a man to death, absorbing approximately eight minutes of screen time. The time it takes to complete the murder's first stage will be marked excruciatingly by the slow-passage of a bicycle along the yellow-lit horizon.

Kieślowski's ironies are not signs of detached, sovereign authorial control but appalling dissonances. They echo in the premonitions of a young lawyer, Piotr Balicki, whose celebration of his graduation to the bar is pierced by a sudden sense that his future will not be as straightforward as he hopes. As the lawyer celebrates, Jacek, the future murderer, is already drinking in the same café. It is in the scenes of Jacek's wandering around Warsaw – ironically, in its showcase tourist area, near the Old Town – that Kieślowski's film is most remarkable. Jacek traverses a world turned to slime by Sławomir Idziak's green filters, like the drained aquarium street of Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907). He first appears in doubly uncanny form, before a cinema, as a reflection that is also a shadow, in a half-lit world. The partial desaturation of the image – other colours are visible only at its centre – echoes the effect of the tinted band across the windscreen of the taxi whose driver Jacek will kill. As Kieślowski himself notes, the filters obscure non-essential objects in particular (just as his screenplay omits the unnecessary trial) (Niogret 1997: 16). Thanks to the filters one image after another as it were spreads the dirt at the edges of the car window the windscreen wipers cannot reach: the taxi-driver may wash it, but the filters fog it again. And his car window's tinted band is echoed musically as Piotr's girlfriend sits in the café in front of a large green plastic screen, ironically placed centre-screen this time. With its realistic equivalent, the device is never ornamental but suggests – quasi-expressionistically – the closing down of possibility in the murder's world: fatalistically, every image quietly anticipates or recalls the taxi, evoking an inescapably determining primal scene of murder towards which the film descends and from which it only seems to swirl away – until that scene recurs, transformed, in the hanging of Jacek himself. It is hardly surprising that we only learn Jacek's name after his murder of the taxi-driver, as if the deed alone has given him a name, as if – existentially – his deed has defined him completely. The work's expressionistic use of stylisation to evoke Jacek's point of view even allows him to darken the world, identifying him as a power of darkness: as he looks back underarm at the Castle Square taxi stand the crooked arm through which he does so blots out the image's edges. Shortly afterwards, filters stretched across the top half of the image darken the sky as the taxi-driver moves off with Jacek as his fare.

At the centre of Idziak's muddled images, only one colour is strongly present: the red worn by a series of girls. This is doubly ironic: girls are unattainable for Jacek, one of whose possible motives for the killing was to acquire a car to take one to the mountains; ironically, Beata, whose recognition of the taxi precedes Jacek's trial, had been ogled and propositioned by the oleaginous taxi-driver. The film's succession of girls in red leads naturally to another red, the blood on the taxi-driver's head. When Jacek covers the bloodied head with a brown checked blanket, he completes the desaturation of his own world by trying to hide the sign of his guilt, to accelerate red's declension into brown. Just as he pulled his head up into the taxi's darkness to escape the look of *The Decalogue* series' recurrent witness figure, he veils the staring face of his victim. (Jacek's unwillingness to be seen is in a sense the precursor of his own death.) The interchange of red and brown in this murder scene formally anticipates the colour-scheme of that other Kieślowski film preoccupied with law and judgement, *Three Colours: Red*. The only girl with whom Jacek is associated in the scenes preceding the murder is a young one in a photograph, in a communion dress, later revealed as his dead sister. She wears white, not the red that is instinct with life, and from the outset we suspect that she is dead: Jacek asks the shop assistant whom he wants to enlarge the photograph, whether photographs can tell one if someone is no longer alive.

Ironies are legion in this densely scripted film. The taxi-driver savours the outlaw qualities of a stray dog, unaware that a human outlaw will kill him (after the murder, Jacek eats the other half of the sandwich thrown to the dog). As Piotr describes law positively as a way of meeting people he might otherwise never encounter, he says this will happen 'if everything goes well': words he applies to his exam, but which follow an image of Jacek and the welling up on the soundtrack of menacing chords. The driver tells Jacek he's driven as far as he'll go, and his words assume a deadly second meaning as the killing begins. (A cutaway to the car's wheels grinding in the mud underlines the futility of any attempted escape.) Jacek's frantic efforts to halt the nightmarishly prolonged blast of the car's horn are ironised when only a horse in a field looks round and then, the moment the horn has fallen silent, a passing train picks up its note (implying the futility of Jacek's activity – for the sound would have been drowned anyway – and that the murder will recur infernally in the mind of its executor); a man selling lottery tickets congratulates the driver on his good luck; and Jacek refuses to let a gypsy read his fortune as he enters the café where the girlfriend of the young lawyer, Piotr Balicki, is reading *his* palm. Jacek's Warsaw is a realm of diabolic coincidence and reversal, a circle of hell.

Jacek's murder of the taxi-driver may seem motiveless, its apparent inevitability the result of the expressionist style and the accumulation of such details as the hanged cat ironically prefiguring Jacek's dehumanisation and hanging or the severed head that is the taxi-driver's good-luck charm – another irony, as it presages the mode of his death. With his fluffy punk hair and denim jacket, Jacek stalks Warsaw like an edgy existential angel of doom. But it is not just the stylistic tour de force that persuades us to accept the experience of the appallingly protracted murder, but Kieślowski's equally important, sombre insistence on the action's status as the logical conclusion of a gratuitous violence in human relations that may well issue from Poland's late-1980s economic decline but which is also something he deems increasingly characteristic of our ever colder civilisation. Whether it be the taxi-driver hooting at a poodle then deliberately leaving would-be clients standing (appallingly rough justice then lands him with Jacek), or Jacek himself telling people at the taxi-stand that his destination is the opposite

of theirs, hostility is pervasive. Jacek's action simply discloses its implicit murderousness. It is as if Jacek is the point at which the social chain snaps beneath the overwhelming weight of an oozing evil: who earths it for that society like a scapegoat.

Nevertheless, there are hints of an alternative world linked to the work's children and its idealistic young lawyer, modelled partly on Kieślowski's script consultant on legal matters, Krzysztof Piesiewicz, and surely partly also on Kieślowski himself (he uses his signature-phrase '*nie wiem*' ['I don't know'] when motivating his career-choice, while his ironic summary of the putative deterrent virtues of capital punishment anticipates the director's own argument). When Jacek flicks coffee dregs at the café window through which two young girls are watching him, they smile and he smiles back: their reaction transforms his violence into play, and in retrospect it will seem almost as if he has been flinging mud at the image of his sister (throwing earth on her coffin?) and then smiling at her untouchability, the invulnerability of the dead. He looks at her but is separated from her photographic image just as in this scene the glass separates him from the girls. Piotr's exuberance as his scooter weaves in and out of traffic is virtually the sole additional relief in the stalking darkness of the film (the taxi-driver frowns at him). But Piotr's defense of Jacek is useless, its hopelessness daringly embodied in the cut wherewith Kieślowski excises everything between Beata's recognition of the taxi-driver's car and the judge's closure of the trial. Piotr's peroration against the death penalty may be the best the judge has ever heard, but we are not shown it. Piotr's role as secular priest, hearing Jacek's last words in prison, is more important to Kieślowski. But the omission also occurs because his own argument against capital punishment is framed purely filmically. This polemic may be taken as an extension of the critique of fascism in *From the Point of View of the Night Porter*. As Hermann Broch notes, 'a man who campaigns for the abolition of capital punishment loses his interest in magical justice ... With this loss of interest in such magic goes one in the magic-demonic propaganda of the various fascisms' (Broch 1955b: 217). For Broch, writing during the rise of National Socialism in Germany, the abolition of capital punishment would entail a 'leap into the dark' that 'forces men to shut their eyes' (is the darkness pre-existent or caused by those eyes closing?) – but it is the precondition of the open system that is democracy (Broch 1955b: 215–17). In *A Short Film About Killing*, all idealisation of the state becomes impossible as a parallel gruesomeness places individual and state-sanctioned killing on the same plane: Kieślowski does not speak of 'murder' and 'killing' but simply of killing. As militiamen bundle Jacek into the execution chamber, knocking down the curtain, and the man tightening the noose shrieks instructions to his assistant, their frenzy echoes Jacek's earlier realisation of the difficulty of killing a man. In the final, most deadly irony, it is as if the law that has violence at its carefully screened heart, behind the curtains Kieślowski rips away, is itself implicated in the murder Jacek has committed.

Kieślowski suggests several possible explanations for Jacek's deed. There is the need for one of the chronically deprived young to obtain a car (the actual motive in the real case that was the film's point of departure) and hence of youth's revenge upon age. There is the country boy's desire to assert himself in the city whose hostility he reciprocates with a vengeance. Perhaps most mysterious and unconscious of all is Jacek's own death-wish, his apparent search – by means of a murder for which he knows he will die – for a mode of suicide that will not preclude burial in consecrated ground alongside his beloved sister (the suicide motif being first suggested, but not spelled out, by Jacek's visit to a cinema in which *Wetherby* is playing). If Kieślowski neither highlights nor privileges any of these possibilities, it is partly because he

wishes to allow for the essential mysteriousness of human actions. Part of that mystery lies in the hints of a possible intersection between these actions and an invisible reality: Zbigniew Preisner's score rises to an agonised crescendo as the taxi-driver moves off with Jacek in his cab; writhing choral voices suggest a dissonant transcendence as Jacek stares at the 'witness' figure who haunts *The Decalogue*. The music re-enters, again with a sense of off-key otherworldliness, as Jacek looks at the bloodied head of his seated, seemingly dead victim and moans 'Oh Jesus'. An entirely mysterious irony, meanwhile, links Piotr and Jacek: as Piotr tells his examining board that as years go by people doubt the meaning of what they do, his head slips into darkness rather as Jacek's will do on passing the witness. There may be a crucial difference – Piotr does not hide in the dark, as does Jacek – but the lighting establishes an enigmatic connection nevertheless, perhaps indicating the sheer pervasiveness (though also intermittence) of the principle of darkness. Kiesłowski's refusal of determinist explanation extends to his viewers the freedom Jacek denies himself.

A 'SHORT' FILM

Kieślowski often remarked on the difficulty of finding titles for his works, perhaps because he rejected the most widespread and conventional form of title, which uses a name. His titles are more abstract and conceptual. The only one to mention a person's name – *The Double Life of Véronique* – lures one into expecting one Véronique living two lives (an open one and a secret one) *simultaneously*, while the film in fact both expands and inverts this expectation: what one gets is *two* girls, Weronika and Véronique, living *one* life, which is simultaneous and co-terminous only up to a certain point in time. A title like *Camera Buff*, meanwhile, is descended from the titles employed by the documentarist (*Bricklayer*, *From the Point of View of the Night Porter*): titles stressing the typicality or representativeness of a protagonist who simply exemplifies a profession. Kiesłowski's dissatisfaction with his own titles may reflect a sense of the disparity between the individual life or events filmed and the project of investigating an idea. In the case of *A Short Film About Killing*, whose 'short' is both modest and ironic, a kind of transfer occurs between the words 'short' and 'killing', rendering all the more unexpected the sheer duration of the work's two deaths. In addition to this, Kiesłowski employs the idea of the 'short' film given in his title to engender spectator question and suspense, particularly in the film's second half, when the audience knows the end to be approaching, and when language begins to be used extensively – following the near-silent first half – making possible explicit moment-by-moment adjustments in conscious awareness of temporality. Immediately after the verdict has been pronounced, Jacek asks 'is that the end?', and since this is a *short* film we may indeed wonder if it is so. (In the *really* short film that is *Decalogue 5*, meanwhile, the end is indeed closer, and could even come here – after about 55 minutes.) A little later, after the hangman has prepared the execution chamber, he tells the lieutenant 'it's ready', and again the end may seem imminent. But the lieutenant tells the lawyer he can have half an hour with Jacek. Audience members already aware of the film's running time may be tempted to glance at their watches and wonder whether this encounter will take up the film's remainder – as it could well do, since it still has approximately thirty minutes to run when the lieutenant makes this remark, and filmic executions seldom last long. The viewer, perhaps stunned by the earlier appallingly protracted murder (unbearably and ironically *long* in the 'short film'), may even wish to read this announcement as a sign that – despite the expectations aroused by the title

('killing' rather than 'murder' is a category that might be stretched to include execution too) and by the film's genre (the prison execution movie) – the hanging may even not be shown. After all, Kiesłowski has already set a precedent for surprise by omitting the trial. Be that as it may, the lieutenant's remark foregrounds the question of time, the insistent ticking away of the clock of a short (young) life in this short film. Later still, the lawyer's dialogue with Jacek will be interrupted by officials asking whether or not he's ready: on the first occasion he says 'not yet'. The interruption is both an alarm clock the text switches off and the kind of momentary suspension of intense encounter Kiesłowski frequently employs – to induce suspense, to preserve the scene from monotony or claustrophobia, to evoke a sense of possible and other worlds, to indicate the ease and frequency with which his characters' aims are frustrated. (The principle of such a punctuation goes back to his documentaries, with their analytical subdivisions and occasional lifting of the oppressiveness of their subjects' lives, often with a shot of the world outside, often viewed through a window.) Asked a second time, the lawyer retorts, 'tell the prosecutor that I'll never say I'm ready'. Death always comes too early. The lawyer's position is the one embodied in the title of Kiesłowski's previous film, *No End*. Jacek himself may then fling himself to the ground, but there will now be only a brief stay of execution before the short film and his short life are over.

THE DIALECTICS OF DISTANCE

Although Kiesłowski's titles distance one, their relationship with the works they head is dialectical, as the camerawork places one *close* to the characters. The images themselves often reiterate that dialectic, counterposing closeness with intervening glass or juxtaposed mirrors. Throughout the works, the camera placement plays out a dialectic of urgency and distance, appeals and their rejection. As a man is chased down an alleyway and beaten up the camera closes in to watch as Jacek observes from a cool distance. It is probably only Kiesłowski's consummate alternation between close-up images of the murder and long shots of the car, or the cutaways to other elements around it, that renders this sequence bearable, preventing it becoming utterly overwhelming, not bludgeoning us into insensibility but rather deepening our horror with each return. After Jacek's conviction, the lawyer visits the judge's chambers to ask if another lawyer might have succeeded where he failed. In the shot/reverse-shot interchange between the two men, the camera is closer to the lawyer, evoking and seconding the urgency of his appeal. Since he looks past the camera, the image of Piotr is clearly not from the judge's point-of-view.⁴ We then see the judge, seated – protectively? – behind his desk, at a greater distance, and from an angle that suggests the lawyer's point-of-view.⁵ The distance shows the judge's capacity to create distance, to mute the urgency of the lawyer's appeal, and it is hardly surprising that the two are then shown together in long-shot, from the end of the judge's chamber: everything is now settled, cut-and-dried. The judge's initial relative smallness corresponds to a diminution of humanity through identification with the judicial killing mechanism, an identification even more apparent in the case of the lengthy sequence of the hangman's preparation: we first see him passing through the prison gate, leaving behind the outside world and his own individual life as he then walks impassively into the distance, shrinking by the moment as he becomes a functionary. Since we are at first unaware of his identity, he seems as impersonal as the doors and windows that clank open and shut with equal impassivity. As the camera registers his preparations, it never draws as close to him as it does

to the lawyer: the focus is on his activity rather than his personality, with the implication that the former has extinguished the latter. The ability to distinguish between the two is important for Kiesłowski. The lawyer – desperately holding on to the Christian distinction between the sin and the sinner – tells Jacek that the court did not so much condemn him as his deed. But since Jacek himself is to die, while his deed lies in the past and is not available for reinspection (though, crucially, *we* are allowed to reinspect it through its filmic dramatisation), he may be forgiven for failing to recognise the distinction and arguing that to oppose his deed *is* to oppose him. Where the lawyer's position may be deemed Christian, is not Jacek's existentialist? Jacek's surname – Lazar (Lazarus) – poses the question of his final fate, ironically asking if he will ever rise again and noting that (unlike his namesake) he will not do shortly after his death. As Tadeusz Sobolewski notes, the film does not simply hold the murderer at a condemnatory distance: 'we find ourselves as viewers sufficiently close to see in him not the incarnation of evil but a human being stripped of the protective layer that restrains aggression' (Sobolewski 1988b: 8). For Sobolewski, 'the *closeness* of our view of both killings represents a shattering move with aesthetic, ethical and also religious consequences' (Sobolewski 1988a: 83), including the reflection that justice must give way to mercy: a conclusion which 'does not stem from religious presuppositions but from intuition, from the mere manner of looking' (*ibid.*). The consequences this has for the view of the state meanwhile are – as Broch observes – that it must divest itself of the mystical power of killing in order to demonstrate its humanity to its subjects: 'to make them aware that all human life is inviolable, that no human soul, however depraved, can be excluded from this' (Broch 1955b: 214). If throughout its remainder the film stays closer to the lawyer than anyone else, it is to hug the one sign of life in the dank brown (*non-red*) obscurity of the fearsome, death-dealing space – the valley of death – through which he walks as our harrowed representative.

POLISH CINEMA AND THE QUESTION OF CO-PRODUCTION

The recurrent political oppression of the last two hundred years rendered Westward moves common, even traditional, among Polish artists and intellectuals. The exile's position is, of course, tense and difficult: on the one hand, one may need to leave one's native country to achieve freedom of speech; but, on the other, prolonged absence may sap both the will and – more importantly – the ability to speak for one's countrymen, who may legitimately ask the Conradian question whether the artist is still 'one of us'. Thus when the key Polish filmmakers of the late 1970s – Wajda and Zanussi – took frequent working trips to the West in the early 1980s, they became 'temporary exiles', and their peregrinations testified both to post-martial law oppression and to the fact that the ice that had thawed under Solidarity never regained its old temperature sufficiently to freeze everybody in. The less well-known Agnieszka Holland, meanwhile, was trapped by martial law in a West to which she adapted remarkably well, re-centring her work to stress its feminist rather than its Polish strain, something perhaps partly facilitated by the way the ethos of traditional 'Polishness' is tinged with a masculinist military virtue her gender made her question. (Perhaps only the tough-minded Kiesłowski could have succeeded in making the dark and critical *No End* within early 1980s Poland, but the fact of its domestic production and distribution, albeit unadvertised and in out-of-the-way cinemas, indicated the uncertainty of rulers who would later abdicate entirely.) It is surely significant that whenever possible the departing artists always returned: only sojourn on Polish soil

ultimately legitimised their speech to and for the disenfranchised nation. Even Skolimowski sought to set up a Polish project in the early 1980s.

For anyone considering the dynamics of national identity under globalisation and co-production, the case of Central and East European cinema during and after the withering away of state sponsorship and control is profoundly instructive. For individual directors, meanwhile, the demise of *soi-disant* socialist orders meant an evaporation of the availability of the status of political refugee, ending the lineage of Forman, Passer and Polański and turning the East European-US axis into a one-way street travelled by Hollywood producers seeking well-trained, cut-price technicians for works with American stars (thus facilitating the continued payment of those stars' inflated fees). France, the old half-way house for so many Poles, became more likely to be a permanent domicile, especially since to enter the North American cultural sphere often entailed deep marginalisation – as was discovered by Ryszard Bugajski, exiled director of *Przesłuchanie* (*The Interrogation*, 1982), that key Solidarity-era anti-Stalinist text.

Whereas the co-productions of the 1980s had been shot abroad, with directors willingly bearing a Western 'economic censorship' that was nevertheless far less constraining than the native political one, those of the 1990s would be made domestically. The 1989 collapse of the socialist state's film-funding system merely concluded its lengthy tottering. For Poland's key directors of the early 1980s – Wajda and Zanussi – had ventured abroad after the imposition of martial law not just to secure relatively free utterance but also because the native industry's undercapitalisation at a time of spiralling national debt lent it an early openness to co-production. In the process, however, the questions of identity central to these filmmakers' earlier works, and to the Polish artist's status as unofficial national spokesperson, often suffered repression: the options open to a Hungarian director like István Szabó, whose 1980s German-language trilogy contributed to the debate on Hungarian identity by tapping the overlap between the then fashionable notion of *Mitteleuropa* and the intellectual afterlife of the Austro-Hungarian empire, were not available to Polish directors. Polish idealisation of 'the West' simply testifies to the country's distance from it (see, for instance, Radosław Piwowski's feeble *Train to Hollywood* [*Pociąg do Hollywood*, 1987]). Polish filmmakers did not follow the inter-war novelist Witold Gombrowicz and dissect the way local obsession with one's culture's seeming second-class status – particularly *vis-à-vis* the economically more successful West – generates compensatory pride in one's devotion to 'higher things'. The nearest thing to such a dissection was to be found in the early 1980s work of Skolimowski, particularly *Success is the Best Revenge* (1984), where 'revenge' extends to the football field and Poland's famous and unexpected mid-1970s dismissal of England from the World Cup. Such themes, however, hardly promised the large international returns a co-production's outlay demands, and even Skolimowski's low-budget work on Polish themes was financially viable only during the brief heyday of Poland's early-1980s 'newsworthiness'. Nor have native Polish directors interrogated their own idealisation of American culture through appropriation of the road movie, as have Wim Wenders or Hungary's György Szomjas. The major temptation they face when engaged in co-production is thus one of a self-division that may avoid becoming schizophrenia only when consciously thematised – as in Kiesłowski's *The Double Life of Véronique*, which devotes only a third of its time to its heroine's Polish incarnation (is such asymmetry also necessary to avoid schizophrenia, indicating greater commitment to one place than to the other?) and then, later, in *Trois couleurs: Blanc* (*Three Colours: White*, 1994). For Polish directors unwilling to follow Kiesłowski's lead, however, the question became one of how to