

Virtual November 24, 2020 (41:13)

Krzysztof Kieslowski: **RED** (1994, 99min)

Spelling and Style—use of italics, quotation marks or nothing at all for titles, e.g.—follows the form of the sources. Cast and crew name hyperlinks connect to the individuals' Wikipedia entries



[Vimeo link for ALL of Bruce Jackson's and Diane Christian's film introductions and post-film discussions in the Fall 2020 BFS](#)

[Vimeo link for our introduction to Red](#)

Zoom link for *all* Fall 2020 BFS Tuesday 7:00 PM post-screening discussions:

<https://buffalo.zoom.us/j/92994947964?pwd=dDBWcDYvSlhPbk44TkswcUhiQWkydz09>

Meeting ID: 929 9494 7964

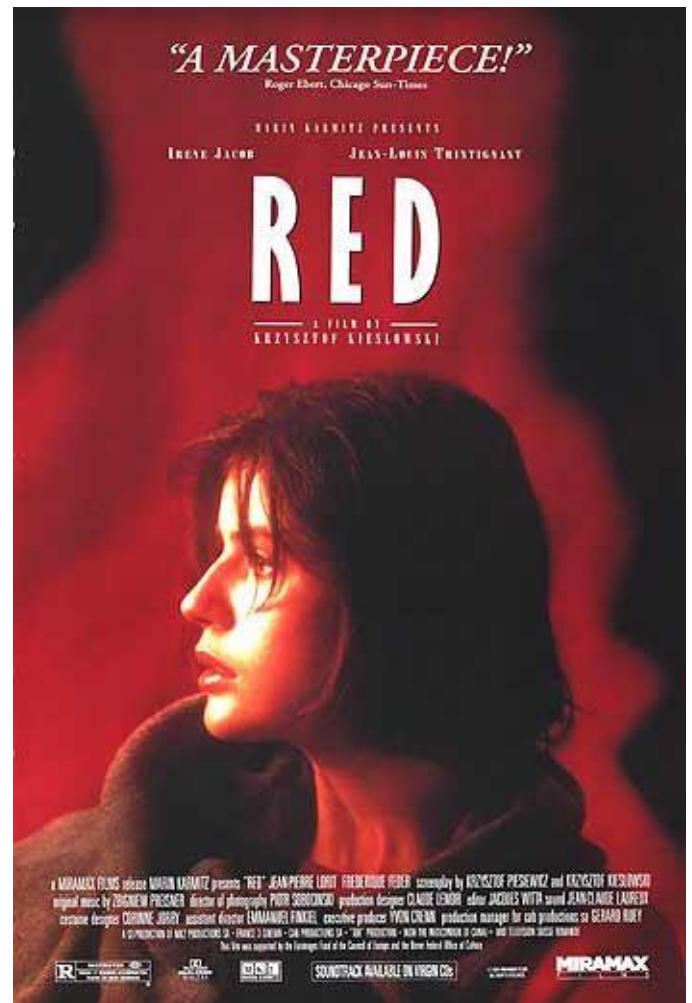
Passcode: 703450

Three Colors: Red (1994)
99min

[Trailer for Red](#)

[Marta Jazowska's "Krzysztof Kieslowski"](#) (*Culture,Pl*) is a great introduction to Kieslowski and his work. She comments on all of his documentary and feature films, and provides urls to essays on the films, [a 30-minute interview](#) with him, and much more.

DIRECTED BY Krzysztof Kieslowski
WRITING Krzysztof Kieslowski and Krzysztof Piesiewicz
PRODUCER Marin Karmitz
MUSIC Zbigniew Preisner
CINEMATOGRAPHY Piotr Sobocinski
EDITING Jacques Witta



The film was nominated for the Palme d'Or at the 1994 Cannes Film Festival, and was nominate for Oscars for Best Director, Best Writing, and Best Cinematography at the 1995 Academy Awards.

CAST

Irène Jacob...Valentine
Jean-Louis Trintignant...Le juge Frédérique
Feder...Karin
Jean-Pierre Lorit...Auguste
Samuel Le Bihan...Le photographe Marc Autheman...(voice)
Juliette Binoche...Julie Vignon
Julie Delpy... Dominique
Benoît Régent...Olivier
Zbigniew Zamachowski...Karol Karol

KRZYSZTOF KIESLOWSKI (b. June 27, 1941 in Warsaw, Mazowieckie, Poland—d. March 13, 1996 (age 54) in Warsaw, Mazowieckie, Poland) wrote

most of the 41 feature-length and short films he directed. It is thought that his work was only beginning to be recognized soon before his untimely death in heart surgery in 1996, though he had announced his retirement in 1994 after premiering *Three Colors: Red** at that year's Cannes Film Festival. Still, he was indicating plans for a new trilogy based on the Dantean framework of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory. Growing up in a Polish Communist regime that placed a premium on socialist-realist aesthetics, he began work as a documentary filmmaker. Even, as a filmmaker, conforming to the demands of socialist-realism, his work was imbued with questions and insights that interrogated the limits of the material world. His career is often broken into films he made before and after 1985's *No End*, his first collaboration with writer Krzysztof Piesiewicz and composer Zbigniew Preisner, a creative team that was sustained through the rest of Kieslowski's filmmaking career. He began to draw attention from filmmakers like Stanley Kubrick and critics like Roger Ebert in the late 1980s with the release of the 10-part series of short films based on the Mosaic Decalogue (*Dekalog*, 1989)* for Polish television. One of the extended shorts in this series granted him permission to enter the main competition at Cannes. He expanded parts V and VII of *Dekalog* into longer feature-length films, *A Short Film About Killing* (1988)* and *A Short Film About Love* (1988)*, the former winning the Jury and FIPRESCI prizes and nominated for the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1988. When *The Double Life of Véronique** was first screened at Cannes, in 1991, Georgia Brown, of the *Village Voice*, declared: "Anything I say about [the film] is merely a labored minuet danced around my own ecstatic response." The *Financial Times*'s Nigel Andrews commented, "I believe we are being hypnotized in *The Double Life of Véronique* . . . How else to explain the ability of a French-Polish film with a nonsensical plot premise . . . to enthrall and enchant



us like no European film in recent history?" The film won the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury and the FIPRESCI Prize and was nominated for the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1991. With the release of *Three Colors: Red* in 1994, he was nominated, once again, for the Palme d'Or at Cannes, and, the following year, he was nominated for Academy Awards for Best

Director and Best Writing.

These are the other films he directed: *Tramway* (1966 Short),* *The Office* (1966 Short), *Zdjecie* (1968 TV Short documentary),* *Z miasta Lodzi* (1969 Documentary short),* *Fabryka* (1971 Documentary short), *Bylem zolnierzem* (1971 Documentary short), *Robotnicy 1971 - Nic o nas bez nas* (1971

Documentary), *Przed*

rajdem (1971 Documentary short),* *Refren* (1972 Documentary short),* *Podstawy BHP w kopalni miedzi* (1972 Documentary short),* *Murarz* (1973 Documentary short),* *Pedestrian Subway* (1974 TV Short),* *First Love* (1974 TV Movie documentary),* *Przeswietlenie* (1974 Documentary short), *Life Story* (1975 Short),* *Personnel* (1975 TV Movie),* *The Scar* (1976),* *Slate* (1976 Documentary short),* *Szpital* (1977 Documentary short),* *Nie wiem* (1977 Documentary),* *Siedem kobiet w różnym wieku* (1979 Documentary short),* *From a Night Porter's Point of View* (1979 Documentary short),* *Camera Buff* (1979),* *Kartoteka* (1979 TV Movie),* *The Calm* (1980 TV Movie),* *Talking Heads* (1980 Documentary short),* *Dworzec* (1980 Documentary short),* *Short Working Day* (1981 TV Movie),* *Blind Chance* (1987),* *Siedem dni w tygodniu* (1988 Documentary short),* *City Life* (1990 segment "Siedem dni w tygodniu"), *Three Colors: Blue* (1993),* and *Three Colors: White* (1994).*

***Indicates films Kieslowski wrote and directed**

KRZYSZTOF PIESIEWICZ (b. October 25, 1945 in Warsaw, Mazowieckie, Poland) studied law at Warsaw University and began practicing in 1973. Through the late 1970s he became increasingly involved in political cases, defending opponents of the

Communist regime, serving as a legal advisor for Solidarity, and assisting in the successful prosecution of the murderers of Jerzy Popiełuszko. In 1982, he met Krzysztof Kieslowski, who was planning to direct a documentary on political show trials in Poland under martial law. Piesiewicz agreed to help, though he doubted whether an accurate film could be made within the constraints of the judicial system; indeed, the filmmakers found that their presence in court seemed to be affecting the outcomes of cases, often improving the prospects of the accused, but making it hard to capture judicial abuses. Kieslowski decided to explore the issue through fiction instead, and the two collaborated for the first time as writers on the feature film *No End* (1985). He remained Kieslowski's collaborator throughout the rest of the director's career. He was nominated, in 1995, with Kieslowski for an Academy Award for Best Writing, Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen for *Trois couleurs: Rouge* (1994). Since Kieslowski's death, he has remained engaged with film writing. He has written for 14 films: *A Short Film About Killing* (1988 writer),* *A Short Film About Love* (1988 writer),* *Dekalog* (1989 TV Mini-Series, written by - 6 episodes, writer - 4 episodes),* *The Double Life of Véronique* (1991),* *Three Colors: Blue* (1993 scenario),* *Three Colors: White* (1994 scenario),* *2001 Silence* (2001), *Heaven* (2002 screenplay), *Hell* (2005), *Nadzieja* (2007 trilogy "Heaven, Hell and Purgatory", written by), *Uit Zicht* (2009 Short, original screenplay), and *Wander and Burn, the Endless Stars* (2018).

* Indicates films Kieslowski directed



ZBIGNIEW PREISNER (b. May 20, 1955 in Bielsko-Biala, Slaskie, Poland) studied philosophy and history in the university of Cracow. In his

twenties he started to study music as an autodidact: listening to records and learning to write by breaking down what he was hearing. He then began to make compositions. In 1981 he began collaborating with filmmakers. While working with Antoni Krauze, he met director Krzysztof Kieslowski who invited him to work on *No End* (1985), a film about Poland under the martial law at the beginning of the 80s. With that movie he began a very close collaboration with Kieslowski and his screenwriter Krzysztof Piesiewicz. He has composed for 76 films, some of which are: *Prognoza pogody* (1983), *I Like Bats* (1986), *The Lullaby* (1986), *Is It Going to Be a War?* (1986 Documentary short), *A Short Film About Killing* (1988),* *A Short Film About Love* (1988),* *Dekalog* (1989 TV Mini-Series),* *The Last Schoolbell* (1989), *City Life* (1990), *Europa Europa* (1990), *Eminent Domain* (1990), *The Double Life of Véronique* (1991), *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* (1991), *Kieslowski: Dialogue* (1991 TV Movie documentary), *Olivier, Olivier* (1992), *Damage* (1992), *The Secret Garden* (1993), *Three Colors: Blue* (1993),* *On the Edge of the Horizon* (1993), *Three Colors: White* (1994),* *When a Man Loves a Woman* (1994), *Three Colors: Red* (1994),* *Mouvements du désir* (1994), *Krzysztof Kieslowski: I'm So-So...* (1995 Documentary), *The Island on Bird Street* (1997), *FairyTale: A True Story* (1997), *Migrations* (1997 Short), *Foolish Heart* (1998), *The Last September* (1999), *Dreaming of Joseph Lees* (1999), *Aberdeen* (2000), *Between Strangers* (2002), *It's All About Love* (2003), *Strange Gardens* (2003), *SuperTex* (2003), *1966-1988: Kieslowski, cinéaste polonais* (2005 Video documentary short), *Sportsman of the Century* (2006), *A Secret* (2007), *Angelica* (2015), *Lady of the Dynasty* (2015), *Valley of Shadows* (2017), *Lies We Tell* (2017), *Forgotten We'll Be* (2020), *Dear Child* (2020, Documentary), and *Man of God* (post-production).

* Indicates films Kieslowski directed

PIOTR SOBOCINSKI (February 3, 1958, Łódź, Łódzkie, Poland – March 26, 2001, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada) has 28 cinematographer credits, among them *Trapped* (2002), *Hearts in Atlantis* (2001), *Angel Eyes* (2001), *Twilight* (1998), *Marvin's Room* (1996), *Ransom* (1996), *The Seventh Room* (1996), *Three Colors: Red* (1994), *A nagy postarablás* (1992), *The Decalogue* (1990), *A Tale of Adam Mickiewicz's 'Forefathers' Eve'* (1989), *Biala*

wizytówka (1989), *Pension Sonnenschein* (1989), *Magnat* (1987), *Zuk* (1987), and *Zu Hause - Was ist*



das eigentlich? (1985).

IRÈNE JACOB (b. July 15, 1966 in Suresnes, Seine [now Hauts-de-Seine], France) is a French-Swiss actress (71 credits) known for her work with Polish film director Krzysztof Kieślowski. She won the 1991 Cannes Film Festival Award for Best Actress for the Kieślowski film *The Double Life of Véronique*, and was nominated for the BAFTA Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role for his 1994 film *Three Colors: Red*. Her other film appearances include *Au Revoir les Enfants* (1987), *Brigade de nuit* (1987), *The Gang of Four* (1989), *Erreur de jeunesse* (1989), *Les mannequins d'osier* (1989), *Nick chasseur de têtes* (TV Series) (1989), *Shijou no tabibito* (TV Series) (1989), *La compagnie de Sarah* (TV Movie) (1989), *La veillée* (1990), *The Secret of Sarah Tombelaine* (1991), *Claude* (1992), *Le moulin de Daudet* (1992), *The Secret Garden* (1993), *Predskazaniye* (1993), *Enak* (1993), *Runaways* (1995), *Beyond the Clouds* (1995), *All Men Are Mortal* (1995), *Othello* (1995), *Victory* (1996), *Incognito* (1997), *U.S. Marshals* (1998), *Cuisine américaine* (1998), *Jack's pots* (Short) (1998), *The Big Brass Ring* (1999), *My Life So Far* (1999), *History Is Made at Night* (1999), *Cuisine chinoise* (Short) (1999), *L'affaire Marcovelle* (2000), *Fourplay* (2001), *Lettre d'une inconnue* (TV Movie) (2002), *The Landlords* (2002), *La légende de Parva* (2003), *Nés de la mère du monde* (TV Movie) (2003), *The Pornographer: A Love Story* (2004), *Autumn* (2004), *Battle of the Brave* (2004), *The Education of Fairies* (2006), *The Inner Life of Martin Frost* (2007), *Fallen Heroes* (2007), *Faits divers* (Short) (2007), *The Dust of Time* (2008), *The French Kissers* (2009),

Les yeux de Simone (Short) (2009), *Déchaînées* (TV Movie) (2009), *Rio Sex Comedy* (2010), *La solitude du pouvoir* (TV Movie) (2012), *The Lanzac Clan* (TV Movie) (2013), *Les enfants rouges* (2014), *Salaud, on t'aime* (2014), *The Easy Way Out* (2014), *Dying of the Light* (2014), *Arnaud fait son 2e film* (2015), *Boulevard du Palais* (TV Series) (2015), *Ella Maillart: Double Journey* (Short) (2015), *Sayonara* (2015), *Captain Marleau* (TV Series) (2016), *Eternity* (2016), *Deux escargots s'en vont* (Short) (voice) (2016), *Tales of Mexico* (2016), *The Collection* (TV Series) (2016), *The Affair* (TV Series) (2016-2017), *Home Away from Home* (Short) (2017), *Dark* (2017), *Patrick Melrose* (TV Mini-Series) (2018), *For the Ones We Loved* (2019), *The OA* (TV Series) (2019), and *Villa Caprice* (2020).



JEAN-LOUIS TRINTIGNANT (December 11, 1930, Piolenc, Vaucluse, France) has been in 143 films, some of which are 2019 *The Best Years of a Life*, 2017 *Happy End*, 2012 *Amour*, 2003 *Janis and John*, 1998 *Those Who Love Me Can Take the Train*, 1996 *A Self-Made Hero*, 1996 *C'est jamais loin*, 1994 *See How They Fall*, 1994 *Three Colors: Red*, 1993 *L'instinct de l'ange*, 1991 *'Merci la vie'*, 1989 *Bunker Palace Hôtel*, 1986 *The Woman of My Life*, 1986 *A Man and a Woman: 20 Years Later*, 1985 *L'homme aux yeux d'argent*, 1985 *Partir, revenir*, 1985 *L'été prochain*, 1984 *Long Live Life*, 1983 *Under Fire*, 1983 *Cover Up*, 1983 *Confidentially Yours*, 1982 *La nuit de Varennes*, 1981 *Dead Certain*, 1981 *Passione d'amore*, 1980 *Je vous aime*, 1979 *Melancoly Baby*, 1978 *Other People's Money*, 1977 *The Passengers*, 1977 *L'affaire*, 1976 *Rain over Santiago*, 1975 *Flic Story*, 1975 *Playing with Fire*, 1974 *The Secret*, 1974

Escapade, 1974 *Les violons du bal*, 1973 *The Train*, 1973 *Défense de savoir*, 1973 *Une journée bien remplie ou Neuf meurtres insolites dans une même journée par un seul homme dont ce n'est pas le métier*, 1972 *The Outside Man*,

1972 *The Assassination*, 1970 *The Crook*, 1970 *Secret Intentions*, 1970 *The Conformist*, 1969 *My Night at Maud's*, 1969 *Z*, 1969 *L'américain*, 1968 *The Libertine*, 1968 *My Love, My Love*, 1968 *Les Biches*, 1967 *Trans-Europ-Express*, 1966 *Is Paris Burning?*, 1966 *A Man and a Woman*, 1966 *La longue marche*, 1965 *Compartiment tueurs*, 1965 *I Kill, You Kill*, 1965 *The Real Bargain*, 1964 *Mata Hari, agent H21*, 1964 *The Last Steps*, 1962 *The Easy Life*, 1962 *Les sept péchés capitaux*, 1961 *Le puits aux trois verities*, 1961 *Journey Beneath the Desert*, 1961 *Spotlight on a Murderer*, 1960 *The Battle of Austerlitz*, 1959 *Les liaisons dangereuses*, 1956 *Club of Women*, 1956 *...And God Created Woman*, and 1956 *If All the Guys in the World...*

FRÉDÉRIQUE FEDER has 13 acting credits: 2005 *EastEnders*, 1997 *Swept from the Sea*, 1996 *Delphine 1*, 1996 *Un inverno freddo freddo*, 1995 *La terraza de Miguel*, 1994 *Three Colors: Red*, 1994 *Comme un dimanche*, 1994 *Parlez après le signal sonore*, 1993 *Acción mutante*, 1991 *Road to Ruin*, and 1985 *Emmenez-moi au théâtre: La robe mauve de Valentine*.

JEAN-PIERRE LORIT has 77 acting credits, among them 2010 *Outside the Law*, 2010 *The Round Up*, 2006 *Tell No One*, 2006 *Un ami parfait*, 2005 *The White Countess*, 2004 *Au bout du quai*, 2001 *Alexandria*, 2000 *A Matter of Taste*, 1998 *In All Innocence*, 1998 *Alice and Martin*, 1996 *Jeunes gens*, 1995 *Nelly & Monsieur Arnaud*, 1995 *Un jour, ce soir là*, 1994 *Three Colors: Red*, 1994 *Jeanne la Pucelle II - Les prisons*, 1994 *Jeanne la Pucelle I - Les batailles*, 1992 *Le moulin de Daudet*, 1991 *Le gang des tractions*, 1991 *Chronique d'une fin d'après-midi*, 1990 *La veillée*, and 1989 *Les nuits révolutionnaires*.



SAMUEL LE BIHAN

(November 2, 1965, Avranches, France) has 62 acting credits, some of which are 2012 *Cornouailles*, 2012 *Une nuit*, 2009- 2011 *Braquo*, 2009 *Au siècle de Maupassant: Contes et nouvelles du XIXème siècle*, 2008 *Mesrine:*

Public Enemy #1, 2008 *Disco*, 2007 *The Sandman*, 2006 *Exes*, 2005 *The Last Sign*, 2004 *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, 2004 *Everybody Is a Killer*, 2002 *Shooting Stars*, 2002 *A Private Affair*, 2002 *He Loves Me... He Loves Me Not*, 2001 *Brotherhood of the Wolf*, 2000 *Total western*, 2000 *Jet Set*, 1999 *Venus Beauty Institute*, 1997 *Le cousin*, 1995 *Une femme française*, 1994 *Three Colors: Red*, 1992 *Promenades d'été*, and 1987 *Le beauif*.

JULIETTE BINOCHE (b. March 9, 1964 in Paris, France) is affectionately known by the French press simply as "La Binoche." She was only 23 when she first attracted the attention of international film critics with the 1988 film adaptation of Czech novelist Milan Kundera's 1984 novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Her performance in that film gave famous film critic Roger Ebert the impression that she was "almost ethereal in her beauty and innocence," and image she resisted in her turn as a woman having an affair with her fiancé's father in 1992's *Damage*. She has also, famously, resisted many opportunities for mainstream Hollywood roles, in particular rejecting three different offers from Steven Spielberg, fairly early in her acting career. She appeared in Kieslowski's *Three Colors: Blue* (1993), *Three Colors: White* (1994) and *Three Colors: Red* (1994). She won an Academy Award for Best Actress in a Supporting Role in 1997 for *The English Patient* (1996), and she was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role in 2001 for *Chocolat* (2000). She won Best Actress at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival for *Certified Copy* (2010 *Copie conforme*). In all, she has acted in 75 films. These are some of her other performances: *Liberty belle* (1983), *Hail Mary* (1985), *Family Life* (1985), *My Brother-in-law Killed My Sister* (1986), *Roundabout* (1989), *The Lovers on the Bridge* (1991),

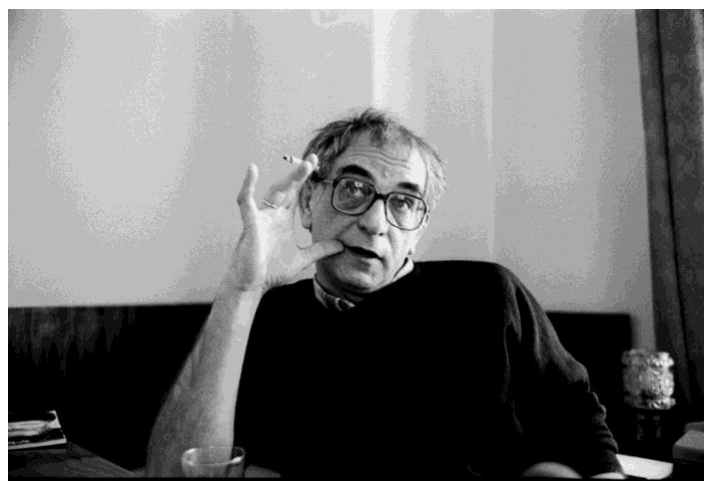
Wuthering Heights (1992), *The Horseman on the Roof* (1995), *Jet Lag* (2002), *In My Country* (2004), *Caché* (2005), *Paris, je t'aime* (2006), *A Few Days in September* (2006), *Flight of the Red Balloon* (2007), *Certified Copy* (2010), *Another Woman's Life* (2012), *Godzilla* (2014), *Clouds of Sils Maria* (2014), *Endless Night* (2015), *7 Letters* (2015), *Slack Bay* (2016), *Let the Sunshine In* (2017), *Vision* (2018), *Double Lives* (2018), *High Life* (2018), and *Who You Think I Am* (2019), *The Truth* (2019), and *How to Be a Good Wife* (2020).

JULIE DEPLY (b. December 21, 1969 in Paris, France) made her first short film at age 12, then wrote her first screenplay at age 16. Later, when she started to act, she saved the money she earned to help pay her way through the film program at New York University. She first got the attention of Jean-Luc Godard who cast her, at fourteen, in his 1985 film *Détective*. She has written for 12 films and was nominated, with Richard Linklater and Ethan Hawke, for an Academy Award for Best Writing, Adapted Screenplay for both *Before Sunset* (2004) in 2005 and for *Before Midnight* (2013) in 2014. She has directed 9 films, produced 4 films, composed for 4 films, and edited for 2 films. She has acted in 64 films, including Kieslowski's *Three Colors: Blue* (1993), *Three Colors: White* (1994) and *Three Colors: Red* (1994). She is also a frequent actor in Linklater's films, most notably, the aforementioned *Before Trilogy: Before Sunrise* (1995), *Before Sunset* (2004), and *Before Midnight* (2013). These are some other films she has acted in: *King Lear* (1987), *The Dark Night of the Soul* (1989), *Europa Europa* (1990), *Voyager* (1991), *Killing Zoe* (1993), *The Three Musketeers* (1993), *An American Werewolf in Paris* (1997), *Crime and Punishment* (1998 TV Movie), *The Passion of Ayn Rand* (1999 TV Movie), *MacArthur Park* (2001), *Waking Life* (2001), *Intimate Affairs* (2001), *Beginner's Luck* (2001), *Looking for Jimmy* (2002), *Frankenstein* (2004 TV Mini-Series), *Broken Flowers* (2005), *The Legend of Lucy Keyes* (2005), *The Hoax* (2006), *Guilty Hearts* (2006), *2 Days in Paris* (2007), *2 Days in New York* (2012), *The Bachelors* (2017), and *Burning Shadow* (2018).

BENOÎT RÉGENT (b. Benoît Michel Régent, August 19, 1953, Nantes, Loire-Atlantique, France – October 22, 1994, Zurich, Switzerland) appeared in 46

films, including 1995 *Black for Remembrance*, 1995 *Out in the Country*, 1994 *Du fond du Coeur*, 1994 *Three Colors: Red*, 1993 *Three Colors: Blue*, 1991 *J'entends plus la guitar*, 1990 *Jean Galmot, aventurier*, 1990 *Dr. M*, 1988 *A Soldier's Tale*, 1988 *L'île aux oiseaux*, 1987 *A Flame in My Heart*, 1986 *A Man and a Woman: 20 Years Later*, 1985 *Spécial police*, 1985 *Subway*, 1985 *Hell Train*, 1985 *L'été prochain*, 1984 *Dangerous Moves*, 1983 *Stella*, 1983 *Un dimanche de flic*, and 1980 *La femme intégrale*.

ZBIGNIEW ZAMACHOWSKI (b. July 17, 1961 in Brzeziny, Łódzkie, Poland) has acted in 127 films, including Kieslowski's *Dekalog* (1989) and *Three Colors: Blue* (1993), *Three Colors: White* (1994) and *Three Colors: Red* (1994). He has also appeared in films such as: *Wielka majówka* (1981), *Rycerze i rabusie* (1984 TV Series), *The Tribulations of Balthazar Kober* (1988), *Escape from the 'Liberty' Cinema* (1990), *Pestka* (1995), *Demons of War* (1998), *Proof of Life* (2000), *The Pianist* (2002), *Distant Lights* (2003), *The Birch-Tree Meadow* (2003), *Cialo Adam Dizel* (2003), *Popieluszko. Wolność jest w nas* (2009), *Operation Dunaj* (2009), *Within the Whirlwind* (2009), *Walesa: Man of Hope* (2013), *Gods* (2014), *Journey to Rome* (2015), *Persona Non Grata* (2015), *Be Prepared* (2017), *Taxing Love* (2018), and *Pitbull: Last Dog* (2018).



Kieslowski, from *The St. James Film Directors Encyclopedia*. Ed. Andrew Sarris. Visible Ink, Detroit, NY, 1998. Entry by Blazena Urgosikova

Polish. Born Warsaw, 27 June 1941. Education School of Cinema and Theatre, Lodz, graduated 1969. Worked as director of documentaries

and fiction films for TV, from 1969; directed first feature for cinema. *Blizna*, 1976; vice-president of the Union of Polish Cinematographers, 1978-81; member of faculty of Radio and Television, Silesia, 1979-82; made *Dekalog*, series of short films for Polish TV, 1988-89, then gained financing to make longer versions of two episodes for cinematic release.

In the late 1970s, when the conflict between the State and the citizens of Poland was imminent, a new trend emerged in cinematography—the “cinema of moral unrest.” All the films in this trend have one common denominator: an unusually cutting critical view of the state of society and its morals, human relationships in the work process, public and private life. It is more than logical that Krzysztof Kieslowski would have belonged to this trend; he had long been concerned with the moral problems of the society, and paid attention to them throughout his film career with increasing urgency. The direction of his artistic course was anticipated by his graduation film *From the City of Lodz*, in which he sketched the problems of workers, and by his participation in the stormy protest meeting of young filmmakers in Cracow in 1971, who warned against a total devaluation of basic human values.

A broad scale of problems can be found in the documentary films Kieslowski made between shooting feature films: disintegration of the economic structure, criticism of executive work, and the relationships of institutions and individuals. These documentaries are not a mere recording of events, phenomena, or a description of people and their behaviour, but always an attempt to look underneath the surface. The director often used non-traditional means. Sometimes the word dominates the image, or he may have borrowed the stylistics of slapstick or satire, or he interfered with the reality in front of the camera by a staged element. Kieslowski did not

emphasize the aesthetic function of the image, but stressed its real and literal meaning.

His feature films have a similar orientation: he concentrated on the explication of an individual's situation in the society and politics, on the outer and inner bounds of man with the objectively existing world, and on the search for connections between the individual and the general. He often placed his heroes in situations where they have to make a vital decision

(in his TV films *The Staff* and *The Calm*, and in his films for theatrical release).

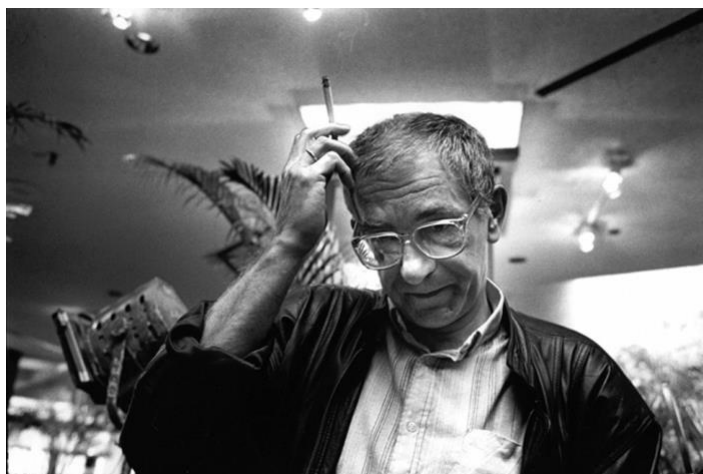
The Amateur is the synthesis of his attitudes and artistic search of the 1970s, and is also one of the most significant films of the “cinema of moral unrest.” In the story of a man who buys a camera to



follow the growth of a newborn daughter, and who gradually, thanks to this film instrument, begins to realize his responsibility for what is happening around him, the director placed a profound importance on the role of the artist in the world, on his morality, courage, and active approach to life. Here Kieslowski surpassed, to a large extent, the formulaic restrictions of the “cinema of moral unrest” resulting from the outside-the art essence of this trend. These restrictions are also eliminated in his following films. In *The Accident* (made in 1981, released in 1987) he extended his exploration of man and his actions by introducing the category of the accidental. The hero experiences the same events (Poland in 1981) three times, and is therefore given three destinies, but each time on a different side. Two destinies are more or less given by accident, the third one he chooses himself, but even this choice is affected by the accidental element. The transcendental factor appears in *No End* (a dead man intervenes in worldly events), but the film is not an exploration of supernatural phenomena so much as a ruthless revelation of the tragic period after the declaration of the state of emergency in December 1981, and a demonstration of the professed truth that private life cannot be lived in isolation from the public sphere.

In the 1980s Kieslowski's work culminated in a TV cycle and two films with subjects from the Ten Commandments. *A Short Film about Killing* is based on the fifth commandment (Thou shalt not kill), while *A Short Film about Love* comes from the sixth. Both films and the TV cycle are anchored in the present and express the necessity of a moral revival, both of the individual and the society, in a world which may be determined by accidentality, but which does not deliver us from the right and duty of moral choice.

After the fall of communism when, as a consequence of changes in economic conditions, the production of films experienced a sharp fall in all of Eastern Europe, some Polish directors sought a solution to the ensuing crisis in work for foreign studios and in co-productions. This was the road taken by Kieslowski, and so all his films made in the 1990s were created with the participation of French producers: *The Double Life of Veronique* and the trilogy *Three Colours: Blue*, *Three Colours: White*, *Three Colours: Red*—loosely linked to the noble motto of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, fraternity. In these films Kieslowski followed up on his films from the 1980s in which his heroes struggle with the duality of reason and feelings, haphazardness and necessity, reality and mystery. Even in these films made abroad we can also trace certain irony and sarcasm which first appeared in his films made in the 1970s in Poland.



Derek Malcom: Krzysztof Kieslowski—obituary
(The Guardian, 14 March 1996)

The untimely death of the outstanding Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski, aged 54, has dealt a huge blow to European cinema. Although he had only come into worldwide prominence in the last few years with the

brilliant ten-part Dekalog, *The Double Life Of Veronique* and the trilogy, *Three Colours Red*, *White and Blue*, Kieslowski had been working in cinema for almost 30 years, first as a highly original and imaginative documentarist and then as a feature film director.

His late discovery by the world at large as one of the few European directors capable of measuring up to the giants of the past was both a huge chance and considerable burden for him. He took his sudden fame and good fortune with the same stoicism as the difficulties of working under Poland's communist regime. He hated doing endless interviews and circling the festivals as a star guest. He constantly talked of retirement. But, as a fatalist, he reckoned that to be fashionable was temporary and that it was incumbent upon him to seize the day and make the best of it.

Those who knew his work from the beginning could easily detect an outstanding talent. His ironic but very human tone, the mastery of style and the ability to put something on the screen that had an emotional and dramatic force of exceptional power was obvious.

But despite becoming noticed by travelling critics and festival directors for *Personnel*, *The Scar* and in particular *Camera Buff*, a satirical critique of political censorship in Poland, no one was prepared for the brilliance of his Dekalog, loosely based on the Ten Commandments, which hit the festival circuit some 10 years later.

These ten films, of less than an hour each, were filmed in the same suburb of Warsaw and with many of the same characters in each story. Most of them said more in that time than many film makers can suggest in a dozen full-length features.

Two of them - *A Short Film About Killing* and *A Short Film About Love* - were extended into superb features and won festival awards which encouraged the French to take him up. All his other four films were produced in France and each won further awards, though a blow to Kieslowski's esteem came when *Three Colours: Red* his magnificent last film, was given nothing at Cannes in 1994 while Quentin Tarentino's *Pulp Fiction* won the coveted Palme D'Or.

This ludicrous decision persuaded him, quite apart from the fact that he was exhausted after working flat out on projects for six years, that he should rest. He called it 'retirement' but most people

knew it wasn't permanent. He was due shortly to make another trilogy on the themes of heaven, purgatory and hell - again for the French producer Marin Karmitz.

In his later years, Kieslowski relied on a formidable team of collaborators which is why his films had a unity of style and content second to very few others. But he was first and foremost a director who knew exactly what he wanted and how to obtain it quickly and without fuss. Perhaps, under French influence, his style became more aggressively noticeable and did not always achieve the naturalness of his best Polish work. But even when this happened, the filming was still impeccable. If anyone could be considered a contemporary European master it was Kieslowski and the Dekalog in particular remains one of the great saving graces of the European cinema over the last disappointing decade.

Everything Kieslowski means to the more literate film makers of the world is encompassed within the ten films, originally designed only for Polish television and all done in the space of around 18 months. Yet he was not without his critics, sometimes being labelled obscure and too content to rely on a kind of fake mysticism for effect.

I well remember being on a jury that was hopelessly divided as to the merits of the longer version of *A Short Film About Killing*. One juror said it was little more than a melodramatic plea for murderers to be treated kindly. She then produced a video of the film and asked us to look at the very first scene. This, she said, would prove her point. We all did, but the experience had the reverse effect to that intended. Kieslowski won the main prize.

This criticism of him was underlined by the fact that he invariably refused to explain his films, though talkative on the actual process of making them. He surprised the British, for instance, by saying, when talking of retirement, that he would be willing to come back to work in any capacity whatsoever if Ken Loach was the film maker who summoned him. He admired Loach's work greatly saying that very few directors had the capacity to make people laugh and cry within the space of a single sequence.

This is actually what he himself could do since he was an odd mixture of pessimist and optimist in his nature as well as in his work. He was typically Polish but became, like Wajda and Polanski, an international figure who transcended his nationality.

He hated the ponderously short-sighted Polish communist regime and delighted in circumventing their strictures. But he also despised the post-communist, market-oriented Poland - a fact made obvious by his coruscating satire of a corrupt, money-making society in the undervalued *Three Colours: White*.

The best thing that can be said about an artist of the stature of Kieslowski was that his espousal of a highly individual, very personal cinema gave a great many film makers renewed hope and sprang directly from the work of other European masters now lost to us.



Georgina Evans: Red: A Fraternity of Strangers (Criterion Notes)

Krzysztof Kieślowski said that he did not care about cinema, only about audiences and the ways in which films could move them. *Three Colors: Red* (1994), his last film, is a complex parting gift. The film's declared theme of fraternity completes the trio of ideas that structures his Three Colors trilogy; *Blue* (1993) considers liberty, *White* (1993) equality. But as in those previous installments, the treatment of the theme in *Red* is rather idiosyncratic. The story of young model and student Valentine (Irène Jacob), who hits a dog with her car and thus begins a strange relationship with its owner, retired judge Joseph Kern (Jean-Louis Trintignant), does not offer a straightforwardly heartwarming vision of humanity, nor does it clearly preach the socialist politics we may naturally associate with the titular color. However, *Red* ultimately culminates with a note of tentative optimism, not just for the protagonists of this film but for those of the entire trilogy.

The difficulties of interpersonal communication are conspicuous from the opening moments of the film, in which the camera races down the telephone wires under the English Channel in an exhilarating surge, only to encounter a busy signal at the other end. The chatter of mingled voices on the soundtrack in this sequence suggests a form of sociality that, even if it is unseen and mediated, is warm and lively. Belief in the sincerity of these conversations is undermined, though, by the film's later revelation that the judge is eavesdropping on telephone calls. What he unveils, above all, is a world of deceit and loneliness, which he observes with detachment, despite the fact that the people he hears are his immediate



neighbors. Valentine seems to be no exception to this dispersed social existence, constantly dashing to answer calls from her boyfriend in England, who attacks her with paranoid accusations of infidelity. The secondary characters, whose stories interweave with those of the central pair, likewise suffer fractured relationships and troubled lives. The somber atmosphere is amplified by Piotr Sobociński's chiaroscuro cinematography; there is a deliberate absence of blue, which, along with the preponderance of red objects, lends a melancholic, antique quality to the images. This compounds the feeling that history is repeating itself, that time produces an accumulation of layer upon layer of variations on the same story rather than moving neatly forward.

While the film at first seems to set the judge's perverse intrusiveness against Valentine's clear-sighted morality, even her apparent acts of selflessness are called into question and reconfigured as solipsistic. The judge casts doubt on the motivation

for her supposed good deed of rescuing the dog, opening up the question of whether such "moral" actions are really rooted in a fear of tarnishing one's self-regard. Interviewed by Danusia Stok, Kieślowski elaborated on this theme:

"There's something beautiful in the fact that we can give something of ourselves. But if it turns out that, while giving of ourselves, we are doing so in order to have a better opinion of ourselves, then

immediately there's a blemish on this beauty. Is this beauty pure? Or is it always a little marred? That's the question the film asks. We don't know the answer, nor do we want to know it. We're simply reflecting on the question once again."

This refusal to answer the question is characteristic of Kieślowski's professed desire not to be seen as a moralist, and his rejection of the idea that politics can answer life's most important questions. The trilogy and the earlier *The Decalogue* (1988)—a set of ten films he made for Polish television, contemplating each of the Ten Commandments—both take fundamental political or religious ideas as their structuring framework but blur the light and shadows in their responses to them. The unanswered question is endemic in Kieślowski's late work, a quality that brought charges of mysticism from those who felt he was betraying his earlier social commitment in pursuit of glossy aesthetics, facilitated by the use of French funding (which began with his first feature film partially in French, 1991's *The Double Life of Véronique*). In fact, Kieślowski's move from Poland was partly motivated by his acute awareness of the limited resources available there and his wish to preserve them for filmmakers of less renown. It is certainly true that *Red* enjoys far more

lavish production values than his early Polish work, making use of expensive locations and elaborate cinematographic techniques, such as the opening sequence with the telephone wires and the moment when the camera mimics a falling book in the theater, which are not entirely typical of his style. However, they are typical of his vision, imbuing the film with a sense of unknown forces and unknown eyes at large in a world that cannot be mastered by any of its merely human inhabitants.

This feeling of mysterious presence reflects the way Kieślowski spoke of the narrative of *Red*. He described the story, and

particularly the “missed” relationship between Valentine and the judge, in ways that suggest that the world has a hidden design, albeit one prone to flaws. For him, “the essential question the film asks is: Is it possible to repair a mistake that was committed somewhere high above?” The idea that there is an invisible but fallible authority presiding over the world within the film naturally invites us to consider the director himself in that role. Jean-Louis Trintignant, asked why his character wants to see Valentine’s ferry ticket before she sets out for England, responded that he did not know, and moreover that he had no wish to ask Kieślowski himself, remarking, “In poetry, there are shadowy areas. You don’t understand everything, but you understand a lot, and it’s still wonderful.”

The way the film considers fraternity reflects this sense of a hidden pattern underlying the everyday lives of its characters. Rather than conventional brotherly loyalty or friendship, the fraternal relationship is one of uncanny resemblance in the eyes of the spectator. The film is full of doubles, echoes, and reverberations that invite us to see people, incidents, and history as part of a bigger mechanism that we intuitively discern rather than intellectually comprehend. In this respect, the film has much in common with *The Double Life of Véronique*, which recounts the mysterious connection between

Véronique in France and Weronika in Poland, two young women with no knowledge of each other. Both Véronique and Weronika are played by Irène Jacob, and the image of the same actor in *Red* as Valentine, another dreamy young woman, inevitably brings with it memories of those doppelgängers. The music Valentine and Auguste both listen to in the CD shop is

by the invented composer Van den Budenmayer, placing them in a constellation with Weronika and the young woman in *The Decalogue: Nine*, who both sing his music, and with the concerto in *Blue*, which makes reference to it (in reality, it is all



written by Zbigniew Preisner, composer of the music for all three films in the trilogy, *The Double Life of Véronique*, and *The Decalogue*). Within *Red*, the parallel lives of the judge and Auguste, a young judge who does not know him, propose a form of fraternity that is rooted in similarity rather than amity. It is up to the spectator, not the characters, to consider them as kindred spirits. The film’s aesthetics reinforce the uncanny connections, with shots of the same places deliberately taken with the camera in the same position, and held so that the spectator has time, consciously or otherwise, to recognize them. The closest fraternal resemblance of all is probably the one between Valentine’s chewing gum poster and the final still shot of her being rescued, an image that suggests that time has been folded back on itself somehow, and that resemblances are not just coincidences but moments that help us glimpse hidden truths.

The final scene of *Red* lends the Three Colors trilogy a coherence that has so far been absent. The fleeting appearance of Julie, from *Blue*, in Karol and Dominique’s courtroom divorce hearing in *White* gives us a hint of the characters’ interconnectedness, but it seems very slight (and, indeed, Kieślowski pointed out that the trilogy involves far fewer interrelations than does *The Decalogue*). When we see the judge watching the television news report of the ferry accident survivors, all but one of whom are the

protagonists of the trilogy, we finally learn the destiny toward which they have been moving, unwittingly, since we first set eyes on Julie in *Blue*.

Chronologically, this is not a point of origin; it is the moment at which the trilogy's stories converge. Intriguingly, it suggests that there has been an afterlife for characters we would conventionally have believed to be sealed off in their own finite stories. Julie and Benoît from *Blue* are traveling together, and Karol and Dominique from *White* also. Kieslowski went so far as to say that the climactic scene of *Red* reveals that *White* had a happy ending. There is an expansiveness to this vision, in which everything may or may not be connected, in which fictional characters continue to have lives in times and places that exist beyond their filmic stories, that absolutely fits with the resonant quality of *Red*.

The possibility of a cinematic afterlife is especially poignant in these final moments of Kieslowski's final film. Nobody knew for certain that *Red* would be his last, though when he took it to the Cannes Film Festival in 1994, he declared that it would be. Asked why, he said he was tired, hated being on location, and wanted to sit in a chair in the countryside, smoking. He never quite ruled out a return, though, stating at the same press conference that he had ideas about writing a script, and also about helping younger filmmakers. His death on March 13, 1996, at the age of just fifty-four, was sadly to cut short for good the hopes of all those who wanted to see more.

Kieslowski's legacy is not just in the films he made. He was always intensely aware that filmmaking is a collaborative creative act; he valued the words of an elderly Polish cameraman who'd observed that "the director's a guy who helps everyone." And it is not least through his coworkers that he continues to send ripples through European and Hollywood cinema. Before his death, he did, in fact, begin a new project, with his coscriptwriter Krzysztof Piesiewicz, a trilogy on the subject of heaven, hell, and purgatory. Only the first of these scripts was completed, and *Heaven* was taken up by German director Tom Tykwer, and released in 2002. (*Hell*, finished later by Piesiewicz, was eventually directed by Bosnian Danis Tanovic, in 2005.) The producer of the Three Colors trilogy, Marin Karmitz, went on to support Michael Haneke's first films in French, explicitly because he hoped to foster a continuation of Kieslowski's

European vision. Preisner turned the work he was doing with Kieslowski at the time of his death into *Requiem for My Friend* (1998), a choral tribute to his collaborator. He and the cinematographers who also lent so much artistry to Kieslowski's cinema have all gone on to display their talents in work with other directors.

There is no substitute for Kieslowski, though, and none for his own words. For him, cinema was limited in its possibilities. Its goal was "to capture what lies within us, but there's no way of filming it. You can only get nearer to it." In his films, he gets near enough to make us catch our breath.



Colin MacCabe: Three Colors: A Hymn to European Cinema (Criterion Notes)

In 1989, the Communist rule that had dominated Eastern Europe since the end of the Second World War collapsed with astonishing rapidity. If the long-term political, economic, and ideological consequences of Europe's reunification are still unfolding, there was an immediate and extraordinary artistic result, as Polish and French cinema came together to provide a climax to the work of Krzysztof Kieslowski. In a remarkable burst of creative energy from 1988 to 1994, the filmmaker was to write and direct fourteen films, culminating in Three Colors—the trilogy made up of *Blue* (1993), *White* (1993), and *Red* (1994)—a feat for which there are few parallels in the history of the cinema. Kieslowski in this period went from being a well-respected filmmaker within his own country to being one of the all-time greats of world cinema. The trilogy itself, his final work, almost defies belief: written, shot, and edited in less than three years and screened in succession at Venice, Berlin, and Cannes, so that for one year, Kieslowski dominated art cinema as no one ever had, or likely ever will again.

Kieślowski's apprenticeship had been long and thorough. By the time he came to make *The Decalogue* in 1988, a series of ten hour-long films for Polish television based on the Ten Commandments, he already had behind him training at the Łódź film school, the most famous film school in Europe, and a long career as a documentary filmmaker, as well as a number of prize-winning features. Perhaps just as significant, he had developed a series of collaborations that were to form the infrastructure that would enable him to work at a furious creative pace. The first and arguably most important was with Studio Filmowe TOR, which Kieślowski joined in 1974 and which was to provide constant backing during both his struggles with Communist censorship in the seventies and eighties and his adventurous experiments with Western funding in the nineties. I remember well that when I first asked Kieślowski, as he was editing *Red*, to participate in a film celebrating a hundred years of Polish film—part of the sixteen-country Century of Cinema



project, in which great directors were asked to make personal histories of their own national cinemas—he was adamant that, whatever his own interest, he would do nothing without the approval of TOR. I remember even better the day spent in TOR's cramped offices in Warsaw, where Kieślowski sat, smoking more cigarettes than I have ever seen a human being smoke, listening intently to the negotiations but never intervening, until we had reached agreement that we would film his idea of a history told from the point of view of the audience, with a young and unknown director, Pavel Lozinski.

If TOR was Kieślowski's bedrock from the early seventies, the filmmaker forged two further essential relationships while making the fiction film *No End* (1985). Earlier, while researching a documentary about the courts, Kieślowski had encountered the lawyer Krzysztof Piesiewicz, and when he came to make *No End*, a film about the consequences of a lawyer's death during martial law,

it was to Piesiewicz that he went, to suggest that they cowrite the script. This collaboration was to last until Kieślowski's death in 1996. Similarly, the music for *No End* was provided by Zbigniew Preisner, who thereafter would compose for all of Kieślowski's films. It was this formidable team that sat down in the late eighties to plan *The Decalogue*. Although the original intention had been to use several directors, in the end, Kieślowski directed them all. During this frenetic period, he and Piesiewicz also began to think that the films might have international appeal, and German television came in with the money to allow two of them to be turned into full-length features. The

one based on the sixth commandment—"Thou shalt not kill"—was screened at Cannes in 1988 and, under the title *A Short Film About Killing*, became an international hit.

The final component of the infrastructure underpinning *Three Colors* now came into play. Marin Karmitz's family had fled Communist Romania in the immediate postwar era, and he had built up one of the most important distribution and exhibition companies in France, MK2. That company now became the lead partner in Kieślowski's next film, the Franco-Polish coproduction *The Double Life of Véronique* (1991), starring French actress Irène Jacob. She won best actress at Cannes for her performance, and Miramax picked up the film in America—where it grossed \$2 million, an amazing feat for such an art film. All the elements were now in place for *Three Colors*.

These films gather many of Kieślowski's earlier concerns, particularly the role of coincidence and chance in life, and take them to a level both more personal and more abstract. Each film elaborates one of the great ideas of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, and fraternity. However, Kieślowski is not interested in these slogans politically; indeed, it would be fair to say that, for Kieślowski, the final collapse of Communism merely acknowledged the end of politics, which had so obsessed Europe for two

hundred years, and had been so prominent in his earlier films and life. Instead, the films explore what these concepts can tell us about life: we are presented with Julie, who must break free from the ties that bind her to her dead husband and daughter; Karol, who must find equality with his French wife, who so despises and misuses him; and Valentine, who discovers in her relationship with a snooping judge a genuine fraternity absent in her life with her boyfriend, with his petty jealousy. But it would be completely wrong to think that these interpretations, or any of the other allegories that one can lay out—so that equality in *White*, for example, is also about the inequality between East and West in Europe—in any way exhaust the films' multiplicity of meanings. Indeed, it is more helpful to understand these themes as one of the elements that Kieślowski uses to make each scene and each shot pregnant with meaning—for the individual films and, even more dizzyingly, for the trilogy as whole—which, in the end, the viewer can make sense of only in terms of his or her own life.

As a counterpoint to the great ideas of the Revolution are the three colors of the French flag: blue, white, and red. The colors punctuate each of their films, adding yet another layer to the rich palimpsest that Kieślowski creates from his gripping narratives. For they are all at the service of his abiding concerns: that each moment is full of infinite possibility, that our lives are connected and interconnected in ways that we can never fully grasp. The conclusion of the trilogy, when our major characters emerge from a tragic accident, both delivers the pleasure of a happy ending and leaves us all too aware of the five hundred deaths that the narrative has not had time for—an open ending without equal. This continuous reflection on the act of filmmaking never becomes coy or pretentious, but Kieślowski, in these final works, shows that he is perhaps the director in the history of the cinema who most recognizes the claims of narrative closure while also recognizing the falsifying simplicities of narrative.

When Kieślowski said that he was retiring from directing after *Red*, it was easy to read it as a gesture of exhaustion. However, it may be as true that Kieślowski saw that what he had achieved in these films marked a cross-fertilization of the two great postwar European cinemas that could never be surpassed. He had composed the hymn to Europe that

provides such an important plotline in *Blue*, and his song was sung.



Kieslowski on Kieslowski. Edited by Danusia Stok. Faber and Faber, London & Boston, 1993. The Cinema of KRZYSZTOF KIESLOWSKI variations on destiny and chance. Marek Haltof. Wallflower Press, London and New York, 2004. Three Colours: Red

This is a film about communication that disappears. We have better and better tools and less and less communication with each other. We only exchange information.

—Krzysztof Kieslowski

Kieslowski's *Red*, probably the most sophisticated and widely praised part of the trilogy, tells the story of a young student and part-time fashion model living in Geneva, Valentine Dussaut (Irène Jacob) and her chance encounter with a retired judge, Joseph Kern (Jean-Louis Trintignant), who is obsessed with illegal surveillance of his neighbours. Another character is also introduced, Valentine's neighbour, Auguste Bruner (Jean-Pierre Lorit), a young law student preparing for his final bar exams, whose life mirrors that of the old judge. Valentine and Auguste live in the same neighbourhood surrounding *Café chez Joseph* (which is portrayed in the film as almost the centre of the universe) and their paths repeatedly cross. For example, they are in the same places, such as the music store and the bowling alley. During the scene at the bowling alley, when the camera moves away from Valentine to the left, passing behind red seats, it pauses on a table and portrays in a close-up shot a broken beer glass and an empty pack of Marlboros—a sign that Auguste has

just left the place. Valentine and Auguste pass by not knowing each other and remain unknown to each other until the fate of destiny brings them together in the final scene of the film.

Kieslowski once commented: ‘The theme of *Red* is the conditional mood—what would have happened if the judge had been born forty years later?’ The ‘what-if’

structure of several of his earlier films is cleverly retold in *Red*, which offers a game of associations. A story of chance encounters, double chances, mystifying coincidences and destiny. When Valentine runs over a

German shepherd, Rita, which belongs to the Judge, it changes her life forever. Returning the injured dog, she meets the disillusioned and misanthropic judge who seems unconcerned with the plight of Rita.: ‘If I ran over your daughter, would you be so indifferent?’ asks the enraged Valentine; ‘I have no daughter, Miss. Go away’, is his supposedly heartless response. Despite this unpromising beginning, the Judge intrigues Valentine and the complex relationship that develops between them constitutes the centre of the film. Judge Kern, who is listening to his neighbours’ private phone calls, gives himself up to the police and is prosecuted for illegal eavesdropping. When Valentine learns from the newspaper about his fate and visits him to explain that she is not responsible for leaking the information to the neighbours and the police, the Judge informs her that he thought she would come to see him after reading this information. (The scene is clearly reminiscent of the manner in which Véronique’s lover, Alexandre, is conducting his ‘psychological experiment’ in the *Double Life of Véronique*.) Towards the end of the film, thanks to the generous and good-hearted Valentine, the embittered Judge reconnects with the world in the same way Julie in *Blue* returns to life thanks to the patient love of Olivier.

The third part of the trilogy revolves around several puzzlingly connected subplots: Valentine’s personal life is juxtaposed with that of Auguste; her telephone conversations

with the controlling and absent (because based in London) lover Michael and the troubled teenage brother Marc, a heroin user, are intertwined with scenes from Auguste’s relationship with a slightly older woman, Karin (Frédérique Feder), who runs a personal weather forecast service. Like the Judge several years earlier, Auguste is betrayed by his lover.



The similarities between Judge Kern and his much younger alter ego, Auguste, are carefully placed in the narrative. Both men are lawyers, own dogs, experience the betrayal by unfaithful blonde lovers (both witness them making love to somebody else) and listen to music composed

by Van den Budenmayer.

The scene with the falling textbook that opens on a page containing the answer to a future exam question also emphasises the mysterious connection between them which recalls the equally perplexing link between the Polish Weronicka and the French Véronique in *The Double Life of Véronique*. As portrayed in the film, Auguste’s life echoes that of the Judge; he seems to be the Judge’s alter ego. Perhaps the Judge creates himself once again in searching for his ‘second life’, his ‘second chance’.

As with other films by Kieslowski, in *Red* moments of good luck come with a heavy price and serve as ominous signs of terrible things to come. Possibly, that is why Valentine treats winning some money from the ‘one-armed bandit’ as a calamitous signal: ‘That’s a bad sign’, the bartender at the *Caf   chez Joseph* tells her after seeing her winning combination. In another scene, resembling the scene with the hitchhiker in *Blue*, when Auguste goes to Karin only to discover her in bed with another man, the camera portrays his car from inside the caf   then pans to the right to reveal the winning (red) combination on the slot-machine.

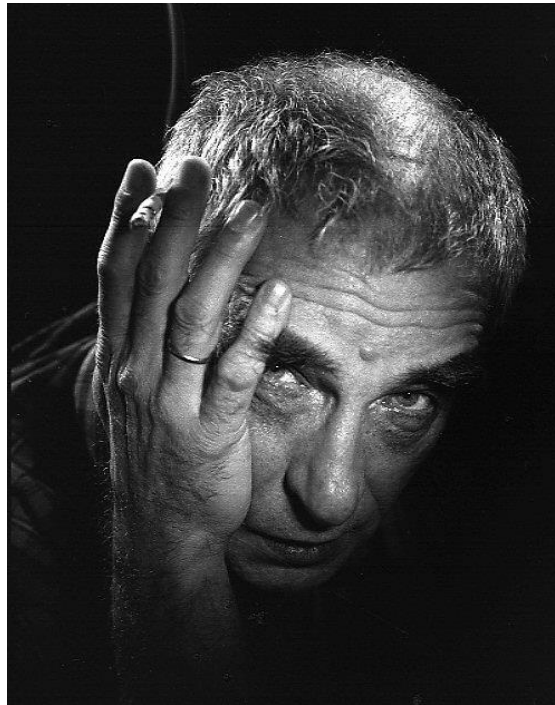
Like other parts of the trilogy, Kieslowski opens *Red* with an almost psychedelic speeded-up sequence filmed with an extensive use of Steadicam. The camera traces a phone call, in a way following an electronic impulse, beginning with a hand dialing the number, then the cord, the plug socket and bundles of wires, before the cable plunges into the English

Channel where it resembles a sea monster and rapidly emerges on the other side, never reaching the destination. The red pulsating beep of a busy phone begins to form the background for the film's title and Kieslowski's and Piesiewicz's names credited as scriptwriters. The camera moves back to the dialing hand that hangs up the phone. The photograph of Valentine on the desk of the dialing person indicates that this must be her unseen and domineering boyfriend Michael. The lack of real communication between people who, instead of being united, are separated from each other by modern technology. In *Red*, the telephone conversations, which play such an important role in several scenes, replace human contact. *Red* features people with their phones, missed phone calls, conversations that are overheard and answering machines that respond instead of characters. Valentine talks to her jealous boyfriend in London and tries to maintain contact with her mother and brother Marc. The camera also reveals the lack of communication in seemingly working relationships. For example,

Judge Kern is listening to a conversation between a mother trying to see her daughter and using tricks to lure her home. In another scene, when the angry Valentine tries to warn the neighbours of Judge Kern that he spies on the husband who is betraying his wife with a homosexual lover, she notices that the damage has been done—the husband's daughter is secretly listening to her father's conversation with the lover.

The final scene also focuses on characters that appear alienated rather than being united by the immense tragedy. The Judge witnesses on television the news about a tragic ferry accident in the English Channel, which happened due to freak weather and despite the good forecast provided by Auguste's former lover Karin. She has to pay with her life (lost without trace while yachting with her lover) not so much as a punishment for her professional mistake but for her adulterous behaviour. Valentine and Auguste are shown among the mere seven survivors out of the

1,435 ferry passengers, but despite their mysterious connection, emphasised throughout the film, the final freeze-frame with the red background suggests they do not yet know each other—they appear together within one frame but look in different directions. In an attempt to sum up the trilogy, the film also lists survivors whose names include the earlier protagonists: Julie and Olivier from *Blue* as well as Karol and Dominique from *White*. Furthermore, given that the television broadcaster informs the viewers



about the death of Julie's husband a year before, the events within the trilogy must have occurred within a year. Although Kieslowski is known for his particular understanding of 'happy endings' (evidenced by the last scenes of *White* and, most prominently, the depressing *No End*), it is not easy to bring together the idea of a 'happy ending' with the immensity of the tragedy. Several hundreds of passengers are dead but the chosen ones, 'our protagonists', are saved. As depicted in *Red*, the ending serves almost as a mockery of happy endings and seems to be closer to the realm of disaster

genre rather than art cinema.

In this film about the power of accidental occurrences there is, however, nothing accidental as far as the narrative structure is concerned. The film's cinematographer, Piotr Sobocinski, once commented:

"We had shot the last scene of the film, the video 'news footage' of the ferry boat accident, several months before we began principal photography. After we had finished it, I was watching it one day on tape and I happened to hit the pause button. There was a fireman with a red jacket behind Irene Jacob, who was in profile. I said to myself, 'this is a key for the film'. It occurred to us that maybe the events in the film were not so accidental; maybe the Judge had some control over the events. So we made a billboard poster in the film exactly like the stop-frame I had found on the tape. The whole film progressed in this backwards fashion. It was like a game of billiards: we already knew the final configuration of balls on

the table, and we had to work out the patterns that would get them there. When you see the billboard poster recreated in the stop-frame at the end of the film, you have the impression that nothing happened accidentally.”



The huge chewing-gum advertising poster with a sad-looking image of Valentine portrayed against the background of a red drape. Which fills the screen several times during the film, returns at the very end when the Judge watched the report of the ferry accident. The freeze-frame of Valentine that ends the film looks almost like a replica of her carefully arranged sad pose during an elaborate studio session (Don't smile; be sad', she is instructed by the photographer). Although red filters play a significant role in the film, it is not so much the lighting, but numerous red objects within the film that glue the film together and magnify the intricacy of the multilayered narrative: Valentine's red sweater and umbrella, Michel's jacket with which she sleeps. The chewing-gum poster, red cars on the street, Rita's red leash, red bowling balls in the bowling alley full of red colour and red ferry tickets, among other things.

As Piotr Sobocinski reveals, Vermeer was his 'visual inspiration', particularly in the scenes involving the portrayal of the Judge's house with its brownish interiors. Although Kieslowski finds Geneva an 'exceptionally unphotogenic' city, the quiet neighbourhoods of Geneva play as important a role as the urban locations of Paris and Warsaw. The camera moves a lot, rarely rests, and is truly voyeuristic: gliding on the streets, following Valentine. Even rushing after the (red) bowling ball as it rolls down a bowling lane. Sobocinski also uses the Technocrane shots, for example in the scene after the fashion show

when the Judge recalls the story about the book that fell down from the balcony before his exam—the story that recalls Auguste's experience.

As part of Kieslowski's self-reflexive narrative strategy, a number of scenes in *Red* either recall earlier films or refer directly to them. A shot familiar from the three previous films (with an old person carrying a glass to the recycling bin) is repeated this time as well, albeit somewhat differently. Unlike former protagonists, who either passively observed the elderly man (Karol), did not notice the old woman because of their preoccupation with their own problems (Julie) or at least appeared to be willing to help the old women (Weronicka and Véronique), the generous Valentine actually helps the old woman. Dave Kehr writes that this 'simple act of kindness is the climax of the entire trilogy, the gesture that saves the world'. The references to *The Double Life of Véronique*, which were indicated earlier in the text, are abundant in *Red*. Both films deal with the theme of a possible double life, parallel experiences, the ability to learn from somebody else's mistakes, and destiny. When Valentine tells the Judge in an empty theatre after the fashion show, 'I feel something important is happening around me. And it scares me', it brings memories of the dual life of Weronicka and Véronique. Furthermore, several images such as the one when the Judge and Valentine part and they put their hands against each side of his car window, are reminiscent of similar scenes from *The Double Life of Véronique* and *Blind Chance*. The two scenes portraying Valentine's participation in the physically exhausting ballet lessons are close to Kieslowski's documentary *Seven Women of Different Ages*. The self-reflexive nature of this film also owes something to Preisner's music and references to Van den Budenmayer's music. Even though the film features primarily a romantic bolero theme, Van den Budenmayer's name and music appear briefly when the camera captures the cover of the disk owned by the Judge and later when Valentine and Auguste are listening in the same record store, but unaware of each other, to Van den Budenmayer's music. The link between *Red* and earlier parts of the trilogy is also stressed by the brief incorporation of the tango motif that dominated in *White*.

Kieslowski's unexpected death on 13 March 1996 prompted several critics to look at his artistic

oeuvre through the prism of his biography. Such a critical approach, analysing films from *The Tram* to *Three Colours: Red* as films about Kieslowski, seems justified. Following the great European *auteurs* from the 1960s and 1970s, Kieslowski often stressed the semi-autobiographical nature of his films. For example, in the documentary *I'm So-So*, he pronounces, 'I turn the camera on myself in all my films'. Apart from citations from earlier works and, in his 'Polish films', thinly-veiled allusions to political and social contexts, Kieslowski's films are filled with numerous biographical references. For example, his protagonists experience acute heart



problems (the lawyer Zyro in *No End* and Weronicka in *The Double Life of Véronique* die unexpectedly of heart attacks); live without parents (Filip in *Camera Buff*, Tomek in *A Short Film About Killing*; the death of the father in *Blind Chance*, the motherless protagonists in *The Double Life of Véronique*); and die unexpectedly (Pawel in *Decalogue I*, Julie's family in *Blue*). The puzzling openings of *Three Colours: Red* and other parts of the trilogy, which are later incorporated into the narrative, find their predecessors in earlier films: the image of a hawk in *Camera Buff*, the puzzling close-up at the beginning of *Blind Chance* and several openings in *Decalogue*. Kieslowski's observations are always detailed, realistic (with a documentary flavour) and often incorporating supposedly unrelated episodes (like the memorable scene with the two jugglers observed by Witek in *Blind Chance*).

For a number of Polish critics, Kieslowski seems to be the true hero in his films. Tadeusz Sobolewski writes that in spite of Kieslowski's often declared agnosticism, his films are imbued with strong religious overtones. For instance, the Judge in *Three Colours: Red* 'becomes simultaneously the figure of Kieslowski and the Lord God as imagined by common folk'. Another Polish critic Piotr Wojciechowski,

notices that Judge Kern is 'somewhat God, somewhat Kieslowski himself'. The Judge is certainly portrayed almost as a God-like manipulative figure, perhaps the film director himself. When Valentine hesitates on whether to go to England, the Judge Tells her 'Leave. It is your destiny.' He can also predict the future. 'You were fifty years old and you were happy' he tells Valentine, recounting his dream after the fashion show and indicating that maybe she is the woman he

never met. 'Who are you?' asks the bewildered Valentine, to which he responds: 'A retired Judge.'

The Judge is another puppeteer overhearing people's conversations and meddling in their lives; he is an

embittered and lonely character who retired earlier due to personal disappointments in order to live a secluded life, and the one who oversees the breakup of the relationship between Auguste and Karin to pair his alter ego with Valentine. Given Kieslowski's reclusive artistic persona, his early retirement from filmmaking caused by some professional disappointments and moral dilemmas at work and the nature of film-making in general, the parallels between the Judge and Kieslowski seem reasonable. Comparing the Judge to film-makers, Dave Kehr writes the following: "Trintignant invests the Judge with much of Kieslowski's own flinty contrariness, and it isn't hard to imagine the solitary smoker of Kieslowski's retirement occupying a house just like the Judge's, sitting just as quietly amid the clutter of a lifetime". The performance of Jean-Louis Trintignant (b. 1930), an actor very popular in Poland (and elsewhere—after the success of Roger Vadim's *Et Dieu créa la femme* (*And God Created Woman*, 1956) and, in particular, Claude Lelouch's *Un homme et une femme* (*Man and a Woman*, 1965), adds another dimension to the film.

...Before his death on March 13, 1996, despite his much-heralded retirement from film-making,

Kieslowski was embarking on a new project with his long-time collaborator Krzysztof Piesiewicz. They started working on another trilogy of films titled *Raj* (*Paradise*), *Piekło* (*Hell*) and *Czyszciec* (*Purgatory*). The script of *Paradise*, the last film written together

by Kieslowski and Piesiewicz, was published after Kieslowski's death; Piesiewicz wrote the other parts of the trilogy later. In 2001 *Paradise* was directed by Tom Tykwer, titled *Heaven* (Italy/Germany/USA) and premiered at the 2002 Berlin Film Festival.

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