People Have the Word:
Experiments with Voice in Polish Documentary, 1960 - 1984

By

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Abstract

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This dissertation proposes a direct relationship between specific formal and ideological developments in Polish documentary films made between the 1960s and the 1980s, and the concomitant evolution of the country's socio-historical context at the time. Over the two decades, Communist Poland was the scene of social and political transformations that lead to the mobilization of an opposition movement culminating with the legalization of the independent Polish trade union *Solidarity*. During the same time, the Polish documentary film underwent a remarkable development with a prolific production of original and unique works that came to be known as the Polish School of Documentary Film. An analysis of the socio-political context brings forward the predominantly social dimension of the growing opposition, as a movement based in the re-building of an independent civic society, and on the mobilization of various types of civic engagement. Coming of age against this background, the Polish documentarians understood their work as a form of communication through representation. The filmmakers' formal explorations of the relationships between sound and image were creative manifestations of their stringency to contribute towards the recuperation of a civic sense through the affirmation of a political consciousness.

In the second decade after the war, documentary film in Poland reemerges as a medium of observation of, and commentary on, everyday events that make up the social realm. Gradually, as an evolving technology brings the camera and microphone closer to the filmed subjects, the degree of the social actors' engagement in representation increases. The filmmakers replace the expository voice-over with the talking interventions of the filmic participants, as they explore novel forms of address allowed by the use of interview. I argue that the three filmmakers at the center of this dissertation develop distinct interview approaches that mirror respective stages in the mobilization of people's socio-political consciousness. As such, Kazimierz Karabasz's observational approach enacts the attitude of coming into awareness through a concerted attention to one's surroundings, in films that represent everyday activities of the social actors against their voice-off account of important experiences in their lives. Krzysztof Kieślowski

interacts with his interviewees across camera, in filmic representations driven by the urgency to reveal an image of reality censored from the sanctioned socio-political imaginary. Kieślowski's approach embodies the gradual mastery of an interactive attitude of communication through direct engagement. Marcel Łoziński places the social actors within somehow provoked interview situations that he frames as reflexive commentaries on the practice and effects of representation. While the protagonists acknowledge and affirm their stand within their social milieu as prompted, Łoziński's removed look at their interactions enacts a similarly self-referential intervention aimed at a fundamental questioning of the system.

I will follow the trajectory of each filmmaker's exploration of interview techniques through close readings of films that are relevant for this evolution. I will situate the effective function of the films as platforms of communication in relation to the directors' theoretical writings in the margin of their filmmaking practice. The filmed interviews are forms of mediated communications as embedded in filmic representations located at the intersection of sociology, ethnography and documentary. My analysis of formal filmic innovations will be in dialogue with research on sociological interview, with works of theoretical reassessment of the meaning of ethnographic representation, and with writings that challenge epistemological expectations of documentary film's access to, and delivery of, particular types of knowledge.

This dissertation will contribute to the ongoing discussion on the significance of voice in non-fiction film by proposing a reassessment of the mediation of voice through the use of image. While these films stand as expressions of their makers' contributions to a historical process of social and political awakening, they rely on interview explorations that suggest the authors' preoccupation with the risks and dangers posed by representation. I suggest that these documentaries prevent the flattening of human subjects into unidimensional audio-visual portraits by keeping the sound and image within a tension that opens an interval ripe with virtual meanings. At the same time, the filmmakers are experimenting with reflexive markers that bracket the viewers' unmediated access to knowledge and safeguard the distance between representation and its subject. The films become the territory of a continuous shaping of contrasting relationships that results in a triangulated space where the making of meaning requires the consistent participation of both filmic and viewing subject. As such, these documentary works enable a form of communication through representation that transcends the socio-historical determination of the profilmic world, and that stands as an actual and relevant model of achieving social mobilization and political engagement through artistic expression.

To Constantin Călin, and our infinite conversations

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Introduction

It is the beginning of the 1980s, in Poland. Black-and-white film images show people talking to reporters in urban settings.

Close-up on a young man's face, low-key lit – he leans his fingers against his cheek, and looks sideways as if contemplating the measured coming of his words: "I do not consider myself only as an individual, I definitely see myself as part of what's going on in the country. I can't envision myself living in such a state as it is because the whole system is, in principle, based on total rubbish, on absolutely nonsensical foundations."

Filmed in profile, an older man speaks while seated in a public space that is vaguely visible in the blurred background: "I live for my memories, mainly the memories of the pre-war, resistance and early post-war when new vibrant life was sprouting everywhere. Not all our dreams have come true. I'd like them to come true for my sons and grandsons."

The viewfinder of a video camera reveals a man in his 40's: "I don't know, I don't want to comment. I won't comment" – he says, while the image changes to a full close-up of his profile – "because anything I say could be interpreted as either positive or negative and so it's hard for us to give an interview."

These filmed interactions, that show comparable preoccupations and degrees of engagement, come from the works of three documentary filmmakers. The first one is part of Kazimierz Karabasz *Material Test* (1981), an account of the lives of the residents of the Wola district in Warsaw. In the second one, we see one of the last interlocutors from Krzysztof Kieślowski's *Talking Heads* (1980), where a number of people arranged from very young to very old answer the filmmaker's questions: "Who are you? What matters most to you, what would you want?" The third fragment is from Marcel Łoziński's *Practice Exercises* (1984), an experiment in media manipulation disguised as a street survey on people's opinions about the young generation.

Growing up in the neighboring Socialist Republic of Romania, I could have been one of the younger subjects of these interviews. In my country, though, no filmmaking crew ventured to start an honest conversation about one's perception of their role in society, or their aspirations for the future, in a public setting. We whispered our disappointments and fading hopes behind the closed doors of the apartments. We showed our discontent with the everyday pretense of normality only in context we perceived (sometimes mistakenly) as safe, as out of the sight of authority. A couple of times, I was fortunate to encounter a high school teacher or a university professor who openly addressed, in their courses, the dysfunctional reality of our living, behind the veneer of the propaganda image - these group conversations felt like lucid glimpses into an off limit, surreal zone, and brought to the surface an exalting feeling of underground solidarity: there were many of us with similar thoughts and feelings, but we could hardly ever join in a shared form of public expression.

Today, the interview approach on the street and in public spaces belongs to a common vocabulary of documentary and television production, while the visual media's proliferation and distribution render irrelevant the distinction between forms of private and public expression. In the 1980's Poland, the gesture of opening up about one's

concerns as a citizen, in front of a camera and a microphone, constituted a daring act of expression assumed by both interlocutor and filmmaker. As part of the Eastern European Bloc, the Polish People's Republic (PPR) was ruled by a soviet-type socialist regime that strictly controlled the image of the society and repressed any manifestations perceived as able to trouble the officially sanctioned appearance. In his 1978 article "The Power of the Powerless", Czech playwright Václav Havel referred to the Communist countries in Eastern Europe as part of a "post-totalitarian system", a form of dictatorship fundamentally different than any historical form of totalitarianism (27). According to Havel, this system subjected reason and conscience to a higher authority (Havel, "The Power" 25), served people only to the extent necessary to ensure the people's obedience (30), and used ideology to project an illusory coincidence between its interests and the necessary conditions for living in freedom (Havel, "The Power" 30). If the sustenance of the post-totalitarian system relied on the incessant concoction of a pervasive lie, then the choice of living within the truth became a fundamental threat the system had to suppress (Havel, "The Power" 43). This context suggests our reading of the fragments above as expressions that carry a degree of risk for all participants, and leads us to interpret the filmic representations as historically situated forms of political engagement. The scenes I described remarkably capture glimpses of a general state of mind, as Polish people openly reflect, with self-awareness, discontent, and some lingering hope, and from perspectives allowed by distinctive ages, at the ways the socio-political context affects and determines their lives. Beyond the significance of the words, these recordings remain as vehicles for a spoken communication that they not only enable, but re-mediate through the perspective of filmic representation. As such, the films stand as the material proof of an ongoing, active form of opposition through communication.

In this context, I consider my contribution as a necessary continuation of this process of communication. While I inhabit the vantage point of a scholar exposed to systems of thinking still invested in the belief of an unrealized, virtually viable Marxist socio-political model, I belong to the last generation that came of age under the "post-totalitarian system" of East European communism. I contribute, thus, this analytical attempt at revealing the formal complexity of these objects of representation, and at the affirmation of their continuous relevance as both filmic achievements and political acts of resistance, as my necessary gesture of social responsibility and cultural awareness.

This dissertation proposes a theoretical and historiographical intervention into the late 1960s - early 1980s period of the Polish documentary film movement. Over these decades, the Polish documentary filmmakers explored new approaches of sound, and developed original ways of relating sound and image. I will analyze works authored by three filmmakers – Kazimierz Karabasz, Krzysztof Kieślowski and Marcel Łoziński – in order to establish a direct relationship between the innovative treatment of speech in documentary films, and the tumultuous social and political context of the Polish reality at the time of the production of these works. As such, I will locate the filmmakers' explorations of forms of address within a programmatic engagement with the voices of

the social actors.[1] I propose that the filmic constructions around various modes of interview suggest the authors' preoccupation with a process of bringing into being - through representation and mediation - of responsible subjects engaged in critical conversations pertaining to their present. The directors' formal treatment of these films reveals their awareness of the limitation of representation, as perceivable in the constant adjustment of the distance between social actor and viewer. Subtle markers of ethical considerations function as filters that nuance the films' focus on communication, and trouble the viewer's expectation of an immediate access to knowledge. In the end, in the process of refining the relationship between sound and image, the filmmakers sublimate their ethical work of awakening the people's sense of civic engagement and political consciousness, into an aesthetic dimension that uniquely determines the filmic object, as it transfers the urgency of the act of communication into the sensorial quality of artistic representation.

Historical and Cultural Context

In order to arrive at what I consider the remarkable contributions of these films, I will refer to several important moments in the history of Polish documentary film, against the social and political context of the times. With its beginning after the second world war, when Poland became part of the Eastern European Bloc under the political influence of the Soviet Union, the Polish documentary movement developed along, against and in spite of the communist regime's various manifestations of control over representation. As such, most of the films produced between the late 1940s and mid 1950s under the newly approved doctrine of Socialist Realism followed closely the communist party line of documenting the times from the perspective of the Marxist ideology, a view enforced through an extensive censorship apparatus. According to film historian Marek Hendrykowski, "the official presentation of the doctrine of socialist realism was basically reduced to a few circulating slogans and empty generalities such as: progressive art, fighting for social justice and peace in the world, proclaiming the superiority of the new system, showing screen heroes as ideological role models for the masses, etc." (*Historia polskiego filmu dokumentalnego/ The History of Polish Documentary Films* 21-22). So formulated, the ideological and aesthetical criteria were far from precise, and allowed the more daring artists room for creative experimentation. This constrained but systemic treatment of the documentary approach led to the shaping of documentary film into a specific field of creativity, with a set of conventions regulating the means of expressions and the reception styles – in short, controlling the communication process (Hendykowski, *The History* 21). The institutionalization of documentary film – visible in "a program of conceptual implementation, administrative decision-making, production and distribution, evaluation of results and promotion" – and its incorporation into a mechanism of

[1] Bill Nichols uses the term 'social actor' in order to suggest that, in documentary film, individuals represent themselves to others, in an act that can be seen as the performance of their real selves (*Representing Reality* 42).

cinematographic industry show the degree of the authorities' investment in a genre fit to serve as propaganda vehicle (Hendykowski, *The History* 21).

In 1956, two events led to the outcome of important political changes: Nikita Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, condemned in a secret report to the party congress the crimes of the Stalinist period, and Bołeslaw Bierut, the president of PPR, died suddenly. Against the background of a vacuum of power in Poland, manifestations of social unrest erupted in the summer, with the result of Władisław Gomułka being reinstated to power. In his thorough historiographical analysis of Socialist Poland, *Poland. Socialist State, Rebellious Nation*, Ray Taras writes:

> It is a difficult task to establish linkage between factional struggles within the ruling elite and the eruption of mass protests on the streets. It is a fact that in June 1956 workers' strikes and demands for bread and liberty in Poznań coincided with the ongoing battle for power between Stalinist dogmatists who defended the existing system of rule, and liberals and nationalists espousing the ideas of Gomułka (who had quietly been released from prison in late 1954). […] Hundreds of thousands of Poles gathered in Warsaw in late October and demonstrated peacefully in favor of his [Gomułka] election – perhaps the only case of a genuinely free and unfettered "election" held in a Soviet client state since Yalta. (Taras 52-53)

The simultaneous presence of these conditions favorable to a change of power brought about a political thaw, and the critical distance from the Stalinist doctrine of socialist realism allowed a cultural relaxation. After years of filmic productions that advertised a constructed and illusory reality, a number of young film school graduates seized the moment of social and political turmoil, and turned their cameras on the bleak aspects of their immediate surroundings. These films, later referenced as *Czarna Seria*/ *The Black Series* are the first to expose contexts of social and economic dysfunctionalities, within novel formats of editorial indictments. Productions like *Look Out, Hooligans!* (Jerzy Hoffman, Edward Skórzewski, 1955), *Article Zero* (Włodzimierz Borowik, 1957), *The Children Accuse* (Jerzy Hoffman, Edward Skórzewski, 1956), *Warsaw '56* (Jerzy Bossak, Jarosław Brzozowski, 1956), *The Lublin Old Town* (Bohdan Kosiński, 1956), and *Where the Devil Says Goodnight* (Kazimierz Karabasz, Władysław Ślesicki, 1956), focused on hooliganism, prostitution, alcoholism, child neglect, unemployment, and, most controversially, the gap between rhetoric and reality in such areas as housing and social and cultural planning. Critical and accusatory, the films relied on the rhetorical contrast between images and voice over-commentary – while the visuals suggest a direct relation between people's hard living conditions and their socially unacceptable behavior, the voice over-commentary formulates a resounding condemnation of the system's negligence or failure to address the problems. These films articulate clearly a position *against* the regime's selective sanctioning of the visible worthy of representation, and their novelty and power come from the incisive tone of the expository commentary. At the same time, *The Black Series* filmmakers frequently used actors in order to stage situations that would illustrate their arguments, and thus the people portrayed appear as stand-ins for social groups symptomatic of the system's malfunction. As such, the filmmakers built their arguments in relation to collective subjects that are seen from a

distance, where the voice-over intervention controls the narrative, leaving no room for the voices of individuals.

In this context of pervasive staged situations and overwhelming voice-over, Kazimierz Karabasz and Władysław Ślesicki proposed slightly different treatments of sound and image in their collaborative works. In *Where the Devil Says Goodnight*, the filmmakers look at people living in the poverty of the Warsaw suburbs, and place the youth's unruly forms of socializing against the dragging construction of the Targówek District House of Culture. The film relies mostly on observational visuals that capture moments from the lives of the residents of Targówek – a woman carrying buckets of water, an old woman sitting on a bench, young boys gathering to light cigarette buts in the cemetery, a man in crutches walking on a muddy road between old houses, school kids playing soccer on a grassy yard. Cameraman Stanisław Niedbalski, who has studied at FAMU film school in Prague, brings over the technique of observational filming that he refines with the first touches of a particular style that will mark his future collaborations with Karabasz. This is visible in the focus on details - the close-up on the old woman's hands, or on the running water filling the bucket; the painterly filling of the whole frame – the group of men seen in a distance, through an opening in the wooden fence; the expressive use of accentuated angles – filmed from ground level, the boy running through the cemetery appears projected against the sky; the small, fluid camera moves revealing fragments of movements – the flight of pigeons out of a tower. All this camera work allowed an unprecedented impression of freshness, of life captured in transitory details of ephemeral moments. More restraint than in other films of *The Black Series*, the voice-over commentary draws attention to the neglected district in a condemning and rhetorical tone. The filmmakers experiment with elements of sound, as they add a made-up conversation (spoken by a female voice) to the images of women chit-chatting at the market, in what seems an attempt of getting closer to the voices of the social actors. In fact, one voice originating in the world of the film is that of the singer of the beautiful ballad "I am a Crook and a Conjurer" which we hear over images of old Targówek during the first two minutes of the film. We do not have visual access to the source of the song, but film scholar Mikołaj Jazdon notes in the *Czarna Seria* DVD notebook commentary that the singer is the pigeon fancier whom we see briefly sending off the birds. The film continues with the portrayal of the adolescents who start using the newly built gym as a multipurpose activity room – while the commentary treats the human subjects as a group, the images emphasize individual figures and specific attitudes. The general effect is that of a tension between general and particular, between an inclination towards sociological study, and the observational capturing of the contingent. While still present in Karabasz's following films, this tension will become more complex and productive, as nuanced by the filmmaker's continuous exploration of sound and forms of address.

During the 1960s, Kazimierz Karabasz became one of the most innovative and influential documentary filmmakers of the decade. Working with cinematographer Stanisław Niedbalski, Karabasz continued to develop the observational technique and the use of sound, while attempting a form of new approach with every film. With preoccupations similar to those of the contemporary *direct cinema* of Richard Leacock,

D.A. Pennebaker and the Maysles brothers, the filmmaker was interested in capturing everyday reality with no intervention and no staging, but the focus was on the life of ordinary people, and not on public figures like in the first films of the American directors. Other differences from the Western documentarians were, as Jazdon writes, "that Polish filmmakers did not make films for TV on 16mm, but on 35mm and for theater release", and that lighter cameras and sound equipment allowing synchronization of image and sound were not yet available in Poland (*The Struggle for Form* 75). These limitations functioned as incentives for the filmmaker's experimentations with new ways of expression. In *The Musicians* (1960), an account of one day in the life of an amateur brass band, Karabasz used footage from a long observation process and no pre-written script. Niedbalski came up with an improvised lighting system of bulbs hanging from the ceiling, a top-down lighting device the technicians criticized at the moment, but recognized as revolutionary in the years to come (Jazdon, *The Struggle* 75). The film's soundtrack included the synchronous recording of the music in the making, and fragments of the non-scripted dialogue between the band members and the conductor. In *On the Threshold* (1965), Karabasz attempted the portrait of a group of young women graduating from high-school, and analyzed in voice-over the filmic methods he used, delivering the first self-referential Polish documentary (Jazdon, *The Struggle* 76). With *A Year in the Life of Franek W* (1967), Karabasz disproved the opinion of Jerzy Bossak, his film professor at the film school in Łódz, who believed that documentary film is appropriate only for the portrayal of social groups. Following young Franek Wróbel for one year during his participation in the Voluntary Army Corps, the film built the psychological portrait of an individual by juxtaposing observational footage with an interesting form of voice-over mediation, in which an actor read fragments from the protagonist's written diary.

A number of filmmakers, known as 'the school of Karabasz,' found inspiration in Karabasz's expressive and inventive work, and followed suit in developing their own attempts at observational cinema. Their films focused on groups of people engaged in various types of work or leisure, on moments of everyday life of individuals, or on particular places and their inhabitants. Through prolonged, patient observation, the filmmakers captured gestures, behaviors and attitudes that they arranged in personal renderings of fragments of the social fabric. In *Before Leaves Fall* (1964), Władysław Ślesicki gave an observational account of the nomadic life of Roma people in Poland, after filming for several months one of the last Gypsy caravans (Jazdon, *The Struggle* 76). In *Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays* (1965), Krystyna Gryczełowska makes a lively and endearing portrait of a group of senior citizens that meet three times a week at the Senior's Club of the House of Culture, to celebrate each other's birthdays, engage in conversations, or have dance parties.

These preoccupations with the social detail left out the political events that signaled the increasing tension throughout the decade. The intelligentsia's discontent with Gomułka's policies of suppressing the Polish culture culminated with the widespread student protests from March 1968. The government's reaction of violent repression, followed by an antisemitic campaign of purging the Jewish professors from the academia, deepened the rift between intellectuals and authorities. At their turn, the

workers from the Baltic ports walked out in protests after the government's decision to increase food prices in December 1970. By the end of the decade, the party replaced Gomułka with Edward Gierek, who stepped in announcing a program of social, political and economic reforms. Gierek's attempt at reform implementation disregarded the need for corresponding systemic changes, leading to socio-economic deterioration and political crisis by the end of 1970s. In response to the pervasive social inequities and economic inequalities, the industrial proletariat became increasingly engaged in concerted actions of revolt and in collective gestures that showed the workers' growing political consciousness (Taras 58-60).

Following the arrest of the 1970 strikes leaders, a group of intellectuals lead by historian and activist Jacek Kuroń formed the Committee for Workers' Self-Defence (KOR), a civil society organization set up to give assistance to the families of the imprisoned workers. KOR's oppositional activities over the next decade illustrate the intelligentsia's sustained engagement with the protection of civil liberties, and its militancy for a democratic society based in civic participation.[2] Philosopher Leszek Kołakowski was one of the first thinkers to frame the 1970s socio-political context as a background favorable to an active opposition movement in Poland. In his article "Theses on hope and despair", the philosopher identifies the principal characteristic of the Soviet model of socialism as based in observations from within the dysfunctional Polish socialist system, features that constitute the evidence brought forth by "those who hold that the Communist social system, in its present form, is unreformable" (Kołakowski 2). The writer argues next that, in fact, these conditions allow the possibility of a reformist position understood as a form of "active resistance taking advantage of the natural contradictions of the system" (Kołakowski 8). Jacek Kuroń further elaborates Kołakowski's idea when he affirms that a system that strives to control the life of every citizen cannot fully achieve this goal, therefore any action that resists this tendency becomes an act of opposition to the system (Kuroń's interview "Nie do druku", 1981/84, qtd in Ost 66). According to Kuroń, the political opposition of the moment had to take the form of active engagement in rebuilding the civil society, a call reiterated also by the prominent activist and essayist Adam Michnik in his 1976 article "A New Evolutionism": "the democratic opposition must be constantly and incessantly visible in public life, must create political facts by organizing collective actions, must formulate alternative programs" (Michnik 147). Writer and *Solidarity* movement scholar David Ost assesses the oppositional perspective of the moment as such:

> [T]he goal of the opposition in the 1970s was to get people to do things - anything - just as long as they did it on their own, with no official mediation. Organizing, publicizing, or even attending a lecture series or discussion group, a theatrical work, or an art exhibit presented in a private apartment, basement, or some other

[2] Ray Taras makes a distinction between the terms intelligentsia and intellectuals: the first group is "the stratum of educated people that earns a living from the knowledge it has acquired and whose social function has become to serve as both managers of people and administrators of things. The second group, the intellectuals, should be more narrowly construed as a substratum of the intelligentsia, defined by their function in society as creators of cultural and ideational goods and also by their role as social critics, whether working from within or outside the political establishment." (Taras 133)

> space not under state control; distributing samizdat materials; independently assisting people persecuted for political reasons - these were among the main forms of oppositional activity. For all these were felt to produce an ethos of self-determination, a belief in one's ability to act publicly. (Ost 70)

Coming into practice against this background of social and cultural unrest, the documentary filmmakers of the 1970s – the students of Kaziemirz Karabasz and Jerzy Bossak - understood their work as a necessary contribution to the social mobilization towards the awakening of people's ethos of self-determination. In their films made at the Warsaw Documentary Film Studio, Krzysztof Kieślowski, Tomas Zygadło, Marcel Łoziński, Grzergorz Królikiewicz and Bohdan Kosiński used formal explorations and technological innovations in order to rework some of the directions established by their predecessors into personal expressions meant to advance and shape the social and political debates. In the 1950s, the documentaries of the *Black Series* have built critical representations by using voice-over editorializing commentary, placed in contrast to, or in agreement with, the montage combining staged situations with observed moments. In the 1960s, the observational films developed under Karabasz's influence proposed sociological studies of people's lives through the recording of everyday moments, and introduced the presence of the subjects' voices in forms of direct or indirect address. The films of the 1970s reestablished a political stand through the careful editing of observational takes that preserved relevant fragments of conversations and dialogues between social actors, and through the filmmakers' direct participation in, or collaboration at, the soliciting of social actors' expression. The social and political criticism came across in these films as a questioning of the status quo suggested by the relationship between images and speaking voices. Most importantly, the documentarians of the 1970s structured their films around individuals – seen at times on their own, and at other times as part of groups – and relied necessarily on one or more forms of address in shaping the representations of social actors as subjects engaged in a process of communication that, in turn, determines the position of the viewing subject. With this approach, the filmmakers took a stand against the amorphous quality of the communist notion of "collectivity" by returning its high-definition of human constituency as given by the participant agencies of individual subjects. The project of allowing the expression of individual voices – alone or as part of a plurality of group voices – was also a form of resistance to practices of media representation that hijacked people's images in order to turn them into propaganda models of the "new man/woman."

At the 1971 Krakow National Short Film Festival, the documentaries of the young filmmakers occasioned stormy reactions from critics and journalists, who referred in their articles to a new "Krakow school" and a "documentary rebellion" (Jazdon, "Avantgarde Krakow '71"). In response, filmmakers Bohdan Kosiński, Krzysztof Kieślowski and Tomas Zygadło vocally expressed their position in the article-manifesto "Documentary Filmmakers Make Their Case" (published in *Polityka 28*, 1971), where they presented their filmmaking method, and argued for the necessity of a particular approach. The "Krakow group" affirmed that, while their films target negative phenomena in the country, not unlike a few works of the recent past, their method is different:

> We are interested in that place where everything appears to be right, normally, but where there is also hidden some concealed disease. We try to find this disease and bring it to light. We treat situations like this as models, using them to reveal the nature and repeatability of a phenomenon and to question the inert structures that distort the meaning and substance of social affairs. These are assumptions that are more difficult than before, but probably more necessary today. (Kosiński et all 465- 466*)*

This fragment speaks for two important features that Mirosław Przylipiak identified as being characteristic of the 1970s documentary filmmakers. One of these refers to the authors' belief in the duty of documentarians to reveal the social reality, a duty that, in the context of socialist Poland where the official image did not reflect the lived reality, was equivalent to a moral and political mission of "finding the disease and bringing it to light" (Przylipiak, "Polish Documentary Film After 1989"). Then, beyond the act of exposing, the filmmakers attempted to identify the nature of the mechanisms, and to question the structures that supported the dysfunctionalities of social affairs. This analytically-based position of contestation expressed the authors' distrust of the political system, and their conviction of the necessity to manifest this distrust with all means at their disposal (Przylipiak, "Polish Documentary Film After 1989"). One of these means was the inclusion of people's talking in various forms of address, an element the makers defend in reaction to criticism of a perceived "overtalking" in their films. In their manifesto, the filmmakers note that the techniques allowing synchronous recording of speaking people are relatively new, and thus a meaningful exploration of their expressive potential is still to come. The "Krakow group" proposes that, by filming people's talking, the authors mediate a way of access to the subjects' modes of thinking, adding an invaluable dimension of communication to what they call "the image of the world recorded spontaneously" (Kosiński et all 466).

In his study of American documentary film, Jeffrey Geiger refers to documentary as an "essentially public format, appealing to and depending on shifting public understandings and beliefs", thus oriented towards the public sphere (12). The writer qualifies the notion of public sphere as "traditionally associated with hierarchical power structures, where 'official' ideologies and discursive practices strive to suppress alternative and challenges to power" (Geiger 12). While the fluidity of this dynamic is the symptom of a functioning democratic society, in the socialist Eastern European Bloc the mere attempt at stepping aside the official discourse constituted an attack against the communist regime and was grounds for repression. I will relate, thus, the term public sphere with the concept of *civil society*, as addressed by researcher Tomaž Mastnak who argues that Eastern Europe of the 1970s and 1980s was the stage of the rediscovery of civil society in contemporary history (323). According to Mastnak, "one could define civil society, as it was conceived in Eastern Europe, as a sphere different from, independent of, and opposed to the state" (329). The writer makes clear the direct relationship between the emergence of civil society and the growth of the new opposition ("new" as a movement that no longer considers the possibility of governmental reform):

> The new opposition's forms of action had to be invented, conceptualized, and given meaning. It was necessary to imagine and construe social spaces in which

> action could take place; to create the very conditions and possibilities of action. The reinvention of civil society was the articulation of the intellectual and imaginative framework that made such action possible. The reinvention of civil society made imaginable, and sustained, the action that created its own possibility. (Mastnak 332)

The actions that shaped the civil society as an oppositional movement aimed to reconstruct social bonds "from below," and to materialize in autonomous institutions allowing a free flow of information, independent education, and alternative culture (Mastnak 332- 333). In this context, Geiger's consideration of documentary film as a form of expression oriented towards the public sphere takes a particular significance – for the Polish filmmakers represented by the Krakow group, the practice of documentary making was a necessary act of participation in the rebuilding of civil society. At the same time, the concept of filmic representation and the notion of communication take here historically situated meanings – at the level of representation, the directors strive both to re-present a reality otherwise not allowed in the realm of the visible, and to negotiate the degree of proximity to their human subjects; at the level of communication, the filmmakers focus on people talking in order to initiate processes of self-assessment and of questioning of the status-quo, both within and across the frame. I consider that these mechanisms achieve their most expressive forms in the films of Krzysztof Kieślowski and Marcel Łoziński, made during the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s.

Kazimierz Karabasz's films give a reference point for the sociological direction of interview documentary, as well as the first important explorations with social actors' forms of address. Coming from distinctive stylistic and methodological approaches, Krzysztof Kieślowski and Marcel Łoziński take further the visual mediation of interview attempted by Karabasz, and arrive at formal innovations that shape their films into political platforms of communication through the use of spoken words. These filmmakers are aware of the risks and dangers posed by representation – like the risk of flattening the human subjects, and the danger of assuming, along with the viewer, a direct and exhaustive access to knowledge. Bill Nichols identifies the interview as one of the "technologies of knowledge," or "those activities that work to implant a gendered, social subjectivity that never disrupts the linkage of knowledge from power" (*Representing Reality* 51). He adds that ethical, political and ideological parameters surround the interview, as markers of hierarchy and control, of power and knowledge (*Representing Reality* 51). Nichols suggests that filmmakers can address these issues by a careful treatment of the space between camera and subjects, and by the organization of the spaces within and across the frame in ways that imply the presence – even in the apparent absence - of the author's agency and intervention (*Representing Reality* 98-99). I will suggest that, in their formal explorations, Kieślowski and Łoziński open up various spatial registers that allow the transfer of ethical and political inquiries onto the realm of the aesthetics.

These formal strategies gravitate around the treatment of the voices of social actors, as mediated through different types of interviews - interviews on-camera that are constitutive part of the films' structure, interviews taken within the film as part of the profilmic diegesis, or interviews used as voice-off monologues along images placed in

specific relationships with the spoken words. The interview as a form of address engenders a certain linguistic proximity between participants that is readily discernable in its written or sound only forms (for instance, in written interview articles, or radio interviews). The visual element of the filmic representation provokes a qualitative difference to this proximity – the presence of moving or time-based image of the social actor sharing personal information complicates the perception of this communication process and places a special responsibility on the filmmaker as mediator. In his writing "Speaking Is Not Seeing," Maurice Blanchot notes that "to see is certainly always to see at a distance, but by allowing distance to give back what it removes from us. […] There is a privation, an absence, precisely through which contact is achieved" (28). At the same time, he continues, in the context of speaking, "[l]anguage acts as though we were able to see the thing from all sides, […] as sight freed form the limitations of sight" (Blanchot 28- 29). What Blanchot qualifies as a conflict between sight and speech ("for sight, speech is war and madness"), translates in these films as a contrast between sound and image, a noncoincidence that feels like a productive tension that opens an interval ripe with virtual meanings. This negotiation of the in-between is apparent in the specific way each documentarian chooses to enlist the visuals in a recalibration of the dangerous proximity allowed by the spoken words, by using images in order to safeguard a distance, or a spatial dimension between social actor, viewer and filmmaker. Another separation, that between representation and its subject, follows from the filmmakers' experimentations with reflexive markers that bracket the viewers' unmediated access to knowledge. The films become the territory of a continuous shaping of contrasting relationships that results in a triangulated space where, beyond the grounding of the authorial referent, the making of meaning requires the consistent participation of both filmic and viewing subject. These documentary works enable a form of *communication through representation* that transcends the socio-historical determination of the profilmic world, and that stands as an actual and relevant model of achieving social mobilization and political engagement through artistic expression.

Theoretical Frame and Methodology

The filmmakers were the first to understand the necessity of a theoretical frame for the conceptualization of their praxis. In their writings, they reflected on the methods of approaching the filmic subjects, the effects of representation, and the rapport with the viewers. While the Polish directors' theoretical thinking mirrored their filmmaking explorations, it also paralleled the international development of documentary film theory that proceeded to map the evolution of this non-fiction form and to analyze its signification. In their projects of shaping filmic representation as platforms of communication, the Polish filmmakers developed methods and approaches that resonate with the later concepts of *reflexivity* and *voice*.

For Bill Nichols, a documentary film operates in the reflexive mode if it heightens the viewer consciousness of her rapport with the text, and of the text mediated relationship to its referent (*Representing Reality* 60). Nichols notes that, while reflexivity

implies the filmmakers' preoccupation with politics and aesthetics of representation, it does not necessarily address the authors' ethical responsibilities to the films' subjects or viewers – this, because "[e]xplorations of the difficulties or consequences of representations are more common than examinations of the *right* of representation" (*Representing Reality* 59). While the reflexive gesture transpires first and foremost as a formal operation that upsets filmic conventions, it can also work as a political statement geared toward a broader form of socially situated awareness (Nichols, *Representing Reality* 69).

David MacDougall defines reflexivity as an attitude necessary in the ongoing process of filmmaking, and one that should not rely on signaling through exterior markers. "Reflexivity – he writes – involves putting representation into perspective as we practice it" (MacDougall 87). Writing as a filmmaker preoccupied with ethnographic and anthropologic representation, MacDougall postulates a direct and necessary correlation between the author's rapport with the subject, and the effect of the text on the reader (89). MacDougall considers, in contrast to Nichols, the ethical dimension of the filmmaker's relationships with subjects and viewers as constitutive part of a reflexive practice: "In the eyes of *my* subjects, my work will be judged by its good faith toward them and its understanding of their perception of the world, without pretending to be their view of it. […] If I am self-reflexive, that self-reflexivity must be about the relationship between us, not a way of speaking behind my hand to some foreign audience" (MacDougall 91).

A documentary practice that is reflexive, thus aware of its responsibility in relation to the viewer's expectation of direct access to knowledge, should, in the words of Maurice Blanchot, qualify the "knowing by the measure of the 'unknown', approaching the familiarity of things while preserving their strangeness, relating to everything by way of an experience of the very *interruption* of relations" (Blanchot 6). Here Blanchot refers to the communication of knowledge between the philosopher as master and the disciple as student, a process that never *arrives*, as the master opens always more directions of inquiries and renders the paths of knowledge impracticable (4). Such an ideal understanding of documentary practice situates the filmmaker as both creator and educator, as a master using the films to let the student-viewer know of the impossibility of getting to know. Such a filmmaking is akin to a form of writing where meaning appears from interruption, and form comes with rupture (Blanchot 8). The product of such a process of creation recalls Roland Barthes' *text of bliss*: "the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts […], unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language" (Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* 14). Like the *text of bliss*, the reflexive documentary film comes into being through a process culturally determined, only to defy, in its final form, the canons, settings and expectations that allowed the conditions of its possibility. Like the reader, the viewer learns to channel her sense of displacement and disorientation into the productive effort of making meaning. According to Trinh T. Minh-ha's, reflexivity in filmmaking acts "to prevent meaning from ending with what is said and what is shown [and] to challenge the representation itself while emphasizing the reality of the experience of film" (Trinh 47). Trinh contemplates Blanchot's *relation of infinity* that occurs between master and student, and

turns it towards the dynamic between representation and its referent, defining *the reflexive interval* as the site of an always illusive (in)communicability of the object of knowledge:

> The "core" of the representation is the reflexive interval. It is the place in which the play within the textual frame is a play on this very frame, hence on the borderlines of the textual and extra-textual, where a positioning within constantly incurs the risk of de-positioning, and where the work, never freed from historical or socio-political contexts nor entirely subjected to them, can only be itself by constantly risking being no-thing. (Trinh 48)

The *reflexive interval* brings into perception the infinite – and infinitesimal - distance that remains between seemingly overlapping elements, or, as seen from the other direction, the asymptotic touching that persists even in separation. The *reflexive interval* functions as a place where continuity and disruption not only validate each other, but come to depend on one-another.

Presented from various angles, these perspectives on the concept of reflexivity agree fundamentally on the idea that a reflexively creative practice consists of the author's assumed and explicit intervention in the process of creation with the aim of challenging the experience of artistic reception, through a questioning of the modes and effects of representation from within. As a form of communication, reflexive filmmaking means the constant and conscious refraction and redirection of the visual and aural stimuli, allowing the viewer an ongoing (re)constitution of the meaning of knowledge. I will show that, in their explorations with forms of address able to sustain the tension between expression and constraint, between flow of information and its interdiction, the filmmakers I analyze develop distinctive understandings of a reflexive practice, within filmic approaches gradually more open towards addressing and/or engaging the viewer. Kazimierz Karabasz inaugurates a self-inquiring mode with the inclusion of his first-person, directorial voice-over commentary about the methods and direction of his films – a self-reflexive exposition that functions like a communication with the viewer beyond and above the text of the film. In his later works, the voice-over belongs to the characters who give accounts of their lives in interview-monologues, in settings that contain reminders of the director's mediation and the viewer's position as addressee. Moving from demonstrative and announced to character driven, Karabasz's reflexive approach is manifest at the level of the voices that speak in direct address to the viewer, an act that comes as a troubling of the pervasive observational framing.

In Krzysztof Kieślowski's films, reflexivity is implicit and subtle, and comes across in the finely tuned dynamic between sound and image. The films built around on-camera interviews retain, in the margin of the frames, details that suggest the embodied presence of the filmmaker-interviewer. Never fully visible, Kieślowski enacts a bridging of the spaces in front and behind the camera, as he simultaneously inhabits the within and the outer frame. Barely suggested, the author-interviewer's appearance in the image trips the viewer's undisturbed access to the world of the speaker, and functions as an interruption of the spectatorial gaze. At the same time, not fully there with his interlocutors, but not completely on the side of the viewer, the director occupies a threshold that suggests a possible – but always postponed – arrival. For Kieślowski, the

reflexive filmmaking allows the shaping of the interview encounter into an inexhaustible movement of drawing near, a process of a never-ending *appropiare*.

In his filmic constructions, Marcel Łoziński approaches the subjects' situations through modes that both mimic and subvert the sanctioned politics of representations. Unlike Karabasz and Kieślowski, Łoziński does not appear as visibly or audibly engaging with the world of the film, world that he nevertheless shapes into a metaphorical expression of his critical perspective. Like in Kieślowski's work, and to some extent in that of Karabasz, the stakes are the revealing of the mechanisms of lying with their corrupting effects on the people, and the disrupting of the veneer hiding the actual state of things. In Karabasz's films, the revelation is a consequence of the observation and recording of dialogues and interactions – the dysfunctionalities come to the surface within people's open expression of their daily problems at work, at school, in institutional settings controlled through hierarchies of power. In his direct inquiries, Kieślowski provokes people's talking and orients the topics of conversations in sensible directions that are officially not addressed as deemed inconvenient for the manufactured image of reality. At his turn, restless and naughty, Loziński violently troubles the established parameters of documentary and televisual making – in some films, he arranges sound and image in bold and unexpected relations, with a jarring delivery of his loud argument; for others, he intervenes directly and off-camera in the context to be filmed, in order to precipitate specific outcomes. Łoziński's films develop somehow prearranged situations of media interventions (a weekly magazine team, a radio reporter, a television crew) into filmed interactions that reveal attitudes, behavior and modes of thinking of individuals or groups as symptomatic for the Polish society at that moment. The filmmaker's project suggests the enrolling of human subjects in situations meant to expose broader systemic malfunctions, and takes shape in the context (or under the pretext) of an act of media representation. As such, the reflexive practice is manifest here in the filmmaker's gesture of referring back to media in its institutionalized forms, while framing his own filmic representation as both catalyst for, and constitutive element in, this process of mise-en-abyme.

The concept of *voice* allows me to analyze the Polish documentaries as dual processes of communication, where the filmmakers re-mediate for the viewer the interactions that happen within the world of the films. In his article "The Voice of Documentary," Bill Nichols refers to the question of "voice" as the driving element in the evolution of documentary (18). Voice is what gives us the sense of a text's social point of view by revealing the ways it is organized into a (re)presentation (Nichols, "The Voice" 18). For Nichols, "'voice' is not restricted to any one code or feature, such as dialogue or spoken commentary. Voice is perhaps akin to that intangible, moiré-like pattern formed by the unique interaction of all a film's codes, and it applies to all modes of documentary" (Nichols, "The Voice" 18). While referring to innovative works (at the time) of observational documentary, Nichols signaled the danger of the films' textual voice getting lost within the sounds and images of observed evidence ("The Voice" 21). Similarly, for the films built around interviews, where the authority of voice is diffused, Nichols suggested the need of "a gap between the voice of interviewees and the voice of the text as a whole", as a marker of an inclusive distinction between the perspectives of

the speakers and that of the filmmaker ("The Voice" 24). The voice of the text should hold higher authority than the voices of interviewees, while not being above but part of the historical process it offers for interpretation (Nichols, "The Voice" 24). In a later writing that introduces the modes of documentary representation, the writer posits a "shift of emphasis from an author-centered voice of authority to a witness-centered voice of testimony" (*Representing Reality* 48).[3] As such, Nichols suggests the presence of a collaboration between filmmaker and subject that allows the shaping of the voice of documentary around the spoken contributions of the interlocutors. It is in the negotiation between the author-centered voice of authority and the witnessed-centered voice of testimony that I will locate the Polish filmmakers' explorations with expressive forms of communication. Karabasz maintains in many of his films some type of authorial voice-over intervention in which he reflexively clarifies, or comments on, the project of the film, while relying on the contributions of the social actors to illustrate his sociological observations. In most of his documentaries, Kieslowski's presence is not audible, but rather discretely visible in the margins of the frame, in the position of a witness of testimonies who both models and mediates the process of communication for the viewer. Neither audible nor visible in his documentaries, Łoziński is always at a remove from the situations and interactions he helps orchestrate in advance, but the camera work and editing bring to the fore an authorial take above and beyond the spoken contributions of the social actors.

A number of film scholars and practitioners proposed new understandings of the voice of documentary, in their contributions to the Fall 2017 issue of *Discourse* titled *Documentary Audibilities*, edited by Pooja Rangan and Genevieve Yue. In the volume's introduction, Rangan proposes a new definition as follows:

> we redefine the "voice of documentary" as a specific *form of audibility* whose rhetorical and aesthetic modes of sonic focus (1) fashion its contents in forms that can be understood and apprehended as a voice, (2) shape a listening ear that accommodates to its call, and (3) call into being a mode of relation or resonance—a "shared world"—between these felt but often unspoken forms of speaking and listening. (Rangan 282)

According to Rangan's definition, the contributors reframe the voice of documentary as a form of communication where the sonic elements function as an address, or a call, able to establish a relation of resonance with the listening mode, even when it bypasses the spoken mode. Irina Leimbacher proposes a 'haptic listening' of filmed interviews that emphasizes the sensorial qualities of the auditory register and allows an attuning to the *how* as discernible beyond the *what* of the speech (Leimbacher 286). Paige Sarlin identifies the politically generative potential of the linguistic use of the pronoun 'you' in filmed interviews through a transversal sliding between a personalized 'you' and its

[3] In his text "Documentary Modes of Representation", Nichols introduces four modes of documentary representation that he considered as evolving one after the other, as a consequence of the filmmakers' continuous formal explorations: expository, observational, interactive, and reflexive. (*Representing Reality* 32-33) In *Introduction to Documentary*, Nichols expands these conceptual categories and brings the modes of documentary representation up to six: expository, poetic, observational, participatory, reflexive, and performative.

generic-collective form (Sarlin 287). Filmmaker Aura Satz speaks of the "idea of testing the sound *against* the image, and seeing what can happen by working with them in some kind of friction" – for Satz, the adjustment of this tension can open up a different way of apprehending (Yue 345). Along the same lines, Markos Hadjioannou defines the "son/iconic discord" as a disruption of cinema's mode of homogeneity – where speech as logos pertains to the image – that bears the potential of unexplored resources of meaning (Hadjioannou 363). In *The Visit*, Łoziński places the character voice-over monologue against the close-up of his silent face, in an effect that resonates with Satz' idea of friction between sound and image. The filmmaker plays with and around a form of son/iconic discord between visuals and spoken words in *Practice Exercises*, where he reveals the representation's potential for manipulation through editing

In the book *The Voice in Cinema*, Michel Chion argues that, in the process of perception of filmic aural elements, the spectator operates a triage according to each sound's relation to the accompanying image, where the image governs the triage, not the nature of the recorded elements (3). At the same time, the writer notes that the presence of a human voice structures the sonic space that contains it, and sets up a hierarchy of perception (Chion, *The Voice in Cinema* 5). These parameters of a triage against an implicit hierarchy of perception suggest a compounded dynamic of the spectator's relation with the human voice, depending on the image that goes along with it – is our first attention to the human voice deferred, or rather intrigued and enhanced by the visible absence of the speaker as source of the voice? Chion continues by defining the *acousmetre* as the speaker we can hear but we cannot yet see, a concept that, while originating in the writer's observations of fiction films, is relevant for the particular position of the documentary social actor speaking in voice-over (*The Voice* 20). While being at once inside and outside the world of the film, the *acousmetre* is necessarily involved in the image, as "the voice doesn't merely speak as an observer (as commentary), but it bears with the image a relationship of *possible inclusion*, a relationship of power and possession capable of functioning in both directions; the image may contain the voice, or the voice may contain the image" (Chion, *The Voice in Cinema* 23). We see this dynamic of voice and image at work in two of Kieślowski's documentaries: in *The Bricklayer* (1973), a former party activist recounts in voice-over moments form his life, against images of his getting ready to participate in the propagandistic festivities of May Day. Delivered in a balanced, measured tone, the spoken words refer to the man's initial enthusiastic belief in the construction of socialism, followed by disappointment, renunciation, and finding meaning in his work as a bricklayer. The visuals show, apparently in counterpoint, the character's continuous present-day engagement with manifestations displaying the political apparatus. At the same time, though, the framing and editing deliver a satiric take on the vein agitation around the parade preparations, and infuse the narration with contextual colors that enrich and complement the portrait of the man. In this sense, we can say that here the visual register contains the voice – but rather than a relationship of power as suggested by Chion, this is a productive inclusion that shapes a multidimensional character. In *From a Night Porter's Point of View* (1977), Kieślowski interviews a man that works as factory porter, and whose vocation is spying on people and turning them in to the authorities. The

film juxtaposes the man's voice-over account of his vigilante acts with images from his daily activities – we see him walking by the river and gazing at the fishermen, or looking out the window of his apartment at the noisy kids strolling down the street. These gestures that seem ordinary become illustrations of attitudes consistent with the preoccupations the man speaks about – here the voice overpowers the visuals that are thus colored by the meaning of the man's words. Kieślowski readjusts the balance of the film's textual voice by interjecting a musical motif that softens the looming effect of the narration, and that opens our affective disposition toward not losing hope in the character's humanity.

All these concepts that refer to the textual voice as a negotiation of the rapport between images and sound, and as a compounding and balancing of the various voices within the film, will allow me to define one of the two aspects from the dual process of communication – namely, the spectatorial experience of the voice of the film. For the Polish documentarians, the voice of the film stands as the expression of their active engagement in the process of awakening people's political consciousness and social awareness. The constructions of the films reveal questions, challenges or arguments that require the viewers to position themselves, to take a stand, to respond, in other words to become political. At the same time, the other part of the communication process happens within the world of the films, between social actors - or social actors and filmmaker - that talk to each other. In order to approach the context of the characters' speaking, I will refer to Adriana Cavarero's theory of speech as political act, as developed in her book *For More than One Voice*, where she builds on Hannah Arendt's concept of a "political" sphere of relationality that depends on action [*praxis*] (xx). Cavarero writes:

> Rather, speech becomes political on account of the self-revelation of speakers who express and communicate their uniqueness through speaking - no matter the specific content of what is said. The political valence of signifying is thus shifted from speech - and from language as a system of signification - to the speaker. The speakers are not political because of what they say, but because they say it to others who share an interactive space of reciprocal exposure. To speak to one another is to communicate to one another the unrepeatable uniqueness of each speaker. (190)

As such, speech is political because it enables a "reciprocal self-communication, which simultaneously expresses uniqueness and relation" (Cavarero, *For More than One Voice* 193). But then, speech defined as the open expression of multiple perspectives is untenable in a totalitarian regime where "[t]he dominance of a single thought […] is in keeping with a mass society where the negation of plurality, or the reduction of all men to a single Man, is borne out by the existence of a single perspective" (Cavarero, *For More than One Voice* 192). I will propose that the voiced encounters that the Polish filmmakers enable and record, enact instances from a process of re-learning the act of speaking out as relational self-expression. Through their projects of soliciting and arranging the spoken contributions, the documentarians set the interlocutors in relational contexts where talking is the expected means of expression of their personal positions. At the same time, as the social actors talk in and for the film - and their speech is to become public – this gesture stands as their choice of action. Paul A. Kottman, the translator of Cavarero's

book, writes in "The Translator Introduction": "'Action,' put differently, is not a given - like the sheer fact of the voice's singularity or the uniqueness of one's own embodiment. Being born with 'a voice like no other' does not, in the end, guarantee or determine the actions performed by that singular voice" (xxv). Action is thus a choice, an initiative, and it stems from one's "'impulse' to appear, to reveal oneself in word or deed, [which] is the sine qua non of politics" (Kottman xxiv). According to Kottman, the use of one's voice in order to situate oneself in relation to another implies a risk "that adheres to the radical contingency of action" (xxv). This is a primal risk that comes with expressing oneself through speaking up in a relational context – "to sing, to tell a story, to soothe a child" – and of which the speaker may or may not be aware. (Kottman xxv) In their works, the Polish filmmakers negotiate this risk associated with the relational use of one's voice, and the constrains introduced by the presence of the camera, to arrive at forms of address that position talking as a means of people's coming into being. More so, in the act of using their voice in relational self-expressions, the social actors' actions become political, in the sense defined by Cavarero:

> Thus, the realm of politics, unlike that of ontology, has constitutive characters of intermittence. In other words, all human beings are unique, but only when and while they interact with words and deeds can they communicate to one another this uniqueness. Without such communication, without action in a shared space of reciprocal exhibition, uniqueness remains a mere ontological given—the given of an ontology that is not able to make itself political. (*For More than One Voice* 196)

The interview settings allow the shared space of reciprocal exhibition that occasions the participants' spoken interaction of communication. As such, if the voices of the social actors constitute the realm of politics through their manifestation in front of the camera, the textual voice of the films (as defined around concepts I referenced in the first part of this section on communication) extends this realm of politics on the other side of the camera through the framing of the films' address to the viewer.

Overview

While all three filmmakers come to define a political space that takes shape at the intersection of the voices within, and of, the films, each author arrives here from a different position. The structure of the dissertation traces a virtual trajectory of the filmmaker's relative approaches to their subjects. Karabasz places the camera at an observational distance and records his subjects as actors that turn the performance of their social roles into narrative accounts. Kieślowski's camera zooms-in on the testimonies of his interlocutors, and carves out the people's portraits as subjects that negotiate their way through a dysfunctional system. Łoziński steps away and zooms-out on social situations that he frames as both critiques of the system, and commentaries on the effects of representation. In the context of a society where public speaking and forms of representation are highly controlled and regulated, the works of these three filmmakers enact a process of socio-political mobilization through spoken interaction, where the

relative distance of the camera shapes the meaning of the representation. As such, if with Karabasz we become aware of the importance of having people speak within the frame, with Kieślowski we get closer to the speakers' expression of inner struggles, and with Łoziński we contemplate the broader mechanisms that both manipulate the human subjects, and rely on their obedience to the system. This virtual trajectory allows the contemporary reader/viewer to retrace the historical process of coming into political awareness through the engagement in a shared space of communication, process that led to the rising of the opposition movement.

Chapter 1 inscribes Kazimierz Karabasz's groundbreaking explorations with documentary language within a trajectory of increasing collaboration with the social actors as speakers, and of gradual opening toward the viewer's participation in the making of meaning. Employing a sociological approach, Karabasz develops an observational mode based in the patient, long-term observation of his subjects' daily activities and events in their lives. The organization of the observational footage - in chronological order, according to themes, or self-reflexively as illustrations of filmic approaches - determines the sequential structure of the films: the moments of a working day in the life of the amateur band of tram workers in *The Musicians*, the methods of filming and interviewing the young women graduating from high school in *On the Threshold*, the gradual coming of age of the young man enrolled in the voluntary labor corps in Silesia in *A Year in the Life of Franek W*, and the context of work and social life of the young woman leaving the country side to work in the city in *Krystyna M.* More prominent with each film, the presence of speaking voices troubles the viewer's experience as observer, and traces the shifting tension between the highly structured format of the films and the excess allowed by the observational recording. As such, in *On the Threshold* the self-reflexive voice-over of the director functions as the films' structuring analysis, while the on-camera spoken interventions of the women reveal a freshness of expression that overflows the rigid interviewing format. *Franek W* 's chronological organization relies on the voice-over narration of fragments from Franek written diary, in an actor-rendered mediation of the character's words. The juxtaposition of the impersonal voice-over reading and the observational images has a double effect – on the one hand, it locks the sound and visuals in a relationship that predetermines the meaning, on the other, it suggests a quasi-fictional, in-between, novelistic space that allows the viewer to imagine and project a psychologic portrait of Franek. Aural and visual details that punctuate the observational footage open this controlled filmic experiment to alternative suggestions of meaning. In *Krystyna M.*, the voice-over narration of the young woman is a first-person account that gives affective continuity to the sociological study format of the film. As the filmmaker explores and refines the characters' forms of address, he develops the contrast between structure and contingency, and capitalizes on the glitch between organization of form and uncontrollable excess, to arrive at a generative tension that frames in aesthetic terms an implicitly political gesture. The result is a documentary language that works as a tactic - along Michel de Certeau's definition as a production-consumption, or a writing-reading binary – where the films appropriate elements of formal structure from the vocabulary of people in power, in order

to rewrite the contingent reality of people that are the subjects of the ones in power (de Certeau xix, xxi).

In Chapter 2, I look at Krzysztof Kieślowski's development of Karabasz's observational method in a filmic direction that relies on the spoken expression of the social actors. While at Karabsaz the people's speaking completes the sociological approach established through observation, at Kieślowski interviewing places the speakers' words as the substance of the argument that the film crafts through the editing of observational footage. Kieślowski's documentary work reconciles the conflicting directions of the filmmaker's attitude – his urgency to show, to reveal aspects of the lived reality officially unrepresentable thus nonexistent; his concern for an interaction with people based in the awareness of, and respect for, a level of knowledge inaccessible to filmic representation. The author shapes the tension between the political urge to bring into light, and the ethical concern for protecting the subjects' vulnerability and intimacy, into a unique formal approach that I call an *aesthetics of the compromise*. Kieślowski affirms the necessity of revealing a knowledge difficult to address – a knowledge political because of its relevance for the community, but also rooted within the ethical and social implications of personal experience – and proposes an indirect audio-visual approach as a compromise of showing through questioning, and revealing through suggesting. I call *peeking* this formal construction that suggests a limited access of the camera to the filmic subjects, and of the viewer to the profilmic world. I analyze the mechanisms and effects of *peeking* as the main technique of Kieślowski's *aesthetics of the compromise* in three pairs of documentary films.

In *I Was a Soldier* (1970) and *X-Ray* (1974), Kieślowski interviews men who share insights of their lives as fundamentally altered by traumatic circumstances: the war veterans in *I Was a Soldier* lost their sight on the battlefield, and the sanatorium residents in *X-Ray* have their lives on hold while undergoing treatment for tuberculosis. The filmmaker arranges the individual testimonies as to suggests group conversations around the men's living in the margins of the representable social realm. The documentaries remediate the absence of representation, and affirm the social significance of this obstructed knowledge. At the same time, the form of the films avoids turning the speakers' trauma-induced alterity into a spectacle, and places the viewer on a position of shared vulnerability and responsibility. Kieślowski achieves the effect of *peeking* in each of the films: as the men address directly the off-screen filmmaker-interviewer, whose presence is barely – and only visually – suggested, the construction of the frame requires the viewer to earn her role of considerate observer into this process.

The Photograph (1968) and *Talking Heads* (1980) represent the beginning and ending of the filmmaker's formal explorations of the technique of the interview. In *The Photograph*, Kieślowski adopts the *cinéma vérité* mode as he appears in front of the camera (at times, along his crew) to ask various people what they remember about the photographic subjects. In the process of filming, as Kieślowski learns that the access to a certain knowledge resists a participatory intervention, he foregrounds the value of the tangential meaning allowed by an indirect, sideways approach that will later translate in the use of *peeking* as a technique of compromise. In the series of static interviews from *Talking Heads, peeking* functions as a formal compromise that both protects the

speakers' vulnerability, and traces the collective portrait of a society in the process of regaining its power of expression.

The Bricklayer (1973) and *From a Night Porter's Point of View* (1977) are portrait films that play around and against conventions of interview-as-monologue and observational cinema, in representations that render the characters unfixed and unfixable. The films assemble contrasting aural and visual registers that come together into a space that is doubly performative: on the one hand, the social actors perform a re-presentation of their real-life personas for the camera; on the other, the relationships between sound and image position the films as performative interpretations of the characters' narratives. These constructions lead to the viewer's sense of *peeking* at the characters, in an attempt at making sense of approaches that favor contrasts and contradictions, and at negotiating juxtapositions of image and sound that complicate the men's expression of subjectivity. This mode of portrayal through an unfixing, somehow distanced surrounding of *the social actors as characters* speaks for Kieślowski's recognition of those dimensions of humanity that cannot be exhausted within representation. This method also allows the filmmaker an approach that brackets *the social actors as persons*, by focusing on the types of attitudes they represent.

Chapter 3 brings into focus the work of Marcel Łoziński as representing another direction in the development of the ideas the young filmmakers expressed in their manifesto at the 1971 Krakow National Short Film Festival. Łoziński takes further the Krakow group's vision of a documentary practice able to awaken the viewers' social awareness and political consciousness, in his 'semi-open' documentaries that propose arguments and analytical observations based on a pre-treated, condensed reality which functions as the existing reality for the camera. The contexts arranged to be filmed include spoken interactions requiring the social actors to situate themselves in relation to their particular contexts of work and life. Łoziński affirms his concern with the ethos of self-determination and socio-political awareness in filmic expressions that defy the conventions of documentary form. As such, his works constitute a practical manifestation of the theoretical vision for an opposition movement of that moment.

In my comparative analyses of two pairs of films, I will establish particular relationships between *The Visit* (1974) and *Microphone Test* (1980), and respectively *The King* (1974) and *Practice Exercises* (1984). In these films, Łoziński embeds the subject's narratives in constructions that foreground the process of representation and the effects of media interventions on people's expression. This layered structuring enables the viewer's perception of different levels of meaning that I would refer to as denotative, connotative, and compounded meaning. The filmic denotative level pertains to the primary context of people engaged in spoken interactions. Throughout the four films, a journalist, a radio broadcaster, or an interviewer launches inquiries that become more targeted and specific with each film, and that act as starting points for analyses of the interlocutors' personal *status quo* against the background of systemic dysfunctionalities. The filmmaker keeps this important, character-originated meaning at the center of the project, as its nucleus, while he zooms-out to frame the filmed situations in broader contexts of media representation. This technique brings about an indirect reflexivity, along with the suggestion of a connotative or metaphorical reading of the films as reflections on, and

positions against particular effects of media representation. The knowledge about the details of the filmmaker's intervention in – or provocation of – the reality to be filmed is susceptible to influence the viewer's perception and interpretation of the film, leading to the reassessment of the perceived significations into a compounded meaning.

The Visit and *Microphone Test* capture the interview processes that are part of the making of particular forms of media representations - an article for the *Polityka* magazine in *The Visit*, and a radio broadcast on the local station of the Pollena-Uroda cosmetics factory in *Microphone Test*. While Łoziński arranged the participation of the specific reporters, the events of the filmic productions affected the lives of these people beyond the context of the films. The films' narratives center on people's struggle to recuperate a political, personal voice when faced with stifling expressions of ideology. The films' formal constructions reveal the contrast between people's conforming attitudes when addressed in groups, and the unconstrained reasoning attained through honest self-scrutiny when addressed individually. If the spoken interactions within the profilmic world trigger transformations visible at the level of the social actors' attitudes, Łoziński is interested in the conditions of a similar effect at the level of representation. The affective profiles of the films run in opposite directions, according to the historical moment of the representation - *The Visit* ends on a note of hope for the power of outspoken subjects, as in 1974 the socio-political climate allowed a horizon yet fertile for change; *Microphone Test* proposes no exit from a closed system that, in 1980, was a few months away from imploding under a collective cry of *solidarity*.

In *The King* (1974) and *Practice Exercises* (1984), one man's life account, and the answers of various people surveyed on their opinion about the state of the youth constitute the material for Łoziński' experimentation with rhetorical constructions of arguments. The films both rely on, and challenge the viewer's expectation of correspondence between the voice and the face of an interviewee, and propose constructions that treat this relationship as relative and variable. This arbitrary quality of the relation between the voice and the face renders the character abstract and symbolic, in one film, and suggests the image of a disoriented people, resigned to speaking out of conformity, in the other. The effect of the films' preoccupation with formal experimentation is a type of abstraction that situates the contexts of the social actors within a broader historical frame, even while bypassing the significance of people's individual contributions as *real* persons engaged in the making of the films.

For the three filmmakers I analyze in this dissertation, documentary film constitutes a mode of *communication through representation*. This happens at a historical time and in a country where *communication* means a political act of affirmation through self-expression, and *representation* stands as a form of resistance to censorship and the interdiction of showing. In their explorations with on-camera interview, interview within the film, voice-over monologue, and group conversations or debates, the directors enable and orchestrate platforms of communication that they record and edit into reflexive filmic representations. Within distinctive approaches, each filmmaker places speaking as the act that defines the social actor's self-expression and subject-affirmation, and as a means towards a "shared space of reciprocal exhibition", that is, in Cavarero's definition, towards a realm of politics (Cavarero 196). Kazimierz Karabasz is an observer interested

in human interactions as constitutive of the broader social texture, but also the first to understand the potential of engaging with people's voices within, and for, the film. While he captures his individual or group subjects as they perform their social roles, he directs their voices towards the viewer, in forms of address that open reflexive points of access into the observational enclosure. Krzysztof Kieślowski approaches his interlocutors as subjects that attempt to make meaning of their living in a dysfunctional society, and solicits their first-person accounts as revelations of a reality deemed unrepresentable. As people unravel their inner sides, the filmmaker treats the visuals in forms meant to lessen the impact of the exposure, and to keep the viewer at bay. The negotiation between revealing and protecting comes out in the sensibility of the filmmaker's rapport with his subjects, and transpires in the construction of the frame that foregrounds the mediated quality of interviewing. Marcel Łoziński enrolls the social actors in situations he constructs or provokes off-camera in order to represent broader disfunctions or corruptions of the system. At a distance from the profilmic world, the filmmaker situates the filmed interactions within media events, in a gesture of metaphorical reflexivity that allows him a critical commentary on the practice and effects of media representation.

In engaging with their subjects, the filmmakers bring people to speak about themselves, in a public setting. The interviews mobilize the Polish citizens to situate themselves in relation to the political and social reality of the moment. The process of people's awakening through communication constitutes a movement of opposition in the post-totalitarian system that, in the words of Havel, subjected reason and conscience to a higher authority (Havel 4). Through their reflexive dimensions, the documentaries stand as the filmmakers' gestures of interpellation, as calls for the viewer to react, to take action, and to further communicate. The works of Karabasz, Kieślowski, and Łoziński remain as groundbreaking achievements of the unique phenomenon of a concerted development of documentary form in the service of the social and political mobilization of a movement of opposition to an authoritative regime.

Chapter 1
Kazimierz Karabasz: Between Structure and Contingency - A New Film Language

In Kazimierz Karabasz's short film *Railway Junction* (1961), night-shift train dispatchers answer and make telephone calls, read aloud series of numbers, and yell orders across the room while they direct trains passing through the railway junction. The montage of black and white close-ups of the men's barely lit faces follows the sources of the human voices, in a choreographed representation of intense work that relies on talking. *Railway Junction* marked Karabasz's first use of a light, portable sound recorder that allowed the capture of everyday speech, and opened the filmmaker's life-long exploration of forms of address in film. Twenty years later, in *Material Test* (1981), young factory workers give a group account of their supervisors' attitude of preventing their work engagement at full capacity in order to preserve the appearance of efficiency of an unproductive status quo. *Material Test* includes forms of address that Karabasz developed throughout the films he made during this time interval, and that range from expository voice-over commentary, to street survey interviewing in the style of *cinéma vérité,* to character-driven voice-over monologues over images of photographs, and to various contexts of group conversations or verbal exchanges. If the first film is a close look at one moment in the work of train dispatchers, the second one performs a zoom-out and over time, to picture the social tapestry of the Wola district of Warsaw, as seen from the perspective of individuals, or of groups of inhabitants. Beyond the development of representations of talking people, these two films suggest the evolution of the filmmaker's perspective on the function and significance of speech in film. While in the first works, speaking was a constitutive element of the activity portrayed, in the later films, it became a form of communication in the margin of photographic memories, around work contexts, and about topics of social importance. If Karabasz started by exploring the potential of speech as an expressive parameter intrinsic to the particular situation represented, over the years the contexts of people talking became central elements in his films, with a preoccupation for speaking as a form of reflective discourse, manifest in analytical conversations or in evocative monologues. Working with his cameraman Stanislaw Niedbalski, Karabasz developed a filming mode based in patient observation, with the gradual inclusion of gestures of participatory and reflexive approaches that called on the viewer's engagement beyond the observational position. Built as representations of social phenomena, Karabasz's films take on the function of catalysts for a process of communication, as vehicles of ideas exchanged amongst protagonists, and expressions of the filmmaker's direct interpellations of the viewer.

Karabasz's filmic explorations happen during the times of intelligentsia's raising calls on the role of social communication for reconstituting a public sphere able to resist an increasingly authoritarian regime. According to David Ost, by the early 1970s, "the opposition had developed a different understanding of politics, one that focused on civic activity within society rather than on policy outcomes within the state", as well as "the belief that what is essential to a just order is not a benign government and good people in power, but rather a vital, active, aware, self-governing, and creative *society*" (Ost 2). At

the same time, a population politically aware, self-confident and articulated in expressing a variety of assertive positions, would constitute a menace for the officially sanctioned, monolithic order of the socialist system – under this latest incarnation of the paradigm of modernity, people's public expression of needs and desires happens only under prescribed conditions. Zygmunt Bauman sees the bridging of the gap between the will and the duty as the "focus imaginarius of the modern struggle for rationally designed order":

> To create order means neither to cultivate nor to extirpate the differences. It means licensing them. And it means a licensing authority. Obversely, it means also de-legalizing unlicensed differences. Order can be only an all-inclusive category. It must also remain forever a belligerent camp, surrounded by enemies and waging wars on all its frontiers. The unlicensed difference is the main enemy: it is also an enemy to be eventually conquered. […] The subversive power of unlicensed difference resides precisely in its spontaneity, that is in its indeterminacy vis-à-vis the decreed order, that is in its unpredictability, that is in its uncontrollability. In the shape of the unlicensed difference, modernity fought the real enemy: the grey area of ambivalence, indeterminacy and undecidability. (Bauman xvi)

I propose that Karabasz's work walks a fine line between Bauman's parameters of modernity, as it relies on the order of the licensed differences in order to fit and be allowed within the socio-cultural environment, while it discreetly takes advantage of the subversive power of unlicensed difference. Throughout his filmic sociological observations, Karabasz stays away from political inquiries or debates about current events. He is interested in observing everyday details of the mechanisms of society that he represents in films often organized in narrative chapters, or sections following criteria of filmic construction. Karabasz propensity towards a spelled-out ordering of the filmed material (visible in names of sections, or announced in voice-over) recommends him as a modernist filmmaker that believes in the power of film to access knowledge - even absolute knowledge, at the beginning of his career, when he is keen on finding "how the [protagonists] of his films really are" (filmmaker's voice-over in *On the Threshold*). The filmmaker's pervasive control of the form of the films can be interpreted as a preemptive attempt at meeting some official expectations of conformity to rules of structure, rules that would be virtually appeased by having the footage organized within labeled categories. At the same time though, Karabasz's consistent use of the observational mode brings the films on a territory marked by spontaneity and unpredictability, outside the controllable, in an area of ambivalence that we can assume, along with Bauman, as being not agreeable to an authority dedicated to the modernist project of socialism. The gradual refining of the relationship between these contrasting elements results in a documentary language that works as a tactic, in Michel de Certeau's definition as a production-consumption, or a writing-reading binary – where the films appropriate elements of formal structure from the vocabulary of people in power, in order to rewrite the contingent reality of people that are the subjects of the ones in power (de Certeau xix, xxi).

The films included in this chapter illustrate Karabasz's diligent work at mitigating the observational method of filming with the highly structured organization of the material through editing. The filmmaker's repeated use of observation suggests the value he places on the excessive quality of the recorded image and sound, and the films reveal the process of accommodation of the uncontrollable surplus within otherwise highly structured filmic constructions. The preoccupation with structure translates into the presence of various narrative devices that inscribe the elements of the films within stories or narrations with a prescribed or openly suggested interpretation. The visual and aural excess transpires within details of images or fragments of characters' speaking that trouble and go against the closing effect of the narrative device, and that suggest unexpected meanings allowing multiple interpretations. Karabasz's treatment of the spoken words mediates the fitting of the recorded contingency of reality into the rigid structure of the filmic form. The filmmaker uses his voice-over for reflexive commentaries on the structure and making of the films, in a direct address to the viewer that brackets the observational character of the images. Another form of direct address is the voice-over of the protagonists, an interview that takes the form of monologue and that is defined by the affective inscriptions of the contingency of voice and expression. The interviews within the films – unlike the observed/overheard conversations - happen with the open acknowledgment of the presence of the camera, in a participatory context. The use of words prepared for, or delivered in relation to, the filming process, complicates the observational stands by adding the open, intentional expression of people's social positions and attitudes. A collaborative setting comes to the surface – the social actors share fragments of their lives with the camera, thus with us, they talk to us or for us, they interact in front of, and in relation to the camera and microphone. The director's voice-over establishes a distance, as it lays the profilmic over the frame of a structure, while the protagonists' spoken contributions function as direct interpellations of the viewer from within that frame – like seashell structures where hard matter serves as both skeleton and shelter for the living organism, the films resemble hard enclosures of open spaces meant to allow the people to breathe, reach out, and speak up.

In its incipient form, this dynamic appears as an unresolved tension in *People from an Empty Zone* (1957), an early film directed by Karabasz and Władisław Ślesicki, with cinematography by his future collaborator Stanislaw Niedbalski, and considered as part of the Black Series. Released between 1955-1958, during the cultural and political relaxation occasioned by the post-Stalinist change of power in October '56, the Black Series films expressed the authors' critical position in relation to dysfunctional aspects of society never previously acknowledged in the socialist-realist canon imposed by the communist regime. *People from an Empty Zone* focuses on the behavior of young men and women that live in Warsaw's Praga District, suggesting their disorientation, apathy, and skepticism for what the future can bring. The visuals are dense with the freshness of a social document of that moment in time, as they reveal "plain observations of people, places and events, still uncommon in Polish documentary" (Jazdon, *The Black Series*). As the only form of address in the film, the voice-over exposition describes the young people gradually and tentatively, with scaffolding questions and answers meant to lead us closer to their motivations and psychology. The commentary is seemingly developed around

statements of thoughts and feelings given by the social actors filmed.[4] However, the wording transitions subtly from a tone of empathy for, and attention to the individual, to a labeling of the group of youths as a category that needs a diagnostic: "They are no longer a phenomenon, but a serious social problem." The voice-over wording argues that these young people "with no life of their own" are the victims of an institutional system that let them slip through the cracks. At the same time, the richness of observational images – that capture different moments of interactions amongst the youths, as they spend time together – renders the aural argument schematic and objectifying, as the visual excess in this representation of real people goes against their categorizations and labeling. While the film takes an important critical stand, it sacrifices the agency and complexity of the characters for the sake of a generalizing narrative of systemic disfunction. In his following films, Karabasz complicates the treatment of the voice-over, and allows the social actors to express themselves within various forms of address used along or against other structuring or narrative devices.

In the films *The Musicians* (1960), *On the Threshold* (1965), *A Year in the Life of Franek W* (1967), and *Krystyna M.* (1973), Karabasz experiments with forms of interview (direct, on screen), monologue (indirect, off-screen interview), voice-over (of filmmaker, of social actor, or as discourse mediated by a reader), and overheard conversation (dialogue in observational footage). This exploration goes along with a gradual change in the filmmaker's understanding of the construction, form, and role of the narrative. The films frame particular contexts of life and work against the background of economic and social expectations induced by a rapid process of industrialization, where the citizens participate enthusiastically in working environments that promise equality of (high) living standards for all, along a steady growth – leading to (always future) spectacular results - of the communist society. The framing through the birds-eye view perspective of a linear trajectory of progress becomes more complex and oblique with each film, as the visual and aural markers of contingency punctuate the accounts of the protagonists, and give texture to a language of counter-narratives from below.

The Musicians (1960) proposes the portrait of an amateur brass band of tram factory workers. The narrative follows two moments of a regular day, where the workers appear individually at their factory stations in the first part, and later they assemble as band players in order to rehearse and perform. Throughout their activities of the day, the workers engage in various sound patterns that the film arranges in musical form - it seems that, both in the factory, and as an orchestra, the characters express themselves musically. At first sight, the film presents a model-narrative of exemplary lives that balance work and leisure in efficient and productive ways. Beyond the structure of the narrative, the affective expressivity of the observational sound and image suggests a subtle difference between the results of the men's engagement with their work, and their achievement during the rehearsal. While the workers show perseverance and dedication in both work and leisure activities, they seem to embody the agency of their own

[4] Jazdon talks about a text that appears at the beginning of the film explaining this process. This text was not available on the version of the film included on the DVD.

expression only in the process of playing music together, where they achieve a solidarity of creativity by bringing their individual apport to a communal experience.

In *On the Threshold* (1965), Karabasz gives a reflexive documentation of his attempted group-study of young women that have just graduated high school. The director structured the film within chapters according to the various filmic approaches, and used his own voice-over to introduce the project and scope of the film, and to describe, explain and asses each method. The filmmaker's aural intervention anchors the structure of the film into a particular reading that is at odds with the effect achieved through the observational and *vérité* registers – while the voice-over inscribes the project in a tradition of sociological and ethnographic study, the observational and interview approaches reveal social actors that resist categorization and render the film's attempt at 'getting to know these young women' somehow futile. Beyond this structural contradiction, the film incorporates specifically designed forms of spoken address – the filmmaker's reflexive voice-over, his interviewing of young women, the female voice-over reading letters sent by young women to a magazine – that stand as multiple avenues of direct or indirect communication with the viewer. As such, *On the Threshold* continues the process already discernable in *The Musicians* – that of the articulation of a documentary language that represents a group of people as shaped by the individuals' own forms of expression (be it musical or spoken), while it communicates the filmmaker's stand along and against sanctioned forms of representation.

After several studies of social groups, Karabasz attempts a portrait of an individual with *A Year in the Life of Franek W* (1967), where he documents the events during young Franek Wrobel's first year of work with the voluntary labor corps in Silesia. The filmmaker asked his social actor to keep a written diary that became the source of the voice-over narration supplementing the camera's observational account of changes over time. A professional actor delivers the narration as an impersonal first-person reading of someone else's text. This re-mediation introduces a distance that gives the viewer room to imagine the psychology of the hero and to project it back on the observational visuals. At the same time, the constrained pairing of the diary narrative and the observational accounts creates a closed, fictional story-telling effect. While the film reads thus as a novelistic construction, details of visuals and sound escape this framing as they open unexpected directions of interpretations, and suggest contexts of meaning beyond and somehow against the main narrative of the hero's steady evolution.

This dynamic changes in *Krystyna M.* (1973), where Karabasz foregrounds the elements of contingency present in images and especially in spoken words, in order to channel their virtual meanings in directions that complicate and question a similar narrative, now in the background, of a woman's process of individual growth. Structured in chapters according to social and activity related contexts, the film follows the young Krystyna after she leaves the countryside and moves to Warsaw, where she starts working in the Ursus tractor factory. Krystyna recounts in voice-over her thoughts and feelings in various situations during this process of adjustment, along observational images (with overheard dialogues) of moments in her life. Karabasz masterfully establishes an intimate relationship between Krystyna and the viewer in the first part of the film, where the woman describes affectionately, in direct voice-over address to the

off-camera filmmaker, thus to us viewers, a few photographs she has taken in her village. The woman's openness posits us as responsible receivers of her delivery. As her monologue continues throughout the film, the speech reveals her growing awareness of dysfunctional gender dynamics, as well as her determination to stand up to patriarchal attitudes. At the same time, in the interactions with other people, Krystyna's behavior and way of speaking remain within expected norms, as in a performance of getting along in order to fit in. By weaving in these distinct forms of address, the film shapes Krystyna's attitude as a tactic of resistance through the use of language as spoken enunciation – a tactic manifest within the everyday practice of speaking (de Certeau xix).

At the same time, in *Krystyna M.* the film discourse seems to escape its frame in order to enact a tactic of its own. The film uses the cinematic language in order to structure and deliver a story sanctioned officially, but in the process of experimentation with forms of address, it opens to other meanings signaled by parallel, behind-the scenes stories. This suggests the gradual change of the function of narrative in Karabasz's films: the early films endorse a narrative of success as rooted in people's belief in an unfaltering progress achieved through diligent work, narrative that functions as the structuring frame around a terrain of investigation and formal experimentation. Later films rely more on the signifying potential of that which escapes structure, and enroll the narrative devices as vehicles for adjusting the cinematic language into a tactic – or a form of expression that uses the officially sanctioned appearance and forms of discourse in order to deliver a different meaning. If Karabasz tells stories, and each film is a story, that story – in the words of de Certeau – "does not express a practice. It does not limit itself to telling about a movement. It *makes* it" (de Certeau 81). By foregrounding the elements of contingency present in the subjects' words and images, the filmmaker turns filmic storytelling into a practice that (re)invents a hijacked social space (de Certeau 106).

> These heterogeneous and even contrary elements fill the homogeneous form of the story. Things *extra* and *other* (details and excess coming from elsewhere) insert themselves into the accepted framework, the imposed order. One thus has the very relationship between spatial practices and the constructed order. (de Certeau 107)

Karabasz films negotiate the relationship between the affective power of the contingent, and the constructed character of film as a technique of representation enrolled in the service of an authoritarian state monopolizing the image of this particular moment of modernity. In the process, the films arrive at forms of expression that escape and subvert constraints of form and meaning, and stand as both representations and manifestations of a tactical language of everyday survival.

The Musicians: Cinematic Language as Tactic

In *The Musicians* (1960), considered his most important and formally innovative film, Karabasz explores possibilities of synchronization of sound and image, and is preoccupied with making explicit the source of sound, either by showing it in the frame or by suggesting its proximal presence. The use of sound brings layered meanings to the

otherwise simple narrative: a group of tramway workers leave the factory at the end of the workday, and get together to rehearse and play with their classical music amateur orchestra. Either at work, on the streets, or in the rehearsal hall, the men produce different types of sounds as mediated by machines, by their bodies (in walking or speaking), or by instruments. As in a reverse resonance chamber effect, the sounds emphasize the spatial quality of each of the places in which the workmen are filmed.

The film introduces the sounds of the workplace one at a time, as each sound adds to, and overlays the previous one within a seemingly orchestrated crescendo. For each of these sounds, the film suggests a source as visible within the image: the sound of the welding machine against the fascicle of welding sparks, the sound of rhythmic beating along the close-up of a man beating a heated iron, a trolley crackling its way through the hall of the factory, close-up of a man hammering some hard pieces, and the increasingly overwhelming sound of the siren whose final close-up signals the end of the workday. These sounds grow together within an almost musical assemblage, but this concert improvised by the film score has no corresponding visual of the group of men producing these sounds together within one image. This layering of sonic elements seemingly produced by individuals or sources that are framed in contexts independent of each other has the effect of a musical arrangement authored outside and above the men's agency.

Over the next five shots, the film shows men leaving the factory in groups and walking over various zones, while some carry instruments and take a different direction. The continuous, uncut sound over shots of people moving between visually noncontiguous places shapes the action into the crossing of a unitary space. The sound functions within two registers: on the one hand, there is the 'outside' ambient sound (as background of the first four shots), and the sound of a tram engine that grows louder and then fades away (over three shots, with no image of the source). On the other hand, the sequence construction relies on the sync sound, or the sound with the source visible in the images: the steps of various groups of people, the man hitting the match to light his cigarette. If the latter type of sound brings a three-dimensional resonance to the visible actions, the former type of sound suggests the presence of a contiguous space larger than, and beyond that which is visible.

The treatment of sounds into aural close-ups foregrounds the associated action (either represented or imagined), and lets in a contingency manifest within aural inflexions that allow the imagining of stories beyond the frame. The rhythmic sound of steps, of group or solitary walking, projects over the images of men on the move a sense of their state of mind and body: tired after a workday as exiting the factory, determined to arrive at their destination as stepping along the rails, impetuous as approaching the rehearsal hall. The man with the cigarette enjoys his free time, while others are still working, as the sound of the tram engine suggests. The last shot follows the drummer who carries his drum across the frame towards the camera, while his steps resonate louder and louder against the floor of the depot. The aural close up punctuates the moment, and narratively signals the man's arrival. The ending of the sequence mirrors the ending of the factory segment of the film, as both show a juxtaposition of visual and aural close ups that suggests an overwhelming proximity of the subject in the frame – the

siren sounding loudly the end of the workday, the drummer arriving in force at a place to be revealed.

The film marks this transition moment through intertitles that contextualize its subject and shed light on the meaning of the images of the lone man carrying his brass instrument away from the group, in the direction of the camera: amongst the workers, the musicians are only a few, as they hold on to a dying tradition of playing in their brass band, like 'the last of the Mohicans'. The last part of the film starts with a series of close-up shots of the musicians in the rehearsal hall: they set up and tune their instruments, talk to each other, move around to find their places, some fix their glasses, chairs, partitures, some review their scores and discuss in pairs. The images cut from one person to another, and show bits and pieces of gestures of preparation against the background of the group. Visually fragmentary, the space is vibrant with a cacophony of sounds that suggests frantic activities within a somehow orchestrated chaos: snippets of conversations, repeated measures of warm-up tunes, noise of moving, setting and assembling instruments. The low-key lighting from above[5], with high contrasts due to reflections off instruments, musical scores, hands and faces, increases the sense of expectation: not fully visible, something is in the works, in this not entirely comprehensible, almost mysterious, preparation. The film molds the contingency into the representation of a space and activity where the act of creation comes directly and necessarily out of chaos.

This picture of older men engaged in a communal and somehow anachronistic act of creation carries more than a nostalgic tone. The moment refers to the period of 'small stabilization' in Poland, when "the status of the workplace changed […] as it started to be regarded as just a place of work, of mundane activities, often performed as slowly and reluctantly as possible, so that one could preserve one's vital forces for more pleasant activities after work" (Mazierska 147). The film suggests a contrast in people's engagement with the two types of activities. The factory shots of individual men at work portray the dutiful but removed fulfilling of everyone's part in a higher mechanism whose presence is suggested through the film's layering of industrial sounds. At the same time, during rehearsal, the framing of each musician is always against the background of the group, while the sound captures the frenzy of communal activity. Here the men rely and depend on each other's performance, and the rehearsal culminates in a dramatic tension, a crescendo built on the conductor's repeated starts and calls off. As the music finally flows in, the camera becomes fluid and alert, while it pans, tracks and tilts to reveal the rows of musician playing their instruments in unison. Sound and image seem to follow each other in an expression that overwhelms our senses, and suggests the satisfaction of creative achievement through collaborative work. This concerted effort of each and all makes possible an experience beyond the regulations of socialist work and leisure designed to "allow the good socialist [worker] time for purposeful self-improvement (under the tutelage, of course, of the Party)" (Lebow 73). The men perform

[5] The visual quality of the rehearsal footage is due to cameraman Stanislaw Niedbalski's lighting innovation of attaching rows of bulbs to several wooden boards placed on the ceiling. (Jazdon, *Kazimierz Karabasz DVD Notebook*)

with and for each other, outside the 'tutelage' of the authority that organizes and surveys their lives.

> In her analysis of *The Musicians*, Ewa Mazierska notes:
> One can argue that such leisure is useful for work as it helps team building, or conversely that such camaraderie outside the control of the Party implies power that might be deployed against the Party. Both the representation of autonomous leisure and the lack of voice-over points to the workers gaining more independence from the state in this period and filmmakers seeing them more as autonomous subjects. (Mazierska 175)

According to Mazierska, the film allows the interpretation of the musicians' activity as either going along (team building), or having the potential of going against the Party line. I would argue that Karabasz proposes neither of these, as the construction of his film uncovers new territory. The forceful presence of the synchronous sound unleashes a contingency that enhances the observational quality of the visuals, and suggests a continuum of everyday life that both relies on, and grows independent of the rigid structure of the system. With their "independence from the state" and "autonomy as subjects", the workers-musicians learn the tactics of navigating the system as a means towards their ends. While the film's narrative structure follows two main moments in the worker's day, the stylistic treatment of sound suggests a celebration of the after-hours musician. The film highlights the orchestra's creative process as the meaningful event of the workers' day, part of the life's achievement of these "last Mohicans" - a self-sustained collaboration that endures above and beyond the mechanical rules of the socialist project.

In this film, the only spoken words are the exchanges between the musicians, at the beginning of the rehearsal. These snippets of dialogue function as a preamble of the men's total and mutual engagement through the flow of music. Speaking and activities remain on the other side of the observational camera, all along – but the filmic representation gestures towards an interest for the aspect of communication, as visible both within the filmed world (in the workers' interactions), and across the screen (the band's playing of the music functions as a direct address to the viewer). Outside political scrutiny, and within a conforming narrative frame, *The Musicians* delivers the portrait of a group of men that use their music to speak to us about the power of coming together in a context of their own making.

On the Threshold: A Dilemma: Portrait of a Group, or Group of Portraits?

In *On the Threshold* (1965), Karabasz takes further his interest in groups of people with a study of young women that have just graduated high school. The film gives reflexive expression to the process of its making, as Karabasz uses his own voice-over to introduce the project and scope of the film, describe and explain the various filmic approaches, and asses the effectiveness of these methods. The result reads as an experiment fraught with a pervasive and unresolved tension between the degree of the

filmmaker's direct and overt intervention, and the constrained room allowed for subjects' interaction and viewer's interpretation.

Through his narration, Karabasz structures the film along the modes of approach to his subjects, in an attempt to answer the questions: "What are these young women on the brink of adulthood like?" Accordingly, the segments of the film illustrate distinct dynamics between the treatment of image and the sound of spoken words present as voice-over, snippets of dialogue, or interviews. In the first segment, an observational camera captures images of young women engaged in social situations – during the graduation ceremony, on the university hallway during entrance exams, at an outdoor swimming pool, in the process of getting autographs from an Italian singer, and at a dancing party. The sound is comprised of fragments of synchronous dialogues and seemingly diegetic musical pieces, which add a sense of freshness, spontaneity and presence to the interactions. The second segment includes an interview setting, where the director addresses question to a group of young women that volunteered to participate to the making of the documentary. As the off-screen filmmaker turns to each woman, the image follows on – either through camera movement or cuts – and centers on each speaker, allowing the viewer endearingly close but flitting encounters with the protagonists. In the third segment, still-images of young women are edited against a female voice-over reading of fragments from letters sent by teenage girls to a women monthly magazine. The texts of the letters reveal a recurrence of grave motifs that suggests that the adolescents dare to contemplate darker corners of their lives under the confidentiality of anonymous writing. Karabasz qualifies the abstract, symbolic relationship between visuals and sound at the end of the segment, when he explains that the still images are not of the women who authored the letters.

There are two distinct registers of tension that circumscribe the construction of the film. Karabasz's continuous dissatisfaction with every method employed delineates a denotative, openly expressed register that drives the film forward: while each segment of the film provokes a particular type of engagement between viewer and protagonists, Karabasz almost cancels this effect through his critical voice-over commentary that deems each type of filming inappropriate for the task at hand, and that proceeds to announce the next attempted approach. At the end of the observational segment, the filmmaker concludes: "Those were samples of the material we started to gather. We wondered about the value of such superficial observations, simple photo reports [and] registering moods and the most immediate emotions. Of course, that matters too, but it doesn't provide grounds for wider conclusions. The answer to what the girls on the threshold are really like requires more complex research." The film then turns to the interviewing format, and similarly Karabasz summarizes this approach as less than satisfactory: "Yet again we had a feeling that we needed to look elsewhere, and differently. The presence of a microphone and a camera inhibits people. The answers were truthful, but banal and stereotypical. We don't blame them for responding this way to a contrived situation." And lastly, after the voice-over reading of letters sent to the women magazine 'Filipinka', Karabasz comments: "Neither here could we find the answers to our questions. It turned out that the girls who write to magazines are those looking for help, the hurt or disillusioned. Once again, we treaded on unsteady ground."

This form of reflexive criticism expressed in retrospect casts a doubt on the filmmaker's ingenuous engagement with the subjects during filming, and leaves the viewers disoriented amidst their own reactions.

The structuring of the film around the seeming incommensurability between filmic methods and projected outcomes is permeated by a tension located within a more profound, implicit register - that of the rift between the quality of information communicated through the filmed material (the footage of the young women), and the nature of the meaning introduced and shaped by the filmmaker's spoken words. In his voice-over introduction, Karabasz references other discursive practices of representation:

> We were at a graduation ceremony at a high school in Warsaw. The girls were collecting their diplomas, which inspired in us the following reflection. The girls are 18 and entering adulthood. They had acquired the right to vote and marry. They can now go to university. A chapter in their lives has closed and another is about to open. *Journalists, psychologists and sociologists will talk and write about them. They will produce analyses and discourses, and pass verdicts. Old myths will be replaced by new myths*. (my Italics)

These words forward the film's attitude of reflexive inquiry into its own method, and suggest a distance from the scope of the representational process as allowed by the disciplines mentioned. At the same time, though, in his critical comments throughout the film, the director assesses (and disqualifies) the effect of each filmic method based on its (in)ability to come close to the initial goal - that of "understanding the human condition of these girls on the threshold." The announcement of this rather ambitious objective aligns the project of the film with the myth-making representations the filmmaker seems critical about. Karabasz's voice over analysis places the filmic process at the intersection of two divergent directions: one, that of proclaiming the filmic approach as consistently lacking in relation to the other, that of re-affirming an always evasive goal of a definitive knowledge achievable through "a thorough and comprehensive analysis" not possible here. This attitude would suggest a reading of the film as a demonstration of the impossibility of this type of representational project. However, the filmmaker disallows this interpretation as he chooses to question and discard the filmic achievement of each segment, while never doubting the scope and implications of his initial inquiry: "What are these young women on the brink of adulthood like?" Even granting the filmmaker a certain performative reflexivity, in which the voiced-over criticism serves as the reasoning behind the film's structure, there remains a sense of miss-calibration between the unacknowledged richness of the filmed material and the assertion of an unwarranted access to a 'real' or definite knowledge of how people are.

The observational footage captures images and conversations of young women - and men, at times - in different social situations. At the university admission exams, the camera moves along and in-between the girls' faces as if peeking from a distance, and reveals laughs and hugs, and overlapping chitchatting voices in an effusion of warm emotions against the stressful context of the exams. In its impressionistic touches, the camera renders the mood and atmosphere of a specific moment in time through details that suggests fragments of larger stories, evocative of similar lived experiences, across time and space. The sequence represents a historical glimpse into the lived experience of

an institutional practice. In the scene of the girls' hunting for Marino Marini's autograph, the film captures the intensity and determination of the girls fighting their ways through the crowd. As the young women approach and interact with the singer, the camera focuses on their faces and hand gestures, showing these young adults in total control of what they want and how to go about obtaining it. The sequence exudes an air of freedom and maturity of the girls that are both present in the moment, and able to make it their own.

Another observational moment takes place within a setting where young women and men, seated at tables, eat, drink, smoke cigarettes, and engage in conversations from which we only hear and see snippets. Here Karabasz refines and nuances the device that he used in *The Musicians* - that of the camera and microphone focusing on distinct activities of people gathered within the same space. This space is never revealed as a whole, but suggested through the alert editing of close-up shots of different dialogue contexts. The indistinct speaking hum of the aural background is punctured by fragments of sentences in aural close-up, with or without the visual reference of the actual speaker in the frame. This momentary focus on individuals engaged in conversations works as a filmic brushstroke that sketches the fragmentary profile of a lively gathering of young people sharing every-day concerns within intimate conversations.

The last two observational sequences represent leisure activities as wrapped within musical soundtracks that could or could not originate in the profilmic. Young people in swimsuits gather around a public swimming pool, talking, playing or otherwise enjoying each other's presence. The sound of their interactions becomes a background noise barely audible as drowned out by the pop song playing over the images. The lyric tone of the melody accentuates the flirtatious appearance of the interactions and suggests a mood of romantic socializing and friendship connections. Later, at a dance party the youth move rhythmically on a twist musical piece that takes over the whole soundtrack, in a joyful performance of embodied entertainment. The musical framing of these sequences contrasts with the acuity allowed by the synchronous speech captured in the first observational situations - here the music subdues the immediacy of the social interactions, and functions as a filter that places the viewer in a removed, affective disposition. Without the explicit presence of sync sound, the observational camera seems to glide on the surface of a transparent screen that controls and limits the viewers' access into the characters' world. At the same time, the images of joyful and relaxed interactions around the pool, and of the skilled dancers' radiant pleasure, overtake the constraint of their musical framing in an outburst of visual suggestions of untold stories.

Throughout the whole observational segment, Karabasz's sonic interventions - through voice over or added musical score - molds the filmed material to fit an expository template. The voice-over explanations announce the scope of the project, clarify the contexts of each moment, and assess the results of this mode of approach - in short, organize the material within a structured sequence of functional elements. The music, used in the last two moments, acts almost as a placeholder for the voice-over, as it dims the impact of the observational visuals, and keeps us on the surface of the images. It is as if the function of these added sonic layers is to lead our perception towards the significance Karabasz gives the segment at its end: "We wondered about the value of

such superficial observations, simple photo reports and recordings of moods or of the most immediate emotions." However, the effect of the film belies these words which reflect less on the 'value' of the filmed material, as more on Karabasz's concern about taming the footage into a form whose meaning he can have control on.

The experimentation with formats of address through spoken words continues in the following segment, where the filmmaker interviews from off-camera a few young women gathered in the same room. Karabsaz's questioning suggests an ongoing work of adjusting a pre-existing agenda to the moment of interaction with the women. At various moments, we hear the questions: "Are you afraid of responsibility?" (this, in reply to a young woman's remark "I'd prefer to be still a child for a little while…"); "Do you feel grown up? Would you like to? Are you not in a rush (to be an adult)?"; "Are you fully aware of what being an adult entails? What are your concerns?"; "Grown-ups say that you lack ideals and problems, and that you're often cynical. Is that true?" The questions in each of these groups show the extent to which the interviewer is open to deviate from the initial formulation, based on the answers he receives. The formulation of the questions suggests Karabasz's expectations of what the women' concerns and preoccupation should be about. The groups of questions go along with his constant alternation between different interlocutors, and mirror his efforts in keeping the motifs of adulthood and responsibility on the table.

The camera work and the editing enhance the fragmentary and somehow forced flow of the interviews. The tight framing, focused on only one woman at a time, obliterates the larger dynamic in the room - it is not clear how Karabasz decides whom to address, as the camera pans rapidly over several women to reach the one he calls on; as some of the girls are not addressed, we wonder about the criteria for Karabasz's choosing the target of his repeated question: "And you? What do you think about this?" As the camera seems to be in a rush to keep up with Karabasz's sudden change of interlocutors, the interviewing process comes across like a routine activity that needs to be checked off. This effect is amplified by the impression of the filmmaker's impatient listening, at times interrupting in order to ask another question that would realign the talking with his agenda.

As one of Karabasz's first attempts at using the interview format, the segment betrays a tension of miscommunication, visible in the continuous negotiations of meanings and expectations between interviewer and interviewees. Overall, the filmmaker's overbearing aural presence determines a peculiar, virtually unexpected dynamic of the direction of conversation. While the director launches various lines of discussion, he controls and interrupts the responses, and bounces back with new questions that redistribute the vector of address along and amidst his interlocutors. As such, Karabasz's merit is to open up a space of interaction and direct expression - but one that remains fragmented and constrained, and where the young women find it more productive to react and respond to comments of each other than to the direct questions they receive from the filmmaker. In their talk about how parents and other adults perceive them, the girls give various but similar accounts of feeling misunderstood, not listened to, not seen for whom they are, or judged superficially. The editing gives the impression of a flow of ideas between the respondents, as the discussion about contrasting attitudes

between generations leads to interesting perspectives on being modern: being modern, one woman asserts, entails "a certain attitude to life, like being active, studying and working a lot"; another woman suggests that being modern is "a pose meant to hide one's sensibility or true feelings", for the sake of "gaining more esteem in their friends eyes", while yet another woman sees the posing attitude (which Karabasz refers to as the "wearing of a mask") as "unnecessary but impossible to escape from as generally accepted among 18-20 year-old people". In each of their interventions, the women show the ability to self-reflect and assess with maturity and detachment different dynamics of their lives. In their responses, they give articulate expression to their inner thoughts, while also negotiating the anxiety associated with speaking to a slightly older, male reporter, on camera. The images capture the shy smiles and vulnerable glances along the moments of nervous search for the right words, but also the stern looks that come with the assertive refusal to engage with some of the questions: when the filmmaker asks "What about ideals? It is worth having them?", one girl replies "You mean our own, or other people's ideals?" and continues with "You mean guidelines for the future? I can't say I've got any concrete ones yet." The camera then pans to the right as Karabasz asks the woman nearby: "And you?" This one replies: "I don't believe there's any such thing as ideals. It's debatable whether or not there are any ideals. In fact, I'm sure there aren't." Then the image cuts away to another speaker, as the filmmaker stops short of addressing this interesting challenge to his own question.

Through the interview setting, Karabasz brings to the surface an untapped potential of expression that seems to overwhelm his organizational abilities and filmic devices at the time. By asking his questions, Karabasz sets the ground for the young women's analytical interactions and exchange of ideas, along or in opposition to each other. At the same time though, beyond getting the ball rolling, the filmmaker's spoken contribution is that of an insistent but not very creative mediator - he relays the questions repeatedly to various interlocutors, redirects the seemingly straying answers back on his planned path, and remains silent in the face of challenges to his approach. Halfway through the segment, the director gives a partial assessment in voice-over: "Our assumptions have been confirmed. They are not very independent yet. They think that adults don't know much about them. And that one needs to adapt to their surroundings, because it makes life easier." These words speak for both the filmmaker's attitude, and the unacknowledged grounds for his dissatisfaction. Karabasz shows here that he comes to his subjects with 'assumptions', thus somehow already in the know, or at least with specific expectations of how his subjects would or should be - this way, the filmmaker enacts the mere attitude he brings up as a topic of conversation during the interviewing, that of adults as having specific preconceptions about the young generation. At the same time, the conclusion about the women's lack of independence, and the somehow derisive reassertion of their belief that "adults don't know much about them" suggest another, unnamed reason for this otherwise perplexing evaluation. The young women's thoughtful and articulate expression, their complete engagement with the topics at hand and their whole mobilization of their inner resources exceed the film's pre-established template, and outrun the filmmaker's attempt at a sociological language. The inclusion of the segment in the films suggests the director's awareness of its unequaled force of

expression, while the critical commentary stands for his intuition of inadequacies that he fails though to correctly recognize.

These inadequacies stem from the tension between the use of the observational and *vérité* registers, on one side, and the reflexive and expository ones (as enabled by voice-over) on the other side. The former modes give a sense of particularities as rooted in personal interactions, of discrete moments from everyday life - representations that captivate us through their fragmentary and incidental qualities, and the impression of immediacy and spontaneity. The latter modes slip from a spoken performance of filmic reflexivity into a prescriptive retrospection of each segment of the film - the meaning proposed through voice-over is a generalization at odds with the particularities of the filmed material, as indirectly Karabasz blames the particular for failing to stand in for the prescribed general. The tension, thus, translates into a battle for the control of the meaning. In his text "The Aesthetics of Ambiguity", Dai Vaughan writes: "Documentary's images are, ideally, not illustrative but constitutive. They are constitutive of the viewer's meanings, since it is the viewer who constitutes them as documentary" (82). In *On the Threshold*, Karabasz experiments with ways in which sound as spoken word can determine or influence the viewer's meaning. At the same time, the viewer's meaning is, in the case of this film, considerably shaped by a differential that the filmmaker is not prepared to accommodate in his template. According to Vaughan, "documentary always exceeds its makers' prescriptions" (82). He adds:

> "Observational" practices increase the margin of "excess" whereby the film outstrips its makers' intentions: and it is by this argument - by this argument alone - that they may be justified within the viewer's frame of reference. […] The plenitude of the image, its polyvalency, is experienced by the viewer as a play of connotations. Just as the ethics of the filmmakers are experienced as aesthetics by the viewer, so the anthropologist's objectivity translates into ambiguity: and the 'real-life' density commonly attributed by viewers to such film is our experience of active engagement in the generation of meaning. (Vaughan 83)

The observational and interview approaches open up spaces of layered meanings, of ambiguity and complexity, where the women, at once strong and vulnerable, appear as self-reflective individuals sharing similar concerns, as social actors that resist categorization and trouble the filmmaker's straightforward agenda of 'getting to know who these young women are.' Through his voiced interventions, Karabasz attempts to tame the contingency allowed by the representation, and to mold it into a form fraught with conflicting suggestions for the viewer's construction of meaning.

Despite the dysfunctional rapport between the main levels of meaning, the film achieves the remarkable performance of a reflexive group representation that relies on various forms of communication. In *The Musicians*, while the observational camera keeps the viewer at a distance, the spectacle of the music production functions as the musicians' indirect gesture of addressing the viewer. In *On the Threshold*, Karabasz's voice-over accounts on the making of the film summon the spectator as a retrospective witness of the process and a privileged listener of the author's analytical thinking. The director invites us in a world that, while he observes at times, he also interacts with – as an off-camera interviewer of the young women, Karabasz bridges the profilmic with the

space he shares with us. The film complicates the form of group representation perfected in *The Musicians* by adding the dimension of direct communication, as visible in spoken interactions conducted, delivered or designed by the filmmaker. The intersection of discourses allowed by the various engagements with the spoken word features the social actors as present and powerful communicators, as assertive individuals able to affirm their subjectivity as both distinct from, and belonging to, their group.

A Year in the Life of Franek W: The Narrative Taming of the Real

The last segment of the film *On the Threshold* brings another approach to voice-over experimentation: a female voice-over reads fragments from letters that young women sent to the monthly magazine *Filipinka.* This removed sharing of intimate reflections of others suggests a voicing from the position of the reader, and not the writer, producing thus a re-mediation of the text that becomes once again public, this time by being spoken. The voicing of variously authored letters by the same reader establishes a distance allowed by anonymity, and a level of generality that gestures towards a typology. Karabasz alludes to these characteristics in his voice-over comments on the relationship between the segment's images and sound, where he explains that the women visible in the still images are not, though they could be, the authors of the letters. The film I analyze next employs a similar form of vocal re-mediation of a written text, but with different effects.

If in *On the Threshold*, Karabasz was interested in the portrayal of a group, in *A Year in the Life of Franek W* (1967), the director explores the possibilities allowed by a doubly-mediated voice-over device for the portrayal of one individual. In his idea for this film, Karabasz challenged the theory of his professor Jerzy Bossak's, according to which documentary film should be used for representing the social dynamic of a collective, while individual portraits are best pursued in fiction films that allow for psychological insight through the use of dialogue otherwise not suited for documentary (Mirowska et all 18, 40). Karabasz pleaded for his project by proposing to follow his hero as one individual amongst other within the community of labor corps workers. The film documents the events during young Franek Wrobel's first year of work with the Voluntary Labor Corps in Silesia, starting with the moment of his joining the labor corps until the taking of the oath.[6] The filmmaker asked his social actor to keep a written diary that became the source of the voice-over narration supplementing the camera's observational account of changes over time (Mirowska et all 18).

[6] Mazierska explains: "The Voluntary Labor Corps was a semi-military youth organization set up in 1958, offering its members a chance to gain work experience and professional qualifications, as well as general and civic education. It was a channel for social promotion for those living in the country side. […] But this was at great personal cost for its members, as it involved working from early morning till afternoon, followed by studying till late evening. The volunteers often worked in places where ordinary workers were reluctant to go […], such as road and railway constructions and building mines, and were poorly paid." (Mazierska 176)

Karabasz's approach of individual portraiture through observational filmmaking parallels similar developments in documentary film abroad. In 1969, Albert and David Maysles release their direct cinema documentary *Salesman*, considered one of the first observational documentaries that portray ordinary people during their work and everyday activities.[7] The Maysles were hardly purist practitioners of direct cinema, and *Salesman* includes an ingenious subversion of the rules. For the most part, the film follows the convention of the social actors' indirect address, as the soundtrack retains synchronous conversations, dialogues and speeches as part of the filmed events. At the same time though, as the film anchors its perspective in the affective and psychological evolution of Paul Brennan, it includes close-up shots of Brennan driving his car and seemingly speaking to himself. We see the salesman voicing out thoughts and observations as if vocalizing an interior monologue, in a speech act that is not addressed though directly to the camera which remains unacknowledged. This form of address performs an aural breaking of the fourth wall, and it comes about as an ambiguous *indirect direct address*. It is the Maysles' wink at troubling the glassy screen that separates the transparent, almost fictional world of their characters from that of the viewers.

Karabasz approaches observational filmmaking in an attempt to prove the possibility of individual portraiture through documentary means of expression. In the process of circumventing filmic devices associated with fictional representations (at least, according to Jerzy Bossak), he experiments with daring forms of address that arrive at complex, virtually unexpected effects, as they re-inscribe the documentary contingency within narrative constraints that close off the documentary effect. Like in *On the Threshold*, Karabasz employs reflexive elements that account for the process of the filmmaking, as he introduces in voice-over the methods of finding his social actor, as well as Franek's agreement to write a diary that will be the source of the voice-over narration. This reflexive framing of the film functions as Karabasz's contract with the viewer, in which the filmmaker sets out our expectations for a story that documents moments from the real life of a young man. In the Maysles's film, Paul Brennan talks to us without looking at us - the filmmakers make visible and audible the character's gesture towards breaking out of diegesis, but stop short of allowing a clear moment of reflexivity. While in both films, reflexivity refers to the acknowledgment of an interaction between social actors and film crew, in the Maysles's film, reflexivity is implicit as slightly suggested by the performance of the social actor, whereas in Karabasz, reflexivity is explicit within the direct intervention of the filmmaker that introduces the world of the film - world that remains at a remove from that on the other side of the camera or the microphone. After the introduction, *Franek W* unfolds as an intricate narrative construction that catches the viewer into the weaving of its two relatively autonomous registers - the register of the observational footage with its synchronous sound, and the one of the voice-over. The observational register is organized in little vignettes grouped according to the seasons of the year, that picture Franek's struggle to adapt to the new

[7] Eric Barnouw notes that "with *Salesman* the Maysles moved into a very different world, and gave direct cinema an unexpected dimension," away from the spectacular aspects of people leading public lives. (Barnouw 241)

environment of work and learning, his gradual process of making friends, his performance throughout various jobs, the days of military training, the classes he takes, his visit back home during the Christmas break, his city incursions and romantic interludes. Unlike in the films of direct cinema, the observational material is edited in relation to the voice-over intervention that relies on the active engagement of the viewer for the completion of a psychological realism.

With the exception of the clarifying statements made by Karabasz in the opening of the film, the voice-over consists of the actor Jerzy Karaszkiewicz's readings - first, in the film's prologue he reads fragments of letters expressing various young men's intentions of, and motivations for joining the labor corps. Then, throughout the rest of the film, the same actor reads fragments from Franek's diary. The film establishes the act of reading as a direct address to the viewer - in the prologue, we see images of the actual letters from which we hear bits and pieces. This sequence mirrors the last segment of *On the Threshold*, with the voice-over reading of fragments from letters addressed by young women to the monthly magazine *Filipinka*. Like in the previous film, the prologue refers to a collective character, the group of young men interested in joining the labor corps. After the prologue, Karabasz's reflexive voice-over intervention narrows the focus of the film from a group to an individual, and announces the relationship between the social actor that is the main character and the voice-over commentary present throughout the rest of the film.

Doubly mediated - from written diary to speech, and as the actor's ventriloquizing the writer's voice - the sharing of Franek's feelings and thoughts reveals inner aspects of the young man, but also situates him within the distant frame of a novelistic character. Karaszkiewicz's speaking up of Franek's diary performs a translation of written expression into spoken language, in a monotonous tone and alert rhythm that express the detachment implied in this voicing as an act of *reading*. We hear an enumeration of personal observations and intimate feelings expressed in Franek's first person 'I', but voiced remotely and with no emotional inflexions. One sequence proposes a series of close-up and medium shots of Franek and other young men, edited within short segments that suggest the men's engagement in three distinct activities: eating, attending a class in their school program, and working with machinery. Along each of these segments we hear the voice-over reciting sentences from Franek's diary. During the eating moment, the camera frames one individual at a time, and the suggestion of a communal act performed in a social setting comes from the montage of these one-person shots that retain the men's expressions of interest for, and attention to their peers. The visuals return repeatedly to Franek's close-up as he engages with his food while glancing intently in various directions, as if following closely his peers' interactions, without being part of their verbal exchanges. The casual conversation of the young men is soon covered by the sound of the voice-over: "This isn't what I expected leaving home. Work is really tough and I have no friends. Nothing is like what I'm used to. They all know each other better and have their own ways. I can't make friends so quickly. I'm not used to a bunch of people. Making friends is most difficult for me." Franek's written words come across as the direct address of a voice that performs their reading. This act of reading a text - the diary - that is written and functions solely inside the world of the film and that is now

remediated for the public, comes about as an ambiguous *direct indirect address* - in a somehow reversed mirroring of the effect of Brennan's performance in the Maysles' film. The *direct* aspect of the address relates to the speech's qualities as enunciation. According to Michel de Certeau, an enunciation presupposes:

> - an *appropriation* of language by the speaker who uses it;
> - the postulation of an interlocutor (real or fictive) and thus the constitution of a relational *contract* or allocution (one speaks to someone);
> - the establishment of a *present* through the act of the 'I' who speaks, and conjointly, since "the present is properly the source of time," the organization of a temporality (the present creates a before and an after) and the existence of a "now" which is the presence to the world. (de Certeau 33)

By bringing into sound the silent language of the writing social actor, the voice of the performing actor postulates the viewer as the interlocutor, while establishing a *present* that relates the 'I' engaged in the enunciation with the moment of the speech. However, the 'I' who speaks is different than the 'I' the speech refers to, and the time of the enunciation is other than the time of the writing of these words. The *indirect* aspect of the address relates to the speech's quality as reenactment - as the enacted reading of a text created at a different time. Jonathan Kahana writes that "reenactment troubles the 'now' in which any definite statement of its coordinates or its meanings could be made" (55). Here the reenactment is solely aural, and the shifting temporalities it engenders underline the contrast with the discourse of the visuals.

The voice-over opens a space between a particular 'now' of the enunciation, and a general, blurred present continuous of the actions described in the diary, a temporal limbo that guides the viewer's projection of meaning on the corresponding visual discourse. The overlaying of voice-over with this particular visual montage locks the 'now' of the enunciation with the 'now' of the corresponding images, and leads the viewer to decipher the feelings of hardship, loneliness and isolation described in Franek's diary as if directly expressed on his face in the actual moments of having lunch amongst his peers. At the same time, the viewer knows that the other 'now' - of the general present continuous of the actions described in the diary - coincides broadly with the time range represented in the visuals. It is this knowledge that allows us to perceive as virtually possible, thus authentic, the situation skillfully constructed through images and sound in this sequence. The impersonal voice-over delivery opens just enough space for us to set free our imagination, and take over and amplify the hastily summarized emotions in order to mold them on the face and gestures of a Franek who is busy eating and looking at his peers. This rather particular use of voice-over, that engages the viewer's imagination for the completion of the psychological and affective portrait of the character, is akin to the literary device of a novelistic first-person narration, where the readers are the ones to inflect the emotional nuances communicated by the narrative voice and project them on the narrative plot. However, unlike in a novel, here the presence of the visuals channels the imagining impulse of the viewer, while the aural diary over-determines the meaning of the sequence in order to fit within a rounded narrative form.

The film weaves the observational material and the voice-over reading of the diary within contextual dynamics that frame each event as a small narrative of personal

growth fitting within the larger narrative of the hero's gradual development. While this multi-layered narrativization leads to an organization of the lived events into a constraining structure, akin to the construction of a history, the observational footage allows the refreshing contrast of a *documentary effect.* This *documentary effect* refers here to that filmic expression that recognizes and leaves open the potentiality of meanings present within the elements of contingency that are part of the observational visuals and direct sound, or within the sights and sounds that, according to Elizabeth Cowie, are "always in excess of the documentary's narration" (28). Cowie understands documentary "as an organized statement, an 'utterance' of the recorded audiovisual, [that] can never fully determine […] the meaning of the utterance, for there is always some aspect that exceeds the intention of the filmmakers" (29). If we follow Cowie's assertion that this aspect gives "the specificity of documentary as nonfiction" (29), we will locate the *documentary effect* within the filmmaker's ability to acknowledge the potential of the uncontrollable, and to intensify its constellation of meanings by working nearby and around the elements of "'found' reality" (Cowie 29). While the overall framing of *Franek W* relies on an insistent crafting of the narrative as anchored within an artificial encounter of visuals and voice-over, particular moments of the film bloom into an alchemy of expression that open virtual lines of interpretations otherwise latent within images and diary words.

One such expressive sequence depicts Franek and his family, gathered together for the Christmas dinner. Two particularly cinematic shots set up the importance of the moment – against the sound of a moving train, the camera tilts up from the package in Franek's hand to his face; sited in the compartment, he smokes while peering out the window, anxious about his visit home, as the voiced-over diary entry wants us to believe: "I got my first Christmas leave. I wonder how is it all going to work out." The next shot is a low angle capturing the passing train from the outside, as if seen by the hero now off the train. The camera's gradual revealing of his posture and attitude, Franek's posed combination of stasis and action, and the novelistic device of the voiced-over projection of thoughts and feelings – all arranged in a formal harmony evocative of Truffaut's work – allow a very succinct and rather charged narrative transition, framing the following encounter as one of the most important events in Franek's evocation. The sequence of the family gathering captures the traditional festive activities – the extended family dinner, the opening of the presents, and the singing of a Christmas carol. Formally, the sequence stands apart within the construction of the film, as it is subtly inflected by the dynamic between the social actors and the camera.

At first, the large family eats in silence around the long dinner table, while the camera pans over absorbed faces and busy hands that transfer the cabbage rolls between plates. One of the children, and then, the father glance fleetingly but directly into the camera – a rather unusual occurrence within the film, and a behavior that contrasts with Franek's preoccupied 'in character' appearance. Soon, the sound suggests fragments of conversations, with chatter and laughter that happen outside the frame. The subtitles, while sparse, retain significant exchanges, like this question that seems to come from the father to Franek: "Why aren't you saying anything?" This inquiry may allude to people's unease at the camera's presence by bouncing it back at Franek's performance of silently

ignoring the apparatus. The slight tension is relieved after the father announces: "Forks on the table, please. The presents are coming." With ritualistic gestures, Franek offers the gifts starting with the elders of the family, while wishing them the traditional greetings. The camera and editing follow what becomes a frantic and joyful commotion where all happily open packages and exclaim with delighted surprise. The people seem to forget about the presence of the camera, and their 'reality' is further removed from ours as mediated by the voice-over that realigns the form of representation with the rest of the film, ascribing to the moment the specific meaning retained in Franek's diary entry: "I knew they'd want to see if I was doing alright for myself. I had to break into my savings but I think I did the right thing. Father didn't say anything but I know that he was pleased." These words, that speak of the son's perception of his duty to meet the parental expectations, are meant to bring us back into Franek's mind, and to fixate the moment into the narrativizing cause-and-effect of his own story. The whole sequence though escapes this mold, as beyond and more than Franek's story, we see family members who adapt their moments of traditional togetherness and celebration to the inconvenience of being filmed – the people go through their customary gestures along, with, and in spite of the camera, and do not pretend that the apparatus is not with them. While Franek seems to vacate his own life by constantly ignoring the camera in order to remain "in character", the main character in a film about himself, his relatives accommodate the intruding film crew by treating it as guests and acknowledged spectators of their activities. This is visible in the last segment, when, as the group sings a Christmas carol and the camera moves over their faces, some people reciprocate the gaze unfazed, with the ease of acknowledging yet another person in the room. The documentary effect is manifest here in the breaching of the fourth wall – the uncontrollable eyes reach out, beyond the camera and across the screen, straight to the viewer. This subtle acknowledgment of the filming process interrupts the quasi-fictional flow of the narrative, in a gesture of filmic reflexivity that allows the social actors to reveal their vulnerability as film subjects, while holding the viewers accountable for their responsibility as voyeuristic intruders.

This moment that troubles the controlled frame of the narrative is unique as its effect stems from a reflexivity built around visuals. However, the film allows also aural details that suggest meanings which potentially exceed the foreseeable narrative of Franek's progress, by troubling the positive context of his unabated development. In his diary, Franek notes observations, thoughts and impressions that let in extraneous information on the broader context of his life, beyond the immediate activities and events in the camp. At various moments in the film, as the voice-over re-mediates, impersonally, Franek's words, we learn about his previous work in the village bakery, and his health struggles in the past and present, affecting his ability to work; despite a hard work regimen, he notes that accommodation and board are better at the camp than at home; he recounts finishing elementary school five years back, and thus having a hard time getting back to school in the camp; he talks about other colleagues from his village who went on to technical/vocational college, unlike himself; he admits never getting the time to learn an instrument or access to music education, despite his love for music; he writes about his first experience of going to the theatre while at camp; over time, he grows to dislike going to the city where people feel indifferent to each other. These accounts speak

indirectly of Franek's peasant upbringing under conditions of poverty and limited resources, and his struggle to adapt to, and fit in a social milieu where young people showed varied levels of education and life exposure – a situation that depicts the implications of class differences and inequalities, otherwise officially denied, in the socialist society.[8] On the one hand, these words open directions of meaning outside the concern of the film, as they signal a reality that exists beyond the timeframe of the context immediately visible. As such, these remediated written accounts bear the potential of an aural *documentary effect*, as they let in linguistics signs of a real that escapes the control of the narrative. On the other hand, their aural delivery, with no directly corresponding visuals, relegates these details to the story – or history – the re-mediated diary communicates, story that happens in the muffled, almost fictional world of Franek-the-character. As such, against images of work, school and leisure in the camp, these accounts of former struggle serve as the stepping stones necessary to demonstrate the character's progress and moving forward, supporting thus the formal narrative. If Franek's diary words denote meanings that take us beyond the confines of the film, the ways these words are employed in the film connote relationships of causality and temporality strictly pertaining to the narrative construction. This situation illustrates the structural tension at the root of the film: the tension manifested between the novelistic narrative device that transforms the lived experiences into ordered events of the past, and the *documentary effect* that captures bits and pieces of the contingent, suggesting a real that is bubbling up at the seams of the formal structure.

A Year in the Life of Franek W stands as the expression of a filmmaker still indebted to the constraints of a formal construction meant to service the modernist discourse of socialism. While the cinematic language suggests Karabasz's awareness of the importance of the excess of representation and of the role of the uncontrollable, the film remains dominated by the narrative construction of a story of steady individual evolution as facilitated through voluntary work and participation in collective activities. The closed, rounded, feel-good effect of the film speaks for the filmmaker's lingering tendency to avoid, or subdue, the unconventional, the disturbing, that which breaks rank or rules, that which is not convenient or in agreement with a certain expected image.

At the same time, announced as a documentary experiment of following the life of an individual over a lengthy period of time, the film reads as a first-person visual story narrated *for* us, but not *to* us. Karabasz explains in voice-over the setting of the film, in a direct address similar to the one he employs in *On the Threshold*, but unlike in that film, he stops short of having the protagonist talk in front of the camera. The narrator's address is a revoicing of the text Franek wrote at the filmmaker's request, in a re-mediation that places the first pronoun 'I' at a remove, but that preserves the documentary effect of the

[8] In his book *Poland: Socialist State, Rebellious Nation*, Ray Taras makes an intricate analysis of the diversity in Polish society, over the four decades after the second world war. In chapter five, he writes: "The communist authorities speak in more equivocal terms about the classless society they originally set out to create, and in some respects, they have made good use of class differences to divide and rule." (124) Taras looks in close detail at the country's social structure (workers, peasants, intelligentsia), important groups and institutions (women, youth, the small Jewish minority, the church), and general social values and social pathologies. (124-153)

written words. As we locate Franek's inner expression somewhere within the space the voice-over opens between the reader and the writer of the diary, we soon lose it beyond the transparent glass of the observational footage that adjudicates it for a specific meaning. By changing the register of the voice-over from the filmmaker's direct address, to the actor's reading that turns Franek's diary into an indirect address, the film plays on our expectations of receiving a documentary account, and challenges us to discover the contingent elements hidden within a highly constructed, almost fictional narrative form.

Krystyna M.: Speech as Subversive Presence

Karabasz continues his preoccupation with filmic portraits of individuals with *Krystyna M.* (1973), a documentary about a young woman's process of adapting to adult life after leaving her village to move to Warsaw, and starting to work in the Ursus tractor factory. Following a prologue and an introduction, the main part of the film is organized in chapters that have titles suggesting distinct social and relational contexts (Factory; Brother; School; Friends from Warsaw; Boys; Ela), and that are built around observational footage of Krystyna's interactions in these particular settings. The prologue is a series of medium close-ups of women working in a factory, ending with a freeze frame of a young woman's image that reveals the title of the film, Krystyna M. In a different register, the introduction of the film foregrounds Karabasz's use of sound as the element that both sets the tone of the film, and troubles its apparent organization as sociological investigation. Here, we hear Krystyna's voice-over explanations of images showing photographs of places and people from her hometown. While her monologue continues throughout the film against images of various activities, it is in the introduction that the character's form of address assigns the responsibility of a participatory position to the viewer, responsibility that secures the viewer from slipping inside the transparency of observational footage to follow.

We are introduced to Krystyna's image in the last (freeze) frame of the prologue, the effect of her speaking in voice-over in the following segment of the introduction is rather that of a voice-off, that allows some familiarity with the source of the sound – rather than completely abstracted, her body is somewhere nearby (in the previous image), just not in the actual frame. In a soft but steady voice, Krystyna attaches to each photograph that fills the frame a fragment of a personal, emotional archeology. She colors her comments with giggles, pauses, and variations in the rhythm of speech that punctuate the process of remembering and the affective value carried by each image. She turns the still images into markers of a lived experience recalled through little narrative evocations of her perceptions of places and people, a nostalgic reconstruction of a warm and lively familial context:

> This is my road, but my house is further down.
> This is my home. This is where my parents live. That's my doggy, there.
> You can't see that now, but that tree is a big, beautiful chestnut.
> And this is my sister with these two little puppies. I miss her more than anyone.

> And this is my daddy. He likes to cook. He's always rummaging around the cupboards and throwing in whatever he finds. And it's always tasty.
> And this is my mom. Who is she looking out for? Probably looking to see if I'm coming home.

As a commentary that refers to photographs that the viewer sees sliding in front of the camera, this expository monologue functions like a direct address to a palpable presence on the other side of the camera. "You can't see that now…", says Krystyna of the beauty of the chestnut now bare in the winter, in a close, endearing communication with the filmmaker and thus the viewer. Elizabeth Cowie writes: "In documentary, people speak to us, and we are engaged by their address, that is, by how their speech positions us as addressees" (89). The warm, personal tone of the voice-over monologue delivered in direct relationship with the images it accompanies places the viewer within an affective proximity with the protagonist. Karabasz's use of interview as monologue situates us as responsible subjects of Krystyna's address, and determines our identification with the character that will raise the stakes of our observational witnessing of her social interactions.

> According to Elizabeth Cowie,
> the speech of social actors in the documentary, whether direct to camera or in relation to an interlocutor within the film, is central to producing identification. It is an engagement that is sensual and cognitive, for voice is experienced as sound, in an embodied voicing of tone, cadence, and rhythm that produces both a haptic and cognitive relation to the heard, as well as speech and thus language as a conceptual system. (Cowie 94)

Krystyna's voice-over monologue continues throughout the film, alternating with sound overheard during observational scenes. The commentary is not directly related to the observational images it accompanies, but gives insights into the character's thoughts around the theme of each particular film segment. While the haptic quality of the woman's voice keeps us close to her point of view, the tone of the speech changes from the intimate warmth in the introduction, to a more neutral recollection of events, contexts and interactions. The working of sound against different types of images privileges distinct modes of identifications, along the lines noted by Cowie – if, during the introduction, the affective quality of the embodied speech draws the viewer in on a sensual level, during the following segments of the film, the content and conceptual quality of the narrative speech qualify the meaning of observational visuals and sounds, and engage the viewer's cognitive attention. At the same time, though, this distinction between the viewer's modes of identification is attenuated by the presence of an excess, an overflow of information - be it sensual or cognitive – manifest consistently throughout the film, beyond the filmmaker's intent as perceived at the level of the film's structure. Cowie considers the presence of this excessive quality to be an inescapable effect of the documentary construction: "There is always an excess of signifying in what is shown and what is said that is uncontrolled by the speaker—or filmmaker" (Cowie 5).

Almost imperceptible at a conscious level, this overflowing discourse seeps in through small details and seemingly inconspicuous turns in Krystyna's monologue. In the introduction, the soft, tentative sound of the voice, and the assemblage of affective

language within narratives of the still images surprises the viewer, like a sudden explosion of color filling in the black and white photographs. In the moment, the effect is hard to discern or name, as it remains ambiguous and at the level of affect. What is at the first sight the expression of nostalgia for home and family reverberates within later moments of the film to take on a broader, underlying meaning.

In the "Factory" segment, we see Krystyna assembling different pieces at her work station in the factory hall, and hear her talking through her action as prompted by her supervisor. The sound of her interactions alternates with her voice-over recalling the evolution of her feelings in this new context: she talks about missing home, about her male colleagues making fun of her being very young, about the boys having been assigned more interesting work, about her determination to get certified and to ask to be promoted, despite not being sure "they will get girls in" ("If I rolled up my sleeves, I'd really be able to do as well as the boys"). In the "Brother" segment, we see her washing the floors of her little apartment, and then interacting with her brother. The observational camera records the delicate balance of power in their conversation over dinner table, as they check on each other's completion of their tasks. In voice-over, Krystyna gives details of their relationship: they are not always getting along, and her (younger) brother gets angry if she comes home late or goes out with a boy. While the events are narrated casually and matter-of-factly, the nature and build-up of these stories lead the viewer to perceive a realm exceeding the frame of filmic representation. The sense of a longing for home is complicated by factual narratives suggesting tensed relationships centered on gender-based power dynamics, as manifest in a social system that makes rhetorical claims of gender equality, while practicing attitudes governed by patriarchal expectations from women. Dina Iordanova notes about this dynamic in the socialist system of Eastern Europe: "As in the West, women's concerns here were traditionally relegated to the 'private' sphere (as opposed to the 'public' one). The equality between men and women, even though an officially declared goal (and a proclaimed achievement) of socialism, was still a distant prospect" (Iordanova 133). Throughout her monologue, Krystyna unassumingly recalls being the subject of diminishing or controlling gestures coming from males in various social contexts – from her condescending coworkers and supervisor, to the master-of-the-house figure of the brother.

This dynamic transpires most powerfully in the segment of the film dedicated to going to "School." A longer sequence depicts Krystyna as she takes an oral exam – the sequence is assembled from disjointed scenes recording two different moments in the exam, against not always synchronous bits of dialogue. The audio retains the examiner's repeated questioning and his expression of the inadequacy of Krystyna's answers. The images are close-up shots of the young woman's reactions – while she seems embarrassed not to get the answers right, she is also vulnerable, as the target of pointed questioning and passive-aggressive comments. The sequence construction suggests a questioning of Krystyna's abilities to be in school, and painfully resonates with her voice-over assertion that girls were afraid to even consider going to a technical college. The effect is that of an invocation of a broader reality of unspoken social dynamics and distribution of power, not directly addressed but overflowing from the association of images and sound.

Ewa Mazierska includes *Krystyna M.* amongst the 1970s Polish documentaries that proposed a "propaganda of success" narrative, or "films making the point that Poland is a successful country" (215). The author gives a summary of the elements through which the film "conveys the affluence and optimism pertaining to the 'early Gierek' period" (Mazierska 216). She continues: "Karabasz's film shows Krystyna as being ahead of her peers from the city and suggests that the industrialization of Poland could take place only thanks to a transfer of the population from the country to the city" (Mazierska 216). This reading relies on the film's narrative construction and formal structure suggesting a sociologically inclined approach – in other words, on factual and organizational elements assumed by the filmmaker, and meant to assign a certain direction to the filmic project: that of a representation of Krystyna's determination to fit in the social context of villagers moving to the city to work in factories in order to become good citizens of the socialist state. However, beyond its organization, and between the lines, the film suggests another reality as visible in the bits and pieces of commentary, dialogue, and images that let in glimpses of a real that evades the rules of representation. If Mazierska sees *Krystyna M* as a work of propaganda, I will argue that the film's power stems from its gesturing towards spaces beyond and parallel to the readily visible narratives and constructions. The effect of the juxtaposition of Krystyna's voice-over monologue with fragments of overheard dialogues or conversations comes close to the one suggested by Elizabeth Cowie in her analysis of *Housing Problems*:

> The testimonies in *Housing Problems* exceed their proper role as "realistic" and introduce an imagined space of other stories. […] What emerges, I suggest, is a social reality not fully contained by the film's documentary discourse, a voicing of the ordinary that exceeds the bounds of the structures of cause and explanation, problem and solution, that the documentary enacts, reintroducing contingency. (Cowie 82)

The spoken words in the film reveal distinct registers of, in Cowie's words, "imagined space[s] of other stories." During her conversation with her brother, and in the interactions with her supervisor and examiner, Krystyna enacts a performance of getting along with a naturalized form of humiliation, by submitting to a power rapport based in an established gender dynamic. In her voice-over monologue, the young woman speaks from a position of awareness and willpower, of determination to overcome the obstacles that she perceives as socially constructed. These contexts provide the imagined spaces for stories beyond the discourse of the film, and showcase a certain overtaking of the documentary by the work of language within the embodied acts of speech.

The film uses the monologue as a framing device – the voice-over opens and closes the documentary, and serves as a recursive mode of address. For the viewer, the monologue becomes thus the point of reference for Krystyna's embodied language, and the perceived deviations from it cast a performative shade on the other spoken interactions of the character. When talking to individuals that carry social markers of power, the young woman appears as acting according to the expectations, in order to fit in, to get along, to be accepted and promoted. The compounded effect of the film's weaving together of these forms of address is the rendering of Krystyna's attitude as a tactic of resistance through language, through spoken enunciation. For Michel de

Certeau, the tactics are "the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong" (xvii). He writes:

> Many everyday practices (talking, reading, moving about, shopping, cooking, etc) are tactical in character. And so are, more generally, many "ways of operating": victories of the "weak" over the "strong" (whether the strength be that of powerful people or the violence of things or of an imposed order, etc.), clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things, "hunter's cunning," maneuvers, polymorphic situations, joyful discoveries, poetic as well as warlike. (de Certeau xix)

The two registers of Krystina's way of speaking reveal her attitude as an everyday practice of going around, and along with, the system, in her determination to make herself seen, and to prove herself worthy of equal chances and treatment. At the same time, the film discourse seems to escape its frame in order to enact a tactic of its own. Within its quasi-sociological organization – meant to deliver, according to Mazierska, the propagandistic story of the successful socialist project – the film foments suggestions of imagined spaces and parallel stories that trouble the official discourse by revealing dysfunctionalities of the contingent. The film uses the cinematic language in order to structure and deliver a story sanctioned officially, but in the process of experimentation with forms of address, it produces another meaning stemming from the appearance of parallel, behind-the scenes stories. The film thus enacts a type of production that de Certeau calls "consumption, and [that] is characterized" – he continues – "by its ruses, its fragmentation (the result of the circumstances), its poaching, its clandestine nature, its tireless but quiet activity, in short by its quasi-invisibility, since its shows itself not in its own products (where would it place them?) but in an art of using those imposed on it" (31). The film enacts a tactic of subverting its own form, and reworks its appearance as propaganda of success into a vehicle for the expression of Krystina's voice of tactical dissent.

Chapter 2
Krzysztof Kieślowski: Negotiations of Proximity – An Aesthetics of Compromise

Decalogue Six: A Short Film About Love (1988), the sixth episode of the television series Krzysztof Kieślowski directed and cowrote with Krzysztof Piesiewicz, tells the story of young Tomek who peeps through a telescope at a woman who lives in the block of flats across his own. As he learns the woman's behavior patterns beyond her regular sex encounters with various men, Tomek's initial erotic voyeurism grows into a sentiment of obsessive affection that triggers his inconspicuous interventions in the woman's life. Faced with the negative impact of his acts, Tomek confesses to Magda about his spying and controlling habits, but what starts as an attempt at communicating continues with the man's humiliation and heartbreak. The remote, scopohilic knowledge that nurtured an ethereal idea of love is not sufficient to withstand the reality shock of the in-person encounter. Rather than taking a moralizing stand, the film questions the effects and value of the type of knowledge accessible through vision. If too close a look distorts the object of scrutiny and deteriorates the viewer's rapport with it, what is the threshold after which the visual access adversely affects both the seen and the seer? What is the adjustment that validates this type of knowledge by its ability to safeguard both the integrity of the one that is seen, and the "healthy" balance of the one who sees? When Tomek goes out to confront one of Magda's lovers who calls on him after learning of his peeping, he gets first a punch in his face, and then the warning: "Don't do this, it's not healthy for you." While the punch stands as a punishment for the young man's voyeuristic trespassing of Magda's space of intimacy, the warning refers to the perspective of Tomek losing his grip on reality.

Kieślowski has been exploring the idea of film as a visual medium of access to knowledge from the beginning of his filmmaking career, as a young documentarian. As such, Kieślowski's documentary work reveals a tension that mirrors the author's ambivalent attitude towards the relationship between filmic representation and the idea of access to knowledge. On the one hand, Kieślowski strongly believes in the film's potential to reveal what is hidden, to bring into being what is denied or kept silent. On the other hand, from the beginning, he is acutely aware of the documentary camera's treacherous ability to expose what is vulnerable, to simplify and flatten, and to interfere in, and virtually alter, the lives of the subjects. The filmmaker's urgency to reveal stems from his coming of age under a form of government that bends the mere definition of *knowledge* in order to conform with an official version of reality at odds with the everyday life. For Kieślowski, describing the world allows a form of representation that realigns the value of 'truth' with the lived reality:

> The Communist world had described how it should be and not how it really was. We – there were a lot of us – tried to describe this world and it was fascinating to describe something which hadn't been described yet. It's a feeling of bringing something to life, because it is a bit like that. If something hasn't been described, then it doesn't officially exist. So that if we start describing it, we bring it to life. (Stok 54-55)

Epistemological questions about how to reveal what has to be known gain here an ontological dimension, as bringing into knowledge stands as an affirmation of being, at the level of society. This type of knowledge is urgent because it is political - as it speaks about the manipulation of a society by its government - and the filmmaker understands the importance of assuming the agency allowed by his work. At the same time, the main interest of his filmic research is human life, that which "has been the essence of art from the beginning of world. Life itself should become the pretext and the essence of film at the same time" (Kieślowski, *Theory of Practice,* 32). The political knowledge pertains to a collective ethos of experience in common, but it also revolves around individual life experiences, and thus brings forth a different type of knowledge based within personal accounts given through intimate conversations. Kieślowski's films show that, in order to access the inner life of his characters, the filmmaker needs to adopt a position of distance and an attitude of restrain – this type of knowledge is thus conditioned by an ethical understanding of the filmmaking process.

In this sense, Kieślowski develops an approach that avoids the filmmaker's direct intervention within the frame, while bringing forward social actors engaged in various forms of speaking. In his documentary films centered around interviews, the director's presence is implicit, as perceivable within the social actors' gestures of address, or in details visible in the edges of the frame, and it serves both as catalyst for the communication between the subject of the film and the viewer, and as a marker of the constructed quality of the process. The films attest to Kieślowski's preoccupation with shaping a forum of expression and reaction for participants located on both sides of the camera, by creating a space where the filmmaker himself inhabits an in-between position that is both in and out of the frame. This assumed absented-presence is a reflexive gesture that suggests Kieślowski's awareness of the complex dynamics and ethical implications of the process of representation.[9]

The tension between the political urge to describe and reveal, and the ethical care of not being invasive gives way to an expressive modulation of the filmic form around and against the films' topics, with a consistent focus on the process of construction of the characters' subjectivity. In her analysis of the representation of reality and realism at Kieślowski, Francesca Parmeggiani argues that the filmmaker's principle of "describing the world" – that she understands as "a way of seeing and telling that allows filmmakers and viewers to establish an epistemological hold on reality," and as "language that informs knowledge and self-knowledge" (65) – is a consistent feature of his entire work, and "constitutes the foundation of Kieślowski's *modus operandi*" (Parmeggiani 66). I would complicate this argument by allowing the ethical dimension equal weight and consistency in the counter-pondering of the drive to description, as manifest within the

[9] In his Master's Thesis "Documentary Film and Reality", Kieślowski affirms his preference for an approach to documentary film practice that meets the definition of *reflexivity*: "[O]ne may introduce a convention in which the viewer will, at all times, be aware of the film crew, and by identifying with the cinematographer, will perceive the worries of the protagonist in the same manner he knows the cinematographer perceives them." (*Theory of Practice*, 23)

dynamic of a sensible and pervasive negotiation of the audible and visible allowed. The formal elegance and visual subtlety of Kieślowski's work – from documentary to fiction films – stem from this tensed alliance between political stringency and ethical concern, and suggest what I would call an *aesthetics of the compromise* that sublimates the tension within a fine balance of images and sound.

I will follow this dynamic at work in the relationship between spoken words and images, as illustrated in six documentary films that I will analyze in pairs according to what I consider similar themes as addressed at different moments in time, or formal approaches echoing over time. I am interested to show that, rather than a later development, *the aesthetics of the compromise* appears as a constant effect throughout Kieślowski's documentary period. At the same time, the formal differences of films made at various moments in time suggest that the filmmaker recalibrates the emphasis between the political raising of collective consciousness and the ethical concern for the individual, along a continuous attempt to readjust his authorial presence.

I Was a Soldier and *X-Ray:* Filmic Re-Mediations of Trauma Testimonies

In *I Was a Soldier* (1970) and *X-Ray* (1974), Kieślowski interviews men who share insights of their lives as fundamentally altered by traumatic circumstances: the war veterans in *I Was a Soldier* lost their sight on the battlefield, and the sanatorium residents in *X-Ray* have their lives on hold while undergoing treatment for tuberculosis. Similarly structured, the films focus on four or five individuals, and arrange and intersperse fragments of individual testimonies within a tapestry that suggests a group conversation. In these films, the political dimension beyond Kieślowski's urge to describe, to bring into light, relates to the social relevance of the men's narratives, and the implications of the process of their sharing. These men belong to groups that are not visible in the public arena, and that can hardly add value to the all-positive, officially sanctioned image of the society, where the possibility of a marginal life marked by disability or illness is at least inconvenient, if not unconceivable. In their attempt to remediate the absence of representation, the films reaffirm the social significance of this obstructed knowledge. At the same time, the films touch on ethical questions around the relative positions of subject, filmmaker and viewer: How to address difference occasioned by traumatic circumstances as being a likely occurrence and not a spectacle? What is the non-invasive representation that places the viewer on a position of shared vulnerability and responsibility? Kieślowski tackles these questions through his intricate treatment of image and sound. While each film proposes specific ways of modulating the proximity between camera and social actors, and the degree of intimacy as contingent on the context, the overall effect suggests a subtle convergence of opposite formal approaches. In *I Was a Soldier*, the filmmaker attempts a seeming enlargement or blurring of the frame around a speaker's face, in a stylizing intervention that both anchors the character within the social setting of the interview, and prefaces the graphic abstractions of the film's interludes. In *X-Ray*, the camera zooms-in on the interlocutors' faces and isolates gestures and features into abstracted fragments of the men's appearance, in a paradoxical

distancing through closeness. From different directions, both films build space around their subjects by allowing a streak of visual abstraction.

The Viewer: Invited Guest or Clinical Observer

The two films employ distinct ways of establishing the position of the viewer. Shot in black and white, *I Was a Soldier* displays an elaborate construction that gradually eases the viewer into its context and encourages a somehow detached, contemplative perception. The film begins with close-up shots of the still silent speakers, against a faint, eerie sound resembling an undulating jingle of distant bells. Soon the men start talking slowly, describing, in turns, the settings of different moments during the war. The images return to each of the five men, always framed individually, as they bring forth more graphic details of destruction. The editing assembles the fragments of individual testimonies into a group evocation of specific moments of violence that builds toward a collective narrative suspense. Although the dark glasses of some of the speakers suggest their condition, the viewer may not realize the situation until, three minutes into this process of recalling, one of them mentions: "I could still see at that point." The men reach the dramatic peak of their stories in an emotional recollection of the incidents leading to their losing their sight. While the strange musical jingling sets an initial unsettling tone, the visual framings of the men preparing to talk and the narrative editing of their interventions allow the viewer to gradually join in a process of communication that happens within a constructed but seemingly accessible space – that of evocations of painful memories of similar experiences. At the same time, as the gore of the stories increases, the viewer slowly loses any perceived common ground shared with the speakers who become more and more dramatic until their *difference* is spelled out.

The introduction of *X-Ray*, a documentary filmed in color, shows the close-up of a hand applying a stethoscope on the upper back of a person, against the sound of deep breathing that suggests a lung consultation. The following images are of stunningly beautiful nature, where the fog filters the light of the morning sun rising over meadows framed by trees, lush vegetation, and a small creek. These picturesque tableaus mediate the transition from the initial context suggesting illness and medical intervention to the close-up of a man seemingly in the middle of an interview. Kieślowski leaves his questions out of the film, so the man's words come out like a direct and disarming declaration about the effect of an implied but never named health situation. If *I Was a Soldier* opens with a smooth familiarization of the viewer with the context of the veterans, *X- Ray* throws the spectator into making sense of a series of powerful but disparate images. The montage-like sequence composed of the isolated detail of the stethoscope on the naked skin, the eerily beautiful nature shots, and the disconcerting first testimonial troubles our senses and deeply impresses our affect. At the same time, this introductory fragment functions as a metonymic tracing of a space that seems edgy and still in the making, that we cannot perceive as whole, and to which we are expected to attach a meaning. Each of the two films proposes a process of narrative construction of

the characters' subjectivity through implied dialogue with the off-screen filmmaker, and invites the viewer to occupy the position of a witness self-aware and considerate of her own role in the process. Through different means of formal organization, the films calibrate the mutual engagement of the participants – filmmaker, social actors and viewer – by maintaining a visual fine-tuning of their perceived, relative positions.

Kieślowski's preoccupation with the ethical dimension of the regimes of visibility transpires in the visual construction of the interviews, from framing to camera position and editing. In *I Was a Soldier*, the filmmaker explores the relationship between images, spoken language and sound (as music) in order to complicate the role of vision for accessing knowledge. As the veterans look back at the difficult years of adjustment to living with blindness, their words reveal an interior world that belies their non-seeing condition. Their evocations suggest another type of seeing, one that is turned inwards, and where the images once allowed by sight are now based on memories and pertain to the imagination or the realm of dreams. By featuring the men's telling of their own stories, the film restores the characters' sense of empowerment and dignity. At the same time, Kieślowski understands that a visual representation that gives a one-way access to sight, like that of a filmic process visually inaccessible to its own characters, raises the specter of voyeurism and of scopophilic exploitation of the subject. In order to avoid this direction, the filmmaker molds the device of the interviewing, that originates as an exchange between characters and interviewer, into a multidimensional structure that gives the stage to the social actors – as the questions they answer are not included – while also consistently acknowledging the presence of the director, in a reflexive nod towards the viewer who is so reminded of the mediated character of the process.

In a filmed interview, the line of eye contact between speaker and listener indicates the relative positions of social actors, interviewer or filmmaker, and camera or viewer – with the character usually looking at the interlocutor and not directly into the camera. In *I Was a Soldier*, Kieślowski bypasses this convention in an ingenious way: most of the shots, as centered on the faces of the speakers, include traces of the filmmaker's presence in the margin of the frame - the back of his shoulder, the watch on his hand, the line of his hair, a few fingers touching his head, the frame of his glasses in a corner as he faces the men talking. The suggestion of the author's presence socially validates these people's sharing by anchoring their wandering or covered eyes within the now and here of a documented encounter. By re-routing the spoken address and filtering it through the discreet presence of the film crew, the images engage the viewer within a triangulated space that prevents a linear flow of visual knowledge and blurs the transparency that enables voyeurism.

The suggestion of the filmmaker's presence in the frame is part of a more complex mediation of the image. The camera seems to constantly look for the face of the speaker, slowly moving in search of an angle between silhouettes of branches, leaves, plants or listener's head. The low-key lighting which approximates facial features through different degrees of shades brings a stylized, almost abstract austerity to the tight, black-and-white close-up shots of the men's faces. This negotiation of the visible, between obstructed and accessible, functions both as an attraction for, and a distancing of the viewer. The sculpting of the faces through lighting, and their cropping by the

intrusion of interposed objects tease our scopophilic hunger, and ignite our desire to see more or better. The film resists this spectatorial urge, and reasserts a necessary distance – instead of revealing more, one frame places the extreme close-up of the man with round glasses alongside his own tiny reflection in the lens of the listener's glasses; instead of high definition, the moments of speaking dissolve at times into white screens that break the flow of the stories. Most directly, the defiance of spectatorial entitlement comes through the humbling effect of the men's words as they recall their overwhelming wish to die at the realization of their blindness. The film suggests that seeing is a privilege, and perception through sight is a mediated process. As such, the film asks that our gazing does not come effortlessly, but through conscious work that mirrors the veterans' labor at seeing through their mind's eyes.

The abstract, painterly feel of *I Was a Soldier* gives way to a visceral, emotional tone in *X-Ray*, where the men affected by tuberculosis speak of their debilitating life marked by social isolation and rejection. Here Kieślowski's interviewing approach is more direct and stringent, as the challenge is in achieving a representation of the characters' subjectivity beyond their self-perception as perpetual patients. Following a structure similar to that of *I Was a Soldier*, the film assembles fragments from the testimonies of four men interned at a tuberculosis sanatorium. Framed individually, three of the men speak and look in a direction away from the camera, suggesting the presence of an interlocutor off-screen. The fourth social actor alternates his direction of sight between the off-frame interviewer and the camera whose presence visibly influences his attitude: while gazing into the objective, he ponders on the choice of his words, in a seeming attempt at censoring his expression in front of the implied audience. It is this gaze that makes us aware of the weight of our position as inobtrusive witnesses, and raises questions about the source of our discomfort – the man's disquieting behavior is only a lucid reaction to our camera-disguised presence.

The filmmaker complements this reflexive gesture with other formal attempts at defamiliarizing our viewing experience. Filmed in extreme close-up, the speakers' faces fill the screen, with the frame cutting across the forehead to focus on their eyes and mouths. Unequally lit and fragmentary, the bits-and-pieces of the men's faces turn into abstractions of their facial features, through a stylization different from, but similar in effect with the black-and-white framings through interposed objects employed in *I Was a Soldier*. While analyzing Kieślowski's fiction films, Joseph Kickasola defines abstraction as "a visual strategy found in the cinema that deemphasizes the everyday representational approach to image and its referent(s) in favor of formal concerns" (Kickasola 44). He continues with Malcolm LeGrice's assessment from *Abstract Film and Beyond*, that "…in its more general meaning, abstract implies the separation of qualities, aspects or generalizations from particular instances" (qtd. in Kickasola 44). In these documentaries, Kieślowski uses framing manipulation in order to bracket and deemphasize the main quality that determines the men's belonging to their groups: by enlarging the shots of the blind men to include peripheral objects, the filmmaker moves the focus away from their inactive eyes, and naturalizes their behavior in the interview context. At the same time, by zooming in on the expressive facial details of the sanatorium residents, the director leaves behind the clinical surroundings marking their identities. This formal approach

functions as an abstraction that qualifies the viewer's perception of the characters – instead of speakers that represent the blind veterans or the tuberculosis patients, the men appear as individual subjects that have a voice despite or beyond their condition. The other effect of this visual stylization is to establish the viewer's position in relation to the characters. In *I Was a Soldier*, the viewer is relegated to a distant seat as an acknowledged – and acknowledging – participant in the interviewing process. In *X-Ray*, the viewer's constrained access to fragments of the speakers' faces suggests a position that allows only a furtive looking through the keyhole. The use of extreme close-up on facial details triggers our visualization of what is left out of the frame, and evokes the sense of inadequacy and incompleteness expressed by the men's words. The lack of visual wholeness frustrates our expectation of getting to know through seeing, and reaffirms this doubly-mediated sharing as an intimate process where witnessing is a privilege.

Peeking – The Negotiation of Seeing as Access to Knowledge

In both films, Kieślowski uses these framing adjustments as a layer that complicates the viewer's access to the subjects' vulnerability. As portrayed, the men come across as skilled storytellers able to evoke their emotional reactions – ranging from denial, to resignation, to resistance and resilience - in powerful narratives and introspective analyses that color our perception and feed our imagination. The films are edited such that short visual intermission break the flow of the testimonies: in *I Was a Soldier*, the series of monologues dissolves periodically within white screens that, as they reverberate with music by Bach, reveal gradually the written words in the first sentence of the next testimony; in *X-Ray*, the interviews give way to two long takes of patients engaged in passing-time activities outside the sanatorium. Paul Coates considers that this type of interruptions responds to "the desire for relief and release." He adds: "Films focusing on suffering (*X-Ray*) or bureaucratic routine (*Office*; *Refrain*) may require interruption by the image of an elsewhere, a place where suffering and oppression disappear" (Coates 44). While in the formal economy of the films, these inserts may seem to allow the viewer a moment of "looking away", the effect is rather opposite to that of "relief and release" suggested by Coates. If the careful rendering of the personal testimonies bypasses the markings of the men's conditions, the intermissions prevent the spectator from exiting the men's reality, as they function like indirect reminders of their constraining social context. In *I Was a Soldier*, the opaque white screen that repeats four times shifts the weight of our sensorial perception from seeing to hearing, as the figurative representation fades away into the affective power of music that accentuates the meaning of the titles announcing the focus of the speakers. This stylized assemblage places us closer to the sensorial strain attested by the spoken expression of the non-seeing men. In *X-Ray*, the painterly compositions of the interrupting tableaus feature people in the distance either seated on the lounge chairs on the terrace, or playing a game on the grass between elegant white benches. These images retain a sense of stillness of time and

postponement of living that mirror the men's accounts of feeling redundant and socially inadequate in such a forcefully peaceful environment.

This device of apparent distraction of the viewer's attention, that in fact creates only a detour to the defining contexts of the characters, mirrors the filmmaker's visual treatment of the interviews, as part of a complex elaboration of the motif of *peeking.* In his analysis of Kieślowski's fiction films, Kickasola identifies a recurring motif of peeking that stems from "the more general Kieślowskian concern of the hidden being revealed" (Kickasola 9). I would locate Kieślowski's documentary work as the original grounds for the exploration of a certain type of *peeking* understood as an approach that avoids the direct, unobstructed *looking* – that of the camera at the subjects, of the viewer at the profilmic - while attempting a more circuitous surrounding through seeing. Referring to Kieślowski, Kickasola writes: "Implicit in all his conversations was the idea that truth was "out there," and however poor an instrument for attaining it, the filmic medium remained his tool of choice. Where the truth seems impenetrable, Kieślowski's interest was in the human struggle with that problem" (Kickasola 17). I contend that while film is indeed Kieślowski's medium of choice, the formal sophistication he demonstrates even in his early works comes from the director's intuition of truth's unavailability to filmic representation. His documentaries feel as battlegrounds for two conflicting states – the urgency to show, to reveal that which is silenced and erased by the authoritarian regime, but also the understanding that human subjectivity cannot be captured into representation. How to affirm the necessity of a knowledge that is political because of its relevance for the community, but that is rooted within the ethical and social implications of personal experience? Kieślowski tackles this conundrum by exploring a form of indirect audio-visual approach as a compromise that can be achieved through a certain way of *peeking.*

In *I Was a Soldier* and *X-Ray*, *peeking* stands as a working with and around the format of interview that attempts a re-mediation of the encounter and a challenge of the spectator's expectation of getting to know the filmic subject. Kieślowski channels the viewer's access to the dramatic knowledge communicated by the men's words by employing different visual approaches. In *I Was a Soldier*, we can identify a politics of showing through reducing the visibility - by blurring or crowding the frame with auxiliary details, or by turning the screen blank - meant to acknowledge, and show deference to, the vulnerability of the non-seers. *X-Ray* suggests a politics of showing through selective exposing - through visceral and abstracted details of faces, and long takes of the sanatorium surroundings – that either brings the viewer too close, or pushes her too far, within a distorted perspective meant to preserve the men's intimacy. Along the treatment of the visuals, the filmmaker shapes the characters' spoken deliveries into forms suggesting the effect of an aural *peeking*, or of hearing from a position that impedes our getting of the 'whole' or complete information. Both films leave out the questioning and retain only the answering parts of the interviews that come across thus as personal monologues that we seem to overhear. The cutting of the veteran soldiers' individual testimonies into fragments that are interspersed between various speakers discourage us from pinning the men into figures with cohesive, unitary identities. The spoken interventions of the men affected by tuberculosis begin all as if the camera just

landed in the middle of the conversation, with each of them talking as if continuing a previous thread, with no setting or context given. Through this treatment of the sound of speaking, the films constantly readjust and maintain the distance between viewer/listener and filmic subject. At the same time, the men's sensible deliveries carry haptic qualities that touch upon our affective listening - the pace of speaking, the pauses between words, the moments of silence, the small interjections of emotions such as a little laugh, a raising of the tone, a lowering of the voice, are aural details that color the fragmented accounts of frustration, isolation, shock, disappointment, recovery, hope, and determination to overcome. While this sensorial engagement with the voices pulls us inside the world of the speakers and impregnates our perception of the evocations, the visual and aural crafting of the interviews prevent our unproblematic immersion, and reassert the responsibility that comes with our position of privileged spectator.

I Was a Soldier and *X-Ray* stand as Kieślowski's masterful achievements of the fine balance between a political urgency to reveal and bring into knowledge, and an ethical awareness of the dangers and limitations of filmic representation. The films address important but delicate subjects through a complex formal construction that reveals what I consider Kieślowski's stylistic signature, his *aesthetic of the compromise*. Built on and around interviews, the films employ formal techniques for refracting and reflecting the gaze and the speech that result in a form of *peeking*, as a way to divert and obstruct the illusion of direct access to the films' subjects. The two documentaries re-present instances of personal sharing as three-dimensional processes of communication, where the participants – social actors, filmmaker and viewer – occupy subtly marked but clearly distanced positions. This triangular equilibrium will shift slightly, as affected by a variation in the use of the motif of *peeking*, in the films I refer to next.

The Photograph and *Talking Heads*: The Art of Sharing Spoken Knowledge

Released at the beginning, and respectively at the end of Kieślowski's documentary period, *The Photograph* (1968) and *Talking Heads* (1980) mark the range of the filmmaker's formal preoccupation with the technique of the interview. The structure of the films relies on interviews with various people selected and approached according to each filmic project. *The Photograph* is an investigative inquiry into the whereabouts of two boys – adult men at the time of the filming – seen in a photograph from the end of the second world war. *Talking Heads* adopts the survey interview format, as it proposes a series of interviews with people of various ages, edited from the youngest to the oldest, that answer two questions formulated by the filmmaker at the beginning of the film: Who are you? What matters most to you, what would you want? Beyond their clearly announced agendas, the films explore the relationship between individual evocations and shared interventions, as shaped by people's assessment of their experiences of particular moments in time. If *The Photograph* proposes a dynamic gathering of collective memories that lead to the probing of personal recollections of the photographed characters, *Talking Heads* features individual accounts of self-reflection

that converge as the expression of a group of people marked by their belonging to a specific socio-cultural context. In *The Photograph*, the speakers evoke a moment from the recent history of the ending of the war, as visible some fourteen years later, in the filmic present of 1968. In *Talking Heads*, the focus is on accounts of living in the present of 1980, as the time of emergence of an oppositional public opinion whose power of expression has been on the rise over the previous decade. The films operate a transference between official history and lived experience, in opposite directions – *The Photograph* deconstructs an iconic recording of an historic instance by recourse to the collective imaginary, while *Talking Heads* projects the individual testimonies onto an image of history-in-the-making announcing the Solidarity Movement. The filmmaker's preoccupation with people's accounts of lived experiences of past and present stems from his political intuition that relates to the urgency to show, to reveal, to share. At all times, though, Kieślowski remains aware of the obligation to foreground the filmic construction, and his consistent attention to delineate the relative positions of filmmaker, subject and viewer speaks for a filmic practice of ethical concern. These two relatively opposed directions of preoccupation, one of making known, the other of ethical restraint, come together, again, within particular modes of *peeking* that facilitate our indirect gazing at the films' subjects, and our convoluted perception of various degrees of knowledge. The reflexive quality of the films – more explicit in the former, rather implicit in the latter – contributes to their overall effect of arrival at other types of knowledge than the ones originally proposed.

The Space between the Camera and the Social Actor

In *The Photograph*, Kieślowski adopts a *cinéma vérité* approach as he wanders through locations where the boys captured by wartime photographer Józef Rybicki used to live. The director-interviewer solicits the inhabitants' recollections of the moment immortalized in the photograph taken after the liberation of the Warsaw's Praga district, in September 1944 (Kieślowski, "Documentary Film and Reality" 22). In his Master's Thesis "Documentary Film and Reality," Kieślowski references this film, his professional debut, as an illustration for his theoretical understanding of documentary form:

> The TV documentary film *The Photograph* (hand-held, soundproof, sixteen mm camera) told a story about the fate of two boys from a post-war photograph. But, at the same time, it also told the story of the film crew looking for these boys, demonstrating it [by] wandering, finding and then losing the obscure trace, in the end relieved to have found their protagonists. It was a psychological film about a reporter and a crew, even though this was not its subject, it became psychological on the way. What if we then could consistently go in this exact direction? (Kieślowki, "Documentary Film and Reality" 23)

These words acknowledge that the film acquired its layered quality on the go, during its making, an effect Kieślowski finds desirable, and that he attributes to a documentary practice that welcomes a structure based in the "dramaturgy of the real", a principle at the center of Kieślowski's argument in his thesis:

> An element of action, surprise, a punch line so important in classical dramaturgy; an element of suspense and non-denouement of unordered threads, so meaningful in contemporary dramaturgy, all these elements are not made up, but they constitute an attempt to imitate (differently seen) reality. The point is to cease imitating it and pretending, but take it as it is. Precisely with its lack of punch lines, its concurrent order and mess, it is the most modern and the most reliable structure. Apart from a documentary film, no method enabling recording this structure exists. Documentary film should exploit this possibility in full, and take advantage of its individuality. This is a chance. (Kieślowki, "Documentary Film and Reality" 30)

To note here is that Kieślowski elaborated his concept of the dramaturgy of the real as part of his graduation examination in 1970, two years after the making of *The Photograph*, in a process of reflecting back at his practice, and transcribing it into theory. In the paper, as he reflects on the differences between documentary and fiction film, he situates his analysis in various degrees of agreement with his professor (and filmmaker) Jerzy Bossak, the supervisor of his theoretical work. Speaking about the limitations of documentary film, Kieślowski writes: "The most obvious one is that *the documentary filmmaker is not the host of the matter he observes and films*. He has no influence over it, cannot shape it, and cannot act against it. As Bossak puts it, he must reach for events that are not only realistic, but also real" ("Documentary Film and Reality" 19, my Italics). Towards the end of the thesis, then, he adds: "Practically, the topic imposes it all, the time when the production starts, its location, the length of the film. There is no script, no documentation. The crew only handles the recording. *The host of the performance is the author, the man who knows the course of events*" ("Documentary Film and Reality" 32, my Italics). We understand from these two fragments that the capacity of being a host is allowed to the documentary filmmaker/author only in relation to the performance - or organization, or form - of the film, and not in aspects of matter - or substance, or content - of the filmed material. Kieślowski arrives at a characterization of the role of the documentary maker that seems rather restrictive and puzzling, and all the more so as it fails to take into account his own creative authorial intervention warranted by the *cinéma verité* approach he adopted in *The Photograph*.

In this film, the director-interviewer appears as one of the protagonists, and as he engages with the profilmic world, he provokes the represented reality and influences its dramaturgy. Filmed in full participatory mode, the interactions happen in front of the camera where the director formulates his inquiries in direct reference to the photograph which he carries with him and shows to the people. The still uncommon *cinéma vérité* format takes people by surprise, as the arrival of the TV reporter with microphone in hand and a small crew on the side, chasing his interlocutors on their locations, occasions specific dynamics and particular types of interactions. The effect of the crew's mobility is visible in the tenement yard sequence where Kieślowski approaches various people going about their chores, but soon he finds himself surrounded by a crowd of tenants curious to see the photograph. While he repeats his questions to incoming persons, the answers are fragmentary and chaotic, as people remember bits and pieces of details more or less relevant, and speak as to complete each other's sentences. The film crew's arrival

occasions a spontaneous process of collective remembering, filled with emotional reactions – the people seem open to share their knowledge, in a gregarious behavior seemingly unaffected by the presence of the microphone and the cameras. Here the film takes a step away from its subject, as it reveals, beyond the filmmaker talking with the social actors, the cameraman at work filming this interaction, as well as a short glimpse of the sound recordist. This reflexive punctuation signals the film's layered construction and virtually unfixed meanings.

If in *The Photograph* - Kieślowski's only *cinéma vérité* documentary - the interviewing process is mobile and dynamic, in *Talking Heads* - his last documentary structured around interviews - the approach is static, with a particular rhythm crafted through editing and the placing of social actors within the frame. In this film, Kieślowski assembles a series of one-shot recordings of individual interlocutors of ascending ages - from one to one hundred years - that reflect on their identity, their values, and their wishes, as prompted by the filmmaker's off-camera initial questioning. While the film has the appearance of a montage of talking heads with the filmmaker-interviewer off-screen, between two consecutive shots, the speakers' faces are never oriented in the same directions. Throughout the editing, this alternation of the faces' directions as presumably oriented towards the interviewer that is every time somewhere else outside the frame, carries the trace of a previous movement, as it suggests that the visible moments of speaking are the final achievements of a non-visible dynamic process (of selection, approach, and interrogation) similar with the one we see in *The Photograph*. Besides the implication of previous mobility, this constant change in direction jars our viewing experience, and keeps us aware of our positions of witnesses of a constructed practice of representation.

The orientation of the people's faces follows the line of eye contact between interviewer and film subject, line which constitutes the grounding of the interview exchange, as visible in Kieślowski's interview documentaries. When this line is missing, like in the image of the young man born in 1959 who looks down throughout his speaking with no eye interaction, a fragment of Kieślowski's glasses is visible in the frame, a placeholder device also used in the context of the blind veterans from *I Was a Soldier*. The absence of eye contact may suggest reticence towards speaking in front of camera and microphone, doubled by personal insecurity, as this particular man introduces himself as being "still nobody, and I will be for a while". But this attitude may indicate also fear, as noted by interview researcher Hanna Herzog: "Whether one consents to being interviewed or fears it, is often related to the role attributed to the interviewer – a perception frequently influenced by the cultural context of the group being studied" (Herzog 211). In 1980's Poland, people associate the institution of television with the oppressive state authorities, and they may be weary to open up in front of a reporter-filmmaker, as it is visible in Marcel Łoziński's short film *Practice Exercises* (1984), in which possible interlocutors approached on the street run away from the camera in order to avoid being interviewed. It seems, thus, that the direction of the speakers' gaze – along a real or an unmet line of eye contact - reflects their preferences for their positioning, as well as their inclination to opening up and talking about themselves. The man born in 1958 is positioned completely towards the left of the frame, perpendicular to the direction

of the camera. While he speaks, we see his profile lit in high contrast, keeping his gaze down in front of him with momentary glimpses up that are hardly signaling an eye interaction. His demeanor suggests a focus on the inside, and a reluctance to open towards a public, and is mirrored by his words of humble self-assessment: "I'm at that stage of my life where I still take more than I give. I'm gathering experience and values. What I'd like is to have freedom in the wider sense of the word, the kind of freedom that doesn't favor the strongest." As he allows various orientations of the speakers in the frame, Kieślowski creates a perceived space between camera and social actor, a buffer zone that gives the interlocutors a sense of safety in their vulnerability. This space functions as a palpable distance that separates the filmic subject from the viewer, who is thus prevented from having unrestricted access to people's guarded subjectivities.

Narrative Engine and Structuring Principle

In *The Photograph*, if the acknowledged presence and mobility of the TV crew act as catalysts for the filmed interactions, the photograph is the object at the center of the participants' attention. The still image mediates the dynamic between social actors and filmmaker-interviewer, and advances the film's narrative as it triggers people's reactions. From enthusiastic, to cautiously curious, to reserved, these reactions conjure the living through a memorable event in the country's recent history, the 1944 "liberation" by the joint Polish and Red Armies.[10] In their article on postmodern trends in sociological interviewing practices, Michael Ian Borer and Andrea Fontana refer to photo elicitation as the "use of photographs or other visual materials as objects for discussion between interviewer and interviewee" (Borer & Fontana 54). The authors quote Douglas Harper as a proponent of this method who contends that "images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words. … [T]he photoelicitation interview seems like not simply an interview process that elicits more information but rather one that evokes a different kind of information" (Harper 13, qtd in Borer & Fontana 54). By bringing into conversation the image of the young boys jokingly adorned with military attire, Kieślowski activates the sharing of an experiential knowledge that pertains to the collective memory – the speakers stimulate each other to share what they remember, especially as neither the photograph, nor the questions are directly about them. The charged image awakens people's affective imagination, as they bring forward emotional accounts of personal or associative memories. When asked to identify what she sees in the photograph, a woman replies: "They are children… I guess they defended… they threw bottles with gasoline at the Germans, burned down those tanks, they hit everything, you know." The information is general (as it doesn't address the context of the children in

[10] Elżbieta Stefania Dziekońska notes in her dissertation "The Best of All Worlds: Public, Personal, and Inner Realms in the Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski": "The majority of Poles felt that their so-called liberation in 1945 by the Red Army constituted loss rather than victory in the Second World War […]" (51).

the photograph) but suggests this speaker's associative remembering of children's involvement in the Polish resistance. An older woman is saddened to see young Polish children as pictured in the photograph, but cannot recognize them; when asked about that particular day, she recalls: "I remember that day, I cried, I kissed them [the soldiers], I came out of the basement. I remember that day, it was an awful day, happy, yes…" Her sensible words retain the emotional intensity of the moment, but also signal the complex and problematic context represented in the photograph. Another woman expresses directly the chaotic nature of that instance: "[I] guess they dressed them up and photographed them like this, but what could such a child do? He was running around without us even paying attention." Her defensive tone indicates that she perceives Kieslowski's inquiring attitude as a provocation that she questions and implicitly resists. Yet another woman takes the questioning one step further when she asks: "What is the intention for all this? What's the reason, gentlemen?" In these scenes, the film seems to delve into other realms of knowledge, as the lively portrayal of the group of tenants, punctuated by reflexive glimpses into the filmmaking process, relegates the factual, investigative action to the background.

If in *The Photograph*, the element advancing the narrative is the filmmaker's engagement with the still image, in *Talking Heads* the structuring principle consists of the relative passing of time as reflected in the increasing ages of the speakers – Kieślowski chooses to make visible on the screen the speakers' years of birth, and not their ages. This way, with every new year, we contemplate the distance to the filmic present, as we calculate the interval that stands as the actual age of the social actor. While there are probably practical reasons for this choice (like the difficulty of giving/naming someone's actual age as it depends on the month of the year in course), its effect is that of a repeated reminder of the timing of the filmic present. We thus experience these testimonies as necessarily anchored in their historical moment, as they suggest a cross-sectional study of Poland's society attesting for the living context in 1980. Indeed, the age-profile of the speakers' thoughts carries the imprint of the time, as such a variety of opinions – including statements of dissent – would have hardly been possible at another moment during the communist regime. As such, on age groups, the youngest speakers are idealistic – they talk of a desire to go to America, of wishing for the Pope to come, and for people to show respect to each other, they are in need for more love, and recognize that material things bring no happiness. The young adults are full of self-doubt, and somewhat critical of the social system – like the 1961-born woman wishing to be more certain of her value and actions, or the men from 1959 and 1958 that I addressed before. The working people and the professionals become the more stringent in their critique of the social system, the more advanced in age they are - 1952, people's actions should not be motivated by fear; 1949, a need for the ability to adequately provide for one's family; 1948, the absence of freedom of choice; 1945, a need to have a place to live; 1944, the necessity for democracy and tolerance, in practice, not just in theory; 1940, too much nepotism and opportunism; 1939, the difficulty of fulfilling the social roles with a clear conscience; 1938, a disappearance of authentic public discourse could lead to the disappearance of democracy. The members of the oldest group look rather backwards, towards the past, and hardly have wishes for the future. The film resonates with the

worries expressed by the writer concerned about the disappearance of the public discourse, and gathers the series of public expressions of personal, realist and lucid assessments in order to take a stand against the suppression of public discourse. By the end, the film assembles the individual voices into the image of a collective attitude that mirrors the state of mind of a population on the verge of reaffirming its public voice - the Solidarity Movement was to be officially founded in September 1980.

Space of Interactions, Background Space, and Access to Knowledge

In the participatory context of *The Photograph*, the filmmaker-reporter's navigation through the interview locations has a direct and visible influence on the type and quality of the interactions. When walking into the tenement's yard, Kieślowski selects his interlocutors based on their familiarity with the place, and is soon surrounded by a group of vocal people that speak as a community of residents that share memories of a locally experienced past, and recognize images of themselves and their neighbors in the photograph. Kieślowski meets the tenants on their territory and thus stimulates the process of collective recollection. At the same time, as he stands in the middle of the people, he occupies a space that is not inside their homes or apartments, but not quite outside either, as it is defined by the enclosure of the interior yard. The relative positioning of filmmaker and social actors in this location mirrors the dynamic of the film crew's attempt at accessing knowledge. The yard is a space accessible to newcomers, and as the residents welcome the intruders in this public space that is also their place, they willingly share a knowledge they have in common, but that is not revealing for them on a personal level. This dynamic – based in an unacknowledged but seemingly observed location neutrality - changes once the director proceeds to approach individual interlocutors by moving closer to their personal spaces. The old man interviewed against a curtain with geometrical patterns has no recollection of the boys in the photograph, but brings the conversation to his own past and present suffering as he turns to face the camera directly. Kieślowski then learns of a former neighbor who may have more information, and knocks at the door of his brother's apartment – upon opening the door, first the man retreats as startled by the light used by the filming crew, then he answers the questions reticently until the sight of the photograph warms up his memories. While the director's abrupt manner of questioning gives an invasive appearance to these interactions in which his stringent inquiring parallels an aggressive flattening of the space – after all, these individuals are not filmed as part of a crowd outside, but in contained indoor places further constrained by the presence of the crew – the framing situates the locations as citadels that shelter the sieged speakers who resist by remaining unable to remember or reticent to share.

This seeming give-and-take between access to intimate location and (in)accessibility of information continues as the filmmaker moves to different places in order to interview other individuals. In her research on the social meaning of interview location, Hanna Herzog notes:

> [A] qualitative interview is about the ability to traverse social boundaries and to acknowledge that as part of the process. It is about our understanding that the interview, almost by definition, recontextualizes social relations. The physical location in which the interview is conducted is one of the most concrete expressions of this process of boundary crossing. (Herzog 211)

While these assertions refer to sociological interviewing conducted for scientific data gathering, the concept of crossing social boundaries acquire a particular weight in the case of the filmed interview, a context closer to that of the ethnographic interviewing. In such a situation, the presence of the camera acts as a marker of spaces of difference, or as a border between the profilmic territory and 'our' space which is also the filmmaker's space. In this sense, Kieślowski's (and for a couple of times, his crew's) appearance in front of the camera suggests a boundary crossing of sorts, in an attempt at negotiating the defaulted difference introduced by the camera. But, as seen in the scenes analyzed, the author's decision to be part of the profilmic does not guarantee a welcoming acceptance from, and smooth integration within, the filmic social milieu. Rather, the film presents the interactions with the two tenants interviewed indoors as if, in the process of stepping on the other side of the camera, Kieślowski-the-interviewer carries the boundary with him, and gives it an embodied visibility that reorganizes the profilmic space. Through this reorganization, the crossing becomes a moving of the border to the advantage of the film crew, a gesture that delineates the space behind the social actors as the new unexplored territory, or as the zone that stands as both a physical and a metaphorical background for the characters, and that holds the promise of information to be accessed and of knowledge to be revealed.

In his following documentary explorations of the interview format, Kieślowski will not reconsider the type of direct, participatory treatment of filmic locations allowed by the mode of *cinéma vérité*. Twelve years later, in *Talking Heads*, the filmmaker's subtle turning of the background space into places of subjectivity brings a painterly quality to the portraits of the interviewees. The film adjusts and combines lighting, camera focus, and framing in order to create a three-dimensional rendering of each interlocutor as sculpted against a personalized background place. Beyond the speaker, the camera allows the glimpse of an out-of-focus corner, a blurred fragment of a larger space, in an image that gives only enough contours and movements, along with localized sounds, as to suggest, both visually and aurally, a site of happenings. These in-depth extensions of the people's close-up portraits situate the characters within living socio-cultural contexts that layer our perception of the interactions. We find ourselves completing the speaker's partially lit features and summary but personal words based on isolated details that we perceive in the backgrounds. Almost stylized through high-contrasts shades of black and white, the boy born in 1968 leans his head against his arm in a pensive attitude while declaring with rather mature words: "I'm not fully prepared to make major decisions as yet. […] I'd like people to take more notice of one another." His figure seems the more detailed version of a cut-out from the background, where dark silhouettes of children move slightly in front of a lit wall while carrying a somehow removed conversation. Through the plastic harmony of shades and forms, and the complementary rapport between foreground and background, the image suggests the

portrait of a young boy that ponders his sentences within the articulated speech of a fully formed subject, of a person coming into his own according to a complex and nuanced socio-cultural context.

Kieślowski interviews the younger characters in spaces adjacent to schools – in rooms, hallways, or the school yard. Young adults or adolescents appear as situated in libraries, in the dining hall, or in classrooms or public spaces of various institutions. The workers speak from a background suggesting a work environment emphasized through the use of sound (factories, construction sites), while professional individuals are seen at desks, in their study rooms, or against their bookshelves. Parents appear next to their children, while older folks seem to prefer the comfort of the home. On the one hand, these locations reveal the scale of the film's project, and bring to mind the preparatory stages of the interviewing process. On the other hand, they suggest a topographic tapestry that approximates the Polish society as a sample of individuals caught within their daily activities. Some of the most interesting context of these individuals appear in the interactions filmed in public spaces – on the street, in a store, in a restaurant, or in a waiting room. Filmed inside a store, the woman alpinist born in 1952 remarks: "You cannot get to know a person here. Only in the high mountains. To me it's vital that we live courageously." The priest born in 1921 answers the questions while on the street, and speaks about his negotiations of two mysteries – the natural mystery of human life, and the questions of faith and attitude to God. The old man from 1905, that seems to be seated in a train or bus station, speaks of living for, and off, his memories, while still hoping some old, unfulfilled dreams will come true. Captured while being in transit, these people take a moment to open up about themselves, as they traverse and occupy public spaces. With their forthcoming attitude, these speakers implicitly suggest the necessity of remerging the private and the public.[11] The open background amplifies the relevance of their words, projecting the meanings onto virtual communities of thought. These encounters trouble the boundary between personal and public, as they model a physical, embodied expression of intimacy ready to assume a double challenge of public performance – first, as interactions happening on camera for a future audience, and then, as instances of personal sharing that occur in a public space, away from the shelter of privacy.

If in this film, the presence of the camera inhabits a virtual boundary between private and public, Kieślowski's treatment of the spaces he shapes in front and behind the social actor attenuates the viewer's perception of crossing a line. The camera work situates the speakers within a place visually crafted such that it appears like a fragment from a larger, shared space. This space is accessible to the filmmaker, as most of the interlocutors look in his direction and away from the camera while speaking, suggesting the presence of an active listener-interviewer in their proximity. At the same time, as the filmmaker is off-screen, we, viewers, perceive his position as close(r) to ours. If in *The Photograph*, Kieślowski's visible presence within the frame embodied a threshold

[11] According to Dziekońska, "… in Poland between 1945 and 1989, and therefore in the context of the greater part of Kieślowski's life and career, the paradigm of public, personal, and inner spheres was not only theoretical but real, not just posited or supposed but actual (27-28).

between two social realms, in *Talking Heads* the filmmaker-interviewer's implied proximity traces a liminal zone that extends on both sides of the camera. From his vintage position of in-betweenness, the director mediates our access to the characters' environments by merging the background and foreground into a surrounding effect that negotiates the viewers' position as virtual visitors. While we get a sense of belonging as we reconstitute familiar types of locations within the background glimpses, the stylized, hardly discernable visuals keep our gaze at a respectful distance. In contrast with his approach in *The Photograph*, here the filmmaker values the mystery of the space behind the social actor, and recognizes the richness of a knowledge that remains unrevealed.

(Miss)Understandings of Knowledge, and *Peeking*

In *The Photograph*, the spatial framings of the physical interactions between the interview participants enact the crew's attempts at accessing various degrees of knowledge. The filmmaker's physical presence within the frame animates the inquiry, and validates the representation as a reflexive account of its making, in a gesture that reveals the director's self-awareness, as well as his preoccupation with the form and quality of his practice. In his role of the interviewer that walks into the tenement's courtyard and knocks at people's doors, Kieślowski pushes the threshold between public and private spaces, in search of a knowledge he insists on localizing. When the film crew arrives at the apartment of one of the brothers pictured in the photograph, the young wife opens the door, and reluctantly allows the crew inside, at the filmmaker's insistence. Her discomfort changes into speechless surprise at the sight of the photograph, when she sits down to have a conversation with the director. The camera captures details from the apartment – the baby asleep in his crib, the wife's cousin who is visiting, baby clothes hanging to dry in the room. As the woman expresses embarrassment for not being prepared to have visitors, Kieślowski replies that the main idea was for them to come unannounced. The whole sequence is built around the characters' spontaneous reactions of surprise, following a "dramaturgy of the real" the filmmaker will theorize in his master thesis. This spectacle of the household taken by surprise continues with the arrival of the husband, the younger of the two photographed brothers, who shows more control of his reactions but is visibly touched by the sight of the still image. As the camera follows their movement through the room and around the table, Kieślowski invites the man to sit down, and then adds, with a slight laugh of acknowledgment: "I'm inviting you as I were the host, but we have already made ourselves a bit comfortable." The joking tone of this observation disguises the director's embarrassed awareness of his gesture of trespassing, of his invasive entrance into a private space in the name of an implicit right (seemingly available to a TV reporter) to access and virtually share the inhabitants' rather personal knowledge.

Towards the end of the film, Kieślowski meets the older brother at his work place. The man has a strong reaction when faced with the photograph – he recalls hastily and emotionally the moment of its taking, giving more vivid details than his brother (like the remembrance of receiving a piece of chocolate). He stops at times to acknowledge his

refusal to think back of the place associated with the death of his mother. The man senses the charged context of the image of two boys wearing machine guns and military hats – and his memory cannot reconstitute the ways the boys arrived to this posture. The whole testimony is fraught with pain, reluctance, and a sense of desperation, as the man seems uncomfortable speaking, and slightly exasperated. After this, the film cuts back to the encounter with the younger brother, in the couple's apartment, where we see him saying: "There were different moments in life. Both good and bad, also the turbulent one, sometimes one doesn't want to talk about this all." To the men pictured in the still image, the filmmaker's pursuit appears questionable and invasive, as the solicited knowledge is personal and delicate, and implies the recollection of a charged and possibly controversial photographic moment. Kieślowski finally arrives to meet the men he set on to look for, but now his same questions about the context of the photographic instance become troubling and unsettling as addressed directly to the grown-up boys pictured in the image. Unlike all other interlocutors, the brothers face the challenge of an abrupt, unannounced exposure, as they are asked to remember and share the circumstances of a chaotic moment that marked their childhood, and transformed them from "subject into object, and even into a museum object." (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 13) The men's answers, evasive and strained, signal a knowledge that cannot be spelled out on the spot, in front of a TV camera. The film proposes the approach of a pervasive boundary reconciliation as a process of learning through practice, as an empirical demonstration that direct inquiry through physical proximity does not imply or result in access to personal or intimate knowledge.

Over his following documentaries, Kieślowski develops subtle ways of marking and negotiating the relative positions of the filmmaker, the subjects, and the viewer, with nuanced and balanced formal achievements like the ones visible in *I Was a Soldier* and *X-Rays*. In *Talking Heads*, the visual crafting of each testimony, and the conceptual serial arrangement of all the encounters, come together to bring into light a type of knowledge never directly requested, but perceivable only through the viewing experience of the interviews as a collection. In their testimonies, some of the social actors attest to the difficulties they encounter in reconciling their various subject positions – as political members within society, as professionals, as family providers – that they find morally incompatible under an authoritarian regime. The speakers bring forward personal reflections as rooted in individual contexts, but their words resonate as referring to a lived experience the people share and react to.

This knowledge that transpires in people's expressions of frustration with their living condition carries a political dimension that renders it vulnerable in the face of censorship. This is why Kieślowski delivers it indirectly, revealing it through a sort of *peeking* facilitated by formal techniques that function as distracting devices. As such, the treatments of the visuals, from framing to camera position, not only create and maintain distances between viewers and filmic subject through the implied mediation of the filmmaker, but they also divert the attention away from the collective expression of critique of the communist society towards particularities of individuality that come to the surface during the interviews. In *Talking Heads*, Kieślowski uses *peeking* as a formal compromise that both protects the speakers' vulnerable intimacy, and traces the contour

of a collective portrait of an oppressed society in the process of regaining its power of expression.

In *The Photograph*, the filmmaker uses the picture as a prop, a pretext for the process of social and historical exploration, and its recording on film. As we follow the investigative journey, we observe on-camera interactions that stand as Kieślowski's filmic demonstrations of his attempts at accessing different types of knowledge. While keeping the still image at the center of the narrative, the filmic construction places us, viewers, in a position of looking *also* at the people, at how they behave, who they are, what they say – we observe them as from a side, like *peeking* at them, while their subjectivities transpire as byproducts of questions that refer not to them directly, but to an experience relatively removed in time and space. As the film both performs and records its own making, this sense of the camera's, and the viewer's, *peeking* comes about as an effect of its construction, one that feels less like a methodical design as more like the result of an empirical experiment. While the filmmaker favorizes this perception through the attitude he adopts as he accompanies the camera, he changes his approach when addressing direct, personal questions to the men pictured in the photograph, who in turn are reticent as to the relevance of his goal – there is a type of knowledge that resists a direct, frontal access. *The Photograph* represents Kieślowski's hands-on discovery of alternative ways of accessing knowledge through the use of *peeking* as a technique of compromise.

From the beginning to the end of his documentary period, Kieślowski understands the endeavor of accessing knowledge as a journey or a process, as *The Photograph* and *Talking Heads* suggest. Both films start by explicitly qualifying the type of knowledge they are after – in reference to the old photograph in the former, and in response to Kieślowski's questions surveying people's personal stands in the latter. However, while in *The Photograph* the journey takes the form of a narrative development towards a destination, in *Talking Heads* the emphasis is on the process, on knowledge as on-going construction and interactive creation. The films meet, though, within their final achievements, in that the knowledge they arrive at is of a different degree than the one announced as the focus of their projects. *The Photograph*'s significance stems from the film's form as an account of both its own making, and of Kieślowski's experience of learning through practice. Under the appearance of a survey-interviewing format, *Talking Heads* crafts an astute and timely portrayal of a segment of the politically articulated society that stood as fertile ground for the formation of the Solidarity Movement.

The Bricklayer **and** ***From a Night Porter's Point of View*****:**
Interview as Documentary Performance

The Bricklayer (1973) and *From a Night Porter's Point of View* (1977) are portrait films that play around and against conventions of interview-as-monologue and observational cinema, in representations that render the characters unfixed and unfixable. The films assemble contrasting aural and visual registers that keep each other in check

from taking over the meaning. In *The Bricklayer*, Jozef Malesa's voice-over monologue gradually reveals the trajectory of a man who chooses to take distance from the path of bureaucracy, compromise and abuse of power laid open by a career of political activism. The visuals follow Malesa's preparations for, and participation in the May Day parade, an event that mirrors the farcical reality of the communist society. The film builds a composite portrait around the perceived opposition of Malesa's voice-over affirmation of distance from political activism, and his visually confirmed presence in the comedy of power and propaganda. In *From a Night Porter's Point of View*, the images suggest the actions and behavior of the guardian Marian Osuch, a man engaged in his community and family, eager to dutifully meet social expectations, while the words of his off-screen monologue reveal a philosophy of life and (mis)understanding of ethics that situate the character's daily activities in a frightening and fraught perspective. In this film, Kieślowski uses music as a device that bridges the two registers by filling in perceived gaps in the representation of an acceptable reality, in an attempt at restoring the character's humanity.

While Kieślowski structures the films around the characters' voice-over monologues, he edits the observational footage against the off-screen words and non-diegetic music into a performative space that disobeys the documentary constrains, in order to deliver fluid representations that escape a stable form. This construction leads to the viewer's sense of *peeking* at the characters, as these are portrayed through surrounding moves that favor contrasts and contradictions, through juxtapositions of image and sound that complicate their seeming expression of subjectivity and that give way to suggestions of meaning that postpone the arrival at a unitary definition of who these people are as persons. By departing from conventions of documentary representation, the films enhance particular features of the social actors that, so abstracted, come to portray specific attitudes of either resistance or conformity to the rules and constrains of the socio-political context.

Film as Stage

Kieślowski's treatment of interview-as-monologue brings to mind Laurel Richardson's observation that, in the context of sociological research interviewing, an approach that would avoid transforming the respondents' narratives into terms foreign to what their original sensibilities might have been should allow that some experiences be "performed," rather than simply translated into text (qtd. in Gubrium & Holstein 38). The opening sequences of each of these two films respectively establish performative constructions that cast the social actors as both narrators of, and characters in, their own life stories. *The Bricklayer* introduces Jozef Malesa gradually, first in a meditative, then a joyful tone, setting up the further juxtaposition of (aural) remembrance of the past and (visual) presence in the moment, device that will allow the character to be both a contemplative observer of his past, and an active participant in his present. *From a Night Porter's Point of View* opens abruptly with Marian Osuch speaking on camera, in the only direct interview of the film. The dramatically filmed delivery of his cinephile

preferences suggests the expressive range of the performatively inclined character, and leads into a filmic construction that uses image and sound in order to dramatize Osuch's unorthodox account of his beliefs and ways of living.

The prologue (the sequence before the title) of the *Bricklayer* reveals a layered perspective of the filmic project: a man's voice-over starts an evocative monologue recounting an important decision in his life, over images of city streets in the early morning light – only retrospectively, we understand that the images show the decorations of the city for the upcoming May Day Parade. The words summarize the trajectory of Malesa's life, setting up the main aural register of the story to be told, while the images announce, ambiguously, the visual register as anchored within a present-day event. The rather discreet title-frame marks the change of sequences, and of the film tone that is now lifted by a joyful, bubbly nondiegetic musical tune that continues in the background. The first image of Malesa is a close-up shot of his reflection in the mirror while shaving, in an informal posture bordering on the intimate, or on the not destined to be made public. Erving Goffman considers that "the bathroom and bedroom […] are places from which the downstairs audience can be excluded. Bodies that are cleansed, clothed, and made up in these rooms can be presented to friends in others" (Goffman 123). The visual introduction of the character in an intimate posture suggests a performative device that extends Goffman's presentational front to the back regions of the home, namely here to the bathroom, from where Malesa performs his non-public role for the audiences. (Goffman 123). Kieślowski cancels the documentary potential of the observational visuals by exploiting the non-reflexive, quasi-fictional quality of the rather private activity framed in extreme close-up - as paired with the background music, the scene resembles the opening of a comedy, where the character's voice-off would likely say: "That morning, I was getting ready to go out, when…." The actual monologue, though, brings back the evocative, story-telling tone of the prologue voice-over, as Malesa recounts the circumstances of his activism as a youth, and the context of his initial engagement with the Party. The intonation and pace of the speech, with small pauses that mirror the process of remembering, and with the reiteration of what seems to be a question from the interviewer ("How did I get involved with the Party?") in a thoughtful perusing of the personal narrative suggest an aesthetic overflow that escapes formal control and situates the spoken track back into the documentary realm. This "return" is accentuated by the complete disconnect between the meaning of the words and the content of the images – if, according to Michel Chion, "[t]extual speech - generally that of voiceover commentaries - has the power to make visible the images that it evokes through sound—that is, to change the setting, to call up a thing, moment, place, or characters at will," here the evocative quality of Malesa's words makes visible details and contexts of his past that overlay his rather constructed likeness with the folds and creases of a lived experience (Chion, *Audio-Vision* 172).

The background music bridges the change of location into the next scene, where the family eats around the breakfast table, with Malesa in the middle, facing the camera with his back against the window. Cinematically expressive, the framing organizes the depth of the visual field within several planes of interest. The window is the source of the backlight, and it allows the suggestion of a space that opens beyond that within the room.

The family members' interaction occupies most of the frame, and draws our main interest, while the little bird in the cage in the dimly lit foreground is the presence that completes the familial tableau. As our eyes process this composition, they are drawn back to the bright background of the window, only to realize that the promise of an outside space is illusory, as the horizon beyond is blocked by the image of a very close apartment building – the living happens inside, in the intimacy of the family home. The voice-over monologue starts again, and Malesa recalls the circumstances of meeting his wife: while he was working as a bricklayer, and she was employed at the warehouse, they were taking part in stage productions at the club house, and ended up playing the roles of husband and wife in a Checkov sketch. The narration affects our perception of the scene, as, like Chion notes, "the textual speech of a voiceover narrator engenders images with its own logic," and all of a sudden, the carefully framed breakfast interaction appears as the performance of a family scene reminiscent of a Checkov representation from another era (Chion, *Audio-Vision* 172). While the characters obey the rule of not-looking-into-the-camera of the observational mode, this apparent point of synchronization between the voice-over commentary and the visuals accentuates the constructed character of the scene, in a seemingly reflexive gesture of the filmmaker.[12] At the same time, and in the opposite direction, for the one moment when the meaning of the off-screen words seems to alter and subjugate the actuality of the images, the pervasive background music flattens the whole into an instant out of a fiction film, namely of a film were visuals and voice-over redundantly comment on each-other in a direct relationship. Kieślowski's play on, and resistance to, the conventions and implications of the observational approach suggest his awareness that the only ethical engagement with this documentary mode implies the necessary foregrounding – the making visible - of a double performance: that of the social actors that re-present themselves for the camera, but also that of the film enacting the narratives of the performing characters.[13]

In striking contrast with the gradual introduction of *The Bricklayer*, the beginning of *From a Night Porter's Point of View* is brisk and alert, as it summons our attention by whipping our senses. The treatment of the opening credits recalls the film noir aesthetic, with the word 'FILM' spelled in red, capital letters over the screen of two consecutive shots that are punctuated, on the beat, by the expansive chords of the first measures of a dramatic, ominous nondiegetic tune. The music continues in the background over the shot of the main character, Marian Osuch, filmed in medium close-up against a dark background, with his arms crossed and his gaze in a direction slightly off-camera. The man starts talking abruptly, as if answering a question in the middle of a conversation, in a colloquial language with an approximate grammar (as suggested by the English

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[12] Chion defines a *point of synchronization* as a salient moment of an audiovisual sequence during which a sound event and a visual event meet in synchrony (*Audio-Vision* 58).

[13] Thomas Waugh uses the term *representational performance* for the "documentary code of narrative illusion, borrowed from the dominant fiction cinema. When subjects perform 'not looking at the camera,' when they 'represent' their lives or roles, the image looks 'natural' as if the camera were invisible or as if the subject were unaware if being filmed" (Waugh 76).

subtitles): "I like them war films best. You know, cowboy films and that. When there's some shooting or a battle, I'm well-pleased. 'Cause them love movies don't do much for me […]. I like them more violent films, with fights an'all. They're a good laugh…" In a self-assured attitude, the man gives his opinions as facts that need no explanations, in a delivery where affective cues of body language compensate for the absence of reflective thinking. As such, he emphasizes his words with head movements that follow the pitch of his phrasing, and adds large, swiping hand gestures when raising his tone to affirm his preference for aggressive, violent films. While Osuch mobilizes his expressive resources in order to engage the audience with his point of view, his gestural involvement seems disproportionate in relation to the topic of his speech and the relative poverty of his linguistic ability.[14] This incongruency gives the first indication of the formal construction of the film as built on the tension between the charismatic visual presence of the social actor, and the repulsive effect of the revelation of his unethical, inhuman thinking. At the same time, this prologue enacts literally the film title shot that follows, as it introduces *the point of view* of Osuch speaking out-of-character, in a sort of backstage, direct address that anticipates his taking on the role of the pervasive guardian in a film made seemingly as to his liking.

This backstage delivery transitions into a seeming rehearsal in the next sequence, where the character enacts the chasing and catching of a 'thief' as part of his training as a guard. Osuch's engagement of his dramatic inclinations results in a performance that both echoes and mocks his own preference for violent films with action and fights. The awkward development of the activity reveals its purpose only gradually: on a grassed area along a fence, we see Osuch chasing a young man that runs slowly and unconvincingly, with a smile on his face. Once he catches up with the man, Osuch puts his guardian hat back on, and starts searching the back of the man, while yelling at him in a threatening tone. The jumpy hand-held camera follows the men as they walk away with Osuch holding the 'thief' with both hands, and then reveals the supervisor who steps in and assesses the performance. In a play on observational filming, Kieślowski builds the scene as a recording of a chase that seems first enacted for the camera, but then turns out to be part of the porter's practice routine – with the arrival of the supervisor, we understand that the performance happens not (solely) for the camera and we perceive momentarily the visuals as observational. At the same time, though, Osuch's preoccupation with his own image short-circuits our perception, as, while he holds up a ferocious figure as composed for the performance, he breaks out of character and glimpses into the camera for a second. The man's shifting gaze between the directions of the supervisor and that of the camera reveals a mentality that remains pervasive throughout the film: the guardian conducts his behavior in an almost dogmatic devotion to the authority (as present in administrative of political form), while also acting eager to please his audience (directly represented by the filmmaker and his crew). While

[14] Goffman writes: "While in the presence of others, the individual typically infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure. For if the individual's activity is to become significant to others, he must mobilize his activity so that it will express *during the interaction* what he wishes to convey" (Goffman 30).

Kieślowski suggests the character's attitude within small visual details, Osuch confirms it directly throughout the voice-over monologue that begins in the next sequence. Throughout the rest of the film, Kieślowski modulates the expressive weight of the visuals and the affective power of the music in relation to the impact of the monologue's textual speech, in a construction where lingering performative suggestions challenge the percepts of documentary representation.

Visual Reverberations of Aural Narratives

In the first part of the films, as Kieślowski assembles the elements that give directions to the portrayal discourse, he adjusts the relationship between voice-over monologues, music and observational footage in an attempt to situate his characters on intriguing positions that suggest a potential for development. In each film there is a particular sequence where the space of the filmed reality takes on the meaning of a virtual construction, as illuminated by, or anchored within the words of the voice-over monologues. These sequences weave the affective and factual information of the visual and aural tracks into a multidimensional structure that both approximates and challenges the idea of documentary portrait – where every scaffolding that seems to get us closer to the characters opens onto an unmapped gap, or leads to a fork in the road toward meaning, as it suggests a direction not yet taken or an attitude not directly expressed. Our gazing at the characters seems always tangential, in a perpetual *peeking* composed of glimpses that can grasp, each, only one facet of the multidimensional structure at a time.

In *The Bricklayer*, this particular sequence starts with Malesa walking on the street, alongside the tram, with camera following behind him. Next, while he is seated inside the moving tram, the camera follows his profile from the outside, through the window the displays the passing reflections of the activities on the street. Along these images, Malesa recalls, in voice-over monologue, moments from his career as a young activist, which he punctuates with commentaries that give a sense of his present-day perspective: he expresses disappointment that the students he worked with had difficulties at putting theory into practice; he becomes all of a sudden self-conscious, in an attempt of defending his genuine engagement with the activist position and with the ideology, at the time. As the words deliver a description and assessment of the character's evolution over a period of time, this element of temporal flow is accentuated by the visual effect of the on-camera superimposition. While advancing at a similar speed with the tram, the camera keeps Malesa's profile in focus in a relatively stable position within the frame, such that the sensation of movement results mainly from the window reflections running backwards and blurring the man's face on and off. The urban glimpses of streets with pedestrians, passing cars, blocks of flats, and vegetation are at times more discernable than Malesa's profile, but as a passing scenery against his constant presence, they inflect and color the evocative imagery awaken by the spoken thoughts. It is as if the visuals mirror Malesa's process of reflecting back at his past, from the vantage point of the present, and effect emphasized by the man's consistent looking ahead (and never out the window towards the camera). At the same time, the reciprocal blurring of the direct

and reflected images may suggest a state of indetermination, of the character's floating along with the reality of his time, somehow at the surface and not fully involved. The detachment is illusory, though, as it gradually reveals a position that allows Malesa to evaluate the rift between the role he is expected to play and his inner vision of life values. This attitude transpires here in his words that express retrospective criticism of the functioning of the system, and awareness of a valid present-day perception that would question the decisions taken in his youth. The rest of the film settles on this perspective and accentuates its contrasts by depicting the May Day strident and theatrical manifestations against Malesa's voice-over recollection of his continuous disengagement with the system. In this context, this sequence stands apart in its subtle, expressively contained power to suggest a position that both nurtures and intrigues our expectation for the character's further development.

Another interesting dimension of the sequence is its doubly performative quality. On the one hand, Malesa's unabated gaze forward while seated on the bus enacts a performance of his every-day routine. On the other hand, the layered construction of the sequence shapes the film's performance of the character's narrative – the presence of the sound associated with the observational footage folds the unrelated tracks of the visuals and the monologue within a unitary, if virtual, space, as it provides an aural bridging between the actuality of the filmed activity and the distance of the evocative voice-over. Michel Chion writes that "sound has an influence on perception: through the phenomenon of added value, it interprets the meaning of the image, and makes us see in the image what we would not otherwise see, or would see differently" (*Audio-Vision* 34). If the words of Malesa's textual speech loosen the visuals from their connection with the actuality, the sound of the moving tram grounds them back, into the immediacy of the moment.

Like the sequence from *The Bricklayer*, the one in *From a Night Porter's Point of View* elaborates a virtual space where visuals and voice-over monologue intersect, bend, and divert each other. In the second film, though, Kieślowski uses non-diegetic music instead of sound recorded along, or somehow deriving from, the images. In this sequence, the two sound tracks (music and voice-over) and the visuals are relatively independent of each other, and thus when perceived in particular combinations, they have contrasting effects on the viewer. As such, while the images attempt to illustrate Osuch's narration of his 'hobby' of spying on fishermen, the particular framing and editing construct a visual flow that, if unaided by the textual speech, but only affected by the music, could suggest interpretations far removed from the explicit narrative. The scene unfolds as an alternation of two visual fields, over three pairs of shot-reverse shot images: the field of a group of fishermen on the banks of a river, in long and medium shots, interspersed with the field showing Osuch in medium close-up, first walking behind some vegetations, later going down a small slope and stopping, and then standing with a blade of grass in his mouth, while always gazing somewhere in a distance but in the direction of the camera. The framing of the shots stops short of bridging the two fields as part of one and the same space, as it never incorporates elements common to both fields in one shot. The effect is that of an artificial unity of space and action – we assume the man's wandering happens on or around the river shore, while his preoccupied looking ahead, probably in the

direction of the fishermen, is both ambiguous and intriguing: is he curious to understand what happens? Is he contemplating the possibility of fishing as well? If we ignore Osuch's voice-over expression of his thoughts and intentions, the lyrical non-diegetic music exacerbates our sensibility and tilts our perception towards a zone of tender indeterminacy, one that suggests the character's ability to feel and think in ways virtually complex as yet unexpressed. The presence of the music thus imprints the quasi-fictional visual construction with another removed dimension. Holly Rogers notes on the use of non-diegetic music in documentary film: "What is it that we are hearing? If our eyes are given real events, what happens when our ears are offered a sonic elsewhere? In fiction film, both image and music are conjured forth from another place, but in nonfiction features, the elsewhere signified by music appears to conflict with the present tense of the images" (Rogers 14). Here, as Kieślowski arrives at an 'elsewhere' by manipulating the visual elements, the presence of the music brings in an affective quality that enriches the alterity of the whole, such that the overall result appears to conflict with the perplexingly crude and brutal meaning of the spoken words, delivered in first-person, present tense.

Osuch's voice-over delivery is dramatic, almost defensive, as the man modulates his phrasing in an argumentative tone, while addressing his interviewer repeatedly with the form 'Sir' ('proszę pana'; however, this appellative is not included in the English subtitles): "Everyone loves to do something, isn't it? Me, (Sir), I love running checks on people, you know. I love checking up on my fellow fishermen, like those lot over there. I'll just take their rods away (Sir). If they haven't got their permits in order, or use nets, (Sir) I'll secure their fishing tackle. You could say that this is my hobby. That's what I do. I'll take that tackle away, (Sir) I'll give them a receipt, and a date and hour when to come and collect it. Because, suppose he comes at a different time, well, he won't get that tackle back. I can buy that fishing tackle if I fancy. (Sir)" The man's straight-forward, un-self-aware description of the practice of his hobby is disconcerting and verging on the non-verisimilar. The meaning of the words is enhanced by the manner of delivery, where *manner* comes close to Goffman's definition, as referring "to those stimuli which function at the time to warn us of the interaction role the performer will expect to play in the on-coming situation. Thus, a haughty aggressive manner may give the impression that the performer expects to be the one who will initiate the verbal interaction and direct its course" (Goffman 24). In this sense, Osuch's manner of speech projects a certain aggressive attitude on his visual appearances that we now perceive as fragmentary illustrations of his on-going spying activity. The juxtaposition of the visual track and textual speech assembles the character's performance of his own role, that of guardian by occupation, and controller or spy, by vocation. Osuch delivers this performance with a conviction and eagerness that go beyond the realm of believable or acceptable, recalling Goffman's words: "At one extreme, we find that the performer can be fully taken in by his own act; he can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality" (Goffman 17). Once again (like in the beginning of the film), Kieślowski seizes on the man's performative inclination, and enrolls the non-diegetic music in what becomes a performance of the film, where the sequence enacts another vision for the character's virtual being. We can feel the music as the embodiment of Kieślowski's gaze at his subject – one of an infinite sadness, almost of a nostalgia for the

human loss this man represents. Apart from the voice-over words, the suggestions allowed by images and music are of the person Osuch could have been but failed to be, of the chance of his acting as an empathetic being, rather than a rudimentary individual that lives by praying on his fellow fishermen. Here lays the art of Kieślowski: while giving us access to a virtual angle through which we can glimpse a face of the character that could be, he lets Osuch's off-screen words to seal his ignoble image that is.

In the *Bricklayer* sequence, the voice-over monologue allows the character to wonder in a distanced time and space, while the observational images and sound keep him in the actuality of the present. In the sequence in *From a Night Porter Point of View*, the contrasting music and monologue project opposite affective qualities on the images, placing the character in-between an evasive virtuality and an abject actuality. Both sequences veil the social actors in a fluid indeterminacy that leaves room for suggestions and interpretations. Our sense of getting to know the two men comes down to a continuous grasping for meaning, as in an act of *peeking* that gives access to impressions to be shaped into associations.

Over the remainder of the two films, Kieślowski takes further the performative play on the tension between different filmic registers, as well as the tension manifest at the level of the performance of the films as opposed to the characters' performances of their own 'real life' roles. Through his filmic constructions, Kieślowski complicates and turns around the characters' directly shared stories: in *The Bricklayer*, he presents Malesa's telling of the process of distancing from activist engagement with the Party against images of the man's participation in the May Day Parade. In *From a Night Porter Point of View*, Kieślowski introduces the non-diegetic musical commentary that initially softens Osuch's crude words, and allows a sense of temporary escape from the character's inhuman philosophy of life. Eventually, in the kaleidoscopic rendering of the men's portrayals, the voice-over monologues shape the films as the expressions and consistent affirmations of the speakers' respective attitudes to living in the Polish society under a totalitarian regime. By the end of *The Bricklayer*, words and images meet, as Malesa describes the joy and meaning he finds in his present-day work as a bricklayer, along moving shots of the city seen from a camera flying above. In *From a Night Porter Point of View*, the musical motif accompanies two other sequences, in the last one becoming more dramatic and with ample orchestration. By the end, it is as if, rather than allowing an emotional dimension to the character, the music's dramatic force both emphasizes and opposes Osuch's abominable assertion of the need to 'crush the people's attempts at criticizing the state'.

This mode of portrayal through an unfixing, somehow distanced surrounding of *the social actors as characters* speaks for Kieślowski's recognition of those dimensions of humanity that cannot be exhausted within representation. This method also allows the filmmaker an approach that brackets *the social actors as persons*, by focusing on the types of attitudes they represent – the surface-level implication in the spectacle of politics and propaganda, an engagement that keeps up appearances but allows the detachment necessary in order to avoid hurting people, as seen at Malesa; the internalization of the pervasive authoritarian psychology that takes over one's moral compass, and its practical manifestation within every-day gestures of power abuse, as encountered at Osuch. In

closing the films, Kieślowski gestures subtly towards his own stands as he summons the means of expression in order to uphold the vision of Malesa and to take a critical distance from Osuch's position.

Chapter 3
Marcel Łoziński: Politics of Representation - Reflexivity and Ethics

Marcel Łoziński and the Polish Context of the 1970s

By the time of his graduation exam at the National Film School in Lodz in 1976, Marcel Łoziński had directed eight short documentaries, an experience that allowed him to formulate theoretical principles for documentary filmmaking as informed by his own practice. In his graduation thesis, titled "Script vs. Filmmaking in Documentary Film", Łoziński proposes three types of documentary films: in an "open" film, the filmmaker is a witness of the world described, without imposing his own view directly on the viewer, as in Kazimierz Karabasz's *The Musicians* (1960) (*Theory of Practice* 67). In a "closed" film, the reality is a "building block" that serves exclusively to convey a particular stand of the filmmaker, and for Łoziński, a successful "closed" film is Jean Vigo's *À propos de Nice* (1930) (*Theory of Practice* 68). In the third type, the "semi-open" documentary, the filmmaker builds analytical observations based on a pre-treated, condensed reality that functions as the existing reality for the camera (Łoziński, *Theory of Practice* 68). Here Łoziński refers to two of his own films – *Happy End* (1973, codirected with Pawel Kędzierski), an account of a meeting of factory representatives and Party members that attack and hold accountable an engineer for the factory's production failures, turns out to be, in the end, a filmed psychodrama where participants play roles within a scripted situation. Similarly, for *The Visit* (1974), the director pre-arranges the encounter between Urszula Flis, the country-side woman who runs her family farm but is also an avid reader of literature and theater, and the female journalist who aggressively and authoritatively questions Urszula's values and style of life. The practice and theory of the semi-open documentary approach stand as Łoziński's filmmaking development both in deference of, and in reaction to, the work and philosophy of his professor Kazimierz Karabasz. While Karabasz advocated the patient observation of events and every-day occurrences within the social context, Łoziński troubles the observed surface in order to reveal the systemic dysfunctionalities affecting the mechanisms of society, like an observer would intervene to disturb an aquarium from the outside:

> Take an aquarium. Everything's quiet, the plants flutter beautifully, the little fish swim peacefully, the sand shines bright. As you know, dramatic events can suddenly take place in aquariums. A fish gets nervous, bites another fish, the latter gets scared and escapes so swiftly that he jumps out of the tank. A general melee ensues. If I could afford to keep the camera and the microphone on the aquarium for a month, I would succeed in filming a situation like this; but I am short of time, I already know I can't make it. I won't record all the truth about that aquarium. Therefore, I raise it and shake it a little. And then I put it back. The dirtier sand lifts up, the little plants flutter more violently. Disquiet and aggression also surface, a phenomenon that happens often in an aquarium. This is what I call prompting reality, or putting reality in motion (Iervese & Grasselli 111).

This interventionist method suggests a position that Mikołaj Jazdon referred to as Łoziński's "impatient eye" (2021 Paris Conference), and which Tadeusz Sobolewski sees

as part of Łoziński's defining artistic attitude of "alertness to social reality and to the media that present it" (Łoziński DVD Intro). While this attitude embodies a method of work unique to Łoziński, it reflects the belief that documentary films need to be more than critical inquiries into the negative aspects of the socio-political life, a belief shared by the group of young filmmakers working at the Documentary Film Studio in the 1970s: "We are interested in that place where everything appears to be right, normally, but where there is also hidden some concealed disease. We try to find this disease and bring it to light. We treat situations like this as models, using them to reveal the nature and repeatability of a phenomenon and to question the inert structures that distort the meaning and substance of social affairs" (Kosiński at all 465-466). These words, that are part of the documentary manifesto delivered at the 1971 Krakow National Short Film Festival by Bohdan Kosiński, Krzysztof Kieślowski, and Tomasz Zygadło, suggest the groups' understanding of documentary filmmaking as a means of raising the viewers' social awareness and political consciousness, the main qualities that would allow an active resistance in face of an authoritarian regime unable and uninterested to represent its people. The Krakow Group's assertive formulation of their programmatic investment in the shaping of a collective socio-political awareness signaled the shifting ground of the 1970's decade, when successive political and social events led to the conditions of a vast social movement that culminated with the founding of the independent trade union *Solidarity* in August 1980.

Film theorist and historian Mirosław Przylipiak refers to the young generation of documentarians who presented their manifesto at the film festival in Krakow as being "distrustful of the political system and convinced that they could and should manifest this distrust." He adds:

> [T]hey shared the awareness, increasingly common in the creative and intellectual circles of Poland in the 1970s, that it was the artist's duty to contest the political system. At the same time, all this was happening within the framework of a totalitarian state that controlled the production and distribution of films. Thus, a bizarre situation was created, difficult to understand today, and specific to the cultural life of Poland in the 1970s - films questioning the political system and the legitimacy of state power were made with state money, in state institutions and under the control of state censorship. (Przylipiak, "Polish Documentary Film After 1989")

These observations show both the mechanical character of the political control over the cultural productions, and the filmmakers' determination to use all means at their disposal in order to express their dissenting vision. The vocal directors' uphill battle meant that, once they were able to complete their films, many of these were shelved, temporarily or indefinitely, but then the filmmakers made public the event of the films' production and eventual censorship. From the twelve films Łoziński made between 1971 and 1980, only four films (*A Visit* (1974), *Frontal Collision* (1975), *Film nr 1650* (1976), *The Touch* (1978)) were distributed without being interfered with or stopped from release. (Kornacki, "Politics, Psychology and the Man. The Films of Marcel Łoziński").

Marcel Łoziński's Approach to the Filmed Interview

These historical determinations situate Łoziński as a member of the generation of documentarians that understand their work as an ongoing process of resistance, manifest through films designed as forums of communication. This chapter argues that Łoziński's films stand as convention-defying forms of expression for the filmmaker's concern with the ethos of self-determination and socio-political awareness, and as such, they constitute a practical manifestation of the theoretical vision for an opposition movement of that moment. Łoziński's films depict situations in which the social actors are prompted, directly or indirectly, to situate themselves in relation to their particular contexts of work and life. In *The King* (1974), *The Visit* (1974), *Microphone Test* (1980) and *Practice Exercises* (1986), the films that are the focus of this chapter, the filmmaker uses specific forms of interview – voice-over monologue, conversation, and direct interview (taken within the film) – to make audible *the voice* of the characters. I will analyze *voice* as a concept informed by meanings that have been theorized, affirmed, and contested throughout the history of subjects' speaking in non-fiction films. Furthermore, Łoziński embeds the subject-delivered narratives in filmic constructions that foreground the process of representation, and that (re)frame the scope of the projects as pertaining to the effects of media representation on people's expression through their voices. This layered structuring enables a gradual scaffolding of different levels of meaning that I would refer to as a denotative, a connotative, and a compounded meaning. What people speak about, and the immediate context allowed by the recorded (video or audio) interactions, provide the denotative meaning of the films. Specific to Łoziński's works is the containment of all forms of interviews within the frame of the film, where the interactions and conversations happen inside the filmed worlds – rare crossings on the other side are playfully displaced through the use of a second camera making visible the camera within the frame. While, unlike Kieślowski, Łoziński does not attempt a continuity between the spaces in front and behind the camera, he employs filmic techniques that suggest, implicitly or explicitly, the alterations of the profilmic space through aural or visual media manipulations. The explicit register of manipulation is visible in *The King* and *Practice Exercises*, where Łoziński 'tempers' with the video and audio recording to arrive at daring, experimental editing formats. In *The Visit* and *Microphone Test*, the filmmaker takes an implicit stand as he films situations that include journalists engaged in the process of communication through media representation. These modes of filmic treatment create a perspective that adds a connotative level to the meaning allowed by the ideas and positions expressed through spoken interactions, and that functions like an abstract type of reflexivity that brackets the represented subject in order to focus on the parameters introduced by the process of representation.

I define the compounded meaning as the viewer's reevaluation of the perceived denotative and connotative meanings, in light of the meta-textual contexts of the films' production. As we have seen, Łoziński's filmmaking method relies on what he calls the *condensation of reality*, or the filmmaker's direct intervention in the conditions of the profilmic world, in order to precipitate the unfolding of otherwise naturally-occurring

events. While not disclosed in the final film as such, these interventions are documented in the filmmaker's statements and interviews, and access to this information potentially redirects the spectatorial perception towards ethical questions raised by the role Łoziński assigns to his subjects in advancing his own agenda. The context of the director's pre-filmic interventions reframes the detachment visible in the form of the film - where the world in the film remains at a remove from the making crew – and reveals a dimension of participatory complicity between filmmaker and social actors. At the same time, the knowledge of this behind-the-scene communication complicates the interpretations of the films, and leads to readings that conflict with interpretations that access the denotative and connotative levels only. Most importantly, we need to ask to what extent this 'optional' level (as not necessarily available) of compounded meaning functions as a form of justification for, or argument against, Łoziński's orchestration of situations able to negatively impact the social actors both during, and after, the filmmaking process. Before taking a closer look at the texts of the films, I will assess the theoretical implications of the dynamic of meanings suggested by the films' layered construction.

Theoretical Considerations

Denotative Meaning, or People Speaking as Political Act

The filmic denotative level pertains to the primary context of people engaged in spoken interactions. Throughout the four films, the characters refer to their life experiences and values as informed by their social positioning, while they answer questions that become more targeted and specific, with each film – their contributions range from an account of one's life in *The King*, to details meant to justify the reporter's aggressive questioning of unusual choices of living in *The Visit*; from factory workers' hesitant answers to subversive questions about their role as co-owners of the means of production in *Microphone Test*, to urban passers-by reluctantly giving their takes on the state of the youth, in front of the camera and microphone on the street, in *Practice Exercises*. The filmed interactions suggest Łoziński's belief in the importance of interview - a form of solicited speech - as a way of making people acknowledge their own position in relation to the question asked, and as an act of sharing that implies taking responsibility for one's stand. Łoziński's understanding of the process of interviewing as "the representation of a political or social practice" transpires in the type of inquiries present in the films (Sarlin 322). As such, in each film, a journalist, a radio broadcaster or an interviewer launches questions that act as virtual starting points for an analysis of one's personal *status quo* against the background of systemic dysfunctionalities, within interactions designed as catalysts for the interlocutors' arrival at a form of political awareness. In looking back at the importance of filmed interview for the American political documentary film in the 1960s and 1970s, specifically in relation to media representations of feminist and gay liberation movements, Paige Sarlin affirms the continuous actuality of the method of filmed interview as a political tool relevant for the contemporary social struggles:

> The problem of finding "one's" footing within the context of a social movement and the struggle to understand the forces of subjectivization as both an individual and social being have reemerged in today's struggles as critical issues. In such a context, the interview has renewed relevance and potential as a political tool or tactical method that can catalyze and record processes of radicalization and politicization. (Sarlin 324)

Sarlin's observations lead us to situate Łoziński's work on interview within a continuum of documentary film practice, and to reveal its relevance as visible from two perspectives. On the one hand, in the Polish documentary film production, the use of interview format was relatively new at the beginning of the 1970s. In this context, Łoziński's recognition of the potential of interview at a time of the rising of a social movement, and his consistent exploration of the technique as both representation of, and catalyst for, the simmering socio-political dynamics of the moment, speak for the director's skill of inscribing the creative expression allowed by formal innovation within the sphere of politically engaged commitments. On the other hand, Sarlin words suggest that, beyond historical moment and political system, Łoziński's filmed interviews stand as references for a type of representation that enables the characters' speaking by treating *voice* as a personal enactment of the political.

Connotative Meaning, or Framing the Interview

What I called denotative level refers to the meaning the films communicate explicitly as related to information exchanged throughout the characters' interactions. The filmmaker keeps this important, character-originated meaning, at the center of the project, as its nucleus, while he zooms-out to frame the filmed situations in broader contexts of media representation. These detached perspectives reveal the initial narratives as sites for subject construction, and raise questions about perceived dynamics of power. Łoziński is aware that, in the words of Sarlin, "[t]he significance of the filmed interview as a media form derives from its ability to represent subjectivity as a discursive process and event" (Sarlin 322). The interactive situations he proposes facilitate discursive processes that produce particular facets of characters' subjectivity, according to the broader representational framing that constitutes, in fact, the filmic event. In *The King*, while the temporal gap between the voice-over monologue and the silent face of the speaker relegates the interview interaction to a pre-filmic moment in the past, the montage-like editing of visuals stands for the filmmaker's commentary in the margins of the man's account of his life. In *The Visit*, the journalist and the photographer surround and interrogate first the villagers, and then the main character, in a targeted campaign of media (mis)representation that both mirrors and feeds the ongoing process of filmic representation. *Microphone Test* shows the struggle of the radio broadcaster to represent the voices of the factory workers as a daring and eventually unsuccessful project, an initiative as risky as it is questionable, as one could anticipate it as doomed to fail from the start. In *Practice Exercises*, as a television crew interviews people on the street about their opinion on the young generation, consecutive editing versions of the interactions

render the participants' answers and reactions irrelevant, in a purposefully bold manipulation of the relation between sound and image. Always at a remove from the filmed interactions, Łoziński's distant authority surfaces throughout an indirectly reflexive framing that lets out the suggestion of a connotative meaning. This layered filmic construction reveals the filmmaker's agenda of playing with and against the effects of media representation, while at the same time it signals a potential perpetuation of issues of imbalance of power that Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein consider as haunting the process of interviewing:

> Empowerment in this context is not so much a matter of providing the communicative means for the respondent to tell his or her "own" story as it is a matter of recognizing, first, that responses or stories, as the case might be, are collaborative accomplishments and, second, that there are as many individual responses or stories to tell as there are recognizable forms of response. This, of course, ultimately brings us full circle to the analytically hoary problem of whose interests are being served when the individually "empowered" respondent speaks, implicating power in relation to the broader social horizons of speech and discourse. (Gubrium & Holstein 42)

As these observations suggest, a responsibly ethical approach is almost untenable, as a process of interviewing that carries a conscious awareness of the determinations and constraints it forces on the shaping of the speaking subject seems incompatible with the necessary observation of the interviewer's pre-established institutional agenda. Whereas Gubrium and Holstein refer to the context of sociological research interview, Łoziński approaches filmed interview as a tool of political dissent aimed at the representational practices sanctioned by the system. While he attempts to expose and counteract forms of regime propaganda delivered through media manipulation, the filmmaker seems to displace one form of institutional control for another, as he devises situations that place the social actors' performances of their real-life personas in the service of his own argument.

Łoziński's preoccupation with forms of media representation shows a timely synchronization with contemporary cultural theories that question the "adequacy of representation for the description of phenomena as well as for the interpretation that follow" (Renov 108). Through his double challenge of authority – in films that take on both the politics of the regime, and established forms of documentary representation – Łoziński is an early adept of the "incredulity toward metanarratives", or what Jean-François Lyotard proposed as a simplified definition of postmodernism (qtd in Gubrium & Holstein 5). The filmmaker's projection of interview inquiry onto the study of its representational practices stands as a postmodernist gesture towards a reflexive approach, one that extends meaning as an interval between denotative and connotative levels of expression. According to Trinh T. Minh-ha, the reflexive dimension in filmmaking refers to the "processes [meant] to prevent meaning from ending with what is said and what is shown, […] thereby to challenge representation itself while emphasizing the reality of the experience of film" (Trinh 47). While Łoziński's layering of meaning within unorthodox filmic forms leaves indeed an open-ended entrance for the viewer's interpretation, the interval that allows the intersection between the denotative and connotative spheres lacks

the smoothness of a blending in, as it retains the sense of a mixing of discrepant materials that refuse to dissolve into each-other.

Compounded Meaning, or the Influence of the Meta-textual Context

I defined the compounded meaning as stemming from the re-reading of the films in light of the meta-textual information about the context of their production. The knowledge about the details of the filmmaker's intervention in – or provocation of – the reality to be filmed is susceptible to influence our perception and interpretation of the film. In *The Visit*, we see the woman journalist probing the intellectual farmer Urszula Fliss through aggressive questions that disturb the woman and bring her on the verge of crying. In *Microphone Test*, we witness the young man in charge of the factory's radio program undergoing an excruciating reprimand from the management because of his attempt to broadcast inconvenient interviews he made with the factory workers. What these films do not reveal are Łoziński's contributions of summoning the journalist Marta Wesołowska to be part of his film as the interviewer, and that of suggesting – in fact, convincing – the radio broadcast director to ask the workers about their understanding of their role as co-owners/co-managers of the factory. The filmed interactions involve thus difficult processes of questioning people about their understanding of their socio-political situations, but the overall framing of these contexts suggests the likelihood that the filmmaking process bring direct or indirect harm to the social actors.

One can argue that Łoziński's acts of *condensation of reality* relate to his propensity for thinking through and along the process of filmmaking, a way of "putting representation into perspective as we *practice* it", as David MacDougall suggests as a perceptive definition of reflexivity (MacDougall 87). In this case, as concerned with socio-political implications and effects of media representation, Łoziński's reflexivity remains abstract and removed, as it bypasses the mere effects and implications of his own work on, and for, the people involved. David MacDougall writes about his understanding of his own filmmaking practice: "In the eyes of *my* subjects, my work will be judged by its good faith toward them and its understanding of their perception of the world, without pretending to be their view of it. […] If I am self-reflexive, that self-reflexivity must be about the relationship between us, not a way of speaking behind my hand to some foreign audience." (91) The nature of the rapport the documentary filmmaker establishes with his subjects, as made visible foremost within the text of the film, directly determines the viewer's availability and openness as an active contributor at making meaning. Łoziński's failure to responsibly return to his subjects throughout these films prevents us from finding ways that could mediate the tension between the levels of denotative and connotative meaning, and leaves us captive within a binary escapable through a choice we may refuse to make.

The Visit and *Microphone Test* - The Ethics and Politics of Speaking Up

There are a number of elements that recommend an analytical reading of *The Visit* (1974) and *Microphone Test* (1980) in relation to each other. Built around interviews, the films capture the processes of gathering information to be used in forms of media representations, such as an article for the *Polityka* magazine in *The Visit*, and a radio broadcast on the local station of the Pollena-Uroda cosmetics factory in *Microphone Test*. Łoziński arranged or somehow determined, for both films, the participation of the specific reporters, and the events of the filmic productions affected the lives of these people beyond the context of the films. While interviewing is here the technique that solicits the speakers' acknowledged position in relation to particular topics, the important distinction in these films (as compared to *The King* and *Practice Exercises* which I will analyze later) stands in the use of this vehicle of communication as a stirring tool able to dislodge fossilized mentalities and to initiate change in people's thinking. The films touch on the dynamic between people's rather conforming ways of expression when addressed in groups, and the unconstrained reasoning attained through honest self-scrutiny when addressed individually. If the spoken interactions within the profilmic world lead to transformation perceivable in the social actors' attitudes, Łoziński is interested in the conditions of a similar effect at the level of representation. This preoccupation transpires within filmic gestures of reflexivity – more visible in *The Visit,* rather implicit in *Microphone Test* – that situate the act of filmmaking in a mirroring relation with the media representation process at the center of the films. These reflexive accents place the predominantly observational filming mode within a grey area in-between the non-intrusive camera and microphone of direct cinema, and the participatory interventions of *cinéma vérité*: while the film crew never crosses the screen, the filmic representation takes shape as a commentary on, or substitute for, the media representation in the making in front of the camera.

Initial Contexts and Final Films

In his writings and interviews, Łoziński shared the ideas and the context at the root of each film. *The Visit* (1974) shows the interaction of journalist Marta Wesolowska and photographer Erazm Ciolek with Urszula Fliss, a young farmer they visit in order to interview and photograph for an article in the weekly magazine *Polityka*. Urszula works hard to take care of the family farm after the passing of her father, but she has gotten the media's attention for her unusual passion for literature and theater. Łoziński had seen Urszula in a television interview taken by Irena Dziedzic, the host of the weekly series of conversations Tele Echo. The filmmaker remembers that

> [a]fter that TV show she had become a very popular figure, a champion of the socialist state. We were presented with a young woman who runs a 13-hectare farm by herself, reads quality literature, in-between works in the fields goes to the theatre, and writes letters to culture personalities at night. In her naivety, Urszula was manipulated by propaganda. I wanted to expose the dramatic side of her life,

> her loneliness, the neighbours' hostility, the lack of perspectives." (Iervese & Grasselli 115-116)

In his Łódź Film School graduation paper, Łoziński recalls the circumstances of the "provocation of reality" for this film which

> was assumed to be an account of the making of a specific reportage for TV and a satire on primitive propaganda on the constant need to seek for and create "model" characters. Our interference was supposed to be limited to bringing together the television crew and a pre-selected female protagonist, i.e. a girl running a farm on her own. Under the script, both parties were supposed to be generally "pre-programmed", as well.
>
> For various reasons, the television crew was not able to come. That is when we decided to replace it with a journalist and a photographer. And that is when another possible option of going about this meeting came to our minds: we decided to choose a young, talented female journalist and confront these two women with each other, one being the "raw material" for the other. And that is how the film was shot. (Łoziński, *Theory of Practice*, 82)

According to cinematographer Jacek Petrycki, the filmmaker warned Urszula that he would bring in the media which would approach her in an abusive way. This context shows the extent to which Łoziński planned and was able to implement the specific elements he was interested in, and suggests the evolution of his interference from theoretical vision to practical reality. In retrospect, Łoziński's expressed intentionality referred to directions hardly compatible: on the one hand, the film would disprove the propaganda image of the 'model woman' by revealing the conditions of Urszula's life, within an approach that would be, on the other hand, a satirical take on media representation. These divergent directions introduce a tension that transfers onto the never-quite-coming-together registers of the final film – the immediate context of Urszula's life as apparent in the characters' interactions, at a denotative level, and the reflexive commentary on the construction and effects of representation which the formal elements suggest, at a connotative level. The pervasive tension at work between these two registers stems from the paradoxical position Łoziński assigns to the media team: the journalist and the photographer need to be the skilled intermediaries able to access and reveal the personal realm of Urszula, even while they appear as clumsy and aggressive enablers of an institutionalized process of representation. As they arrive in the village, they solicit the villagers' thoughts about Urszula Fliss, and later at her house, they interview and photograph the woman and her mother. The interactions with the villagers reinforce the journalist's pre-formed image of Urszula as unable to understand and unwilling to solve the perceived contradiction of her life as an intellectual farmer. Marta's attitude drives the narrative towards a direct conflict with Urszula, whom she tries to persuade, during a heated conversation, that it is best for her to leave the village. The remarkable achievement of the film comes from Urszula's ability to balance her performance in and out of representation by rejecting the journalist's suggestions and turning the questioning back to her. Although subjected to emotional strain, Urszula takes over the filmic project, and, as she renders the questioning process inopportune and

relative, she troubles the journalist's self-confidence and sows the seeds for a reassessment of her vision.

If the impetus for making *The Visit* was Łoziński's attempt at recuperating a certain image of Urszula from the propagandistic projection of her qualities of self-educated peasant as a virtual socialist hero, *Microphone Test* stands as the filmmaker's reaction to a long-in-the-coming deceit of the working class. The ideology that proclaimed the working class as the ruling class, and thus as the owner of the means of production, ideology that served to legitimize the socialist system's take (and hold) of power, was still perceived as carrying a revolutionary potential for change in the early 1970's, but it became a slogan devoid of substance by the end of the decade (Kołakowski 11). In their 1971 documentary *Workers '71: Nothing About Us Without Us*, directors Krzysztof Kieślowski and Tomasz Zygadło filmed workers speaking up about their working difficulties in different factories throughout Poland. The moment was full of hope for change, as following the violent confrontations between police and the shipyard workers going on strike over Władysław Gomułka's rise in food prices in December 1970, the Politburo replaced Gomułka with Edward Gierek. During a conversation recorded while a group of workers were having their lunch, one of them says: "They've been saying this since the December incidents, that we are the ruling class. And we are the managers of our area and nobody else. Whether on the national level or nationwide. And these people are finally starting to feel this way. […] they want to have something tangible to do and something to say as well." Notable in this dialogue is the workers' reference to the principle of self-management of their work environment, which will return in Łoziński's film. *Workers '71* documented people's complaints about exploitative work conditions and their urgent calls for a transformation consistent with the ideological rhetoric, expressions that mirrored the workers' strong belief in the democratic promise of the socialist system. But the film, produced by the Documentary Film Studio in Warsaw, and subsequently edited into a less virulent version that the filmmakers were constrained to accept, has never been distributed and shown, and this stands as a sign of the authorities' continuous politics of deceit.

In 1980, Łoziński decides to bring forth the gap between propaganda and reality by filming a situation where workers have to assess their understanding of factory co-management and their participation in it, the same principle that had animated people's hopes for change in 1970. This is how the filmmaker describes the process of finding a reporter willing to lead the interviews with the workers for the film:

> For many months Krzysztof Wierzbicki and I looked for such a man. Finally, in "Pollena-Uroda" Wierzbicki came across Michał Stepniewski. He ran the factory radio, studied history in the evenings and he was a party member. At first, he did not want to agree to our offer. Maybe he did not ask himself such questions we were asking or maybe he was just scared. When I finally managed to persuade him, I also warned him that this film might be controversial and he risked being fired. But Michał was already involved in the project. (Janicka & Kołodyński 214)

From another interview account, we learn that Michał believed in the system and thus he did not see any risk in asking those particular questions, but that the answers he got were different from what he expected. (Armata 9).

The film follows in observational mode the first two stages of Michał's production of the factory's radio broadcast – the reporter's process of interviewing several individual workers, followed by his meeting with the factory administrative council that was supposed to approve the actual broadcasting of the interviews. During his questioning, the reporter encounters reactions that suggest that either the people do not understand what co-management of the factory means, or they choose to downplay the real meaning and adapt it to their actual situation in order to cope and get by, or that they know better but prefer not to speak in fear or being punished or reprimanded. Thus, while his interviewing develops towards clarifying the concepts and convincing the interlocutors to speak their mind, the actual finalization and transmission of the broadcast becomes a mission of communicating his findings to all workers of the factory, in order to raise their socio-political awareness and lay the ground for open conversations with the management. The somehow naive quality of Michał's approach transpires in a painful way in the second part of the film, when Łoziński's preproduction warning of the controversial potential of the film is actualized. The group of managers and factory leaders echo each other in reprimanding – with superficial arguments suggesting politicized reasons – both the idea of the broadcast and its implementation, as they deem its social value unworthy to be communicated.

The affective profile of the film follows an ascending-descending curve, as the workers' gradual awakening through self-expression brings a mobilizing, almost revolutionary energy in the first part, while the reactions of the politicized management lower the spirits towards a bleak closing off through a denial of resolution, in the second part. In this context, the radio reporter becomes the literal voice-keeper of the people, in the face of an authoritarian leadership that denies the right to free communication. By contrast, in *The Visit*, the film's affective energy flows along a descending-ascending, or discouraging-hopeful, profile – where at first Marta, the journalist, boldly reaffirms (with the help of the villagers) the officially sanctioned class division holding peasants and intellectuals as pertaining to distinct living environments, while in the second part Urszula's articulate resistance to this officially prescribed behavior brings about the possibility of a change of views and of a transformation of mentalities. This opposite dynamics of the respective affective profiles of the films mirrors their distance in time – *The Visit* ends on a note of hope for the power of outspoken subjects, as in 1974 the socio-political climate allowed a horizon yet fertile for change; *Microphone Test* proposes no exit from a closed system that, in 1980, was a few months away from imploding under a collective cry of *solidarity*. While with *The Visit* Łoziński marked the accessibility of a horizon of hope, with *Microphone Test* he affirmed the necessity for a continuous striving for maintaining the fading hope on the horizon. As such, if in *The Visit* the filmmaker had the relaxation to attend to the form of representation (proposing a documentary portrait as opposed to a television propaganda myth), in *Microphone Test* he made a stringent argument for the mere existence of representation as a means of

communication, and assembled his film as the stand-in for the never approved factory broadcast.

Group Speaking, Individual Talking

In both films, the reporters approach people that speak as members of their social or occupational groups, and that show different types of engagement in situations of collective address versus contexts of individual address. Through particular treatments of framing, camera moves and editing, the films mediate this dynamic into representational forms that vary the distance between viewer and filmed world. The interactive situations correspond with the filmic spaces that inscribe the films' narrative arcs: the more linear construction of *The Visit* shows a group approach in the village, interactions of the reporters with Urszula and her mother around and in the women's hose, and more intimate conversation-interviews between Marta and Urszula in the field and inside the house. The first part of *Microphone Test* consists of an alternation of three types of sequences – the first type is of Michał in his studio preparing for the radio broadcast, and later listening the recorded interviews, the second type of images show the man walking through the factory amongst the people working, and the last type is of the actual individual interviews with the workers. The second part of the film shows the collective interaction of the factory management meeting.

In *The Visit*, once they arrive in the village, Erazm, the photographer, starts taking pictures of the people, and Marta, the journalist, addresses the villagers in front of their houses, in interviews that feel like group conversations because of the presence of more than two people in the frame. The camera follows the interactions with framings and moves that work to extend the profilmic space as if to include the viewer as a participant observer, or one who observes from within the filmed world. The interviewing and photographing are constitutive acts of the making of a representation (in the form of the article for *Polityka*), and the skilled camerawork of cinematographer Jacek Petrycki merges the act of filming with these other acts in a seeming complicity of media representation. While the film looks at the making of a photo-journalistic representation, the formal effect is of a reflexive wink that attempts to collapse the filmic and the journalistic views by erasing the actual space that sustains the frame-within-a-frame construction. This illusion of our presence amongst participants puts us at ease during intrusive and somehow aggressive interactions. As Marta starts questioning the villagers about their perception of Urszula, in her insistence to make people talk she formulates her inquiries as to suggests the answers, somehow guessing the people's minds – Urszula, they think, and express somehow reluctantly, is hardworking, but spends too much time with reading books or writing letters, instead of focusing on her household and farm chores, and finding a man to marry. In the last scenes of the sequence, the camera mingles amongst, and pans across villagers and reporters, with close-up shots cutting from speakers to photographer and back to journalist, while they debate the hypothesis of marrying Urszula, *in her absence*. The moment looks as if the visitors rallied the villagers

in an ambush set-up aimed at their nonconformist neighbor that is framed, *in absentia*, as not fit for her environment by not meeting the expectations of her social group.

In *Microphone Test*, after Michał announces the radio broadcast of the day from his studio, he turns on the music that, in the next shot, reverberates through the factory hall where mostly women workers perform various tasks at their work stations. In the background, Michał walks through the hall at a pace in synch with the upbeat tune and stops for short interactions with some people, while a tracking shot follows him from a distance, revealing the in-between activities that occupy the depth of field. The music that has lost the immediate connection with its source in the previous scene acquires a nondiegetic dimension that brings a sense of fictional staging to the moment, in a twist reminiscent of the Kieślowski's use of music in the first scenes of *The Bricklayer*. At the same time, the camera movement and the framing that keep the protagonist in focus - but rather removed and partially obscured at times by everything visible in-between camera and himself - isolate his actions in a protective space, away from interference. Unlike in *The Visit*, where the camera inserted us amongst the villagers, here we watch from the outside, but not like voyeurs as more like witnesses. If in *The Visit* the presence of the photographic camera eased our sense of visual interference, here the musical score keeps us aurally tuned and shapes our perception of the images as a discreet, unassuming documenting of the main event, the making of an audio representation.

In *The Visit*, the change of location introduces a formal re-adjustment of the two levels of representation that modifies the viewer's previous perception of unmediated access to the filmed world. The camera takes a distance as it films the subjects' interactions from beyond interposed objects – the visitors walk is partly obstructed by the sight of trees, vegetation and the fence of the house; inside the room at Urszula's house, the women's conversation at the table and the photographer's moving around with his camera are visible through the glass and beyond the frame of the semi-open window. The effect is that of an emphasis of the observational eye that keeps us at bay, on the other side, in our spectatorial position, with a concomitant loss of the reflexive suggestion – the filmic representation recuperates its distance, as it is backing away from, even while pointing to, the "making of" journalistic representation. The interactions unravel as framed by the hospitable tradition of a host receiving her guests in the intimacy of the house, and inviting them to have tea around the dining table. Marta addresses Urszula with questions about her life, in what starts as a casual dialogue but continues with pronunciations gradually more intrusive and sententious. Aural and visual markers situate the seeming conversation over tea as an act from the making of the journalistic representation, act that centers on the presence of Urszula, and reveals the woman's incipient position of resistance to this process. For the most of the sequence, the images alternate, through camera pans or editing cuts, between a medium shot of Urszula seated at the table and answering Marta's questions, and medium or close-up shots of Erazm taking photographs inside the room, all seen from the outside through the semi-open window. The visible presence of the photographer's activity reinscribes the interactions within their utilitarian function as forms of solicitations of spoken and visual information. Similarly, the quality of Marta's questions realigns the dialogue with the interrogative

tone of the interview, and produces a sudden fissure within the flow of communication. The dialogue concludes with the following exchange:

> Marta: So, you live in two different worlds. Which of them is more real? Which of these worlds is dearer to you?
>
> Urszula: It's hard to give a clear answer because it's hard to talk about these things. These experiences are so intimate. Actually, I don't know which one is more real. Of course, the one I live in, I mean the work, all of this. After all, I realize I need my sustenance to be able to stargaze, so to speak…
>
> Ezram: Can the two of you switch places? But come back afterwards.

As she hears the question, Urszula keeps her eyes down, on a side, for a while, like pondering the meaning of the words, and this gesture is the first to signal a glitch in communication. Marta's question reveals her tendency to think and operate in hard categories – here, she suggests a distinction between a world that is real as opposed to one that is close to the woman's heart. Urszula, however, bypasses the idea of a difference based in opposition, even as she explains why the reporter's approach is incommensurate with the intimate quality of her lived experience. Looking at the relationship between subjectivity and the process of interview, Gubrium and Holstein write: "In practice, respondent subjectivity emerges out of the give-and-take of the interview process, even while the researcher might hope for a particular form of agency or footing to emerge out of an interview format designed to explore a specific research topic" (Gubrium & Holstein, "Narrative Practice" 37). Here, the protagonist's affirmation as a subject comes in reaction to the inadequacy of the interview format. The moment marks the beginning of Urszula's active resistance to the process of journalistic representation, and of her refusal to constrain her persona to fit into the subject template the two media people project on her. At the end of the sequence, when Ezram directs the women to switch places, and then points the camera towards Urszula, a close up on her face reveals a disconcerted look, along small, nervous moves of her lips, a face that gives full expression to both retrospective doubt and anxious expectation, as if saying: how and why did I get myself into this?

The performative sense of this sequence – where every character assumes the role assigned within the process of journalistic representation – resonates with the depiction of Michał's preparatory activities in *Microphone Test*. However, whereas *The Visit* frames the actions of the reporters as demonstrative and coming from a position of authority given by their perceived possession of a higher knowledge they need to impart to - or even impose on - Urszula, *Microphone Test* depicts Michał as engaged in a quest for a knowledge that he does not have and is open to receive. Michał walks into the factory hall as a member of the workers community, and he approaches the people as a familiar face on a shared territory. The workers, thus, trust him and willingly talk when addressed individually, but the editing of the film suggests that an effective communication happens only gradually, only after Michał's understands that he needs to rephrase and clarify his questions. At first, he asks: "I want to know what you mean by the term 'factory co-management'." The answers that come in speak about doing one's job diligently, taking care of the equipment, filling the quota, doing what one is told to. Then, five minutes in, Michał intervenes abruptly: "No. I mean 'co-management' or 'co-deciding'." As people

attribute the competence for decision-making to the management, Michał guides their thinking further: "[W]ould you like to be able to co-decide?" Eventually, a woman's voice admits, as recorded on the tape Michał plays in his studio: "We only carry out our duties, well, we are factory owners… only by name." In the factory hall, when asked if he feels that his opinion matters, a man answers: "No, there's a team of decision makers, and we're expected to be passive." The interview sequence ends with two powerful exchanges the reporter has with two women he approaches as they work at their stations:

> First woman: No, I'm not going to talk.
> Michał: Are you afraid of getting into trouble for it or just…
> First woman: No, for instance, when we report or say something, right from the start, we are, somehow… Well, we receive signals that we cannot… that there's no hope that anything's going to change. That's the way it is. Period. We only talk amongst ourselves about this or that, but nothing comes of it. The situation drags on, you can't see anything changing for the better.
> Michał (explaining this to another woman seated at her workstation): What I mean is… that people look beyond their workstations and object to, let's say, wrong decisions. Do you think that people would be brave enough to say, 'No, I think this should be done differently'?
> Second woman: Well, you know what? I don't know. People rather talk among themselves, you know. People, for instance… Perhaps they are intimidated, perhaps they are afraid to say something but I think we shouldn't be afraid, should we? What should we be afraid of?

These last two dialogues are a condensation of the process visible all along – addressed with more nuanced questions, the people start to realize their own attitude of silenced conformity to a duplicitous politics of suppression covered up in empty slogans. As such, the evolution of these interviews attests for, in Page Sarlin's words, "the role of speech and language in the construction and articulation of political subjectivity" (Sarlin 322). The interviewees went from barely addressing the core of the question, at the beginning, to a cry about "not seeing anything change for the better" (the first woman above), and to the call of the realization that they should not be afraid to talk (the second woman above).

While Michał interviews each worker individually, the communal space of the hall factory transpires through the background sound and the editing. We only see one talking worker in the frame at a time, but in the second part of the interviews, some shots cut away to one or another woman that, from their stations, seemingly watch on the conversations we still hear in voice-off. These ways of framing and editing suggest a complex dynamic where the individual interview address takes place within a witnessing group whose presence does not perturb the honesty of the testimonies. The last two women join in Michał's thread of questioning by voicing out thoughts and feelings previously repressed, despite being virtually seen and heard by their coworkers. The framings of the interviews keep Michał always visible while showing the interlocutors from different angles, with various degrees of lighting, and at times with objects interposed between camera and subjects – as if in a careful looking in, likely through a zoom from afar, as suggested by the flattened perspective and by the absence of people's acknowledgement of the camera. The whole interview series makes us think of

Kieślowski's *Talking Heads* – like in that film, here the variety of the situations speaks for the amplitude of the project, and the attention to framing and camera position shows the determination to accommodate the speakers while allowing them a safe space. The difference is that Kieślowski filmed his interlocutors in 1981, during the short but effervescent times of the legality of *Solidarity*, when they could speak with no fear of repercussions as they would see the possibility of change. That moment is soon to come for the workers in *Microphone Test* filmed in 1980, but their fruitful collaboration with the reporter is the expression of a long-suppressed energy now channeled into a process of communication. The film presents Michał's achievement as a metaphor for the arduous but unfaltering mobilization of an opposition movement through a communication that leads to political consciousness.

In *The Visit*, the individual interview at the center of the film takes the form of a heated conversation between Marta and Urszula, while they seat on the grass in the middle of a pasture field. Petrycki's camera records from a significant distance, as Urszula's cows move unbothered in various directions throughout the space between the women and the camera, revealing thus the zoomed-in quality of the medium take. If the photographer's presence in the sequence inside the house acted as an anchoring element of the frame-within-a-frame convention, his absence here qualifies the scene as an observational take of two women talking. The layered construction of the frame – with the animals moving in the foreground, the women talking in the middle, and some occasional cars passing on the road barely visible at the top of the frame – along with the close-up sound of the voices that contrasts with the perceived distance of the speakers, situate the viewers as voyeuristic witnesses of the conversation. More so, the camera's observational stance feels like a duplicitous form of praying from a distance – on the one hand, it displays a by-the-book attitude of non-interference, on the other, it takes narrative advantage of the emotional drama that it indirectly helps orchestrate. Encouraged by the deceiving distance of the film crew, the women come out of character, and their interaction slips out of their established rapport as journalist and subject of representation.

In this sequence, the observational mode and the context of the setting frame Marta's journalistic interrogation as a filmed conversation that carries markers of testimony. Jeffrey Skoller considers that the difference between filmed testimony and journalistic interview lies in "the emphasis on speaking as a process of coming to knowledge rather than giving a statement" (133). Although Marta starts with precise, pointed questions, the dialogue flows as reoriented by Urszula's answers and interventions – Marta listens and reacts, and, at a certain moment, she encourages the woman to keep on talking. The form of the conversation suggests, thus, the interlocutors' reciprocal attention, and Marta's interest in a gradual arrival at understanding Urszula's thinking, akin to "a process of coming to knowledge." At the same time, Marta's questions come from a position of power the reporter inhabits as she considers herself to be in the know, to have the knowledge of what a woman should do with her life, and thus the right to assess Urszula's different behavior as in need of remediation. The inquiries are along the lines of: As the most intelligent person in the village, why don't you want to choose something at last? Are reading books and writing letters to authors and artists

enough to develop one's personality? Why are you stuck in here if you do not like the people in the village? Can a woman live alone? Do you want to be alone all your life? These questions seemingly attempt to make Urszula reflect at the inner reasons of her behavior, and so to determine her to change her mind, but Marta's tone and formulation resemble a call for Urszula to answer for her behavior in face of the expectations of a higher authority. In other words, while operating within the framework of testimony, Marta requests from the protagonist a confession, a type of response that Paige Sarlin defines as "a form in which the individual subject is situated in relation to power structures" (337). However, Urszula does not submit to a confession, and she maintains a position of testimony, position consistent with a manifestation of resistance, according to Gregg Bordowitz's analysis of these two forms:

> Through testimony one bears witness to one's own experience to one's self. Through confession one relinquishes responsibility for bearing witness to and for one's self with the hope that some force greater than one's self will bear away the responsibilities for one's actions. […] A testimony that leads to confession recapitulates repression. A testimony performed successfully can lead toward liberation. (qtd in Sarlin 337)

Throughout the conversation, there are three instances in which the young woman rejects Marta's assessment of her noncompliance, by asserting total ownership of decisions, and responsibility for consequences. At the beginning, when asked why she does not want to choose, Urszula explains why she considers that she has already made a choice. Later on, at the question of why she is not leaving from the village, she replies, exasperated and in tears, that her decision to stay came after years of hardship at the farm, a decision she believes she should not have to justify. Towards the end, as Marta continues stubbornly along the same lines, the woman asks, detached and rhetorically, "do you think this conversation is helping me?". If a confession implies the admission of a doing that needs to be justified and eventually corrected, thus a submission to the social, cultural or political expectations that dictate one's behavior, Urszula's refusal of such an admission gives expression of her bearing witness to her own experience, in a painful but liberating testimonial on her way of life as an assumed and fulfilling choice. The woman's position stands as a gesture of resistance to the patriarchal understanding of the role of women in society, but also to the communist society's unofficial class division between workers, peasants, and intellectuals.

In their approach of individual people, both Michał in *Microphone Test* and Marta in *The Visit* frame the interviews as testimonial interactions, in so far as there is a rapport of communication towards arriving at a personal knowledge accessed through self-scrutiny. The interlocutors engage various types of emotions in the process of bringing to the surface and putting into words inner thoughts and feelings, and the filmic representations build on the reporter's negotiations of this emotional tone. Unlike Marta, Michał does not prescribe the workers what to do or how to do it, his interactions remain consensual and thus the emotions they trigger are productive, the people feel emboldened to speak as if they rediscover a forgotten strength. Michał's posture as the radio guy with the mic in his hand situates his actions in the service of his project – both speakers and viewers perceive the conversations as forms of communication to be virtually

broadcasted. In *The Visit*, though, the emotional dynamic of the interaction suggests the women step out the conventions of their roles, while they attempt, unsuccessfully, to attenuate the lingering power rapport. After a few exchanges, Urszula asks: "What do you actually think about what I do?" The word "actually" qualifies the question as addressed to Marta-the-woman-subject, and not Marta-the-reporter, expressing Urszula's genuine interest in a communication on equal footing. Later, when Uszula breaks down in tears as she recalls hard times with no help from her neighbors, Marta loses her temper and raises her voice: "Then, why are you stuck here?" The woman replies, angry and in tears, that she created her own world at home, which she would not give up. Toward the end of the dialogue, Marta attempts, at her turn, to let go of her power position, as she appeals to a reasoning based in gender solidarity, with a cautionary reminder of the ephemerality of a woman's youth, good looks and charm. These emotional fluctuations and moments of almost-but-not-quite coming together suggest the persistent distance between the women's types of engagement, and their failure to actually connect or communicate. The viewer's discomfort while watching this sequence comes from the awareness of the deceiving conditions leading to the escalating tensions. The observational setting encourages a genuine and raw interaction, despite – or because – the actuality of the interlocutors' differing ideologies and incompatible social positions. In their analysis of in-depth interviewing, John M. Johnson and Timothy Rowlands write:

> To be effective and useful, in-depth interviews develop and build on intimacy; in this respect, they resemble the forms of talking one finds among close friends. […] The talk between friends is an end in itself. But when an in-depth interviewer talks to an informant, the goal is to collect data. Some specific ethical issues arise because of this difference. (Johnson & Rowlands 100)

Because the sequence setting leads the women to behave outside their journalistically confined roles, they develop a directness that is based in a shared gesturing towards reciprocal trust. Łoziński captures this actual interview like a personal conversation that he instrumentalizes into the representation of Urszula's opposition to Marta, the reporter already portrayed as aggressive and insensitive. This debatable filmic treatment raises a number of ethical questions: How does the filmic representation influence the viewers' perception and understanding of the social actors? In other words, what is the image the film gives of the women, and with what consequences for participants on both sides of the screen? How does this rendering negotiate the trespassing of some representational boundaries? The inclusion of the women's emotional outbursts directly exposes the characters' vulnerabilities, and turns the viewers into involuntary voyeurs. While the women act like their own selves, the filmmaker's gaze is intrusive and manipulatory. At the same time, even as he takes advantage of the painful interaction, Łoziński isolates himself on the other side of the camera, while the women join forces to gradually sleep away from representation.

If in *The Visit*, the conflictual situation finds direct expression in words during the conversation of the two women in the field, in *Microphone Test* the tension comes to the surface during the meeting between Michał and the factory management. Disconcerting to watch, the dialogue opposes the reporter's reasoned attempt at summarizing the issue – how can the management explain the workers' responses of not feeling like participants

in the management of the factory? - to the leaders' contradictory reactions even while trying to agree with each other in a group condemnation of the project. The trigger of the conflict is the interviewer's ability to bring the workers to speak openly against their unfair treatment – but even when the administrative functionaries note people's initial reluctance to speak up, they blame it on Michał's lack of skill in approaching them. As such, the officials say, the reporter is to blame for "trying to furtively elicit workers' impressions," "having questions ill-considered," and failing to be "a good experienced interviewer [who] always knows the answer in advance." The filming of the meeting suggests a rallying of the management against the man – the camera moves from one speaker to another, and cuts across various interlocutors around the table, as they bounce back Michał's questions and refute his arguments. We witness a hijacking of the speakers' ability to think individually by a collective attitude that alternates between a justifying defense of the management's social measures, and an incoherent but vocal offensive against the perspective of broadcasting information perceived as a threat. While Michał explains that, by allowing the broadcasting of the interviews, the leaders would prove that the opinions of the workers matter, the unresponsive attitude of the director suggests that the crisis has reached a point where dialogue and compromise are not on the table. At the beginning of the decade, Kołakowski could see this moment coming:

> The contradiction between technological development and the system of political government and economic management can only become a factor of development if this contradiction finds expression in a social conflict: the conflict between all the social sectors which have an interest in maintaining the existing mechanism of exploitation, on the one hand, and the working class together with the intelligentsia -- in the first place the technical and administrative intelligentsia — on the other. (Kołakowski 14)

If the repressive solidarity of the management board in adopting the voice of exploitative authority is a symptom of the transformation of this contradiction into a form of social conflict, the revolutionary solidarity the workers achieve through the process of interviewing comes as the marker of their being ready to stand up for such a conflict.

The group expression of an officially sanctioned position recalls the beginning of *The Visit*, where the peasants encourage each other, at Marta's suggestion, to speak against Urszula's unusual way of living. These forms of collective voicings of individuals echoing each other bring to mind a double phenomenon – the gregarious spirit of joining a general opinion out of a sense of belonging, but also the need for conformity that becomes a law of survival in the socialist society. While these directions are both manifest in each film, the villagers act out of their personal believes in conservatory values, whereas the management members have vested interest in maintaining a political front.[15] The films represent these situations as important points of articulation for their narratives, but at the same time, we can decipher here the influence of socio-political factors in the behavior of some groups of people in the Polish society of the 1970s. The contexts of the interactions are different – an informal outdoor village gathering in *The*

[15] "[S]ome of the values esteemed by the peasantry [are] private ownership of land, political conservatism, the preeminence of economic interests, and devotion to the Catholic church" (Taras 132).

Visit, a formal meeting of administrative officials in *Microphone Test* – but they share a sense of uniformity, of lack of diverse or personal reactions. These interactions also have in common a framing of people's expression of opinions in relation to a specific topic, where their solidarity of opinion relies on a stand that is critical of the issues addressed. In their film *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961), Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin interview people and film group gatherings in different situations. One informal getting together happens around a house dinner, where the group of mostly young participants engage in a vivacious conversation about the ongoing Algerian War, a topic that, while it brings everyone to a consensual condemnation of the war, provokes heated disagreement about the concrete actions of oppositions one should take. The young interlocutors speak their mind, on camera, against the official political position of the French government (although the more vehement positions are left out of the film), but while in agreement on the bigger issues, they do not hesitate to challenge each other by both affirming their personal stands and criticizing, with intellectual arguments, positions they find incompatible with their own.[16] This assertive quality of expression is apparent also in the sequence of the group's assessment of the final film, where the social actors speaking as viewers criticize the filmic performance of some of their peers with aggressive and almost disturbing remarks. While *Chronicle of a Summer* was the first documentary to record this type of spoken interaction, the film retains a freedom of speech and a courage of dissenting hardly present in Łoziński's group scenes in the two films we discuss. At the same time, as we have seen, the asserting expression of one's opinion was a form of discourse pervasive in Kieślowski's *Workers '71*. In that film, during a meeting of a plant council, a worker declares, in an increasingly angry voice, as camera moves around to reveal the faces of the listeners, with the speaker visible only from behind:

> I think the plant council is there to defend the employee and offer support. All problems should be dealt with by the plant council. And not that everything is under the control of the director or actually, the administration. They have a hold on everything. And that's why the plant council is powerless in some things, really.
>
> Why? Because the plant council is financially tied to the administration. What happened to the previous supervisor of the council? Why isn't he here? He wanted to have it his way. So, they said watch it, we're going to make you come around. And they did. And where was the collective? And everyone would suffer the same fate.
>
> So, the general conclusion here is what? That we have diddly to say here. That we are only supposed to work and to get yelled at. And nothing else. And it will be bad so long as the workers don't have an active say about the management of the plant, about making plans, realistic possibilities for these plans, and as long as these plans aren't generated from the bottom up.

[16] The disagreement referring to the efficiency of individual acts of war desertion as opposed to actions able to influence more people to oppose and resist the draft was not included in the film, but it is available to watch in the documentary that includes outtakes, *Un été + 50* (Florence Dauman, 2011).

The worker's vocal stand shows that, in 1971, the people had summoned the determination to speak up – to contribute their voice in a public setting, and more importantly to remain assertive in situations of disagreement with, and anger towards, the official position of the authority. The socio-political events of the decade brought the people's hopes for change down, and their confidence in the power of their voice deteriorated. In this context, *The Visit* and *Microphone Test* represent two distinctive moments in this ongoing disappearance of the people's courage to stand up for their own differing opinion and to participate in situations of speaking openly in the presence of others.

In *The Visit*, the evolution of the interaction between Urszula and Marta seems to overturn this type of enforced socio-political conformity. At nighttime, the camera films, through the closed window, the short exchange the women have while eating dinner. Always careful with the use of words and leaving room for questioning their meaning, Urszula asks: "Do you think you live a successful, happy life or rather…?" At first, Marta utters a self-assured "Yes", but when asked to elaborate, she gradually modifies her subsequent explanations to replace the markers of certitude with expressions of potentiality and ongoing attempt:

U: Yes? Why?

M: Because, it seems to me that all the goals I chose in the past, at least partially, for the time being…

U: You've achieved your goals?

M: I am achieving them…

U: You are?

M: At least I am trying consistently…

This moment suggests that Urszula's true-to-herself attitude determines Marta to reconsider the ways she thinks about her own life, in a reversal of the journalist's projected outcome for the farmer. The camera includes the closed window's frame in the image, with the uncanny effect of keeping us visually outside, in the dark evening, while the close-up sound of the dialogue brings us aurally inside, in-between the speakers. This splitting of our viewing-hearing perception inflects the women's performance with the reverberations of a literary encounter, one that comes to life through the power of the reader's imagination: while visually accessible but marked as out of reach, the near-by sound makes it unreally tangible by bringing it right within reach, in a paradoxical space that escapes the nonfictional dimensions. This effect is enhanced by the observational framing that seems to let the social actors slide on the other side of – or beyond – the representation, in a reversed space where Urszula is now the one asking the questions. The young intellectual farmer takes over the project of the film, as she arrives to influence Marta's behavior in front of the observational camera, as well as the turnout of the reporter's article in *Polityka*.

Reverberations, or the Films' Afterlife

The participation in the films' production affected the lives of Marta, Urszula and Michał long after the filmic events. This information – available in Łoziński's interview accounts about Michał, and within two other media representations involving Marta and Urszula – has the potential to alter our experience of the films, and to complicate our understanding of an authorial ethical position. The creative situations that unfolded in direct relation with the context of *The Visit* are Marta's article for the weekly news magazine *Polityka*, and Łoziński's documentary film *So It Doesn't Hurt* (1997), in which he revisits Urszula Flis and they look back at the experience of filming *The Visit*.

In her article titled "Horoskop w sprawie genów"/ "Gene Horoscope", and published in *Polityka* in 1974 Marta Wesołowska grounds her portrait of Urszula in interviews taken during the encounter documented in *The Visit*, interviews that she enhances by contrasting them with contributions from the woman's family members as well as from her neighbors in the village. The reporter's method of gathering various opinions on Urszula suggests a position of curiosity and an attempt at understanding the context by approaching it from various directions, within a thorough work of journalistic documentation. At the same time, Marta's own voice transpires in the way she arranges these opinions and edits the written material, while subtly letting in her own point of view as informed by the experience of the encounter. Within particular observations and comments, the article reveals the author's dimensions of openness and attention to nuances, qualities that hardly surface during the interactions visible in Łoziński's film. While Urszula's words constitute the main thread of the article, they also stand apart from other people's interventions - if the latter deliver information on interlocutors' social status, relation with Urszula, and perception of her attitudes, the former recount details of the woman's literary and theatrical preoccupations, with an abundance of names of important writers, authors, and plays that Urszula has come in contact with as a reader, spectator, or correspondence writer. These two types of information suggest a contrast that recalls Marta's question to Urszula, in *The Visit*, about her living in-between two worlds – however, unlike in the film, here the reporter features the woman's words about her intellectual life, and uses the family and neighbors' contributions to suggest the conflict openly addressed in the documentary: the opposition between her unconforming life as an intellectual farmer, and the expectations and perceptions of her social milieu. At the same time, Wesołowska includes in her article Urszula's complaint about the assault of the media she has been going through: "Everyone comes to me with a ready picture of what they would like to find, everyone wants to fit me into the newspaper's profile" (Wesołowska, "Gene Horoscope"). The inclusion of these words in an article virtually able to replicate this mere process stands as a gesture of reflexivity stronger than the suggestions of reflexive preoccupations present in *The Visit*, as here Urszula – the subject of representation – is talking back to Marta, the author of representation, in a direct, explicit way, enforcing thus a reaction of ethical responsibility. And this reaction, I argue, which Wesołowska subtly enacts throughout the whole article through the weight and stature she gives to Urszula's words, comes across visibly at the end, where, from all the participant voices, the intellectual farmer has the final say:

> Why? Why do I have to fight with my siblings and with you now, convince, prove?! I live here, here, on this farm, it's a choice, damn it! […] I'm looking at my siblings. Are they better than me? More valuable because they took their skills to the cities? […] I want the right to be a farmer who reads and visits theater friends in winter, not a strange phenomenon and a subject of curiosity… (Wesołowska, "Gene Horoscope")

We remember the first sentences as being Urszula's most intense expression of anger and revolt in the exchange with Marta filmed in the field. The article's closure with the woman's affirmation of her rights as a subject able to choose how she lives, and requesting that her choices be respected, suggests Wesołowska's position along and in support of her interlocutor. The overall approach and organization of the article allow the perspective of a complex dynamic of interview interactions, with nuances absent from the filmic representation of the encounter. While one could argue that Łoziński's interest was other than the process of the women's communication, the formal treatment of the filmed interactions brings forth a pervasive oppositional and simplistic dynamic, that acts as the vehicle for the filmmaker's agenda, and that leaves the social actors exposed and vulnerable.

Twenty-three years later, Łoziński returns to film Urszula Flis, this time accompanied by another young journalist, Agnieszka Kublik from the daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*. The 1997 longer film *So It Doesn't Hurt* includes, at the beginning, a slightly trimmed version of the initial short, *The Visit.* One of the missing sequences from the edited version of *The Visit* is the one showing Marta and Urszula eating dinner and talking, inside Urszula's house, in the evening, as they are filmed from the outside through the closed window. The absence of this moment suggests Łoziński's consideration of the evolution of the two women's rapport as not relevant for his next project. Beyond this important observation, a summary analysis of *So It Doesn't Hurt* can give us a sense of Urszula's position in relation to her experiences as a filmmaking participant.

If in *The Visit* Urszula was forced to assess her situation in order to contemplate expected 'corrective' changes, now she is asked to position her present in relation to her past. Łoziński's preoccupation with the past is visible in the construction of the film that, openly reflexive, acknowledges the crew's presence and directly references the process of the making of *The Visit.* As such, the film comes across as a self-referential commentary on the experience of its making as informed by the production of the previous film, a commentary that relies fully on the protagonist's contributions. During a dialogue between Urszula and the reporter, filmed as a re-enactment of the conversation between her mother and Marta in the previous film, the farmer questions the director's intent and choice: "Besides, we are sitting here, you in that reporter's place, and I in my mom's place, and I think to myself that it's all water under the bridge. We are different people now. I have no idea why Marcel told us to seat like this. One can't step into the same river twice..." Throughout this film, Łoziński enacts a sense of recuperation, of doing it all over again, while Urszula responds with a calm but strong affirmation of her subjectivity doubled by a questioning of the scope of the whole filming process. Łoziński crafts the representation as shaped by a seemingly shared agency of the filmmaking

authority with the human subject of the film – Urszula comes across as a subject that speaks for herself, or rather for a self she constructs in reaction to Łoziński's platform.

As viewers summoned to establish a relationship between the two filmic approaches incorporated within *So It Doesn't Hurt*, we are tempted to relate the recuperatory attitude of the later film with the ethical issues that marked the early one: is the second film an expression of Łoziński's perceived guilt of orchestrating a verbal and mediatic abuse of his character in *The Visit*? The questions Agnieszka formulates recall those of Marta – but the new reporter is not interested in preaching a prescriptive future attitude, as in inquiring about past choices that lead to the present context. The flow of the conversations and the camera work shape the character of Urszula as a subject that fully assumes her choices, and that responds with the serenity of a life-long wisdom to the same old questions about the two worlds present in her life, or about the perspective of leaving the farm. At the same time, the film allows the woman an implicit authority by portraying her as holding knowledge that escapes deciphering through the filmmaking process. In response to Agnieszka's question about the definition of happiness, Urszula says: "It sounds awful when you try to dress your emotions in words… when they get lost in words…There must be something beyond words. I'm very attached to words…[…] But fortunately there is something beyond words. Not all things can be expressed in words." An avid reader of literature, Urszula understands that the words' ability to trigger one's imagination relies on the power of what they leave unsaid, on the suggestion born within the intervals, on the feeling caught between the lines. As such, any representation needs to allow room for the interval to breathe, a space to accommodate that which cannot fit within the frame.

In the last sequence of the film, Łoziński breaks his own rule of not interacting directly with his characters, but only half-way – he brings his voice in direct dialogue with Urszula, while using still images of himself and the crew as placeholders for their live presence in the interview. These photographs, that reveal the sound woman Małgorzata Jaworska, the director, and the cameraman Jacek Petrycki as fragmentary faces surrounded in dark shade, alternate with medium and close-up shots of Urszula as seated against the background of the kitchen wall, in a low-key light, and addressing the crew somehow anxiously:

> U: You really think it is so easy to get to know a person?
> L: No. It's very difficult.
> U: I'd like you to make a good film, and at the same time I'd like to remain discreet. When you talk, you always say too much. I never say so much… I might unintentionally say something… I'm in a difficult position here.
> L: Well then, how can we show the truth?
> U: Who needs the truth you're talking about? Who needs a story of somebody else's limitations, of somebody's real or imaginary wrongs… It's like an anecdote…
> L: Maybe people will reflect over their life?
> MJ: They'll find a bit of themselves in you…

> U: Well, but… I'm showing my own face, my own environment. On the one hand, I'm pleased that Marcel wanted to make a film about me after all those years, and on the other hand… I wouldn't want it to hurt…

For Urszula, the filmmaking process poses the danger of hurting – both the people who view, and the ones who are viewed, the subjects. This danger comes from the virtually reductive character of documentary representation, with its indexical claim of nailing down an identity as grounded in recorded image and sound. There is also the danger of hurting through showing too much, and exposing sensitive aspects that render the characters vulnerable and turn the viewers into involuntary voyeurs. During this dialogue, the woman shows her awareness of the implications of the process of representation in words suggesting a more nuanced and sophisticated attitude than the filmmaker's approach – she questions the assumed access to knowledge allowed by a filmic portrayal, she is reluctant of the idea of a given, unquestioned "truth" as formulated by Łoziński, she delicately informs them of her difficult position in front of the camera, and while she is humble in her self-perception, she requests the right to privacy and to "not be hurt". The effect of placing this sequence at the end of the film is that of a lesson the protagonist gives to the filmmaker, following her (double) encounter with him – an effect that marks the film as Łoziński's retake aimed at featuring Urszula not only as *a subject* with her own agency, and as *the subject* of the film, but as a social actor that collaborates at the making of this project. According to Dai Vaughan, "[d]ocumentary's purpose is to enable the character of film as record to survive, so far as is possible, its metamorphosis into language" (54). This aphoristic observation alludes to the pervasive tension between the means of documentary construction, and the effects of documentary representation. In general, the cinematic language shapes the film as record into a representation, and the actor's performance into a character. In the case of documentary, the character exists already within the film as record – as the social actor plays herself – and thus, says Vaughan, documentary's attempt is to minimize the irreducible distance between the character's *presentation* in the film as record, and the image the filmic *re-presentation* constructs of her. The context of the interactions from *The Visit* provoked Urszula to withdraw from representation, to find ways to resist and quietly escape as she was never given the chance to address the filming process. *So It Doesn't Hurt* relies and is built on the woman's direct reflections around the filming process, and Łoziński's inclusion of her questioning words allows her to go around a "metamorphosis into language", and to resurface with a strength and beauty that illuminate retrospectively the strained attempts of the films.

Urszula's request for the filming not to hurt confirms our perception of particular interactions from *The Visit* as painful, for both participants and viewers. Beyond the ethical concerns it raises, *The Visit* remains important for two aspects: first, the filmic situations provoke the social actors to speak from assumed positions of subjectivity - from the villagers who express and explain their thoughts about their neighbor, to Urszula and her mother speaking about themselves, and finally to Marta, at first as an interrogator, and at the end answering questions at her turn. This visible stirring of the people to communicate and interact in meaningful ways (in agreement with the narrative) recommend the film as a gesture of political resistance, as an act serving the process of

building an opposition through social mobilization. Second, and more importantly, following her interactions with the villagers and Urszula, Marta seems to change her attitude – this is suggested in the sequence of the two women eating together, and then, as I argued, it transpires from the journalist's article. As such, if the context of the encounter influenced and virtually changed Marta's thinking and behavior, we can fairly assume that the film, which was a fragmentary representation of this context, carried an unquestionable potential of altering people's perception of the protagonist's conjuncture toward accepting it as a sanctioned choice of living, and not an anomalous behavior in need of correction.

According to Łoziński, the experience of interviewing the factory workers in *Microphone Test* allowed the radio reporter Michał Stepniewski a shocking understanding of the gap between the propaganda image and the reality of the people's thoughts (Janicka & Kołodyński 214). Łoziński himself claims to have been taken aback by the factory management's reinforcement of their arguments when they had to reshoot the scene of the meeting. The film unveils thus a pervasive social tension that, while muffled under the appearance of business-as-usual, was all ready to explode. Film historian Jadwiga Huckova remembers the filmmaker's observation in a 1984 dialogue with her: "The film anticipated the development of events in an unbelievable way, and after August it was hard to believe that the problem so formulated had been addressed in this way" (*The History of Polish Documentary Films* 368). After the making of the film, the reporter was fired from the factory, and Łoziński was asked to leave the Documentary Film Studio. Soon after, Michał "resigned from the party, graduated from history studies and joined the opposition" (Armata 10). On the one hand, *Microphone Test* makes visible the workers' awakening to their rights to self-expression and representation, as a consequence of their engagement with Michał' questions. On the other hand, the accounts about the film's preproduction and reception suggest important changes of vision and mind for both the reporter and the filmmaker, and inscribe the filmed situations within the larger order of the historical events that followed. Łoziński's condensation of reality for this film evolved in the direction of history, and worked as a scaled precipitation of major events already in the making. The film engendered transformations – in and out of the visible profilmic – that mirror an overall atmosphere of social mobilization, along with, or in opposition to, an image of the ossified structures of authority. In this context, Łoziński's direct contribution to Michał's interviewing performance, and consequently to exposig him to the dramatic situation of the management meeting, appears as a gesture of necessary provocation through communication, doubled by the stringency of safeguarding a form of representation that documents these interactions.

The King and *Practice Exercises* – The Speaker between a Voice and a Face

In *The King* (1974) and *Practice Exercises* (1984), interview acts as an expository means for soliciting and delivering information, and not as a vehicle for analytical conversation on the topics discussed, like in *The Visit* and *Microphone Test*. One man's

spoken life account in *The King*, and the answers of various people surveyed on their opinion about the state of the youth in *Practice Exercises* constitute the material for filmic experiments that Łoziński assembles into pointed arguments that he builds beyond, or without, the awareness of the social actors involved. If in the previous films I considered the denotative level of meaning as being associated with the social actors' situations and interactions, here the denotative component comes forward in the ways the films' formal constructions destabilize the people's spoken expression. Łoziński's overt interventions in the text of the films – through editing, and manipulation of visual and aural tracks – mold these representations into, respectively, a critical take on the protagonist's opportunist self-assessment, in *The King*, and a warning about the televisual representation's potential for deceiving, in *Practice Exercises*. At the same time, the films both rely on, and challenge the viewer's expectation of coincidence between the voice and the image of an interviewee, and propose constructions that treat this relationship as relative and variable, opening thus layers of meaning beyond the denotative one. The effect of the films' preoccupation with formal experimentation is a type of abstraction that situates the contexts of the social actors within a broader historical frame, even while bypassing the significance of people's individual contributions as *real* persons engaged in the making of the films.

The Contexts of the Films

Łoziński arrived at the subject of *The King* by chance, as the film crew stopped at a café-bar on their way back from shooting *The Visit*. The crew had unused film stock for only five minutes of shooting, when Łoziński decided to audio-record the café-bar owner's account of his life, and then film his face while he listens back to the recorded interview. The result is a minimalist visual portrait of the elderly café owner as based on the narrative of his life delivered in voice-over monologue. Against the continuous sound of the voice-over speech, there are three types of images, all taken with a static camera: the main visual 'action' of the film is a frontal close-up (and later medium) shot of the man staring silently into the camera; this gazing is interrupted with images of photographs that reference moments from the character's past, as well as close-up shots of objects or domestic animals from within or outside the man's house. The use of the monologue against the close-up of the silent man grabs the viewer's attention through the ways in which it approximates, but it is not quite, a direct interview addressed to the camera. As the image of the character's inactive mouth deceives our expectation of locating the source of the speech within the visuals, our attention stays with the sound track, the main keeper of time in this static representation. The live, haptic quality of the speech brackets the presence of the man whose expression remains flat and immobile, and who stops short of giving visual proof of ownership of the voice. At the same time, the imposing proximity of the close-up figure qualifies the man's continuous staring into the camera as the silent confirmation of his previously spoken expression, a formal device that enacts a never-actualized promise of meeting our expectation that the words we hear relate to the face we see.

Despite a seemingly underwhelming format, the film is highly expressive, as the visual inserts trigger particular effects in relation to fragments of the character's concise speech. These techniques amount to an overall satiric effect as built on the contrast between a perceived amoral quality of the man's life account, and his affirmed self-contentment and satisfaction with the way he lives. The perpetual non-coincidence between the image of the protagonist's face and the sound of his speaking voice turns the character into an abstract illustration of an attitude – the attitude of opportunism that is at the center of the filmic critique. The year of the making of the film, 1974, was still the time of a growing opposition movement through individual acts of social mobilization – and here Łoziński takes a stand against a chameleonic frame of mind leading to a servile attitude able to take advantage of all political regimes. However, a number of questions remain: What happens with the *person* that is the real man engaged in the film? In relation to this *person,* from what position of higher moral authority does the filmmaker suggest a disapproving reaction? What type of deceit does the filmic representation (and its distribution) enact, by proposing an account that connotes a subtext at odds with the character's self-perception?

In *Practice Exercises*, a reporter from the Documentary Film Studio approaches various people in different urban locations to inquire about their opinions on the state of the young generation. Built on repetition, the film manipulates and rearranges the same interview material in three parts: in the first segment, a series of short reactions and answers gives a tableau of individuals as defined by the associations of their appearances with their spoken expressions. The second segment retains images of a selection of the previous individuals that, while having the same or similar physical expressions, offer statements that are different than, or opposite from, the ones they gave before. The third segment is a visual montage of smiling faces that alternates images of some of the interlocutors with the close-up of the reporter, all against an upbeat musical tune. The film's construction illustrates Łoziński's commentary on the insidious effects of manipulation, as used by a media platform controlled by an authoritarian regime.

In *The King*, we are given a voice and the image of a silent face as distinct elements that we are encouraged to read as belonging to the same person, association the film suggests but never directly confirms. In *Practice Exercises*, the first segment of the film introduces the interlocutors as defined by the visually sanctioned associations of their physical and vocal reactions, while the second segment troubles some of these associations by projecting new spoken statements on images of speakers that previously gave opposite opinions. As such, in support of their arguments, both films make visible the constructed quality of the representation of the speaking characters, but engage the viewer from opposite directions. If in *The King* we reconstitute a virtually real person based on disparate elements of image and sound, in *Practice Exercises* we face the deconstruction of seemingly unitary representations of interviewees into elements of speech and physical expression that may or may not belong together. In the case of one individual, like in *The King*, this relative relation between the sound of a voice and the image of a face works to render the character somehow abstract and symbolic, as I proposed. In the situation of a group of people, as in *Practice Exercises*, this redistribution of utterances and figures in incompatible arrangements or contradictory

relations has a double effect: at the level of the filmic construction, it virtually cancels the initial referential status (or, the implied quality of "authenticity") of the first round of expressed opinions – we can suppose that a similar degree of manipulation makes these performances equally relative; at the level of connotative meaning, it suggests the image of a disoriented society that has lost confidence in a better future and has resigned to speaking out of conformity. While making use of the manipulation techniques he condemns, Łoziński proposes *Practice Exercises* as a reflection on the social apathy and the sense of general disappointment pervasive after the martial law (Sobolewski, *Marcel Łoziński DVD* written notes). At the same time, the film reframes and reformulates people's attitudes through ironic twists that diminish the weight of the individual stands. The final credits of the film reveal the following disclaimer: "The film was edited without the knowledge or consent of the persons filmed by means of out-of-sync editing of images and sound." This statement seems at odds with the project of the film – the mobilization of both social actors and viewers as critical participants in a process of communication – as it stops short of engaging the interlocutors in the finalization of a product that relies on their likeness and words.

Postponed Portrait, and Sketches of Identities

Referring to the use of filmic interview, Łoziński declared: "I have never looked like the film-maker that asks questions. I have always tried to find an intermediary between the camera and the viewer. Some medium that transforms an interview into a situation." (Iervese & Grasselli 112) In *The King*, the juxtaposition of the voice-over monologue with the non-speaking face of the speaker acts as the mediation that turns the original interview into a 'situation' defined by temporal disconnect. As such, it seems that the character listens to his own words, and his silent looking into the camera (and not on a side, as in an interview where the interviewer's presence is implied off-frame) remediates the act of communication as now addressed to the/a viewer – his gaze seems to say "you see me here as confirmation that I gave this spoken account earlier in the form of an interview." This implied temporal layering acts as a seam in the texture of the film, a reflexive device that foregrounds the construction of the representation – we do not witness an interview in the making, but a stylized assemblage of its virtual components. The man's silent stare into the camera detours our visual access into his subjectivity via the aural way of the spoken words, while it instates an irreducible distance between the actuality of his presence, and the perpetually removed past and present times of his narrated life. In an abstract performance of a de- and re-constructed interview, the film arranges the constitutive parts in ways that both attest to, and challenge a preferred reading of the whole as the portrait of one individual.

In *Practice Exercises*, the act of interviewing appears as both the original situation and the form of mediation – or "the medium that transforms an interview into a situation" Łoziński refers to above - as each of the film's three segments opens with a close-up of the camera lens, followed by a zoom on the viewfinder revealing the image of the speaker in front of the camera inside the film. Unlike the uncanny construction that

challenges the idea of an interview-portrait in *The King*, the first segment of *Practice Exercises* represents a relatively common situation of a survey-interviewing of random people. The one individual's static performance over a dilated temporality in the previous film becomes here a series of instantaneous reactions of a group of agitated people – the first part of the segment shows a few characters running away or hiding form the camera, while refusing to interact with the reporter. We should recall that "in the People's Republic of Poland, […] accompanying the hero with the camera had a completely different meaning than it does today. As a consequence of the propaganda offensive of television in the 1970s, the camera became synonymous with power and its oppressiveness" (Maka-Malatynska 32). While this is the only moment when the film reveals successive reactions of refusal, their inclusion in the film suggests the scale of this pervasive frame of mind, as well as the difficulties the crew encountered while trying to convince people to speak. A man in a white coat – presumably a doctor – explains his reluctance in an interesting statement, the only one reproduced almost entirely in each of the three segments: "No, I don't want to comment. I guess, I won't comment because anything I say could be interpreted as either positive or negative and so it is hard for us to give an interview." The repetition of these words allows a gradual revelation of their meaning over the next segments, as they give expression to the interlocutor's version of the argument attempted by the film. The theme of the people's cautious rapport with the media continues when a man wearing a leather-jacket, a hat and moustache replies, with an insinuating smile: "I sure have an opinion, madam. What opinion would you like to hear from me?" This first segment functions as a sketch for a broad social tapestry that covers a range of interlocutors diverse in age, gender, and social status, giving a variety of spoken contributions. The initial question – what do you think of the youth? – is neutral enough to allow the respondents room for answering either in general, vague terms, or in opinionated takes. A middle-aged policeman thinks youth are great as long as they do how they are told, while his younger subaltern believes young people are not interested in anything. A bus driver complains about punk youth he sees as "drug addicts with pierced ears, [and] hair dyed in rainbow colors." Some speakers attempt comparisons with their own past, and introduce a more personal set of questions the reporter addresses to the young: Do you have standards and principles? Do you still believe in anything? A young man's lucid answer resonates with the dramatic consequences of the banning of *Solidarity* and the long-term effects of the recent martial law: "Many people got disappointed, very disappointed. Our hopes and expectations were brutally shattered, maybe too brutally for some. I think that a lot of people are just waiting." This segment, lasting the first two thirds of the film, represents interventions that feel alive and articulated, in ways more or less consistent with the social actors' age and social function. Unlike in *The King*, where the protagonist's virtual arrival at a unitary self depends on the viewer's experience of the film, in *Practice Exercises* the figures are introduced as memorable despite their ephemeral appearances, and they stay with us through their particular identities forged in specific combinations of gestures and words.

Positions of the Viewers

In *The King*, the device of the voice-over delivery against the image of the silent face bypasses any indications of the crew's interaction with the character, while it also leaves the facial expressivity of speaking unexplored. Instead, the commentary and the visual inserts suggest direct and associative meanings that enable us to reconstitute the protagonist's relational and social qualities. Like in a reinterpretation of the Kuleshov effect, Łoziński uses the words of the voice-over monologue to make the viewer project personality traits on the man's blank figure. Through prolonged exposure to his face, we learn to recognize the character's likeness in images of inserted photographs that stand in uneasy relations with the spoken words: as the narration advances, the photographs become more charged with meanings that either accentuate the voiced ideas, or reveal unaddressed attitudes. The man's voice-over recounts his youth as a tailor and Army Training instructor in the early 30's, his employment as a tailor sewing uniforms for German officers after the occupation of his town, his moving to another city after the end of the war, and his successful business as the owner of a tailor shop dedicated to sewing uniforms for Polish Navy officers during the new regime. Our reading into the photographs beyond and against the words starts at a certain moment in the narrative – after the mention of Kobryn being captured by the Germans, we hear "I had a lot of work to do as a tailor", while we see an extreme close-up of the needle fixture, with thread going through, of a sewing machine, then the image returns to the man's face on the words "For the Germans." The editing marks this almost abstract visual detail as a break, a diversion meant to prepare and amplify the effect of the words that qualify the work as serving the invaders. For the next two sentences – "So, I set up three workshops. And I kept an average of 7-9 trainees at a time." – we see the character looking into the camera, but in-between the two utterances, over a short moment of silence, the image shows an aged photograph of three young men smiling at the camera as they proudly display a military uniform. The men's content attitude is made explicit after a few sentences, when the seeming inner voice of the character affirms, as he looks us in our eyes: "So, I was doing quite well under the German occupation." In the span of less than 30 seconds, this fragment qualifies the character's attitude as morally dubious, and announces a preferred reading of the remainder of the film. From this position, the viewer is sensible to the contrast between the matter-of-factly narration directly recounting behavioral tactics of adaptation under any political regime or social context, and the old photographs of a frivolous, self-indulgent man enjoying life and women's company. The sarcastic suggestions of these associations continue with a charge of irony, in the second part of the film, where the monologue refers to the present time. While the voice-over describes the every-day chores of the café-bar's owner, the images show matching close-up shots of the dishes he claims to wash, the room he brags he cleans, and the animals he takes care of around the house. The irony of these juxtapositions stems both from the redundant quality of the terms, and the contrast between the appearance of the filmed inserts as punctual but elaborate illustrations, and their spoken referents as descriptions of banal activities or inconsequential details. The construction mirrors the man's boasting self-perception and amplifies the overall satirical effect. This effect, in turn, qualifies the

viewer's critical position as one of superiority, and prevents her from establishing any avenue of empathy with the subject.

In the second segment of *Practice Exercises*, the interlocutors appear in another order and give shorter answers that are somehow, or completely, different than the ones they gave before. The doctor's intervention remains the same, though, but now its first sentence is visible through the viewfinder, while in the third segment we will see his whole delivery through the device: "I don't know. I don't want to comment. I won't comment because anything I say could be interpreted as either positive or negative and so it's hard for us to give an interview." Indeed, the whole segment demonstrates exactly this: how particular selections and juxtapositions of sound of voices and images of speakers give the representation a spin that turns it into propaganda material. Besides, the doctor's performance of answering by not answering is also potential subject for visual manipulation, as suggested by its gradual "relocation" inside the viewfinder. The man with the hat that was asking previously about what opinion to offer, seems to be saying now, in a more serious tone: "What are young people like? Very progressive, we can count on them in the future. That's what I think." The young policeman who had described the youth as being apathetical, now thinks "they are eager to work, and reliable if something needs to be done." If we did not notice yet the out-of-synch quality of sound and image, this opinion of the policeman repeats entirely the words we have just heard from the man right before him. If the first segment introduced these sketches of portraits as centered on attitudes somehow expected along divisions of age, gender, and social status, the second segment destabilizes these associations in a mocking play on our expectations. As such, the politically-aware young man speaking of disappointment and hopes brutally shattered in resonance with the recent tumultuous events, appears now as a model of subdued political conformism: "Our organization's expanding on a school level where the Socialist Youth Union has had quite a lot of success, at least in our district." In fact, during this second part of the film, despite the diversity of the respondents, all opinions are positive and optimistic: the youths are good, progressive and cool, hardworking and reliable, beautiful while showing self-respect; they look up to the example of the Socialist Youth Union, they follow moral principles, and are committed and confident in what they do. This uniformity of replies eliminates the variety of the initial reactions, and levels any idiosyncrasies that could signal people's original thoughts, while proposing a visibly fabricated assessment of an ideal category (the "socialist" youth) by a survey group assembled through media manipulation. The subsequent shattering of the sketches of identities established in the first part has the effect of a sudden rift that throws the viewer away from the characters – the film is not about people's thoughts and opinions, but about how media creates representations of "real" interlocutors that unanimously express the officially sanctioned, identical position. Film historian Marek Hendrykowski notes about the film:

> This film shows both the mechanism itself and the scale of manipulation allowed – and often materialized – by […] the techniques of recording and editing of photographic material. Łoziński demonstrates a short lesson of film and television fraud. Asynchronies, which he deliberately leaves in the material he reassembled, are like seams and basting left by the tailor. Their goal is to make us realize that

> the manipulation effect can still be rather suggestive and invisible, […] despite our using our own perceptiveness and skepticism as defense mechanisms. (*Marcel Łoziński* 84)

Łoziński's lesson on the fraudulent use of media manipulation relies on the contrast between otherwise repetitive situations, contrast that triggers the viewer's reaction of comparison followed by a readjustment of focus. The demonstrative quality of the bold asynchronies shifts our attention from the interview interactions to the reflexive dimension of the film, through a rugged transition that we still resist. In order to conquer our defense mechanisms, the film uses elements of irony and humor, as the joggling around of people's words and images tones down the stringency of the contributions and turns the interactions into a comical spectacle. In the process of our acknowledgment of the actual subject of the film, we let go of our engagement with the social actors' re-presentations of their selves, while we take a distance that, for a moment, loses sight of the people.

Connotative Meanings and Abstracted Characters

The constructions of the films rely on the effects of the distance between the sound of the voice and the image of the face as virtual components in the representation of a speaking person. Referring to the relationship between close-up and the representation of face in film, Mary Ann Doane notes: "The close-up transforms whatever it films into a quasi-tangible thing, producing an intense phenomenological experience of presence, and yet, simultaneously, that deeply experienced entity becomes a sign, a text, a surface that demands to be read. This is, inside or outside of the cinema, the inevitable operation of the face as well" (Doane 94). When directed at the face, "[t]he close-up pushes us beyond the realm of individuation, of social role, and of the exchange that underlies intersubjectivity" (Doane 95). The prolonged close-up transforms the King's figure into a text that remains enigmatic because is silent – the film never confirms visually the image's implied relationship with the voice-over. The proximity of the face that stares directly at us in the "now" perpetuates the distance from the voice that attests for another moment in time, and places us in an uncanny phenomenological experience of co-presence with the protagonist, as co-listeners of a spectral voice that we agree to let him own. In *Practice Exercises*, the close-up shots of people's faces are fragmentary and fugitive, but enhanced by gestures, moves, and the sound of words associated with images of speaking persons. Łoziński's variation of the relationship between the words and the speakers' visuals frees the latter from the identity markers suggested by any of the spoken statements. As built on repetitions, the film encourages the viewer's experience of rewatching as an experiment on the readjustment of perception – but then, to what extent are we prepared to consider any represented association of voice and speaking human figure as virtually permutable, according to precise ideological purposes? Coming from opposite directions, the films seem to suggest that the media renderings of a voice and a face should not be taken to represent a unitary individual. For the convenience of the argument constructions, we need to allow the King his virtual

identity, as well as to consider the first editing of the *Practice Exercises* interviews as a context of reference. On these premises, though, the filmic constructions insist on, and actualize, a separation of image and sound that turns the characters into abstract entities in the service of the filmmaker's arguments.

In his film school graduation paper, Łoziński argues for a particular method of representation of conflict in documentary:

> One would have to resort to staging. Optimally (to stay within the framework of a documentary film) to a staged role-play, in which protagonists, playing themselves, in fact, could feel that it is just a role they are playing. Then, revealing certain attitudes and behaviours would not attack them personally. One would have to create a certain conventionality that would give protagonists some safety margin without affecting the authenticity of presented views. […] Playing on this option of either an authentic or imaginary "relocation" of a documentary film protagonist somewhat aside his actual figure opens up a great opportunity for a documentary film with an ambition for psychological content. (Łoziński, *Theory of Practice* 77)

By pinning the "King" in front of the camera, while foreclosing the possibility of his direct address, Łoziński enacts what he envisions as the "'relocation' of a documentary film protagonist somewhat aside his actual figure", as he engenders a split virtually meant to safeguard a distance between the social actor and his persona as the "King". This distance would constitute then the "safety margin" allowing the revealing of "certain attitudes and behaviours" not affecting the character personally. Here, as there is no other character to contrast – and conflict - with the protagonist, the film does the work of revealing the man's idiosyncrasies through the satirical effect achieved by the pairing of visual inserts with particular fragments from the monologue. Similarly, in *Practice Exercises* the filmmaker manipulates the interlocutors' words and images without the speakers' knowledge or agreement, in order to illustrate the contrast that represents the necessary conflict at the center of his argument. The fragment quoted above suggests an unresolved tension between the real-life existence of the protagonist, and the implications of Łoziński's vision of a filmic alterity preserving some part, but not the whole, of the character. This tension is pervasive in the films addressed, where the people, less then whole and thus vulnerable, are seen from above, and are pictured like caricatural stand-ins for attitudes and contexts at the center of the filmic critiques. It seems that, in the process of representation, Łoziński forgets that his characters are social actors that play themselves, and that have, as filmmaking collaborators, the right to be informed about the use of their likeness, and prepared for the consequences of the film's distribution. The films feel like formal competitions between the social actors' expressions of their engagement with the actuality, and Łoziński's arguments built above and beyond the drama of the people. In the end, though, the stringency of the human interactions prevails, as the concrete quality of the spoken words and the intensity and directness of the visual presence overflow the filmmaker's formal control, and converge in projections of imperfect but unitary human beings.

Conclusion: Film as Political Space for a Surging Democracy

In her book *Surging Democracy: Notes on Hannah Arendt's Political Thought*, Adriana Cavarero analyses and expands Hannah Arendt's redefinition of politics as a participatory experience, and affirms the actuality and urgency of Arendt's theoretical work for our contemporary context. Some of the concepts Cavarero emphasizes as fundamental in Arendt's theory refer to a shared spatial dimension that allows the in-between as a physical space of participation, "a plurality of actors who are simultaneously equal and distinct", and "a relationship between those who are present, allowing them to mutually appear and remain distinct, unique human beings who do not melt into a uniform mass" (*Surging Democracy* 6 -7). The political quality derives, according to Arendt and Cavarero, from the process of the participants' interactions with each other through forms of action and expression that reveal them as different and unique, and that affirm their relationship through their copresence within a shared space – a definition which attempts to reconstitute what Arendt sees as the original meaning of the Greek *polis.* As we have seen, Cavarero reiterates Arendt's consideration of speech as a political action, because "to speak to one another is to communicate to one another the unrepeatable uniqueness of each speaker" (Cavarero, *For More than One Voice* 190).

This theoretical context highlights the relationship between the works of the filmmakers I have explored in this study by defining their respective positions on a shared trajectory of filmic experimentation with forms of address. As I have shown in my research, these films that represent social actors engaged in spoken interactions are symptomatic for both the particular moment in the development of the Polish documentary film, and the historical times of oppositional mobilization and revolutionary upheaval in Poland, a historical context that, according to Cavarero, allows the conditions favorable to a reassessment of the concept and experience of politics (*Surging Democracy* 9). Seen in relation to each other, the three filmmakers approach their social actors from positions that reveal the contours of a space of plural and relational engagement, or a space that, while contingent on the conditions of the films' production and cinematic experience, functions as a political space in the sense defined by Arendt and Cavarero. In these films, the people speak up, and express themselves in relation to the filmmakers' calls to feature their voices. In the Polish documentaries of the 1950s and early 1960s, the narrator's voice-over delivered the expository commentary about and for the people represented, placing the human subjects within a frame akin to Arendt's understanding of *the masses* as "an undifferentiated conglomerate of individuals who melt into one, single body" (Cavarero, *Surging Democracy* 60). By having them speak in and for the films, Karabasz, Kieślowski and Łoziński bring forth their subjects as unique, distinct persons, against the background of their social context. In other words, in these films, the presence of individualized speech creates the effect of the in-between, or of that interval that distinguishes a plurality from a mass of people.[17]

[17] Cavarero notes: Margaret Canovan has rightly stressed that Arendt "'augmented' the world by one word: the word plurality," adding that "the most fruitful way of reading her political thought is to

Cavarero argues, following Arendt, that plurality is unrepresentable, as it requires a "space of appearance", a relational space where "unique human beings act in concert […] and actively and mutually disclose *who* they are" (*Surging Democracy* 24). As a counterargument, I propose that Karabasz's work gestures towards a filmic representation of plurality, with portrait films in which the characters speak in voice-over monologue about events in their lives, in a form of direct address that both recommends them as unique and distinct, and integrates them within a social and historical context. If Karabasz gives the initial touches for the filmic tracing of a political space, Kieślowski completes the process with his formal explorations of relationality. The filmmaker's liminal presence in the margins of the frame – in-between the profilmic and the viewer's space – makes palpable the addressee (that was absent in Karabasz's film) as a participant in a doubly-mediated relationship extending from social actor to director to viewer. Łoziński takes the development of a political filmic space even further, as he observes the inter-relationality at work in situations that he orchestrates off-screen and films at a remove. The filmmaker provokes and exposes forms of collective relationality where speech enacts either expressions of mass conformity (like the villagers rallying their voices against their neighbor's way of living in *The Visit*), or attempts at resisting through the affirmation of difference (like the workers who gradually open up to expose the lie of their supposed factory co-managing, in *Microphone Test*). Łoziński's films are, on the other hand, metaphors that express the filmmaker's critical stand in relation to the system, but before arriving there, the author creates contexts for people to communicate, or to engage in relationships engendered through speech, "as a plurality of voices linked to one another in resonance" (Cavarero, *For More than One Voice* 200). The conditions of possibility for an "acoustic dialogue that takes its cadence from the very rhythm of breath, and where the logos is oriented toward resonance, rather than toward understanding," are prerequisites for Łoziński's constructions of reflexive tableaus of dysfunctional social mechanisms (Cavarero, *For More than One Voice* 201). The micro-contexts of relationality and plurality that he envisions and films function as pop-up laboratories for what Cavarero calls a *surging democracy*:

> [T]he concept of "surging democracy" has the completely Arendtian virtue of highlighting the generative rather than the oppositional aspect of plural interaction. One could simply say that the term surging democracy avoids substantiating democracy, first and foremost, in its being *against*, choosing instead to present its core as essentially affirmative rather than negative. (Cavarero, *Surging Democracy* 12)

These films represent generative interactions where people come into being by expressing themselves in front, and for, their interlocutors, and in relation to a film crew - within a public space that "makes political actors equal, allowing them to discover and experience freedom in the shared space of its actualization" (Cavarero, *Surging Democracy* 21). In expanding Arendt's concept of "space of appearance" to the idea of

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treat her analysis of modernity as a context for the interesting things she has to say about the fact that politics goes among plural persons with space between" (Surging Democracy 19).

"surging democracy," Cavarero affirms her preoccupation with a phenomenology of the political centered on the birthing moment of democracy itself (Cavarero, *Surging Democracy* 26).

In this context, my study has shown that the works of Karabasz, Kieślowski and Łoziński come together as consecutive stages in the development of filmic political spaces that converge into instances of surging democracy. While fully determined historically and geographically, these films challenge the parameters of their time and place by reinstating people's communication through self-expression as a political act that must be possible in any context of mutual engagement through spoken interaction within a shared space. This affirmation of the right to a *polis* constitutes the filmmakers' aesthetic gesture of resistance to oppression.

The aesthetic quality of this creative gesture of resistance pertains to the filmmakers' consistent preoccupation with the form of the films. The documentaries at the center of my research illustrate the evolution of the directors' explorations of forms of address from detailed portraits of individual speakers to refined threads of multiple voices, and the authors' continuous belief in the urgency of re-presenting the people's direct expression. At the same time, the films suggests that, in the process of portraying social actors who talk, the filmmakers reassess both the meaning of what constitutes knowledge, and its relationship to representation. Along the interlocutors' spoken contributions, the directors summon visuals that work to modulate and attenuate the effect of the spoken words, by opening up a space that defers the arrival of a predefined, hard knowledge. Rather than information delivered linguistically, the films propose sensible audio-visual mediations of interactive situations, where the speakers go through arduous self-introspections that challenge the dynamic between question and answer, and trouble our expectation of getting to know. In these works, the cinematic rendering of spoken interactions opens an interval of infinite conversation, where meanings change and refract in unnumerable directions. These ramifications suggest virtual paths that promise to bridge the distance between participants even as they lead into the labyrinth that prevents an actual meeting. Beyond the content of the verbal exchanges, the details of the faces of tuberculosis patients in *X-Ray* retain the painful intensity of their interview engagement, and make us responsible for our position complicit with the camera. The closed window which frames the point of view of the camera looking in on the dinner scene in *The Visit* simultaneously denies and allows our access to the final act in the strained communication between Marta and Urszula. The films in this study propose that communication happens only through a mutual agreement on the immaterial quality of *knowledge*, and a shared understanding of the fluidity of this asymptotic object to be perpetually approached but never actually reached. The meaning of communication stems from the desire to know, and not from its (impossible) fruition.

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