



KIEŚLOWSKI'S ARTISTIC REBELLION IN CAMERA BUFF (1979): REFLECTIONS ON THE MORAL ANXIETY CINEMA

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Abstract

This study focuses on Krzysztof Kieślowski's socio-political commentary and artistic expression in *Camera Buff* (*Amator*, 1979). The reason for mapping Kieślowski's political stance stems from his deep engagement with subtle and profound cinematic expression within the Cinema of Moral Anxiety, where directors skilfully forged artistic avenues as a counter to the dominant narrative and censorship imposed by the socialist realist doctrine. This creative defiance birthed not only a novel approach to filmmaking but also a distinct mode of political assertion in a restrictive environment. Directors within this movement stand as exemplars of conscious opposition to state intervention, fostering unique artistic practices in defiance of oppressive systems. Amidst a political climate marked by censorship and stringent controls, the emergence of the Cinema of Moral Anxiety holds significant political and artistic weight. Within Cinema of Moral Anxiety movement Kieślowski's *Camera Buff* reflects his resistance to the dominant political order and its censorship mechanisms. To analyze the distinctive features of Kieślowski's political cinematic expression and the ways through which he dismantles the system in the film, this study proceeds in two steps. First, it examines how socialist realism is juxtaposed with the ethos of the Cinema of Moral Anxiety. Second, it examines how Kieślowski employs self-reflexivity and metaphor to reflect the themes of the Cinema of Moral Anxiety in *Camera Buff*. In both steps, metaphor and self-reflexivity are underlined as potent forms of political stance and expression. This essay concludes by demonstrating how *Camera Buff* embodies the principles of Moral Anxiety Cinema, offering a critique of societal norms and political oppression through self-reflexive storytelling.

Keywords: Kieślowski, the Cinema of Moral Anxiety, *Camera Buff*, self-reflexivity.

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KIEŚLOWSKI'NİN CAMERA BUFF (1979) FİLMİNDE SANATSAL DİRENİŞ: AHLAKİ KAYGI SİNEMASI YANSIMALARI

Öz

Bu çalışma, Krzysztof Kieślowski'nin sosyo-politik yorum ve sanatsal ifadesine odaklanarak *Camera Buff* (*Amatör*, 1979) filmini analiz etmektedir. Çalışma Ahlaki Kaygı Sineması'nın en önemli yönetmenlerinden olan Kieślowski'nin politik duruşundan ve bu çerçevede ortaya koyduğu sinema biçiminin özgün niteliğinden temellenmektedir. Ahlaki Kaygı sineması içinde yönetmenler baskın anlatıya ve Sosyalist Gerçekçilik doktrini tarafından uygulanan sansüre karşı yeni bir ifade ediş biçimi bulmuşlar ve böylece politik bir duruş benimsemişlerdir. Bu etkili meydan okuma sadece film yapımına yeni bir yaklaşım getirmekle kalmamış, aynı zamanda kısıtlayıcı mekanizmaları bertaraf ederek belirgin bir politik iddia biçimini ortaya koymuştur. Bu hareket içindeki yönetmenler, baskıcı sistemlere karşı bilinçli bir muhalefetin temsilcileri olarak, benzersiz sanatsal uygulamalarını metafor ve öz düşünümsellik öğelerini filmlerinde uygulayarak baskıya karşı gelmişlerdir. Sansür ve sıkı kontrollerle işaretlenmiş bir siyasi iklimde, Ahlaki Kaygı Sineması'nın ortaya çıkışı, Kieślowski'nin mevcut siyasi düzene ve yerleşik sansür mekanizmalarına direnişi göz önüne alındığında önemli politik ve sanatsal ağırlığa sahip olduğu görülmektedir. Bu çalışmada *Camera Buff* filminde nasıl bir politik söylemin Ahlaki Kaygı Sineması arka planında şekillendiğini ortaya koymak için, metaforik ve öz-yansıtıcı unsurları tartışılmaktadır. Kieślowski'nin *Camera Buff* filminde sistemi nasıl eleştirildiği ve politik sinematik ifadesinin belirgin özelliklerinin filminde nasıl ortaya çıktığını analiz etmek için çalışmada iki aşama benimsenmektedir: (a) Sosyalist Gerçekçilik öğretisinin Ahlaki Kaygı Sineması ile nasıl bir karşıtlık içinde olduğunun tartışılması (b) Kieślowski'nin öz-düşünümsellik ve metafor öğelerini kullanışımı merkeze alarak Ahlaki Kaygı Sineması temel özelliklerinin *Camera Buff* (1979) filminde nasıl yansıttığının incelenmesidir. Bu bağlamlarda, bu çalışma Kieślowski'nin *Camera Buff* filminde metafor ve öz-yansıtmayı etkili bir politik duruş ve ifade biçimi olarak kullandığı sonucunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kieślowski, ahlaki kaygı sineması, *Camera Buff*, öz-düşünümsellik.

Introduction

The Cinema of Moral Anxiety (*Kino moralnego niepokoju*) denotes a cinematic movement instigated by prominent filmmakers in Polish cinema. Diverse interpretations abound for the term “*Kino moralnego niepokoju*” in Polish cinema. While some translate it as the “Cinema of Moral Anxiety” (Veronica, 2013; Coates, 2005) and “Cinema of Moral Concern” (Mazierska, 2015; Haltof, 2019) others opt for the “Cinema of Moral Unrest” (Bickley, 1980) offering an alternative perspective. The term “cinema of moral anxiety” gained traction after its initial coinage by a filmmaker, Janusz Kijowski. It was later popularized by Andrzej Wajda during a public address at the 1979 Festival of Polish Films (Haltof, 2019, p. 221). This nuanced divergence in translation underscores the multifaceted nature of Polish cinema, where filmmakers grapple with moral dilemmas, societal tensions, and existential uncertainties under the veil of censorship and ideological conformity.

Central to the genesis of the Cinema of Moral Anxiety is the prevailing political regime and its sustained authoritarian grip, which engendered an atmosphere of societal oppression and moral disquietude. The Cinema of Moral Anxiety in Poland emerged as a response to the socio-political realities of life under a repressive regime (Haltof, 2019; Maron, 2013). During the post-World War II era, Poland, like many Eastern European countries, was under communist rule, which imposed strict censorship and enforced ideological uniformity on cultural expression. Despite these constraints, filmmakers found ways to eliminate the limitations of censorship and raise profound questions about the human condition. The Cinema of Moral Anxiety became a platform for introspection, critique, and existential exploration, offering audiences a glimpse into the ethical complexities of life in an ambiguous world. A new generation of Polish filmmakers, many with roots in documentary filmmaking or connections to the Young Culture movement, stood at the threshold of a significant opportunity. They recognized a growing societal need—an urgent call for cinema that connected with the public, a “social request” as described by director Agnieszka Holland (Leppla, 2019, p. 165).

Krzysztof Kieślowski holds a prominent position within the Cinema of Moral Anxiety movement in Polish cinema during the 1970s, renowned not only for his impactful films but also for his leadership role within this influential group (Coates, 2005; Haltof, 2019). Among the films by Kieślowski during the Cinema of Moral Anxiety era, *Camera Buff*

(*Amator*) (1979) stood out as the most notable. It garnered significant acclaim, winning the top prize at the Moscow Film Festival and earning praise both domestically and internationally. This success marked Kieślowski's introduction to a global audience, highlighting the resonance of his work beyond Poland's borders. While it may appear unexpected for a film that subtly criticized the ruling regime to achieve such acclaim, it's important to note that the films of this movement typically avoided direct criticism of the regime itself (Veronica, 2013, p. 74). Coates (2005, p. 94) attributes the success of the film to its skillful utilization of metaphorical narrative techniques. In *Camera Buff* (1979), Kieślowski's contribution to Polish Moral Anxiety Cinema is rooted in his profound engagement with self-reflexive themes intertwined with political discourse.

Camera Buff (1979) stands as a quintessential example of Kieślowski's artistic response to the prevailing political order and the pervasive censorship mechanisms of the time. Through the film's narrative and visual language, Kieślowski confronts the realities of censorship and authoritarianism while exploring themes of individual agency, moral ambiguity, and the quest for freedom. In this essay, the emphasis will be on the forms of political expression within the film, particularly examining the approach of crafting films outside Socialist system. This study unfolds in following steps (a) how the Cinema of Moral Anxiety initially diverges from socialist doctrine, and then how the utilization of self-reflexivity and metaphor in *Camera Buff* (1979) establishes a distinct political stance. Through this analysis, it aims to illuminate the diverse aspects of cinematic expression and its role in understanding political discourse and societal critique.

From Socialist Realism to the Cinema of Moral Anxiety

Socialist realism, which prevailed in literature and cinema as a state policy in the Soviet Union from 1932 to 1953, can be characterized as a prescriptive doctrine dictating the thematic and formal elements of artistic expression. In 1934, the regime instituted socialist realism, which mandated artists to concentrate on socialist themes presented in formats accessible to the wider Soviet populace (Belodubrovskaya, 2017, p. 171). Following the 1st All-Union Writers' Congress of 1934, socialist realism was declared the cornerstone of Soviet literature and literary criticism (Wang, 2021, p. 303). Socialist realism mandated that artists portray reality authentically and within historical context, defining their role in promoting the intellectual world of the working class and fostering socialist

ideals. Therefore, artworks were required to convey messages reflecting the decay of bourgeois society and champion the virtues of a socialist system in stark opposition to such decadence. At its core, socialist realism asserts that art must serve a purpose, primarily guiding society according to Marxist principles. This doctrine eschews the notion of art for art's sake, emphasizing the importance of nurturing social consciousness and rejecting formalism.

Key tenets include unwavering loyalty to the Communist party, portrayal of class struggle, and a historical narrative grounded in Marxist ideology. The question of "art and the people" emerged immediately following the October Revolution. Predictably, forms of art with the broadest popular appeal took center stage during this period—such as festive street decorations, mass circus performances, posters, and cinema. Lenin himself deemed cinema the most significant form of art, capturing the Bolsheviks' attention due to its ability to reach the masses effectively (Chegodava, 2003, p. 50). This recognition of cinema's power as a tool for mass communication and propaganda led to the establishment of various film organizations and initiatives aimed at harnessing its potential to serve the revolutionary cause. Additionally, the Bolsheviks recognized the importance of controlling the narrative evident in films, leading to the creation of strict guidelines and censorship mechanisms to ensure that cinema aligned with the party's ideological agenda.

In the annals of Polish history, the term "Stalinism" delineates the era from 1949 to October 1956, characterized by stringent one-party governance and pervasive Soviet influence over all facets of Polish society. Under this regime, the arts in Poland bore the indelible imprint of the Soviet model, with socialist realism reigning supreme as the dominant artistic doctrine (Haltorf, 2019, p. 96). The doctrine of socialist realism, a dominant force in Poland—one of the nations nationalized along the Soviet model post-1945—significantly influenced Polish cinema. This era saw Polish filmmakers producing a plethora of films with thematic similarities reflective of this doctrine. Concurrently, a substantial number of films exhibited in Poland originated from Eastern Bloc countries, characterized by narratives imbued with messages and propaganda echoing the principles of socialist realism. In this context, the insights of Krzysztof Kieslowski emerge as particularly illuminating for conceptualizing this period in Polish cinematic history. He recounts socio-realism as:

Socio-realism is an art movement which was in force in Soviet Russia

from more or less 1930 up to Stalin's death (in 1953), and the mid-1950s in the Socialist bloc. It boiled down to making films which showed how things ought to be and not how they were. That's what socio-realism was about. And it's obvious how things ought to have been according to the people who funded films in Russia in the 1930s and in Poland after the Second World War. People ought to have been working, they ought to have been pleased with their work, they ought to have been happy, they ought to have loved Communism, they ought to have believed in the future of Communism, they ought to have believed that, together, they'd change the world for the better. That's socio-realism. They were extremely coarse films because an assumption like that means you always have to have a goody and a baddy in order to have a conflict (1993, p. 93).

Kieślowski's observations shed light on the ideological underpinnings of socialist realism and its impact on filmmaking in the Eastern Bloc, emphasizing the idealized portrayal of society and the promotion of Communist values through cinema. This approach led to the production of films that often lacked nuance and complexity, adhering to a simplistic narrative structure of portraying protagonists as either champions of Communism or adversaries of the state.

Beyond the doctrine of socialist realism, Polish cinema embarked on a divergent trajectory influenced by evolving historical dynamics and social conditions. As one of the Eastern Bloc nations under the sway of Stalinism, Poland experienced a notable reduction in the impact of Stalin's governance following his death in 1953. This shift opened avenues for a gradual transformation in the cinematic landscape, reflecting broader changes within the country's socio-political context. Also, while it's clear that the origins of socialist realism are deeply rooted in Soviet practices, the unique aspects of its adoption and development in Poland merit further examination. The Polish experience of socialist realism unfolded within a distinct context, emerging at a different historical juncture, shortly after the country underwent significant socio-political transformations (Chmielewska, 2019, p. 23). Consequently, Polish filmmakers faced pressure to produce works that aligned with the government's socialist agenda, leading to the proliferation of films characterized by didacticism and ideological conformity. However, amidst these constraints, directors like Kieślowski sought to navigate the complexities of socialist realism, infusing their works with subtle critiques and humanistic themes that trans-

cended mere propaganda.

Given these factors, it's crucial to view Polish cinema as an independent realm and explore how prominent directors of the era devised methods to express cinematic narratives while maneuvering around censorship constraints. It is within this framework that the Cinema of Moral Anxiety emerged as a novel movement (Jachimczyk, 2017, p. 32). Initiated by Wajda, Kieslowski, and Zanussi Cinema of Moral Anxiety gained momentum in the late 1970s. Films produced during this period illustrates the political turmoil within the restrictive Polish regime on ethical values, highlighting the tension and breakdown of interpersonal relationships (Krakus, 2018, p. 8). In 1970s, the Cinema of Moral Anxiety also provided a platform for other filmmakers to engage with pressing social issues and challenge the status quo (Veronica, 2013, p. 16). One of the key figures associated with this cinematic movement is Kieslowski, whose films often revolved around the complexities of human existence and moral dilemmas (Pięta, 2020, p. 38).

This cinematic expression, born out of a necessity to negotiate the constraints of the existing political regime and censorship apparatus, holds significant political and artistic implication. Directors such as Andrzej Wajda and Agnieszka Holland employed allegory and symbolism to address topics such as political oppression, moral decay, and the erosion of individual freedoms (Castle, 2015). Kieslowski's participation in this movement not only highlights his creative struggle against the political system but also underscores the crucial role of filmmakers in dissenting politically and critiquing societal norms under oppressive conditions.

At the heart of this cinematic movement was a response to the socio-political realities of Poland during 1970s. The country was under communist rule, which imposed strict censorship and ideological conformity on cultural expression (Mazierska, 2015, p. 65). Despite these challenges, directors within the Cinema of Moral Anxiety found creative ways to circumvent censorship and convey their messages through allegorical narratives, symbolic imagery, and subtle critique. Rather than directly confronting the authorities, filmmakers often employed metaphorical storytelling techniques to explore themes of moral ambiguity, individual responsibility, and the search for meaning in a morally ambiguous world (Jachimczyk, 2017, p. 32; Leppa, 2019, p. 167).

The Cinema of Moral Anxiety stands out for its distinctive features,

evident in both its narrative structure and character development. These traits encompass a commitment to portraying societal realities authentically, steering away from idealized depictions. Instead, it embraces metaphorical and symbolic language to navigate censorship constraints effectively. Political satire becomes a powerful tool within this cinema, allowing filmmakers to critique prevailing systems. Characters are intricately crafted to blur the lines between good and evil, showcasing the complexities and vulnerabilities within supposedly virtuous individuals, rather than adhering to simplistic dichotomies (Maron, 2013, p. 253). Moreover, the inclusion of cameo roles by directors associated with the Cinema of Moral Anxiety enriches the narrative tapestry, adding depth and context to the storytelling. Films frequently eschew conventional happy endings, opting instead for ambiguous or cliffhanger conclusions. Thus, the Cinema of Moral Anxiety sets itself apart from the prescriptive nature of socialist realism, championing the director's unique voice and the intrinsic value of artistic expression.

Exploring Krzysztof Kieślowski 's Cinematic Canvas

Kieślowski, a renowned Polish filmmaker and screenwriter whose life spanned from 1941 to 1996, tackled moral and existential dilemmas in his films, earning numerous accolades throughout his illustrious career. His early endeavors revolved around documentary filmmaking, capturing the essence of ordinary lives. In 1975, he ventured into the realm of non-documentary features with *Personnel (Personel)* (1975). Amidst the cultural landscape of the 1970s and 1980s, Kieślowski found himself intertwined with a cadre of Polish directors, including luminaries such as Andrzej Wajda and Agnieszka Holland, forming what was colloquially termed the Cinema of Moral Anxiety (Pięta, 2020, p. 38). Kieślowski 's inaugural foray into feature films, *The Scar (Blizna)*, (1976), often hailed as a pioneering work within the Moral Anxiety movement, intriguingly revisits thematic terrains previously explored in his documentaries, as suggested by the implications of the Krakow Group manifesto (Leppa, 2019, p. 174).

Kieślowski, esteemed as one of the foremost Polish filmmakers of the 1990s, embarked on his cinematic odyssey upon gaining admission to the Łódź Film School on his third attempt in 1964. His formative years culminated in graduation in 1968, laying the foundation for his future pursuits. Initially recognized for his prowess in documentary filmmaking, Kieślowski captured attention with notable works such as

The Photograph (Zdjęcie, 1968) and *From the City of Łódź* (Z miasta Łodzi, 1969), adroitly encapsulating the essence of everyday life (Haltorf, 2007, p. 84). Kiesłowski's films are not celebrated for their intricate plots or action-packed sequences. Instead, they employ artful cinematography, minimal dialogue, nuanced performances, and evocative musical scores to hint at a mysterious, metaphysical realm of existence (Santilli, 2006, p. 148).

The imprint of his documentary background on his fictional works is striking within this framework. Despite garnering attention for his exploration of metaphysical themes, the director's political convictions and documentary roots remain pivotal in comprehending his cinematic oeuvre. From 1970 to 1971, Kiesłowski emerged as prominent figures in the burgeoning wave of Polish documentary cinema (Miczka, 1997, p. 2). Kiesłowski as a documentarian was heedful of potential dispute, recognizing his decisions significantly alter the lives of both himself and his subjects under the constraints of communist Poland. The events of the 1968 student protests, characterized by harsh repression, arrests, and expulsions, extended their reach to Łódź Film School, where Kiesłowski was a student, further forming his understanding of the socio-political landscape (Troy, 2017, p. 39). He immersed himself with political activities under the communist Poland. Actively involved with protests, Kiesłowski developed a political self.

Camera Buff (1979) occupies a significant place within Kiesłowski's cinematic oeuvre, characterized by its profound exploration of human frailty, moral ambiguity, and the search for meaning amidst existential uncertainty. Rooted in the rich tradition of Polish cinema, Kiesłowski infuses *Camera Buff* (1979) with a sense of introspection and moral urgency, challenging conventional notions of filmmaking and spectatorship.

Cinematic Reflections: Plot Analysis and Implications in *Camera Buff* (1979)

Camera Buff (1979) tells the story of Filip Mosz (portrayed by Jerzy Stuhr), an ordinary factory worker who discovers his passion for filmmaking when he receives Soviet-made amateur camera as a gift. As Filip indulges his passion for art of filmmaking, he begins to document the mundane yet profound moments of his life. Through the lens of his camera, Filip embarks on a journey of self-discovery, prompting introspection and self-reflection.

When Filip's boss learns about his camera, he calls Filip to his office and asks him to shoot the factory's anniversary celebrations. In addition to providing film material, the support is also given to Filip to establish a film club with the budget allocated for cultural activities. The film club becomes a pathway for Filip and his colleagues to discover beyond the tight working factory conditions. Over time, Filip creates his own artistic languages and explore editing through trial and error. Initially, Filip records his close neighbor's mother, and then he captures the lives of road workers. Filip's passion for cinema seizes him and he begins to place cinema at the center of his life. Filip's self-discovery and his independent attitudes towards his relationship with the language of cinema leads him loneliness. Filip, who unintentionally causes adverse consequences, is ultimately abandoned by his wife.

Self-Reflexivity and Metaphorical Expression in *Camera Buff* (1979) Within the Context "The Cinema of Moral Anxiety"

Self-reflexivity in cinema possesses a profound transformative potential, elevating the medium beyond mere entertainment to serve as a platform for deeper philosophical inquiry and film aesthetic. Central to such an inquiry is the device of the film within the film, which functions as a conduit for probing intricate layers of meta-narrative. By incorporating a film within the film, directors invite audiences to engage in a multi-dimensional experience where the boundaries between reality and fiction blur. This narrative device encourages introspection as viewers navigate through the labyrinthine depths of cinematic expression. As the layers of storytelling unfold, the audience is prompted to question not only the characters and plotlines but also the very nature of filmmaking itself.

Self-reflexivity emerges as a potent tool, resonating with philosophical underpinnings articulated by thinkers such as Deleuze (1989), Metz (2016) and Stam (1985). Deleuze's elucidation on the film within the film as a mode of the crystal-image underscores its significance not only as a narrative device but as a method that necessitates justification from broader considerations. Deleuze (1989, p. 77) asserts this mode is not an endpoint in itself but a means to understand themes like surveillance and investigation. Metz (2016, p. 71), on the other hand, uses the notion of a "film within the film" which embodies a reflexive figure akin to peering behind the curtain of the cinematic apparatus. Self-reflexivity in this sense, epitomized by the film within the film, functions as a vehicle for profound contemplation. It challenges viewers to think critically about

the medium while simultaneously immersing them in a world of imagination and creativity. Stam (1985, p. xii) discusses reflexivity in cinema as a dynamic concept with diverse manifestations, irrespective of any predetermined political affiliation. In this context he asserts this reflexivity can be rooted in the aestheticism of art-for-art's-sake or the philosophical framework of dialectical materialism. Within this conceptual framework, three primary modes of reflexivity emerge: ludic, aggressive, and didactic.

As audiences traverse these intricate cinematic landscapes, they are invited to uncover new insights and perspectives, ultimately enriching their appreciation of the art form. Much like glimpsing the inner workings of a machine or witnessing the technical crew in action, the inclusion of a film within the film offers audiences a self-referential lens through which to contemplate the medium itself. This reflexive figure acts as a mirror reflecting upon the nature of cinema, inviting audiences to interrogate its mechanisms, conventions, and underlying assumptions. By deliberately obscuring the boundaries between reality and fiction, the film within the film compels audiences to engage in a dual process of immersion and critical reflection, prompting them to ponder the constructed nature of cinematic narratives and the act of storytelling itself.

One notable film that meticulously uses self-reflexivity terrain is *Camera Buff* (1979). The analysis will focus on the specific nuances of self-reflexivity and metaphorical expression in *Camera Buff* (1979). One of the most striking aspects of self-reflexivity in *Camera Buff* (1979) is the blurring of boundaries between reality and representation. As Filip captures the everyday occurrences of his life on film, he becomes increasingly aware of the performative nature of his existence. The act of filmmaking itself becomes a mirror through which Filip confronts his own identity, aspirations, and moral dilemmas.

It seems quite difficult to analyze the film *Camera Buff* (1979) as a dissident film in terms of content. There is neither an attack on a party nor a criticism of the regime in the film. At first glance, the film creates the perception that it tells the story of an ordinary man who cannot resist his passion for filmmaking, but many subtexts and secondary meanings point otherwise. In *Camera Buff* (1979), Kieslowski employs metaphorical expression to explore themes of moral anxiety and existential uncertainty. Through Filip's journey as a filmmaker, Kieslowski explores

the ethical implications of bearing witness to reality and the responsibility that comes with wielding the power of representation. In *Camera Buff* (1979), Filip embodies Kieślowski's alter ego, offering a profound space for the audience to reflect on the intertwined nature of reality and cinematic imagery. The camera, symbolizing both liberation and constraint, becomes a metaphor for the moral dilemmas inherent in the act of filmmaking.

The film's recurring metaphorical theme revolves around documentary filming. The juxtaposition of light and shadow, the use of framing and composition, and the recurring motifs of reflection and distortion all serve to stress the existential ambiguity. This context is evident first in the working conditions of a dwarf in the factory and in the scenes depicting the documentary of Piotrek's dying mother. Rather than contrasting the factory's extraordinary and grand portrayal, focusing on the life of a dwarf worker in the context of the management's idealized depiction creates a metaphorical narrative. Filip's personal journey, along with the conditional support given to artworks at that time, is a reflection of the film that scrutinizes the era. Filip encounters censorship for the first time when his boss states, "You're filming a cripple, are you mocking him?" This symbolically suggests the ideological gap between authorities and filmmakers. At this point, all Filip wants to reflect the life of a worker who has been contributing to the factory for nearly thirty years. The documentary depicting the worker's living conditions and a day in his life reflects the real factory conditions. While the factory management symbolizes the oppressive and censorious policies of that period, Filip resembles Kieślowski's persona. Despite the factory's opposition, Filip proceeds with shooting the documentary, embarking on his journey. The film eventually airs on television, metaphorically illustrating Filip's creation of his own path. This theme is further reinforced in subsequent scenes, such as when Filip requests a copy of *Politika* magazine at a kiosk, implying both his personal and political journey.

Filming Piotrek's mother is another short example of documentary filmmaking in *Camera Buff* (1979). Filip's work gains more meaning when Piotrek's mother dies shortly after. Filip, who reflects reality as it is, will be rewarded with Piotrek saying to him, "I admire what you're doing. Someone is dying, but they continue to live here." In this scene, we witness a hallmark of Moral Anxiety cinema: the commitment to reflecting reality as it is, rather than shooting an idealized version. Thus, with this

sentence the director draws attention to the insignificance of depicting distorted realities under the guise of socialist realism. Additionally, Piotrek's statement is crucial in illustrating the interaction between the artist and the audience, expressing the audience's longing for authenticity and emphasizing the immutability of reality.

Filip tries to shoot the factory managers, but he also wants to film a pigeon occasionally, a request that is unfavorably received by his boss. When looking at this scene, we encounter a confrontation with metaphorical expressions. We see this feature in Filip's relationship with the camera and his self-discovery, capturing the pigeon's symbolizing freedom and pouring milk into the sink to express his loneliness. The pigeon here symbolizes Filip's desire to freely shoot his films. Additionally, symbolic expression also depicts Filip's stance against the function of censorship. Filip's desire to capture the true essence of life is highlighted when he insists on filming his daughter, even as Irena tries to adjust the baby's clothes. His wish to record her crying and smiling shows his commitment to portraying genuine moments.

As Filip grapples with questions of authenticity, truth, and accountability, Kieslowski invites the audience to contemplate on the ethical dimensions of representation and the inherent subjectivity of perception. In this sense, Kieslowski utilizes metaphorical cinematic expression to convey deeper philosophical undercurrents. While Filip is depicted as an honest man who cares about his family and strives to excel in his job, Filip unintentionally causes adverse consequences, eventually leading his wife to abandon him. Kieslowski's choice to depict Filip realistically emphasizes that every person has both good and bad traits, allowing the audience to empathize with him.

Breaking the fourth wall akin to Brecht's technique is a significant aspect of the film. Brecht's theater often employed self-reflexive techniques to draw attention to its own constructed nature. Through techniques such as direct address, meta-theatrical elements, and the use of songs or commentary, Brecht (2013) disrupted the illusion of realism, reminding the audience that they were witnessing a theatrical production. This self-awareness encouraged critical reflection on the part of the audience, prompting them to consider the underlying ideological messages and the socio-political context of the performance. Brecht's theatrical approach (2013) often involved employing self-reflexive methods to disrupt the illusion of realism, thereby prompting critical reflection from

the audience. Through direct address, meta-theatrical elements, and commentary, Brecht (2013) aimed to jolt spectators into an awareness of the constructed nature of the performance, urging them to consider its underlying ideological implications and socio-political context. Brecht asserts political-critical reflection as such:

It is well known that contact between audience and stage is normally made on the basis of empathy. Conventional actors devote their efforts so exclusively to bringing about this psychological operation that they may be said to see it as the principal aim of their art. Our introductory remarks will already have made it clear that the technique which produces an A-effect is the exact opposite of that which aims at empathy. The actor applying it is bound not to try to bring about the empathy operation (2013, p. 102).

His approach contrasts with traditional theatrical methods, emphasizing a deliberate disruption of empathy to prompt critical engagement with the performance's political and social messages. This context aligns with the didactic tone of the film, reflecting traces of its political stance. In this sense, the film adopts didactic tone. Stam (1985) offering insights into the complexities of the medium and its societal implications expresses this tone as such:

Brecht's theatre is ludic, aggressive, and didactic. Its didacticism, at its best, is subtle, dialectical, aimed less at communicating political messages than a teaching the spectator how to learn. Brecht's anti-illusionism is meant as a critique of a narcotic, mystifying, politically demobilizing art which offers, the public its own fantasies about how things are rather than a radical critique of those fantasies. Our interest here will not be in Brecht's plays as such but, rather in the repercussion his ideas have had on cinematic theory and practice, and especially on the films of Godard, Tanner, and others (pp. 9-10).

Although Stam (1985) emphasizes that cinematic traces of Brecht's political stance are evident in significant directors like Godard, *Camera Buff* (1979) and the *Cinema of Moral Anxiety* also evoke a similar tone. When considering this context, it becomes apparent that the foundations of political awareness are rooted in self-reflexivity. This observation suggests that directors like Kieślowski also engage with Brechtian principles through self-reflexive images.

Krzysztof Zanussi and his 1977 film *Camouflage* (*Barwy ochronne*)

appear in *Camera Buff* (1979). By incorporating Zanussi, Kiesłowski reinforces the film's self-reflexive imagery. This deliberate inclusion enriches the narrative. Zanussi, portraying himself, accepts Filip's invitation to discuss filmmaking in his hometown. Zanussi argues that amateur filmmakers, resembling poets, align more closely with "true artists" than their professional counterparts, who often adopt a more business-oriented approach. This specific scene is Kiesłowski's homage to Zanussi. Also, it is significant as it embodies the insights of Zanussi, a key director of the Cinema of Moral Anxiety. Furthermore, it highlights the representation of Kiesłowski's persona by the character Filip, serving as a canvas for articulating his artistic cinematic perspectives.

Through Zanussi and Filip, self-reflexivity unveils a pathway into Kiesłowski's personal artistic expression. Filip, reflecting much of Zanussi's guidance, diligently studies film criticism and history, acknowledging the political potential inherent in amateur filmmaking and its eventual loss as it transitions to professionalism. Ultimately, Filip concludes that filmmaking prioritizes self-expression over mere documentation of the external world (Mazierska, 2015, pp. 77-78). In this context, the significance of the expressions of Kiesłowski in his graduation thesis from the University of Łódź becomes apparent. Kiesłowski's remarks on documentary film and dramaturgy are as follows:

A wonderful, rich, inconceivable reality, where nothing is repeated, where you cannot have a double take. We do not have to worry about its development. It will provide us with new, unusual shots every day. It is actually reality, and this is no paradox, that is the solution for the documentary "film. You just have to believe in it fully, in its dramaturgy – in the dramaturgy of reality (Kiesłowski, 1970, p. 23 as cited in Jadzon, 2018, p. 156).

These reflections illuminate Kiesłowski's belief in the inherent drama and unpredictability of reality, emphasizing his dedication to portraying genuine human experiences without artificial embellishments. This aligns with the ethos of the Cinema of Moral Anxiety which seeks to confront audiences with unvarnished truths and provoke critical reflection on social and ethical issues. The artistic language of Moral Anxiety cinema, the movement under which *Camera Buff* (1979) produced, diverges markedly from contemporary cinematic trends, eschewing linear narratives for more complex storytelling approaches. This departure from conventional norms also reflects a deliberate effort to engage with

Brechtian principles and challenge established cinematic paradigm. By embracing notion of estrangement and encouraging audiences to critically engage with the film, Kieślowski disrupt conventional narrative and foster a deeper awareness of the socio-political contexts within the film. Such a political stance not only enriches the viewing experience but also inspires audiences to question prevailing ideologies and confront the status quo, illustrating the potent capacity of cinema as a tool for impactful social critique.

Conclusion

Within the context of the cinema of Moral Anxiety, directors ingeniously carved out artistic avenues as a response to the dominant narrative and censorship enforced by socialist realist doctrine. This creative resistance not only introduced a novel approach to filmmaking but also established a distinctive mode of political assertion, adeptly maneuvering around restrictive mechanisms. Through his films, Kieślowski invites audiences to engage critically with socio-political realities and contemplate on the ethical dimensions of artistic expression in the face of censorship and oppression. This study focuses on Krzysztof Kieślowski's socio-political commentary and artistic expression in *Camera Buff* (1979). The exploration of Kieślowski's political stance arises from his profound engagement with artistic cinematic expression, which functions as a means to construct a political standpoint. To comprehend how political stance is constructed *Camera Buff* (1979), within the framework of the cinema of Moral Anxiety, this study tackles with metaphorical and self-reflective elements.

Through interplay of meta-narrative layers, the film within the film transcends traditional storytelling conventions, offering audiences a rich tapestry of themes and ideas to contemplate. It becomes a site of introspection, inviting audiences to reflect on the nature of cinematic narratives and the role of the filmmaker in guiding our understanding of reality. The potency of metaphor and self-reflexivity as forms of political stance and expression within the cinematic realm, situates Kieślowski's *Camera Buff* (1979) as a pivotal film. *Camera Buff* (1979) uses self-reflexivity as a mode of communication. In this vein, self-reflexivity as a form of communication (Yacavone, 2021, pp. 99-104) resonates deeply, as it allows the film to engage audiences in a dialogue about the nature of filmmaking and the intricate relationship between art and reality. The film employs self-reflexivity as a central narrative device, intertwining

several key factors to enrich its cinematic discourse. Firstly, the film-within-a-film motif serves as a meta-narrative layer, inviting viewers to contemplate the nature of filmmaking itself. This self-referential technique prompts audiences to reflect on the constructed reality of the medium and the role of the filmmaker as both creator and commentator. Additionally, the character of Filip embodies the alter ego of the director, offering a lens through which to explore themes of artistic identity and creative expression. Filip's journey mirrors that of the filmmaker, blurring the lines between fiction and reality and inviting introspection into the challenges and ethical dilemmas inherent in the filmmaking process. Thus, *Camera Buff* (1979) stands not only as a significant example in the Cinema of Moral Anxiety, but also as an important work within the broader realm of art cinema, showcasing Kiesłowski's adeptness at intertwining personal narrative with socio-political critique. *Camera Buff* (1979) exemplifies the power of cinema to provoke thought and foster a deeper understanding of complex human and societal issues.

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