

Claudia Lindner Leporda

Vibrating Strings and Womb-ilical C(h)ords in Kieslowski's *Blue* (1993)

"You've changed. You were never so abrasive or unpleasant. What happened?" (Journalist)

"Don't you know? We had a car crash. My daughter was killed. So was my husband." (Julie) (*Blue*)

"Beauty revealed by/in self-fragilization survives the self. It is pregnant with proto-ethical potentiality. It resists the self. It resists the system." (Bracha Ettinger)

Writing about Krzysztof Kieslowski's **Three Colours Trilogy**, English director Angela Pope once emphasized the universal quality in Kieslowski's cinematic representation: "The characters are not remotely like me, their everyday dilemmas are not mine, but, in some fundamental way, I am at one with them. The film creeps into your innards and touches something deep within, something beyond reason, and sometimes profoundly hidden".ⁱ Drawing on the work of Bracha Ettinger, I invite a matrixial viewing of Kieslowski's film **Blue** (1993). I argue that the Polish director's **Trilogy** draws its fragile subjects' movement from a profound sense of abandonment and traumatic loss to an acknowledgement of their compassion, trans-connected-ness, and healing.

With its varied representation of intertwining musical, visual, physical/psychical c(h)ords, strings, ropes and linking devices, but also water, tears and colour, **Blue** creates, via sight, sound and touch, the womb/intra-uterine space which Bracha Ettinger has called "matrixial",ⁱⁱ a dimension of subjectivity in which the subject is a fragile partial partner-in-difference, and connection is the ultimate ethical frame of reference. Ettinger argues that although the matrixial sphere emerges alongside the phallic arena, it is a different model because it is nonphallic. Not based on the logic of on/off, present/absent, pure/impure, the matrixial is a sphere where the I is always transconnected to the non-I and its relations to non-I(s) take place without rejection, assimilation, appropriation or abandonment.ⁱⁱⁱ Ettinger claims that "m/Otherity is an evolving process" in which "conductive shareability might lead to traumatizing as well as to healing" and, in her view, "lack of compassionate hospitality is a path to retraumatization" whereas when "I and non-I co-emerge as if each one is a different pole or a point along the same vibrating string can lead to healing".^{iv}

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In **Blue**, a young Parisian woman, Julie, loses her husband, Patrice, a famous composer, and her little daughter, Anna, who die in a car accident at the beginning of the film. As Julie's family car rushes towards death, the camera focuses on Antoine, the teen hitchhiker who is playing with a ball attached by a string to a small stick. The very moment he manages to flick the ball in the air and connect it to the stick, a big crash is heard. Unable either to commit suicide or to deal with her loss, Julie tries to shut out the world around her in order to break free of the pain she feels. She sells everything and plans to start an anonymous and solitary life in central Paris. From there on, the no-longer-m/Other Julie de Courcy néé Vignon (Juliette Binoche) withdraws anonymously into a world where she should know no one and no one should know her: "Now, I have only one thing left to do... nothing. I don't want any belongings, any memories. No friends, no love. They are all traps".^v Her resistance to connection and concealment within herself make her new freedom, which proves, however, to be an impossibility: soon the past begins to haunt her in the form of a melody, the concerto music Patrice was in the process of composing.

Following Julie's too-early-too-soon traumatizing loss of both husband and daughter, I argue that **Blue** traces the continuity of Julie's life in her m/Others' lives, but also their initiation of her subjectivizing moments via their own "self-fragilization".^{vi} Pursuing Julie's journey from a split-I and a no-longer-m/Other to a partial m/Other via her art-working and her m/Others' primary compassion, I propose to watch **Blue** as an artwork which marks precisely a movement from a phallic Symbolic (where the subject is free, separated, and disconnected) to a matrixial sphere (in which the subject is fragile and compassionate to the unknown other who is, nonetheless, a partner-in-difference); from empathy-without-compassion (which harms the matrixial psychic tissue) to empathy-with-compassion (which is creative and leads to the broadening of the ethical horizon); from death-drive and sacrifice to coemergence and besidedness; and finally, from cords with-out connecting to wom-bilical c(h)ords that link to life.

1. Missed Encounters: Splitting, Forgetting and Abandonment

"Thanatos wins when the web of borderlinks is shattered into endless fragments, and when it evaporates or liquidates itself into fusion or when a subject/object split takes over. We are left then with the battle between self and others, self and Cosmos, where empathy from selfobjects can turn malignant".^{vii}

After the car accident we see Julie lying on a hospital bed. A doctor lets her know that her husband and daughter are dead. Kieslowski's macro focus of Julie's eye with the reflection of the

doctor in it introduces the theme of Julie's violent disattunement to the surrounding world, on the one hand, and the Ettingerian matrixial sphere of (m)Others' compassion towards a non(I) via besidedness, which demands reworking towards non-abandonment, on the other. From the beginning, we move with Julie between fascinace and fascinum, which are different modes of fascination: “fascinum relates to the arresting power of the phallic objet a, and fascinace relates to the continual borderlinking and differentiating of a matrixial link a”.^{viii} Ettinger emphasizes that “if fascinace is the ripening of a transformational potentiality in a matrixial prolongation of a time of co-emergence with and in a sensitive image, sound, touch, move, breath, it might turn into fascinum when castration, separation, weaning, abandonment, shaming or splitting abruptly occurs.”^{ix} While recovering from the car crash, Julie watches the funeral of her husband and daughter on a tiny television. Touching the screen with her finger where her daughter's coffin is, she bites her lip yet holds her tears back. Although technology connects Julie to her beloved ones, it actually distances her from the funeral. The television, as **objet a**, is present visually and audibly, but it lacks the emotional, compassionate force of the matrixial **link a**. The impersonality of the little screen together with the “working of the phallic gaze” transform the funeral into a public property,^x an anonymity, a “transparent screen of paranoia” where “positions of subjects versus objects are erected”^{xi}.

After Julie turns down the reporter's request to interview her about her late husband, thus denying the existence of the past, she embraces the death-impulse in an attempt to also eradicate sense from her existence. Her state of renunciation is most clearly rendered in a sequence in which she breaks a hospital window and tries to swallow a handful of pills. Later, when she apologizes to the compassionate nurse for breaking the glass, and implicitly for having to witness her suicide attempt, the nurse says gently that the glass can be replaced, thus revealing what Ettinger refers to as empathy with-in compassion, a fragilizing process but a transporting one of co-habitation nonetheless. Ettinger thinks that “in working-through our besidedness and recognizing all our intimate-anonymous partial partners, we are becoming more vulnerable yet we are re-paving a non-regressive path to the primary compassion”.^{xii}

Julie's first act after returning from hospital is to empty the big country house. She throws her husband's unfinished Song for the Unification of Europe in the garbage, in a symbolic gesture of destroying his memory. She then enters her daughter's blue room where the mobile made out of pieces of blue glass, one of the key motives in the film, is hanging from the ceiling.

Bitterly she pulls at one of the chains of beads, loosening it. She devours the blue lollipop that her daughter Anna used to eat and lets the lid of the piano fall closed with a crash. She appears cold and indifferent and her grief is so deep that she cannot cry, nor even feel. And when later, Julie finds her housekeeper weeping and asks her, “Why are you crying?”, the old woman responds, “Because you are not”.^{xiii} In order to fulfill her obligations, Julie splits off her agony, fighting back devouring emotions. By putting her own self at risk of vulnerability brought about by compassion and wit(h)nessing, the housekeeper embodies Julie’s split-off, agonizing self. This kind of wit(h)nessing, Ettinger reminds us, “heals by stitching the collapse of the other’s capacity to elaborate loss”.^{xiv}

Before she puts her country home on the market and drops her marital name, Julie invites Olivier, a colleague musician of her famous musical composer Patrice de Courcy, to make love to her: “You have always wanted me. Here I am”,^{xv} she tells him. She thanks him for his kindness, yet persuades him she is not worthy of his love. Thanatos, Ettinger claims, “also arises when the I meets the untrusting (own) self. The potentiality for fascinace might then be hurt”^{xvi}. After this symbolic gesture of compassion without empathy, she walks away, deliberately scratching her hand on a stone wall, yet another moment of physical pain and bodily abandonment which she fails to notice. Finally, she takes a flat in a child-free building in a neighbourhood of Paris and furnishes it with her daughter’s mobile of strings and deep translucent blue glass beads. It is the only reminder of her lost life, a memory of her five-year-old Anna, the only wom-bilical c(h)ords that she preserves, but also the tears she would rather look at with a touching gaze than cry.

One day, the boy who witnessed her loss meets Julie to return a necklace he had found at the scene of the accident. Feeling remorse for having taken it, he offers to share his memories of the moments just after the crash: “Would you like to ask something? I arrived immediately after (...)”, he says. “No!”^{xvii}, Julie stops him unexpectedly, and the whole screen is engulfed in black briefly before she forbids him to say anything. Her gesture of refusal is indicative of a denial of memory but also of her refusal to connect to an Other who shares her trauma. Ettinger emphasizes that “the web contracts when appropriation, manipulation or paranoia takes over to the extent that awe, fascinace and compassion recede”.^{xviii} When the image comes back, Julie apologizes and tells the boy to keep the necklace. “Turning away from the non-I by splitting”, Ettinger notes, “becomes a deletion, a dropping, an abandonment and a prolapse that creates

retraumatization and tears the fabric's texture precisely in the potential locus for potential re-co-birth (re-co-naissance)".^{xix} This is particularly apparent in the scene in which Julie spends the whole night on the steps. One night, a man gets aggressed in the street, escapes into Julie's apartment house, and desperately knocks on her door crying for help. Struck with terror, Julie is unable to help. "Whatever and whoever enters the place of the primary others", Ettinger writes, "is always also traumatizing. If the I feels too persecuted, fascinace freezes into fascinum, awe into fear and compassion calls, rather than resists, the narcissistic self".^{xx} When Julie eventually leaves her flat to see what happens, she is forced to spend the night on the stairs, frozen in icy blue, after the wind shuts the door behind her. Looking for meanings in the cold dark, Julie finds the experience of connection painfully impossible.

The sight of a pregnant mouse in her new flat is yet another repressed trauma returning from her childhood and reactivating Julie's emotions. The potential killing of the baby mice and their mother torments her, amplifying her sense of guilt. In this context, Ettinger writes, "the Not-enough mother phantasy arises as a reply to the enigma of the loss of perfect attunement between presubject and environment".^{xxi} However, the realization that she is murdering the mice is a moment of recognition of her primary compassion and it is not by accident that their squeaking draws Julie towards her Alzheimer-stricken mother. Although the old woman eventually confirms Julie's fear of mice, she keeps forgetting who Julie is, mistaking her for Marie-France, her long-dead sister. Sunk too deep into her own forgetfulness, she is unable to comprehend her daughter's pain and loneliness. The lack of connection in their relationships together with the act of misrecognition help Julie herself to better forget who she is: being a stranger to her mother, she can be a stranger to anybody, including to herself.

2. Fluctuations: From Empty Empathy to Full Empathy with Compassion

"If the structuring of the self survives abjection, and the fluctuation between paranoid and trusting states re-reaches compassion, awe and fascinace, a non-phallic feel-knowing in the Other and in the Cosmos by self-fragilization is possible. A borderlinking string trembles and resonates in a psychic web when different souls are reattuned to one another in differentiating, re-specting the transsubjective sphere. A severe foreclosure of such a string is at present a catastrophe to the other but in the future this is also a catastrophe to the self. In the past of its futures, will the future-self re-spect? Will it? And what then?"^{xxii}

Kieslowski's images of split, separation and abandonment, from broken glass to window panes and TV sets that separate people, add a touch of vulnerability to his partial subjects. Glass is his

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perfect metaphor because it simultaneously connects and separates, invites us in but keeps us out. Mother and daughter address each other through a window filled with a multitude of reflections that suggest visually both the loneliness and abandonment in their relationship and the need to re-connect. Moreover, the TV that Julie's mother watches withdraws her from the outside world, giving her the illusion of freedom. She even admits: "I'm fine. I have everything here. The TV... I can see the whole world."^{xxiii} She is free to see the world, but, in her forgetful isolation, she is incapable to emotionally connect to it. Kieslowski seems to project this metaphor in the image of bungee jumpers on the TV set which she watches. Although they cut their contact with solid ground and leap into the abyss, a cord eventually breaks their fall and reconnects them to life. However, this artificial connection via cords is one without compassion, linking and relating, since there is no one at the other end of the rope. Although the distance between mother and daughter is never bridged and no link between the two really generated, her mother tells Julie: "You can't renounce everything"^{xxiv}. Ettinger believes that compassion can work against split and abandonment when "the I rejoins another matrixial non-I in com-passionate reattunement and this reattunement operates without phallic splits".^{xxv}

One can start tracing Julie's passage from empty empathy to full empathy with compassion in Kieslowski's different uses of the colour blue itself. Usually associated with grief, cold, artifice and eventually, death, Kieslowski's matrixial blue, as the refracted glimmers playing on Julie's temple (from some unknown source) remind us, has strong links with water, pregnancy, softness, security, compassion, healing, and inspiration. This kind of blue is linked to the metallic candy wrapper that her daughter held in the wind just before the accident, the water in the swimming pool, the reflections of the chandelier on Julie's face signifying the presence of past memory and, last but not least, as we shall further see, to music. These emotionally charged objects or **link(s)** dissolve into shapeless threads and free-floating clouds of blue and the way in which they are presented in different phases of the narrative is connected with Julie's transformation and subjectivizing process itself.

Kieslowski also returns to the tomb/womblike image of the large, isolated indoor swimming pool, where Julie goes to neutralize her senses and, thus, escape from herself. At one point, as she prepares to climb out of the swimming pool, the music returns and she re-submerges in the water, covering her ears in an attempt to block out the sound of the music she hears in her head. Another time she visits the swimming pool, Julie regresses back into the water,

floating like a corpse but eventually coming back up and gasping for air. As much as she refuses to keep past memories alive, they return forcing her to connect to life and to face her loss. The swimming pool, containing the healing qualities of the womb's amniotic fluid, becomes a womb-*ilical* c(h)ord and a place where Julie curls up like fetus waiting to be re-born. "Like in pregnancy", Ettinger tells us, "one needs to dwell long enough in com-*passionate jointness* interweaved behind the veils of any phallic gaze, hopefully relaxing one's 'schizoid' or 'paranoid' defenses, so that a matrixial web would become creative **or even visible and audible**".^{xxvi} It is after this and other encounter-events that Julie starts to revise the unfinished concert, perhaps realising that she cannot hold her breath forever, hiding underwater from light, music, and the company of (m)/Others.

3. Matrixial Encounter-events and Metramorphosis

"With continuity-in-besidedness, even death doesn't destroy the matrixial web".^{xxvii} "Not inter-subjective but trans-subjective and transjective encounter-events take place by way of subjectivizing experiencing with an artobject or art-process, an other or an event, others, alive or not, met and unmet, that continue to induce and transmit. And the Cosmos is emoved in and through process, image or move, sound or touch, a breath-in and a breath-out, in-spiriting, ex-spiriting and transpiriting beyond the perception by the senses".^{xxviii}

In the matrixial borderspace Ettinger has opened up, a psychic borderspace of encounter and metramorphosis where the subject is inscribed with traces of known or anonymous others, as much as others are inscribed with her traces, nothing is definitively abandoned. From this perspective, "an **originary jointness-in-differentiating and besidedness**, rather than disappearance and death, becomes the kernel of the **feminine-maternal**".^{xxix} Compassionate strings and c(h)ords reach Julie from different webs and partial subjects who are always-in-joining-and-separating with/from her and thus, opening her co-response-ability in the matrixial zone, "where non-life is accessed by life and life is accessed by non-life"^{xxx}. Intensities and vibrations, blue musical links and invisible strings bring her back, connecting Julie to a new future and to the old past. Old and new acquaintances, unwanted strangers, break into her indifferent privacy, initiating subjectivizing transformational healing moments in her new life. "The connections are not planned. They occur",^{xxxi} Brian Massumi would say. In what follows I will show how the lives of the strangers who unknowingly become Julie's intimate-anonymous partial partners in her re-co-birth (later also symbolically reflected in Kieslowski's **Chorale**) as a co-created m/Other, allow Julie 'to feel-know by passion and through fascination and to be seduced into life' anew.^{xxxii} They

finally affect her primary compassion, awe and fascination, which, as Ettinger describes, are “knowing aeriels and feel-thinking strings in the same sense that anxiety is. They are primordial and affective. They can reach the ethical when they turn into respect, non-abandonment and co-poiesis as values or points of view: 'acting-thinking values'”.^{xxxiii}

3.1. Lucille

“Awe (at the level of I - non-I) can evolve into respect, fear, shaming at the level of subject – other”.^{xxxiv} “Matrixial awe is a presubjective and sub-subjective support for respect and fear”.^{xxxv}

One day a neighbour tries to convince Julie to sign a petition to remove the prostitute who is a tenant in their house. Not only does she resist to do so but, on the contrary, she makes sure that the young woman cannot be abandoned on the street. Julie’s “non-abandoning responsibility inside the newly accessed anonymous I(s) and non-I(s) **severality**” is thus awakened.^{xxxvi} “Compassion is intrapsychical, subjective and trans-subjective. It works its way, like art does, by fine attunements that evade the social and the political systems. It is a kind of fragilizing subjective openness which is also a resistance”,^{xxxvii} Ettinger reminds us. While admiring the blue chandelier, Lucille tells Julie, whom she addresses with the intimate “tu”, she remembers a blue mobile hanging in her home when she was a child. “I wanted to touch it but couldn't reach it”,^{xxxviii} she recalls. Not freed yet of painful memories, Julie feels anxious and uncomfortable that Lucille should touch her only link to Anna and her gaze turns vigilant and defensive. However, Lucille’s recognition of the blue crystal mobile implies a history of vulnerability and tortured past which she shares with Julie and Anna and tries to liberate herself from. In her case, “the wit(h)nessing touch-and-gaze is not active-aggressive” and thus,^{xxxix} Julie’s passivity is transformed by Lucille’s activity in jointness-in-differentiating through channels of trans-sensitive borderlinking. A similar moment of wit(h)nessing, recognition and shared trauma appears later when Lucille notices Julie’s phobia of mice and she embraces her – a physical gesture of wit(h)nessing and non-abandonment. It is not accidental that Lucille asks: “Are you afraid of returning?”,^{xl} and Julie nods her head. She comforts Julie and persuades her that it is normal to get rid of unwanted mice, and takes upon herself to return and clean up Julie’s apartment.

Kieslowski cuts directly from the scene of Julie’s despair in the swimming pool to Lucille’s crying-for-help phone call to Julie in the middle of the night. The sight of her father among the voyeurs at the sordid Pigalle nightclub where she dances nude makes Lucille anxious.

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She cannot face him. Instead she asks Julie to join her in the club. The shared traumatic past becomes the inciting force for Julie to co-join with her new neighbour in some kind of psychic alliance, which enlarges her own subjectivity while also enabling her to discover that Lucille has a powerful father complex. In the strip club scene where Kieslowski shows Julie forming a bond with her neighbour, the two get physically closer to one another as they are bridging their gaps emotionally. And rather than the traditional point counterpoint cutting, Kieslowski opts for panning, a two-shot that allows Julie and Lucille, two vulnerable joining-in-differentiating souls “resonating with-in a particular phantasmatic, traumatic and jouissant atmosphere”,^{xli} to share the same image. Ettinger insists that “trans-subjectivity is not a fusion, and where the non-I doesn’t respect the I’s difference s/he forces domination and initiates resistance”.^{xlii} Although Julie and Lucille share attachment and abandonment traces of trauma, they function from opposite sides of the pole, experimenting, for instance, with their sexuality differently: while Julie opts for celibacy, Lucille is sexually-liberated. The difference between the two women friends is also suggested by the floor lights of the club, where the intense red of sexuality alternates with the intense blue of pain and where “Eros doesn’t claim lack or abjection”.^{xliii} Ettinger would say that they both “feel anxiety and pain and survive it”.^{xliv} However, “this survival and the affective recognition of anxiety and pain bound together are a kind of **happiness in sorrow** that allows re-co-birthing as it echoes the matrixial com-compassion within co-response-abi-lity that forms the archaic encounter-event with the m/Other”.^{xlv} Julie’s discovery of sympathy and compassion for Lucille is her first opening to the world as much as an opening up of her enclosing surroundings.

3.2. Sandrine

“Compassion (at the level of I - non-I) can evolve into non-abandonment, adult compassion, abjection, disgust, at the level of subject – other.”^{xlvi} “Infant’s and m/Othernal compassion is a pre-subjective and sub-subjective support of primary empathy, sorrow, trust, gratitude and forgiveness”.^{xlvii}

It is by accident that Julie sees a photo of Patrice with an attractive woman, which she feels might have been her late-husband’s mistress. When she finally decides to meet her, she discovers that a biological link survived her dead husband: Sandrine is carrying his child. Julie finds the conversation with the other woman, her intimate stranger, very distressing, having to painfully accept that they each had their own separate love life with Patrice. When Julie talks to Sandrine, the camera uses a shot/reverse-shot to emphasize the distance between the two women.

However, by choosing to encounter Sandrine, Julie resists her own tendency to turn Patrice's mistress into a despised object and to return to a paranoid abjectivity and narcissistic passive-aggressivity. Ettinger argues that “non-abandonment and non-shaming in wit(h)nessing — that re-spect within a borderlinking move — precede social and political contracts of respect and testimony and contribute to them. The com-passion that wit(h)nessing reverberates precedes and transpasses the senses and the symbolic order. A passage to ethicality occurs at the level of a subject if s/he can withdraw from the social and the cultural without withdrawing from the matrixial tissue, enacting non-shaming and non-abandonment, and resisting paranoid tendencies of one's own self”.^{xlviii}

When Julie finally confronts Sandrine, all she needs to know is: ‘Did he love you?’ Any answer is futile, once she notices the crucifix hanging from Sandrine’s neck, the same affectionate gift her husband gave her. The two women’s encounter thus produces a connection between the foreign and the intimate in which both partial-subjects are linked by further reattunements, wit(h)nessing and non-abandonment. Despite Julie’s discovery of infidelity, she finally accepts “the impossibility of not-sharing”.^{xlix} On the contrary, sharing in the birth of Sandrine’s baby and thinking of the child-to-be as her lost daughter’s half-sibling, and yet another wom-bilical cord connecting her to life, Julie gives her family home and name to the unborn child as a gesture of peace and forgiveness. “Embracing instants of matrixial borderlinking”, Ettinger claims, “orients the subject toward responsibility”^l whereas “re-co-birth can occur in hospitality and generosity triggered within and by sensitive com-passion”.^{li} Moreover, compassion is not only a basis for responsibility, but also the originary event of peace. “Peace”, Ettinger tells us, “is a fragile encounter-eventing, an ever re-co-created and co-re-created fragile and fragilizing encounter-event. [...] To suffocate my own compassion would be a kind of mental and affective paralysis, this would be a 'second death' (Lacan), since primary compassion is a spontaneous way of trans-subjective knowing of/in the unknown Other before and beyond any possible economy of inter-subjective exchange. It is in that sense that in compassion one is always fragilizing one’s self and becomes vulnerable”.^{lii}

Julie is remarkably generous and kind, just as Patrice had always promised Sandrine she was. “Vous etes bonne”, says Sandrine to Julie, “C’est ce que vous voulez etre”.^{liii} Her gesture reflects an expansion of herself rather than the contracting instinct that comes from jealousy, loss and betrayal. At the end of the conversation, the young woman herself approaches Julie and tells

her, ‘I’m sorry’^{lv}, a gesture which articulates a shareable affectivity, vulnerability and empathy-within-compassion. In matrixial compassionate hospitality, Julie, by now herself a m/Other, “is wit(h)nessing whatever arrives: the pain and the wonder, the longing and the fear of languishing with-in contemplation”.^{lv} As we shall further see, new art-and-healing strings emerge in Julie’s life, accompanied by her reattunement in new prolonged encounter-events with several non-I(s).

3.3. The Flutist

“Fascinace (at the level of I - non-I) can evolve into esteem and gratitude, domination, submission, obsession for compensation at the level of subject – other.”^{lvi} “Matrixial fascinace is a pre-subjective and sub-subjective support for admiration and vision”.^{lvii}

Ettinger claims that “accidental encounters turn into creative encounter-events when a desire penetrates the virtual sphere and joins virtual strings left abandoned or unconnected, and trembles them, reattuning with their frequencies, until an eventing of forming and in-forming occurs”.^{lviii} The musical chords that Julie thought she had cut return to her hauntingly in the strains of a beggar’s flute, the instrument which connects him with the world and his own womb-*ilical* c(h)ord. In a matrixial co-emergence “virtual strings interconnected to strings arriving from with-in other matrixial nets, and therefore a matrixial co-emergence [...] awakens the co-creative transformational potentiality”^{lix}, which Ettinger names “co-poiesis”. This “gives rise to a particular kind of knowledge produced in/by unconscious strings and threads vibrating and creating a psychic-mental resonance space, as well as vibrating and creating within a resonance space, where the ethical capacity grows precisely within the primary aesthetical awakening”.^{lx}

Julie is taken aback when the street musician (played by Jacek Ostaszewski, the flute player in composer Zbigniew Preisner’s orchestra) starts to play a few lines of the unpublished music which she thought belonged to her or her husband. The melody is a variation of Julie’s theme, which the flutist performs while preserving the typical triplet rhythms of the previous melodies. Julie recognizes the theme at once and decides to ask the beggar what he is playing. She knows the answer, but is surprised when she hears that the flutist plays “whatever occurs to him”^{lxi} and that he likes to improvise tunes for his street audience. “Inspiration doesn’t belong to the artist alone; inspiriting is with-in a transjective encounter”^{lxii}, Bracha Ettinger reminds us. Kieslowski, whose most known collaborations were with his co-writer, Krzysztof Piesiewicz and the composer Zbigniew Preisner, also talked of his obsession with the idea that the notes are out

there in the world, and that we should not be taken aback if the same music would be heard, by chance, in different places: the artworks we create are neither the property of individuals, nor a work of personal authorship,^{lxiii} but a co-poiesis, a trans-subjective work, and a collaborative process. In this context, “a contact arises through the eye or the ear, but also through the infra-ear and the infra-eye in the participating-and-receiving self and other: a viewer, a listener, and also, again and again, the artist as an inspired receiving participant too, who, in self-relinquishing, fragilizes herself to the psyche of the other and spirit of the Cosmos. [...] In-breath and ex-breath in spirit, ex-spirit and transpirit virtual, real, and real-virtual new apparitions even with-in the already-known”.^{lxiv}

On one occasion, seeing the homeless flutist asleep on the pavement, Julie compassionately pushes the flute case towards him, who gently tells her, ‘You should always hold on to something’.^{lxv} His generosity and passion for music offer Julie an occasion “for re-spect, con-templation and new encounter events” while “calling for arousal on aesthetical and proto-ethical levels”.^{lxvi} Indeed, the strings and wom-bilical c(h)ords that link people to each other, to artworks and to life are not ours to cut off, but ours to protect: “like in the wom-bilical time-space-encounter, where the pre-subject is borderlinking to and borderspacing from its archaic m/Other, a subject can at any moment be affected on that level and become partial in a web, where affectability and co-affectability turns transaffective”.^{lxvii} The beggar’s flute music, so similar to Julie’s and yet different, de-freezes her past and initiates her metamorphosis, a psychic healing through artworking. In her attempt to once again form intimate links with others, Julie slowly reconnects to life, this time through her growing artistic inclinations. “In the matrixial encounter-event the moment of asymmetrical co-responding when compassionate hospitality is responded by fascinace is a subjectivizing moment. When matrixial partial-subjects meet and differentiate in co-emergence, the subjectivizing moment settles beside earlier encounter-events. [...] Jointness-in-initiation is one such hidden effect with a healing transformational potentiality; co-poiesis is another: here an artwork is born”.^{lxviii} It is not by accident that the encounter with Olivier, the old friend in love with her, takes place once again in the café at the time when the flutist comes onto the street and plays a new tune. This resonating encounter-event touches Julie’s psychic strings, opens an ethical trajectory, and offers her a chance for re-co-birth. “This is where art as a transport-station of trauma proposes a unique occasion... The artwork is only an occasion, a chance, an opened possibility and a reminder, sent from the actual or from the past,

or from the virtual past and from a possible virtu(re)al; a chance for re-co-birth from a virtual Real without which a blocked real might become monstrous”.^{lxxix}

3.4. Olivier

“Beauty desires you when you self-relinquish yourself to the process”.^{lxxx} “Matrixial self-relinquishment is a pre-subjective support for trust and gratitude and for the more mature compassion and hospitality”.^{lxxxi}

When Olivier, Julie's husband's assistant, is introduced to us for the first time, he comes upon Julie upstairs in her house. The reason for his coming is to take the in-complete score of the Concerto for the Unification of Europe since he senses that Julie is going to destroy it. As Olivier goes over the score, in the background we can hear the sounds of various instruments, similar to the sounds of an orchestra tuning up before a concert. These are the sounds that Olivier quickly perceives in his mind-psyche as he turns over the pages. As we watch the scene, music connects us intimately with Olivier, it allows us to listen, breathe, and tremble just the way he does. Seeing Julie in pain makes him walk away without a word. ‘Non-wit(h)nessing within a matrixial web would be abandoning. Abusive appropriation would be devouring’,^{lxxxii} Ettinger tells us. However, “if the subject allows re-self-fragilization in re-spect and con-templation and takes responsibility for the I-non-I configuration then esteem, gratitude, respect and compassion will shape ethicality and work against sacrifice and self-sacrifice”.^{lxxxiii} Later, Olivier looks for Julie once again in his attempt to make her help him complete the musical work. Respectfully using the formal ‘vous’ form of address, Olivier also assures her of his love.

Julie decides to take a leading part in developing the Concert, and yet another active attunement of her self to (m)/Others in metramorphosis. Ettinger, an artist herself, has often written that “actively-passive compassionate hospitality begins with aesthetical and ethical desire and an actively-passive 'decision' of the artist, [...], to fragilize herself and loosen her psychic boundaries in order to surrender to vibrations arriving from inside and outside for an-other and for the self. (...) Compassionate hospitality as Eros that offers the possibility for an-other to differentiate herself in jointness creates a psychic space of potentiality, where the other is solicited by a particular configuration of desire to join in what is yet to come, from the virtual sphere”.^{lxxxiv} Music forces Julie to an “originary psycho-ethical openness and aesthetical trans-sensing” and yet,^{lxxxv} not in obligation but “as part of I with non-I in a com-passionate affective, psychic and mental resonance chamber”.^{lxxxvi}

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Julie and Olivier's collaboration becomes a very tactile scene of artworking. As it begins, Julie and Olivier are trying out different instruments and we hear a fragment of each version. In extreme close-ups we follow Julie's finger touching the notes as the music plays. Pressing the score with the finger as if to activate it and listening to the music by only looking at the score, music forces her to feel-know, to feel-understand. Both Julie and Olivier look and observe, “but it takes en-duration in con-templation to see. Self-fragilizing is risky and also painful because you are reaching compassion-beyond-empathy and a com-passion that is often hard to tolerate on the level of an individual that seeks mental security and needs to withdraw inside its habits”.^{lxxvii} However, “by way of this fragilizing and its transformational activity, the matrixial gaze and screen embrace a promise of beauty which sees with the heimlich of compassion”.^{lxxviii} (11) Then, in a medium long shot we see Julie and Olivier by the piano. As the music plays on, the image goes slowly out of focus with only red and blue spots to be seen. Music itself is connected with colours and abstract shapes and the whole symphony, which is an encounter between image and sound, becomes a visual artwork and a passionate actively-passive fascinace: “the aesthetic duration of affective and effective participation-transformation within a subjectivizing instant that actualizes a matrixial potentiality for borderlinking, be it via gaze, touch, movement, voice, breathing, gaze-and-touching, move-and-breathing, but also beyond the senses, by joint trans-sensing in beauty”.^{lxxix} As Julie and Olivier “partake of co-response-ability”,^{lxxx} and bathe ‘within a psychic resonance field of mind-psyche waves, frequencies, intensities’,^{lxxxii} Olivier’s room itself becomes a “transject”, a generous, oceanic blur, similar to the ultrasound image of the child in the womb, nurturing a “working-through of matrixial differentiation and differentiating in coemergence”,^{lxxxii} and artistic co-poiesis.

While working with Olivier in a shared prolonged encounter-event, co-composing in jointness-in-differentiating and side-by-side-ness, without assimilation or rejection and, “trembling in different ways along the same sensitive, trans-sensitive and affective string”,^{lxxxiii} Julie suggests alterations in the instrumentation that Olivier has proposed and tells him which orchestral parts should be thrown out and which brought in. As her aesthetical sensibility deepens, Julie assumes responsibility for the metamorphic reattuning with Olivier's primary compassion and response-ability. “In ebbing and flowing within such a shared field”, Ettinger writes, “particular resonating strings become more and more significant, by intensity or by repetition, and accumulate shareable 'memory' in threads”.^{lxxxiv} As we watch the film, the only

thing that changes is the instrumentation: it is either carried by strings (when she makes love with Olivier) or by the harp (when Julie moves into her new flat) or by the muttering male choir (when she sits on the steps), or the one simple piano line which comes from Julie's mind. However, as Julie starts composing with Olivier, the Concerto links these instruments and themes together and thus, the composition scene itself becomes a shared field of metamorphic reattuning. Also, matrixial reattunement between Julie and Olivier turns both partners vulnerable and yet, in the psychic borderspace they share, each “receives from the other by way of immersion within the same resonating borderspace and becomes, on a certain partial level, a continuity of the other’s strings and threads”.^{lxxxv} With its trans-sensuous strings, music reconnects Julie with a repressed archaic dimension, the past she cannot forget while also linking her to the future she cannot but embrace. Music and her (m)/Others offer her ‘a transferential borderspace founded upon compassion, responsibility and freedom’,^{lxxxvi} whereas her compassionate trans-sensing of m/Others announces the basis of ethics itself.

4. Wom-bilical C(h)ords, Chorale, Co-poiesis

“...and all those pre-subjective and sub-subjective supports are interconnected and cross-informing the I and the non-I, and revealed in and by extreme fragilization within new matrixial webs where co-response-ability, wit(h)nessing and com-passionate hospitality in jointness are re-created”.^{lxxxvii}

Kieslowski’s deep belief in people’s ability to connect on a compassionate level in a special kind of non-relating relationality by connectivity is most visible in the last scene of **Blue**. Julie has self-fragilized herself and completed the symphony. Her movement from an unbearable sense of abandonment and solitude to ‘an originary psycho-aesthetical proto-ethical trans-subjective passage with-in non-absolute m/Otherity’,^{lxxxviii} and acceptance of ‘**com-passionate hospitality in living-inter-with-in the almost-Other**’^{lxxxix} has been accompanied by the strains of her late husband’s symphonic tribute to the unification of Europe, the **Chorale**, a work she herself completes.

As Julie is quitting her solitary existence, preparing to leave for Olivier's place, the Chorale, with its multiple unified voices, brings the music to its climax. Its theme is the passage from St Paul’s **First Letter to the Corinthians**, which vaunts Love above Faith and Hope: “If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all

my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three^{xc}; and “le plus grand est AGAPE”^{xcii}. Although the chorale is sung in French, the last word makes an exception since, as Julie suggests to Olivier, “In Greek, the rhythm is different”.^{xciii} **Agape**, or what Ettinger refers to as the matrixial sphere, “the womb-like compassion”,^{xciii} the intra-uterine felt-known experience we all share, is “a key to access the Other in its **nude vulnerability**” **Agape** is,^{xciv} most of all, an other Eros, which Ettinger also touches upon as “love for the friend/neighbour neither sexual nor that of attachment” and “that reaches human subjectivity by expressions of communication in a womb-like neighbouring – this particular resonance – between foreign beings”.^{xcv}

As Julie and Olivier make love together, embracing each other in an aquarium-like space, a resonance camera obscura, her lips are pressed against glass as if enclosed in uterine waters with the subtle suggestion that she, like all future m/Others, is awaiting birth. The scene alludes to the imagery of the pool but also to the glass surrounding Julie’s mother. When water breaks the surface tension of glass, a new life is born, Kieslowski seems to suggest. Then, Julie appears mirrored in Oliver’s eye, which encompasses her, as tiny as a child, a metaphor for her renewed connection to him and her (m)Others through wom-bilical c(h)ords, which keep her alive and help her breathe. In Ettinger’s words, “if originary compassion is the infant’s way of feel-knowing the m/Other and the world, by the matrixial erotic antenna of the psyche an attraction toward an-other as subject, and not as object, opens the horizon of 'aesthetical' proto-ethical sensitivity, sensibility and emotion, by which the m/Other (and the Cosmos) is apprehended and accessed in primary love”.^{xcvi}

A pan starting from Julie's face links her to each of the m/Others involved in her co-

birthing and trans-nascence. Kieslowski's camera brings them into a single time-space, from where they co-emerge, separate, yet distant-in-proximity and besidedness. Each character seems to float in full nakedness, in a singular web and a matrixial Eros which “creates an invisible aesthetical screen woven by joint floating eyes of different transsubjects”.^{xcvii} Antoine, the farm boy who ran to the scene of the accident, suddenly awakens out of sleep and touches the necklace with the crucifix, which once belonged to Julie. The camera pans past him to the movie posters on the walls of his room, revealing huge close-ups of men and women embracing. It continues on with Julie's silent mother's face in front of the television screen, finally closing her eyes as in death; then, we see Lucille gazing into the dark in the strip club. It all leads to Patrice's unborn baby boy in his mistress' womb, in the blue waves of an ultra-sound image and the wom-bilical c(h)ord linking unborn child to its mother. Bathed in Julie's blue light, most of the figures are naked or partially naked, partial non-Is into an amniotic sac, reinforcing a sense of womblike space, a severality bathing inside the matrix, an intra-uterine encounter and shared borderspace of metramorphosis. Not fusion or destructive rejection, but distance-in-proximity, a position which allows partial-subjects and partial-objects an enlarged multiple, subjectivity of joint borderspaces and where the potentiality of each psyche for differentiating is enacted. “Transconnectivity here is thus being limited to severality in besideness in a particular kind of openness”,^{xcviii} Ettinger would say.

The camera finally rests on Julie's face itself, crying a single tear as she nakedly sits at a window and looks out at us. “At the heart of each web there is an encounter-event whose wounds are still open. Beauty is one of the names of the binding of compathic transgression with abstract expansion.”^{xcix} Her weeping solitude recalls that, in Bracha Ettinger's words, “the healing is a still-working string of an ethical working-through”.^c Blue and red also come together in the play of light on Julie's face, in a “simultaneous asymmetrical differentiation inside the same resonance sphere”.^{ci} “such is the co-response-ability of artworking and of healing in co-poiesis. [...] Freeing the potentiality of an other while being transformed by it too is a kind of love – an ethical co-birthing in beauty”^{cii}. Julie finally embraces the company of m/Others, sharing herself and her possessions with them, while also taking distance-in-proximity with difference-in-co-emergence. It is in this way that “the feminine proto-ethical constellation that turns 'sacrificial' in the phallic arena, turns into a source of grace in a matrixial perspective”.^{ciii} Connecting to her partial (m)/Others as a co-created Self, she finally goes forward (m)/Others and “co-in-sidental

futurity” by going back.^{civ} “To return beyond originary repression to primary compassion in adulthood is a long long journey within matrixial initiative voyages”,^{cv} Ettinger reminds us. It is the journey we must take, before we can see beyond ourselves and embrace (m)/Others. Indeed, as Julie finally concurs: “Maybe it’s better this way”.^{cvi}

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- i Angela Pope, “In Memory: Three Colours: Blue” in **Sight and Sound** 6.8 (London: Faber and Faber, 1996, May), p.22.
- ii see Bracha L. Ettinger, **The Matrixial Borderspace**, ed. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2006).
- iii see Bracha Ettinger, “Matrix and Metramorphosis” in **Differences**, 4(3) (1992), pp. 176-208.
- iv Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility” in *Athena*, 2 (2006), p.132.
- v **Blue**.
- vi Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.116.
- vii Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance” in **Studies in The Maternal** 1(2) 2009, www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk, pp. 17-8.
- viii *Ibid.*, p.26.
- ix *Ibid.*
- x *Ibid.*, p.7.
- xi *Ibid.*, p.10.
- xii Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.117.
- xiii **Blue**.
- xiv Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.129.
- xv *Ibid.*
- xvi Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.17.
- xvii **Blue**.
- xviii Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.16.
- xix Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.129.
- xx Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.26.
- xxi Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.107.
- xxii Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.4.
- xxiii **Blue**.
- xxiv *Ibid.*
- xxv Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.126.
- xxvi *Ibid.*, p.120.
- xxvii Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.115.
- xxviii Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.8.
- xxix Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.102.
- xxx *Ibid.*, p.124.
- xxxi Brian Massumi, “Painting: The Voice of the Grain” in **The Matrixial Borderspace**, p. 204.
- xxxii Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.124.
- xxxiii Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.1.
- xxxiv *Ibid.*, p.8.
- xxxv Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.119.
- xxxvi *Ibid.*, p.110.
- xxxvii *Ibid.*, p.124.
- xxxviii **Blue**.
- xxxix Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.110.
- xl **Blue**.
- xli Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.13.
- xlii Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.123.

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- xliii Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.13.
- xliv Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.118.
- xlvi Ibid.
- xlvi Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.8.
- xlvi Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.119.
- xlvi Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.3.
- xlix Ibid., p.9.
- l Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.111.
- li Ibid., p.117.
- lii Ibid., pp.124-5.
- liii **Blue**
- liv **Blue**
- lv Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.132.
- lvi Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.8.
- lvii Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.119.
- lviii Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.30.
- lix Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.122.
- lx Ibid.
- lxi **Blue**
- lxii Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.15.
- lxiii Danusia Stok (ed.), *Kieslowski on Kieslowski*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), p.153.
- lxiv Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.5.
- lxv **Blue**
- lxvi Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.7.
- lxvii Ibid., p.13.
- lxviii Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.131.
- lxix Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.17.
- lxx Ibid., p.10.
- lxxi Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.119.
- lxxii Ibid., p.129.
- lxxiii Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.8.
- lxxiv Ibid., p.25.
- lxxv Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.132.
- lxxvi Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.111.
- lxxvii Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.9.
- lxxviii Ibid., p.11.
- lxxix Ibid., p.2.
- lxxx Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.21.
- lxxxi Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.131.
- lxxxii Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.3.
- lxxxiii Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.130.
- lxxxiv Ibid., p.131.
- lxxxv Ibid., p.130.
- lxxxvi Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.132.
- lxxxvii Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.119.
- lxxxviii Ibid., p.133.
- lxxxix Ibid., p.103.
- xc St Paul’s **First Letter to the Corinthians 13**
- xci **Blue**
- xcii Ibid.
- xciii Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.105.
- xciv Ibid.
- xcv Bracha L. Ettinger, “Neighbourhood and Schechina”; quoted in Noreen Gifney, Anne Mulhall and Michael O’Rourke, “Seduction into Reading: Bracha L. Ettinger’s *The Matrixial Borderspace*” in **Studies in**
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- xcvi **the Maternal**, 1(2) (2009), www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk, p. 9.
- xcvii Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.109.
- xcviii Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.18.
- xcix Ibid., p.18
- c Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.28.
- ci Ibid., p.21.
- cii Ibid., p.12.
- ciii Bracha Ettinger, “Co-poiesis” in **Ephemera**, 5(X): 703-713 (2005), www.ephemeraweb.org, p.708.
- civ Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance”, p.22.
- cv Bracha Ettinger, “From Proto-Ethical Compassion To Responsibility”, p.133.
- cvi Ibid., p.100.
- Blue.**

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