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# The apotheosis of a Silesian miner Scapegoating in *The Beads of One Rosary*

## Apoteoza śląskiego górnika: scapegoating w *Paciorkach jednego różańca* Kazimierza Kutza

### Abstract

Director Kazimierz Kutz's third instalment of the legendary *Silesian Trilogy*, *The Beads of One Rosary*, chronicles the destruction not only of the historic architecture of Giszowiec (Katowice), but also the tragic downfall of the film's protagonist, a retired coal miner and socialist labour hero, Karol Habryka. The following article examines his status as a *non-mythical but not pure* scapegoat figure and thus as a victim of the successful collective persecution carried out by the Communist regime in Poland. When studied in tandem with the Girardian theory of victimization, in particular, as applied to the biblical story of Job, Habryka's death restores peace to a community fraught with discord, leading in turn to his deification by the persecutors, a mechanistic process favoured by totalitarian systems in times of crisis.

### Keywords:

scapegoating, victimage, Kazimierz Kutz, René Girard

### Abstrakt

Trzecia część legendarnej *Trylogii śląskiej* w reżyserii Kazimierza Kutza, *Paciorki jednego różańca*, jest kroniką burzenia nie tylko historycznej architektury Giszowca (Katowice), ale także tragicznego upadku głównego bohatera filmu, emerytowanego górnika i przodownika

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pracy, Karola Habryki. Poniższy artykuł analizuje jego status jako *nie-mitycznego ale nie-czystego* kozła ofiarnego, a zatem ofiary zbiorowych, a zarazem skutecznych, prześladowań ze strony reżimu komunistycznego w Polsce. W świetle girardowskiej teorii wiktylizacji, zwłaszcza w odniesieniu do biblijnej opowieści o Hiobie, śmierć Habryki przywraca pokój w społeczności pełnej niezgody, co prowadzi z kolei do jego deifikacji przez samych prześladowców, w mechanistycznym procesie preferowanym przez systemy totalitarne w czasach kryzysu.

#### Słowa kluczowe:

koziół ofiarny, wiktylizacja, Kazimierz Kutz, René Girard

I survived the death of my father, feeling somewhat guilty.  
In trying to make him happy, I killed him.

Kazimierz Kutz<sup>1</sup>

In common with other totalitarian regimes, Communist Poland proliferated with episodes of baseless accusations and show trials, intrasocietal strife, violence and scapegoating; the victims ranged from political opponents to those ordinary citizens whose individual desires, deep-seated values and traditions were eclipsed by the collective prerogative, thereby paving the way for a liberatory social progress. In this dystopian universe, neighbours denounced neighbours while families turned against each other, either for self-serving or, less commonly, ideological reasons. Personal freedoms were likewise subsumed in the hopes of crafting a socialist unity, exemplified by one of the Communist Party's more memorable slogans, *Everything for YOU, YOU for Everyone* (*Wszystko dla CIEBIE, TY dla Wszystkich*). Director Kazimierz Kutz's third instalment of the *Silesian Trilogy*, *The Beads of One Rosary* (1979), endures as an exemplary micro-study of the Girardian mechanism of scapegoating against the backdrop of the Polish People's Republic during its waning years. The tragic irony which gradually unfolds cannot be underestimated insofar as the narrative serves more fittingly as a harrowing documentary of social behaviour and its ritually conditioned premises than a piece of moral or psychological drama, however brilliant. A journalist and Kutz biographer, Aleksandra Klich, poignantly notes that the film portrays the systematic "devastation wrought by socialism: the erosion of tiny homelands, the uprooting of people, the destruction of traditions and the fracture of families".<sup>2</sup> The viewer is compelled to witness the headstrong (but endearing)

<sup>1</sup> A. Klich, *Cały ten Kutz: biografia niepokorna*, Kraków 2019, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, p. 196

retired coal miner lose, one by one, his community, friends, family, and lastly, his house — a powerful symbol of the long-established traditions of Upper Silesia, pitted against the Communist behemoth, bearing gifts and promises of a better life in brand new apartment complexes. The story is nothing short of an autobiographical repetition (Kutz's father died shortly after moving to a new flat at the instigation of his family) and foreshadowing (the lead actor, Augustyn Halotta, suffered a similar fate to that of his character after having relocated to "modern" lodgings). Kutz adroitly chronicles the carefully planned razing of, what one reviewer would term, the protagonist's symbolic redoubt, ultimately necessitating his death as well as, by extension, the rapid demise of the Silesian way of life.<sup>3</sup> And thus, this little-known masterpiece deserves a closer examination, one which explores how Karol Habryka, once a respected and idolized pillar of the community, turns into a victim of his people in the role of a successful scapegoat, only to be once again perversely deified by the persecutors themselves.

## The Scapegoat Mechanism

The work of the Franco-American literary critic and anthropologist, René Girard has revolutionized the social sciences with the introduction of mimetic theory, which posited that human desire is imitated or copied from others, therefore negating the myth or *mensonge romantique* of the autonomous self. Objects which we desire can become obsessions, but only because the other likewise values them, a situation which may potentially escalate into mimetic rivalry, that is, an antagonism between the subject and the mediator of desire. Whereas positive mimesis can be observed in learning processes and indeed remains a fundamental aspect of social intercourse, Girard focuses primarily on the nefarious aspects of imitation in literature and myth, which risk engendering not only envy and interpersonal conflict, but may also escalate into large-scale, internecine violence among social groups or even nations. On the basis of his incisive analyses of literary masterpieces of the Western canon, Girard shows how, akin to other antagonistic behaviours, violence is imitated, producing a spiral-effect, whereby the dynamic transforms into a Hobbesian crisis of "one against all." This mimesis of the crowd produces doubles (in a so-called crisis of difference). Those who imitate one another then unite into a single-minded entity in search of an outlet through which to rid the collective's pent-up frustration and aggression. The object of desire

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<sup>3</sup> K. Mętrak, *Reduta Habryki: recenzja filmu Paciorki jednego różańca*, reż. Kazimierz Kutz, *Polska* 1979, "Kino" 1980, vol. 176, p. 16.

disappears from view, often forgotten about by the persecutors who then concentrate on the lethal act of persecution. Girard explains:

The most (or rather the only) effective form of reconciliation — that would stop this crisis, and save the community from total self-destruction — is the convergence of all collective anger and rage towards a random victim, a scapegoat, designated by mimetism itself, and unanimously adopted as such. In the frenzy of the mimetic violence of the mob, a focal point suddenly appears, in the shape of the culprit who is thought to be the cause of the disorder and the one who brought the crisis into the community. He is singled out and unanimously killed by the community. (...) The killing of the scapegoat ends the crisis, since the transference against it is unanimous.<sup>4</sup>

Scapegoating is thus a psychosocial process of collective violence aimed at an arbitrarily chosen and avowedly guilty victim. Invariably, the relentless search for a surrogate victim is further exacerbated by natural or man-made catastrophes such as famine, war, or pestilence, as exemplified by the Oedipus myth. Accusations against the scapegoat abound even to the point where the victim himself believes in his fault. Girard further explains that rituals evolved throughout the history of religions, oftentimes ending the necessity of real human victims based on the archaic myths or narratives of “founding murders,” which succeeded in obfuscating the sanguinary origins of human culture. Myths attempt to justify the violence, but likewise turn the sacrificial victim into a sacralised being, preserved in the oral or written tradition for having essentially delivered the community from self-annihilation.

Although the mechanism of scapegoating débuts in Kenneth Burke’s *Permanence and Change* (1935), and reappears sporadically in his subsequent books, Girard considerably expands its theoretical foundations in order to demonstrate a bifurcation or major categorization of scapegoat victims, i.e. the mythical and non-mythical. The former category consists of a nonconscious, authorial masking of the true nature of the crime taking place where the participation of the crowd is not only sanctioned, but obligatory, and therefore the violence enacted against the victim(s) appears wholly rationalized. As a text of persecution, Guillaume de Machaut’s medieval account of the victimization of the Jews, blamed for having poisoned the wells amidst the lethal harvest of the Black Death, offers the case and point that the Jewish community constitutes “scapegoats of the text,” depicted as

<sup>4</sup> R. Girard, J.C. de Castro Rocha, P. Antonello, *Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origins of Culture*, London 2017, pp. 64–65.

unilaterally guilty by the persecutors themselves.<sup>5</sup> No one can doubt their culpability due also to the fact that religious minorities, foreigners, the handicapped, even the wealthy and powerful, bear the signs or marks of alterity, belonging to the community while at the same time, remaining on its fringes. In contrast, non-mythical scapegoats are *in* the text as “the clearly visible theme. (...) The text acknowledges the scapegoat effect which does not control it. Not only is this text no longer a persecution text, but it even reveals the truth of the persecution”.<sup>6</sup> The Gospels extol the passion and death of Christ, the sacrifice accepted by the scapegoat, the lamb led to the slaughter, who obeys His Father’s will for the salvation of humanity. Several other Old Testament figures are qualified by Girard as non-mythical scapegoats such as Joseph, Abel, and Moses, but it is Christ’s call to non-violence and the crucifixion of the *innocentissimus* which unequivocally unmasks the scapegoat mechanism once and for all, decrystallizes the myth, and represents an outright denunciation of the persecutors. Girard writes: “Each of the Gospel stories reveals a religious origin that must remain hidden if mythology and ritual are to be the result. This origin is based on the unanimous belief in the victim’s guilt, a belief that the Gospels destroy forever”.<sup>7</sup>

Several years after the publication of *The Scapegoat*, in a regretably lesser-known study, Girard turned his scholarly attention to another biblical figure of the Ketuvim, that of Job, whom he regarded as an “unsuccessful” scapegoat; one who, despite universal approbation as to the equitability of his punishment, on the part of his so-called friends or “comforters” and even his wife, refuses to participate in the process by maintaining his innocence and faithfulness to God. Girard provides keen exegetical insight into explaining Job’s torments and, more importantly, those who torment. The focus changes not towards the source as divine or satanic, though the pious Job has indeed been greatly afflicted by the loss of property and status, the deaths of his children, and physical agony, but towards the human origins of his woes. And yet the most excruciating punishment consists of the opprobrium which is attached to Job: “the fact that he is ostracized and persecuted by the people around him. He has done no harm, yet everyone turns away from him and is dead set against him”.<sup>8</sup> The dynamic has changed as Job suffers not just physical malediction, but a spiritual and social fall from grace in which the entire community metes out their own version of divine retribution. The extreme psychological

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<sup>5</sup> R. Girard, *The Scapegoat*, transl. by Y. Freccero, Baltimore 1986, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, pp. 165–166.

<sup>8</sup> R. Girard, *Job: The Victim of His People*, Stanford 1987, p. 4.

pressure for a once well-respected member of the community is too much to bear. As Job reflects upon the intentions of the three friends (Eliphaz of Teman, Bildad of Shuah, and Zophar of Naamath) later to be followed by the young Elihu, who attribute the string of misfortunes to Job's own avarice or perhaps to the mistreatment or exploitation of his subordinates. But the punishment, or so Job contends, far outweighs the sins he may have committed.

Girard underscores that the Dialogues of Job's Comforters are a product of mimetism, wherein a once idolized and worshiped member of the community now represents a shattered idol, one who was imitated yet envied, and is now unanimously despised by those around him; their behaviour, then, is "masked by the fierce God of an immemorial tradition".<sup>9</sup> The friends speak in the name of the whole community, the mimeticized crowd or *vox populi, vox dei*, in rendering Job a pariah, a scapegoat whose persecution will, in the final account, benefit everyone and restore harmony. Moreover, it is they who will oversee the carrying out of the victimary mechanism to ensure its purgative effects, a veritable Aristotelian catharsis which will hopefully take place: "The undeserved suffering and downfall of a victim contributes to the good behaviour of his fellow-men; it becomes a principle of moral edification, a miraculous tonic for the social body. The *pharmakos* now becomes the *pharmakon*: the surrogate victim is transformed into a marvellous drug, dangerous but, in moderate doses, capable of curing all illnesses".<sup>10</sup> The allusion to the ancient Greek *pharmakos* rite is significant, the concept of which has been the object of study for both Jacques Derrida and Walter Burkert.<sup>11</sup> However, for Girard, the scapegoat serves as both a poison and antidote; the unwanted element, though still part of the community, must be killed or expelled in order to restore the "health" of the latter in a therapeutic gesture. In essence, it consists "of whitening the community by blackening the scapegoat".<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, the violence enacted against Job falls short of ritual murder, instead manifesting itself at the level of discourse with the aim of a spiritual and social death against a victim who cannot, under any circumstances, retaliate against the accusers.

One element remains missing from the victimary puzzle, an essential ingredient for the scapegoat mechanism to be fully efficacious. Girard signals the necessity for the victim himself to admit their guilt, ideally, in a public auto-confession: "The need for a consenting victim

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p. 53.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p. 71.

<sup>11</sup> See A. McKenna, *Plato's Pharmacy*, [in:] *Violence and Difference: Girard, Derrida, and Deconstruction*, Champaign 1992, pp. 27-39.

<sup>12</sup> R. Girard, *Job: The Victim of His People*, op.cit, p. 112.

characterizes modern totalitarianism as well as certain religious or para-religious forms of the primitive world. The victims of human sacrifice are always presented as very much in favour of their own immolation, completely convinced of its necessity”.<sup>13</sup> Job holds steadfast to the end, though tempted, but never yielding to the admonitions of the friends. His dissenting voice and recognition of the nature of the punishment, initiated by Satan, the “false accuser,” halts the sacrificial process, to be followed by a restoration of his prosperity by God in the Epilogue. It is this cognizance of the victimary mechanism, collective hate, and ultimate refusal to accept the verdict of the *turba* which distinguishes Job from other victims of scapegoating.<sup>14</sup> The final stage in the Girardian hypothesis involves the paradoxical deification or semi-deification of the victim which, in the case of Job, consists of his immortalization in the Scriptures as a devout man and a paragon of patience in the face of adversity. But Girard’s analysis moves beyond the “old” theology, traditional exegesis, and the image of the God of myth, in noticing that “The evils due to human agency are the most terrible and must engage our attention more than the evils produced by nature”.<sup>15</sup> Yet as a consequence of the Bible’s influential unmasking of the scapegoat mechanism and mythical cover-ups in the New Testament, modern societies must now strive ever harder, ever more convincingly in their persecution of victims, aided by the unquestionably powerful influence of propaganda.

### Locus delicti: Giszowiec

The story of Giszowiec (Ger. *Gieschewald*) can be traced to the manufacturing empire founded by seventeenth-century industrialist Georg von Geische and to its descendant company established under the Prussian partition in the latter half of the nineteenth century (*Bergwerks-gesellschaft Georg von Giesches Erben*), which later became the Giesche Mining Company and one of interwar Poland’s largest coal, lead, and zinc mining ventures. The company eventually passed into the hands of American investors of the Silesian-American Corporation in 1926. Two decades prior, Company Director Anton Uthemann noticed the need to recruit workers from central Germany to man the recently opened mine shaft “Carmer,” which necessitated building new housing on a city-wide scale, for approximately 3,500 residents. Architects (and cousins) Georg and Emil Zillmann based their design of Giszowiec on Port Sunlight’s model

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<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, p. 115.

<sup>14</sup> R. Girard, *Job as Failed Scapegoat*, [in:] *The Voice from the Whirlwind: Interpreting “The Book of Job”*, ed. by L.G. Perdue, W.C. Gilpin, Nashville 1992, p. 202.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 204.

industrial housing, which in turn had been inspired by Ebenezer Howard's acclaimed garden city movement. The result was a sprawling residential settlement complete with two schools, a laundry, a Gasthaus, a theatre, and multiple recreational facilities, with the majority of houses designed for one to two families, each with a garden to accommodate mining families who hailed from the countryside and frequently raised small livestock. In summarizing Uthemann's success, one German journalist and travelogue of the era offered the following unmitigated praise:

Gieschewald is the entrance to paradise. (...) Millions of city dwellers would be happy if they could live in similar, small, two-family houses. Each family has their own separate entrance to the house, their own manicured garden, and within the colony there are, separated from each other by large open spaces so that everyone has plenty of light and air: a bazaar, administration buildings, playgrounds and exercise areas and all of those located in a beautiful, mixed coniferous-deciduous woodland. This worker's colony has become a local destination for sightseeing and is proof of what can be achieved with the right amount of resources.<sup>16</sup>

Following WWI, Giszowiec became part of the Second Polish Republic, causing an exodus of the German miners, who were subsequently replaced with a mostly local populace from the environs of Katowice. Six English-style villas and an adjacent golf course were constructed for the freshly arrived American officials and their families. This idyllic settlement and its nearby urban sister, Nikiszowiec, grew commensurately with the exigencies of the mine. However, in the aftermath of WWII, production succumbed to complete nationalization under the stringent watch of the Communist authorities, who shunned foreign capital, viewed Giszowiec's architecture as a relic of Poland's capitalist past, and immediately set about rechristening all traces of German hegemony. Moreover, the post-war years saw increased levels of coal extraction and the opening of another mine shaft, "Staszic," in 1959. The shortage of permanent workers' accommodation prompted the Department of Construction, Urban Planning, and Architecture in Katowice to adopt a resolution in 1969 regarding the "successive demolition of Giszowiec's buildings and the construction of 'high-density structures' in their place".<sup>17</sup> The aim, just as it had been nearly four decades ago, was to increase the number of and improve workers' lodgings; this time, however, at the cost of pulling down supposedly dilapidated homes in favour of single-family apartments in modern high-rises in the name of a socialist paradise of "prosperity".<sup>18</sup> Quite expectedly, no

<sup>16</sup> A.O. Klaußmann, *Oberschlesien Vor 55 Jahren Und Wie Ich Es Wiedersand*, Berlin 1911, pp. 312–313.

<sup>17</sup> J. Tofiliska, *Giszowiec: monografia historyczna*, Katowice 2016, p. 141.

<sup>18</sup> I. Copik, *Ostatni bastion śląskości? Repetycje z twórczości Kazimierza Kutza (wokół filmu Paciorki Jednego Różańca)*, "Studia Śląskie" 2019, vol. 84, p. 95.



one bothered to consult with the workers themselves, many of whom were second or third-generation residents. Among miners' families, tradition dictated that male children follow in their fathers' footsteps, often working in the same mine and living under the same roof, thereby ensuring the continuity of home ownership, while preserving a distinctly local cultural legacy.

What followed, based on archival images and Kutz's on-site photography, was nothing short of an apocalyptic vision of half-demolished buildings and furniture burning in the streets, where tearful, disconsolate residents are more or less willingly cajoled into vacating their homes while bulldozers wait patiently for the order to finish the job in scenes reminiscent of the Okies' plight in *The Grapes of Wrath* (Fot. 1). As Joanna Tofiliska notes, "It is not difficult to imagine that for many, especially the older inhabitants of Giszowiec, who had been living in houses surrounded by gardens, moving to a ten-story block of flats with several dozen small apartments was a real tragedy. Not everyone was able to find their bearings in a new reality".<sup>19</sup> In part inspired by Albin Siekierski's novella entitled *This House is No Longer Here* (*Tego domu już nie ma*) and haunted by the memory of his father's death due to 'nostalgia,' Kazimierz Kutz set pen to paper, writing the script for what would become the third and final film of the Silesian Triptych during a stay in Hamburg. But unlike the previous two films, *Salt of the Black Earth* (*Sól Ziemi Czarnej*, 1970) and *Pearl in the Crown* (*Perła w Koronie*, 1972), *The Beads of One Rosary* does not directly draw from the written historical narrative of Upper Silesia (largely neglected by historians up to that point). Rather, it features perspicacious history-in-the-making, with Kutz as the ultimate annalist, bypassing any unnecessary moralizing. In doing so, he sought to disseminate to a wider audience the deeply rooted "regional hierarchy of values," the ethnolect, and the traditions of Upper Silesia in response to a very real threat of cultural homogenization.

The visceral authenticity of each episode of the Trilogy can likewise be attributed to the fact that Kutz was galvanized by a wealth of personal experiences and a remarkable familial mythology, coupled with the onus of bringing the public a revitalized image of a region rich in martyrologies, an unpopular subject during the short-lived "bigos" socialism of the 1970's and its disastrous economic aftermath. The landscape of Silesia and its people, having witnessed three Uprisings and the Nazi occupation, underwent a henceforth unrecognizable transformation which uprooted the amassed socio-cultural history, the folklore and the local traditions of countless generations, a process

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<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, p. 142.

compared by one author to an “existential shock”.<sup>20</sup> When the question of casting the role of Habryka arose, Kutz without hesitation pointed to Augustyn Halotta, an amateur actor, writer, and himself a retired coal miner from the nearby Bogucice, whose house, at the start of production, was slated to be demolished. Fiction became a tragic reality when Halotta died a few months after production, echoing the fate of his character, having likewise been relocated to a new apartment complex. The film historian and publicist Jan Lewandowski justly contends that *Beads* is, simply put, a film “about the twilight of the old Upper Silesia (...)”.<sup>21</sup> But there is more to Habryka’s obstinacy amidst the chaos. Like Job, he defiantly refuses to participate in his own persecution; unlike Job, he falters, becoming yet another fatality of the victimary mechanism, a ubiquitous phenomenon in a state under the yoke of totalitarian rule.



**Fot. 1.** Juxtaposition of the new and old; this still was taken during the filming of *The Beads of One Rosary*, during the systematic razing of Giszowiec’s historic architecture. Kutz intentionally planned the filming according to the demolition work schedule so as to give a sense of immanence and authenticity to each scene<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> I. Copik, op. cit., p. 96.

<sup>21</sup> J.F. Lewandowski, *Historia Śląska według Kutza*, Katowice 2004, p. 60

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, p. 58.

Karol “Karlik” Habryka awakens to a seemingly tranquil summer day with the old and newly-constructed mine shafts visible above the treetops in the distance. The bedroom is shown with its late nineteenth century eclectic heirloom furniture, two oleographs of Jesus and the Virgin Mary displayed on the wall, in addition to a brief closeup of a red and white sash crowned by a crucifix, displaying a colourful mosaic of a dozen medals and badges: the Order of Polonia Restituta Commander’s neck badge, the Order of the Banner of Labour (First and Second Class), the military Cross of Valor awarded for courage on the battlefield, and figuring prominently, the Silesian Uprising Cross. The idyllic morning is quickly interrupted when, upon leaving the house, Habryka rests among the blossoming apple trees only to be deafened by the sound of bulldozers a few yards away. Two doors down, a middle-aged couple have haphazardly arranged a pile of furniture and decades of accumulated bric-a-brac in front of their now empty house, setting it aflame. The wife reproaches her husband for having added her prized rake — inherited from her mother — to the smouldering heap, to which he replies in an agitated tone: “What the hell will you need a rake for in the prefab? [*betoniak*]” (Kutz, *Beads*).

Habryka scurries into the outhouse when he notices a white Syrena park in front of his house and three suited gentlemen, carrying documents with a pair of keys enclosed, coming to finalize the couple’s housing allocation process. Later, Karlik’s buxom wife excitedly begins to list off the tempting new amenities which await them — indoor plumbing, gas, even an elevator — yet Habryka has had a last-minute change of heart, as the impassioned monologue with his younger son, Antek, over a beer, elucidates: “It can’t be like this... I’ve been living here for fifty years in this place (...) the Kaiser, two World Wars, three Uprisings, unemployment, strikes famous the world over, Hitler, repeated degradations (...). I won’t move to that cement drawer in my old age!” The dutiful son listens intently and tacitly accepts his father’s position, but that evening, his wife attempts to dismiss the situation, referring to Habryka’s abode as a “doghouse.” Antek defends Karlik by stating that the couple have a moral obligation toward their elderly parents: “We’re all beads of the same rosary.” Attired in the traditional miner’s uniform or *bergmũńok* and decorated with all its accoutrements, Karlik proudly returns the shredded documents and keys to the secretariat. In response, Director Malczewski immediately sends for Antek (employed at the mine as an engineer), questioning the reversal of his father’s decision and citing a possible “infantilization” that comes with old age. He does, in traditional Communist ideologue terms using the majestic plural, laud the elder Habryka’s achievements as a truly exemplary figure, a “Labour Hero” from years past, second only to Wincenty Pstrowski, who had even been accorded

the honour of posing next to the former Chairman of the Polish Council of State, General Aleksander Zawadzki, in one photograph. In an ironic twist, the apparatchik of the workers council, which Karlik helped set up, turns against him, explaining, in typical doublespeak fashion, that his obstinacy can only be classified, as asocial and therefore, against the common good. These arguments do nothing to persuade Antek, who cannot bring himself to abandon his father in the act of “keeping the faith,” despite the potentially grave repercussions, both work-related and domestic, again accenting the Upper Silesian ethos of the unbreakable family bond and adherence to tradition.

Undeterred, Malczewski sends Karlik’s first born son, Jerzy, a personal friend who coincidentally also holds a directorship in a different mine, to discuss the situation at the family home. Jerzy shrewdly approaches the subject, by mentioning the social consequences of Habryka’s decision not to relocate, instead delaying the construction of the new apartment block: “Have you thought about what the others will say? That the Habrykas want to found a private museum at the government’s expense. (...) If they find out, you’ll have everyone against you. They’ll curse you then stone you.” Habryka retorts, “People always lie! (...) When I was breaking records, they used to say I was being paid by the Russians.” Habryka occupies a prominent place within the mining community and holds undisputed respect, evidenced by the sheer number of awards for labour and further strengthened by the professional successes of both sons. Owing precisely to that fact and akin to Job, he risks becoming the target of the envious crowd who vie for comparable recognition if not adoration, something Habryka’s more than discernible weariness of people testifies to. As the second, unsuccessful “friend,” Jerzy grows increasingly impatient and argues that Antek has become the target of scorn at the mine on account of Karlik’s behaviour. The latter retorts: “You wanna scare me, but I’m not afraid of anyone, because I know better,” thereby forswearing Jerzy, the less favoured of the two sons. On the way back, he notices Zosia and together they drive away, presumably to conspire against Karlik.

The pressure begins to escalate, and a series of troubling events occurs at the hands of the mimetically charged community. Leszek returns home with a bloodied face for having defended his grandfather during a fight at school, which prompts Zosia to directly accuse her father-in-law. She then moves out to their previously allocated three-bedroom flat and, in doing so, forces Antek to make an impossible choice between his wife and his father. A premonitory brick is thrown that shatters a window, and finally, the beloved family pet rabbit Maciuś is found dead. Leszek jocosely relays to his grandfather what “those from the new apartments are saying,” that he has been “possessed by the devil.” Hitherto obedient to her husband’s will, the

family matriarch can no longer bear to watch the rapid disintegration of relations. A deeply religious woman, she blames their familial misfortune on Karlik's "blasphemy, thickness" and most saliently, his unrepentant atheism ("You antichrist!"), going so far as to request a Mass at the local parish church for his intention. To be sure, the characterization appears to be unusual, particularly among the working classes in a staunchly Catholic enclave.<sup>23</sup> But it is Habryka's atypicality, a mark of *difference* (the *signe victimaire*), which only serves to reinforce his status of scapegoat as someone who both belongs to and yet occupies a place on the fringes of the community.



**Fot. 2.** Dialogue between Malczewski and Habryka. The image of the suffering Christ looms in the background

Habryka remains unswayed by the litany of protestations, warnings from former neighbours, and threats which prompts Director Malczewski to personally invigilate the scapegoat and elicit an auto-confession. The dialogue commences in a somewhat patronizing tone, with Malczewski paraphrasing the "smart man with a beard"

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<sup>23</sup> J.F. Lewandowski, *Historia Śląska według Kutza*, op. cit., p. 65.

who claimed that the right to freedom did not permit doing harm to others. His reasoning rests on the fact that several dozen mining families have waited years for their housing allocation and any external impediment whatsoever must be equated to a crime against social progress. Habryka's fiery response is immediate, "You are the ones taking away our freedom, like a pig its trough... My only fault is that I won't let you take that away. Because I know what my freedom is." At this point, a desperate Malczewski directly accuses Habryka of anarchism: "You're a person who places their interests above the social needs of other people."

As in the Book of Job, the dialogues and the chain of interlocutors — Zosia, Jerzy, and Malczewski — render explicit the united voice of the crowd who seeks to topple an idol turned rival, the *skandalon* or destruction of a once revered individual and now the object of everyone's ire. Exhausted and defeated by the final and most powerful friend, Habryka impudently shows Malczewski the door before himself collapsing on the bed and muttering the words of the vanquished, "It doesn't matter anymore." Nonetheless, the lack of a confession satisfies no one and the persecutory horde headed by Malczewski must obtain the scapegoat's acquiescence at all costs and without coercion, for any other confession would be seen as worthless.

It is worth noting that one of the Director's sycophants had earlier claimed that the mine reserved the right to evict the family at any time. The strategy now transforms in a complete about-face, from accusation to outright flattery. During an emergency, last-ditch meeting with the Directorship, all the mine's notables gather to hear Malczewski's speech outlining an offer Habryka cannot possibly refuse: "the situation is known to all, difficult, but not so difficult that it cannot be solved, for there is no such thing as a catch-22." The mine has generously decided to gift a modern, one-family house for the anarchist and his wife. In the Director's own words, Habryka is once again the object of veneration, "an incredible man, a great miner, a true example worthy of emulation," deserving more comfortable accommodation than the others. *Image One* pictures the motorcade and throng of officials approaching to deliver the 'good news' to a napping Habryka, who, awakened by their arrival, arises and comments with a sarcastic grin, "I don't have that many shot glasses at home now." The screenplay describes the scene: "They giggled. He personally went to the gate and opened it for the guests. Everyone shook his hand and bowed their heads low".<sup>24</sup> With these actions, an indirect but acceptable admission on behalf of the scapegoat, coupled with the guests' affirmation has

<sup>24</sup> K. Kutz, *Scenariusze śląskie*, Katowice 1995, p. 156.



sealed Habryka's fate. One evening not long after, a chicken is symbolically beheaded and the family, now reconciled and gathered together, partake in a convivial last supper in the kitchen.



**Fot. 3.** Mourners crowd to pay their respects to the deceased, lying in state in the mine's great hall

Following in the footsteps of their neighbours just days before, the Habryka's proceed to light a bonfire with unnecessary furnishings while the whole family and friends eagerly help – “like ants around a threatened anthill” – to load the moving truck with the rest of the couple's belongings.<sup>25</sup> The scene transitions to the house on the outskirts of the city, with its bare, soulless white walls, the latest but totally superfluous amenities, and an almost tangible loneliness among the largely unused luxury. Neighbors and family no longer visit, familiar faces are nowhere to be found. The accidental shattering of a porcelain plate, in the words of Karlik's wife, supposedly portends luck. One evening, Karlik falls asleep to the hauntingly sweet echoes of her singing a folk melody. He dies during the night. The pageantry of the funeral with its raised catafalque in front of an illuminated painting of the patroness of coal miners, St. Barbara, constitutes nothing short

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<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 157.

of a grotesque ritual, a parody of religion (Fot. 3). Congregating in the great hall of the “Wilson” Mine, the persecutors-turned-mourners circle their victim while Antek, Jerzy, Zosia, and Leszek sit beside the revolving tumult and look on at the impressive red-draped coffin, their backs turned to the camera. After the viewing of the body, ten brass orchestras, a guard of honour, and a youth group, carrying all thirty-two of Habryka’s medals and decorations on red pillows, lead the lengthy funeral procession to the cemetery; present are the “minister, deputy ministers, directors, friends, former neighbours, all of the miners and their families, schools, and officials”.<sup>26</sup> The scenes are captured from a birds-eye view, which highlights the grandeur of the occasion, while the doleful music of Wojciech Kilar accompanies the march. Habryka’s friends are shown gathered by the graveside, their faces unconvincing in their display of grief. The final, emotional sequence follows Habryka’s faithful dog, Tekla, running through the labyrinth of headstones to find a mountain of flowers and wreaths atop his master’s freshly dug grave.

Initially, the film’s limited release in 1980 garnered controversy among the PZPR leadership, notably, Zdzisław Grudzień, the Party Secretary in Katowice. If the anecdote is to be believed, his wife wept after the screening, thereby convincing him not to have *Beads* deemed reactionary and shelved away forever. The film then went on to win numerous awards, in Portugal, Karlovy Vary, and most prestigiously, earning Kutz the Golden Lions Prize at the Gdańsk Film Festival. It may even have precipitated the downfall of both Grudzień and Edward Gierek’s government that same year by serving as a rallying cry for workers’ protests and the birth of the Solidarity movement, coinciding with the signing of the Gdańsk Agreement in August. Lech Wałęsa later sent Kutz a congratulatory note on the film’s international success.<sup>27</sup> In 1976, the one dissenting voice against the bulldozing of Giszowiec’s historic quarter was a PZPR member and conservation officer, Adam Kudła. His appeals landed on deaf ears when placed against the business interests of the “Staszic” Mine, in addition to infuriating Grudzień, who ultimately suspended Kudła for two years. Throughout the 1980’s and in response to increased public outcry, numerous buildings were successively added to the National Registry of Historic Monuments, with the final registration completed in 1987, tallying approximately one-third of the settlement’s pre-war architecture. The list includes the fictional Habryka house which stands today, in the shadow of

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, p. 165.

<sup>27</sup> A. Klich, *Cały ten Kutz: biografia niepokorna*, Kraków 2019, pp. 195–196.



towering apartment blocks, whose occupants would themselves later fall victim to massive layoffs as a result of mine closures.

It must be assumed that the death of the scapegoat restored the desired status quo: construction resumes according to plan, Zosia can now settle with Antek and Leszek in their new apartment, and Jerzy no longer feels any embarrassment due to Karlik's "antisocial" behaviour, which could have threatened his lofty career ambitions. Lastly, the families promised a housing allocation by the mine can rest assured that the situation had not changed. In a word, the community has been "emptied of its poisons, liberated and reconciled within itself," in the aftermath of the scapegoat's demise.<sup>28</sup> Social relationships have improved considerably as the scenes at the supper table or the unified crowd gathered around the coffin illustrate. But the accounts of Job and Habryka do differ on several fronts, most ostensibly regarding their level of innocence (or assumed guilt) and the resolution of the sacrificial crisis. Whereas Job did not merit the inordinate suffering permitted by God, protesting the injustice of each of the friend's verdicts in turn, Karlik's bold resistance stems from a personal conviction, that is, a strict espousal to the traditions which define the Upper Silesian way of life contra the existential threat of their obliteration by the powers that be. If the critics are right, his motivation is a defensive one. It becomes clear, then, that both scapegoats belong to two separate categories.

In a private conversation with Girard, Laura Barge proposed a further theoretical splitting of the categories of mythical and non-mythical scapegoats. Each episode of scapegoating entails investigating the exact sociocultural conditions which give recourse to the victimary mechanism: "Only by understanding the characteristics and status of a given scapegoat can we gain insight into the cultural circumstances that have created such a victim".<sup>29</sup> By basing the aforementioned fundamental categorizations on his decoding of Greek tragedy and biblical narratives, Girard knowingly prioritizes certain texts over others, noting the importance of literary masterpieces (considering the hypermimeticism of the authors) as revelatory, namely, regarding the crushing, potentially lethal, consequences of mimetic desire and rivalry which risk snowballing into a full-blown sacrificial crisis. Barge observes in her study of literature of the American South, "Most scapegoat figures in modern literature inhabit a middle ground (...)" and therefore do not fit neatly into either category.<sup>30</sup> Several factors come into play,

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<sup>28</sup> R. Girard, *The Scapegoat*, op. cit, p. 42

<sup>29</sup> L. Barge, *René Girard's Categories of Scapegoats and Literature of the South*, "Christianity and Literature" 2001, vol. 50, no. 2, p. 250.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, p. 251.

ranging from the authorial stance and decision to present the scapegoat as a victim, to the victim's degree of willingness to participate in the mechanism, and finally, the cognizance of the scapegoat as to their role in the process. Among the four categories described by Barge, Karlik is portrayed as a non-mythical but not a pure scapegoat figure, characterized by the following qualities:

His innocence or freedom from guilt consists primarily (and perhaps exclusively) of his adamant, even rebellious, refusal to participate in or acquiesce to victimization. (...) Furthermore, this third figure's position in the role of scapegoat is often anything but a chosen sacrificial behaviour. This type is far more locked into the personal and individual circumstances of life than the purely mythical scapegoat is. In fact, the "persecution" he endures is most often grounded in his own needs. Although this recalcitrant scapegoat's sacrifice may make for a better society in some way, the victim is following his own agenda: he is not one who is "prepared to die for the people" but rather to escape, at almost any cost, from the victimizing circumstances of his own experience.<sup>31</sup>

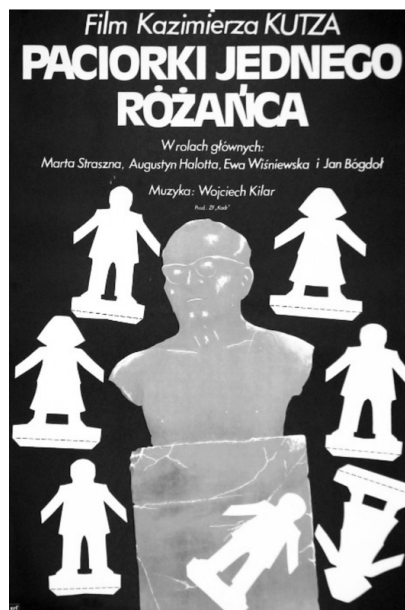
Film historians, critics, and audiences have for decades sympathized with the protagonist as well as his noble campaign to preserve the remnants of a vanishing world. Habryka's initial turnaround occurs as he observes first-hand the emotional toll of leaving one's little *Heimat* without protest. The grandiose vision is revealed in the dialogue with Jerzy, during which Karlik details his dream of creating a "private museum" among the apartment blocks for the benefit of future generations. Its specious naivety, however, reveals an imaginative compromise; on the one hand, the house would stand as a time capsule, on the other, he would be allowed to stay and eventually bequeath the house to his descendants. Habryka's agenda calls for rescuing not just the four walls of the house, but also, and perhaps more pressingly, that which it represents — "a sense of stability, security, a feeling of certainty, finally the knowledge that you are not alone in life, that there is family, relatives, loved ones, but also your own familiar space (...)".<sup>32</sup> For that reason, Habryka's struggle against the totalitarian machine has ensured his place among the pantheon of cultural heroes, those who refuse to fall victim and instead speak out in the face of injustice, however selfish his motives may appear at first glance. The latter is precisely what the persecutors believe, what their propaganda declares, and what they would want us to take as truth, that is, that the guilt of the victim lies with him and him alone, for no

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, pp. 259–260.

<sup>32</sup> D. Simonides, *Paciorki śląskiego różańca: historyczno-kulturowe zaplecze śląskich filmów Kazimierza Kutza*, [w:] *Kutzowisko: o twórczości filmowej, teatralnej i telewizyjnej Kazimierza Kutza*, ed. by A. Gwóźdź, Katowice 2000, p. 91.

ulterior motive could explain Habryka's stubbornness when confronted with the needs of the collective.

It has become increasingly difficult for politicians, religious or civic leaders and their kind to mask the persecution of scapegoats with a veil of myth indefinitely and convincingly, despite the widespread usage of the term in the media. If even the wife of a Communist official sheds a tear over the victim of her husband's "good work," then we live in a post-sacrificial age when the primitive rituals of long ago no longer function as adequately as in pagan cultures. Writing in the 1980's, Girard maintained that modern totalitarian societies had destroyed the belief in the impartiality of the justice system and created the "infallible truth" anew, "precariously and temporarily" re-establishing institutional transcendence through the scapegoat mechanism.<sup>33</sup> Habryka, unlike Job, is a *successful* scapegoat victim, one of the multitude sacrificed in the totalitarian drive towards egalitarian perfection. Habryka attains a cult status as the result of a categorical apotheosis stemming from his purifying sacrifice, which managed to bring about an ephemeral peace to a community whose façade of homogeneity was already crumbling.



**Fot. 4.** J. Erol, Movie Poster from *The Beads of One Rosary*, directed by Kazimierz Kutz (1979)

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<sup>33</sup> R. Girard, *Job: The Victim of His People*, London 1987. pp. 115–117.

His dissenting voice represented just one crack in the failing system already in its death throes, whose citizens looked on ever more enviously at the democratic and prosperous West.

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