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Reality or Fiction?

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The Reality of Illusion

A Transcendental Reevaluation of the Problem of Cinematic Reality

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Abstract.   The paper readdresses the parallel considerations of cinema as both access to an essential, true, objective reality and as a device of deception reproducing the fallacies of a biased and reductive human perception.   The claim is that the critical consideration of cinematic mediation in these ambiguous terms stems from the traditional association of cinema with the working of mental mechanisms – whose logic, it is argued, follows neatly Kant's transcendental constructivist dualist model of reason and its reality. Kant's idea that our sensible but merely phenomenal experience is produced and projected by our supersensible, transcendental synthetic activity, which 'in itself' is as unrecoverable as is the world that it moulds, describes perfectly the imaginary-symbolic regime of cinematic signification, whose dual nature has been considered both as a hindrance and as a guarantee of objectivity. Throughout the paper, repeated emphasis is given to the significance of Kant's insistence to preserve, and to make palpable through the aesthetic, a noumenal unknown, a pure and never fully assessable objectivity within an increasingly self-referential, self-serving and self-enclosed human reason. It has been this modicum of a humanly inaccessible, yet arguably intuitable 'excess,' the pursuit and the promise of modern art, which an aesthetically biased film theory and practice have sought to foreground. Joining forces with Deleuze, Lyotard, and Žižek, as well as with Cocteau, Tarkovsky, Wenders, and Kieślowski, the paper promotes the necessity of continued belief in a non-human metaphysical dimension, an outside within thought that forever eludes capture.

Introduction

This paper wishes to contribute to the long-standing debate concerning the truth value of the psychological verisimilitude produced and projected by the moving image. Does cinema offer a direct, unmediated – that is, non-humanly processed, objective – access to the world, or does it simply create a perfect, subjectivist illusion of reality? In order to make sense of this question, we need to clarify what assumptions of 'world,' 'reality,' objectivity and subjectivity we are dealing with. In this paper I will seek to address this problem through the model of Kant's *transcendental subjective constructivism*, which posits that the world and/or reality as we can know it is shaped by the spontaneous synthetic activity of the mind. In other words, the road to objectivity leads through subjectivity, a transcendentally conceived subjectivity, to be sure, which in Kant is keyed to, and delimited by, a pure or transcendental objectivity, the noumenal unknown. Consequently, the closest we can get to an unadulterated objectivity, and perhaps a 'world-in-itself' (or the noumenal) is by tracing the workings of the unconscious processes that make the world, and which Kant calls transcendental subjectivity.

In what follows, I will sketch out key points of Kant's transcendental constructivist conception of mind and world coupled with a reexamination in these transcendental terms of the prominent and steadily recurring concern in European film theory with the ability of cinema to render sensible the unconscious mechanisms of the mind. Kant's transcendental dualist model of reality, conceived as an inseparably intertwined phenomenal-noumenal couplet, will help us better understand the ambiguity that has surrounded the cinema's reality effect, which has been hailed as an unmatched access to the core of truth, and decried as a device of deception, a "dream factory."

Transcendental Subjectivity as Structuring Device of, and Block on the Real

Kant's insistence to treat transcendental subjectivity as the limits and bounds of phenomenal experience as well as a block on an unattainable noumenal objectivity may be, and has been, said to amount to a revolution in thinking of Copernican proportions. More precisely, Kant's innovation lies in his "transcendental idealism," a peculiar synthesis of the empiricist and rationalist philosophical traditions, which makes room for both an unknown "noumenal" nature, approachable but never recoverable "in itself" through the senses,

and an empirically informed and manifest transcendental-ideal synthetic spontaneity, the transcendental subject, which is assumed to provide the criteria of connections that make possible the phenomenal world of experience. This is a system where "the mind and the world jointly make up the mind and the world," as Hilary Putnam has put it.[1] The question is, of course (of which Kant was fully aware), where the mind ends and the world begins, and vice versa, according to this scheme.

Predictably, Kant finds that human world making is a two-edged sword. Although mental structuring makes possible and shapes our experience of the world, it also delimits, compartmentalizes, schematizes this experience. Therefore, we never experience things as they are "in themselves," in their noumenal immanence, only as our mind is prepared, or inclined, to see them, that is, as mere phenomena. As Deleuze puts it, evoking Bergson, "we do not perceive the thing or the image in its entirety, we always perceive less of it, we perceive only what we are *interested* in perceiving ... by virtue of our economic interests, ideological beliefs, and psychological demands" (Deleuze 1989, 20, emphasis added).

This implies that the immanent criteria of connection (the synthetic a priori principles and procedures) that Kant believes constitute our mental make-up, and which he calls transcendental subjectivity, themselves constitute the hindrance to, or *block* on, the immediacy and (self-)presence, the objectivity that the mind seeks to achieve in relation to itself and the world. To put it in Adorno's succinct terms: "there is nothing in the world that is not mediated" (Adorno, 2001, 85, 66). Uncannily enough, not even the "I," the thinking, world-constructing subject is exempt from this splitting and duplication of its reality into a phenomenal and a noumenal component. In fact, the sensory experience or self-consciousness of the thinking subject, the I, must be necessarily merely phenomenal, spatially, temporally, and conceptually mediated, that is, discursive, indirect, always displaced in relation to itself as spontaneity. This "scandal of philosophy," that is, that we cannot grasp the essence of being, our own as well as that of others, beyond the limits of a phenomenal, discursive consciousness is addressed in an inventive and theoretically intricate manner in the *Third Critique*, through the notion of aesthetic reflective judgment.

It must be by now obvious that Kant's insight that the road to objectivity leads through subjectivity carries within the hazard of tautology, a fact that Kant and his followers were keenly aware of. Kant tried to avert this

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[1] Hilary Putnam is quoted in Bowie 1997, 68.

epistemological problem precisely *by acknowledging this block*, that is, by limiting the scope of knowledge to the empirical and merely phenomenal, and by emphasizing that this sensible human world is an appearance created by a supersensible (transcendental-ideal) spontaneous thought activity (transcendental subjectivity), in response to sensible intuitions of something unknown. "The effect is," Adorno explains "that the world can be said to be doubled, in the paradoxical sense that true existence at the same time becomes something wholly undefined, abstract and ethereal, while conversely what we definitely know, positive existence, is turned into the mere duplication of appearances, the mere interconnection of the phenomena at our disposition. And at the same time we are denied the right to reach compelling conclusions about the true nature of existence" (Adorno 2001, 108–9). Adorno goes as far as declaring the Kantian philosophy of duplicate reality similar to the "consciousness of schizophrenics," who, in their extreme emotional tension, "imagine suddenly that everything that exists, all existing things, are really just signs" (Adorno 2001, 112). It is quite obvious that this comparison brings Kant's philosophy very close to contemporary descriptions of the state of the word and consciousness in terms of schizophrenia (notably by Deleuze and Guattari and Fredrick Jameson), as well as to theories declaring the impermeability and self-referentiality of human symbol systems. Incidentally, Kant's duplication of reality shows great similarity to Henri Bergson's dual system of reference as described by Deleuze, where "the thing and the perception of the things are one and the same thing . . . but related to one or other of two systems of reference." These two systems are, respectively, the general block of space-time, or movement-image, whose parts relate to one another immediately on all of their facets (the counterpart of the Kantian noumenal dimension), and the special image (a phenomenal human consciousness), which frames the movement image of the thing and retains only a partial action from it, reacting to it only mediately (Deleuze 1986, 63).

As it is becoming apparent, Kant has addressed the problem of referentiality by performing *two kinds* of duplications of the world. On the one hand, as we have seen, and as Adorno acutely observes, "in its entire profundity and effort, [Kant's] philosophy amounts to recreating anew the world as it presents itself to consciousness, to producing with the enormous power of the productive imagination the world *as it already exists*" (Adorno 2001, 179, emphasis added) – granted this world is based on empirical or sensory intuition. On the other hand, as we also noted, Kant is aware that the more we make nature our own through our automatic, involuntary synthetic-schematic drive, the more we lose its 'thingness-in-itself,' the more we forget about the unknown

that our phenomenal world is a human reflection of. This demystification, disenchantment of the world, as Max Weber has called it, seems to strip the world of its disturbing and uncanny aspect, yet, in fact, it makes these repressed (forgotten) fundamental but unknown and unknowable forces more threatening, more uncanny. Kant's *second* duplication of the world, Adorno explains, imposes "an entirely undefined, obscure, and ... demonic world as a world 'behind' [or within] our [self-made] world, even though we have no way of knowing how it relates to the world of experience that we inhabit" (Adorno 2001, 111).

In sum, by imposing a "boundary concept" or "block" (the noumenon) on the schematic auto-production of reality, Kant has wished to set a limit to the tautologous mechanical duplication of knowledge by itself, and to ease up somewhat the necessarily resulting *imprisonment in ourselves* and our self-made world[2] by leaving open the possibility of there remaining something humanly unknowable and unrecoverable, something unexpected, untouchable, new. It is not a coincidence that we discover a similar logic in Lacan's diagnosis of the process of alienating specular identification as the trading of the subject's being or "life" for the spectre of meaning. For Lacan, as for Kant, "the symbol manifests itself first of all as the *murder* of the thing."[3] Deleuze's time-image aims to undo, or, at least, alleviate, this symbolic murder by showing us the process of its happening, that is, the process of distinction, or splitting, between perception and recollection, in other words, the indiscernible yet distinct twin poles of transcendental reality production.

Cinema's Transcendental Duplication of Reality and its Concern with Objectivity

The Kantian, and Lacanian, anxiety felt over the dissipation of life from a purely habitual, schematic existence – and its momentary recapture through a defamiliarizing aesthetic, as Kant proposes – is reenacted by the experience of the lonely cinema spectator evoked by Siegfried Kracauer, whose self is "shrinking in an environment where the bare schemata of things threaten

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[2]According to Adorno's well-known adage, this self-made world "is the world of exchange, the world of commodities, the world of reified human relations ... presenting us with a facade of objectivity, a second nature" (Adorno 2001, 137).

[3]Lacan 1977, 104, emphasis added. Kaja Silverman explains, paraphrasing Lacan, that the subject's being, his/her life, is given up through the assumption of language since there is no direct connection between the phenomenal world and the signifier. See Silverman 1988, 8.

to supersede the things themselves" – and who is redeemed by "images of life as such" presented by cinema's "camera reality" (Kracauer 1960, 170). Indeed, Kant's dual reduplication of reality – the appearance that is its own simultaneous auto-production – brings to mind the cinema, whose photographic duplication of psychological reality has always been thought of as withholding or adding, but in any case containing, and in certain cases making manifest, something excessive: a nondescript "fellow traveller" (in Barthes's apt formulation, 1977, 64), a shadowy *Doppelgänger*, or an interstice, a splitting, as Deleuze has it. The noumenal block appears to be very much at stake here. To quote Kracauer again, "Through their very definiteness films ... define the nature of the inarticulate from which they emerge." Films, for Kracauer, "look more like dreams when they overwhelm us with the crude and unnegotiated presence of natural objects – as if the camera had just now extricated them from the womb of physical existence" (Kracauer 1960, 164).

It is in the same vein that Tom Gunning diagnoses a strange duality within the photographic image, an excess that cannot be suppressed: "If photography emerged as the material support for a new positivism, it was also experienced as an uncanny phenomenon, one which seemed to *undermine the unique identity* of objects and people, endlessly reproducing the appearances of objects, creating parallel worlds of phantasmatic doubles alongside the concrete world of the senses verified by positivism" (Gunning 1995, 42–3, emphasis added).

Equally, André Bazin's statement that photography "produces an image that is a reality of nature, namely, a hallucination that is also a fact" (Bazin 1967, 16) is squarely within the Kantian idea of transcendental reflective reality production, which projects a human nature out of sense impressions of an *unknown* nature. In aesthetic considerations of photography and cinema, this residual strangeness, this present yet unsurpassable horizon of a "first" nature stunningly evoked, flashed forward, through the photographic moving image has been alternately referred to as *photogénie*, third or obtuse meaning or the filmic, excess, accent, *punctum*, and time-image.[4]

Four memorable cinematic representations come to mind that target this ever-receding noumenal horizon of a true unknown nature and its human correlate, "life as such," or "life in excess," as Slavoj Žižek has called the

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[4]"Excess" is a term used, for example, by Kristin Thompson. See Thompson 1986, 130–142. "Accent" appears, for example, in Hamid Naficy's work on exilic and diasporic filmmaking, as a sign of "otherness." See, Naficy 2001, 10-39. Punctum is Roland Barthes's contribution, who has also coined the notions of third meaning and the filmic. (See Barthes 1981, 25–6, 43–60, as well as Barthes 1977, 64, 65.) *Photogénie* is associated with the French Impressionist filmmakers, most specifically with Jean Epstein. (See Epstein 1988, 314–8.)

transcendental drive or the synthetic a priori of transcendental subjectivity, which ceaselessly zeroes in on its unreachable goal (Žižek 2006, 62, 63-4), to wit, the noumenon (and itself as noumenal), the limit, the objective. I have in mind Jean Cocteau's *Orpheus* (*Orphée*, 1950), Andrej Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979), Ildikó Enyedi's *My Twentieth Century* (*Az én XX. századom*, 1989), and Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* (1995). All films have male searcher heroes, who enter into some kind of an undead zone of "life in excess," a "magical domain of suspended animation," in which "the linear progress of time is suspended in a repetitive loop," as Žižek writes (Žižek 2006, 63).

Cocteau's *Orpheus* offers a memorable zone, harking back to his early avant-garde film *The Blood of a Poet* (*Le Sang d'un poète*, 1930). The "Zone" in *Orpheus* is truly a transcendental sphere, the realm of an 'undead' life or pure drive, whose drift the mortal hero can barely keep up with, and on whose fringe "the bare schemata of things" (Kracauer 1960, 170) are shown to drive the unthinking human automata in mechanical, repetitive loops ("*vitriére!*"). Seen from this side, so to speak, the young glazier whom Orphée had encountered a little while earlier in 'real life' appears to be a shadowy apparition, one who only thinks that he is alive as he performs schematically the gestures of his trade. In the deeper, reflexive layer of the Zone, things and figures come in doubles, for example through twin characters, mirrors, *trompe-l'oeil* effects. Finally, the room of the tribunal where one can only say the truth limits truth (that of subjectivity) to the realm of feelings, and especially the feeling of love – following the logic of Kant's aesthetic reflection. The closest the film gets to objectivity is through the relegation of the Princess, the personification of judgment, and her servant, the transcendental imagination, to the void of the unknown, to oblivion.

The "Zone" in Tarkovsky's *Stalker* is another poignant portrayal of the transcendental sphere, "a magic domain of suspended animation," whose logic defies those of a linear time and a three dimensional space, and where every route seems to loop around and lead to the Room, the mysterious source of inspiration and knowledge, which, however, humans are well-advised to keep their distance from. The Room appears to reanimate the idea of the noumenal block on knowledge, being an artificial construct(ion), and quite dilapidated too, yet somehow all the more sinister and repellent. Those few who have entered the Room have all taken leave from their senses and ended up taking their own lives. For Tarkovsky, it is eventually not the Room that holds the promise of the survival of enchantment in an unbearably drab, soulless world – which looks very much like the outer fringe of Cocteau's Zone in *Orpheus*, filled with zombies going mindlessly on their routine businesses. It is the Stalker's

crippled, 'abnormal' daughter who is the depository of the inexplicable, the parapsychological, through her telekinetic abilities.

Jarmusch's *Dead Man* too sets up a zone, the Frontier, which like a huge mutual mirror brings together and shows as almost indiscernible doubles Whites and Native Americans, personified by an ambiguous, dreaming, dead, or dying protagonist, William Blake, and his improbable, off-kilter travelling companion and *doppelgänger*, Nobody. Equally, the beginning and the end of the story, which seems to be going in circles, appear as mirror images of one another. In fact, this circular or static journey epitomizes the Western's quintessential, and doomed, aspiration: its endless (and endlessly futile) search for origins. The staple Western tropes of the "frontier" and the "horizon" mark the fringes of the impenetrable 'beyond' (the noumenal block on human appropriation of a first nature) that this genre is obsessed with. The stunning black and white last image of the film shows William Blake's final drifting away – on the mirror of water that makes up and down indiscernible – to a place where the sea meets the sky, that is, to the origin of distinction, the indistinct. We find a very similar ending in Ildikó Enyedi's *My Twentieth Century*, where the black and white image shows a boat drifting on a river, whose two banks meet in an infinitely receding vanishing point, suggesting the reverse movement, the splitting in two and duplicate birth of twin daughters in the beginning of the film. This grainy, washed-out, grey image fading into white is a stunning rendering of the fantasy of *being born back*, of being reunited with one's *doppelgänger,* the lost (maternal) object, and becoming ideal, non-differentiated, in one and the same time.

Needless to say, cinema has offered us many horrifying visions of "The Thing," the phantasmatic unknown transcendental object (noumenon), whose true nature is exactly its unrepresentability. After all, objectivity, or thingness, is nothing but relation, that is, the various, both habitual and unexpected, novel, ways of combining and connecting givens, data as well as a priori criteria. Cinema, it has been argued, reduplicates to a marvel the mimetic impulse of the imagination to (re)create the world both as it is known *and* as it is imagined or desired to be – which includes the unknown. Adorno's adage that "Art is actually the world once over, as like it as it is unlike it" (Adorno 1997, 336), appears to describe both Kant's and cinema's double reduplication of reality by an imagination that, moreover, has stunningly cinematic characteristics in Kant.

Given that the immanent criteria of connectivity (the synthetic a priori) that make possible experience are supersensible and beyond the limit of sensible experience, it may not be an image but, rather, a *shock effect*

that best conveys the idea of the Kantian "block" or noumenon that the transcendental subject as imaginary focus seeks (and fails) to grasp in one – as Kant himself spells out in his conception of the sublime. It is the sudden upsurge of something utterly shocking that is at stake here, to wit, the limit of the imagination as a synthetic force and the ground of expectations. An unexpected break in the continuity of the habitual, the commonsensical brings to the fore an immanent uncanniness in our subjective reality construction. These unexpected breaks and 'malfunctionings' of the transcendental imagination are wonderfully demonstrated by Jean Cocteau's animistic cinema, and most notably in *Beauty and the Beast* (*La Belle et la bête*, 1946) where inanimate decorative objects unexpectedly and eerily come to life. Candelabra with human arms that suddenly move, disembodied arms that wait on tables, candle lights that turn themselves on and off, as well as a gallery of balefully motionless, shadow-play like frozen animal statues alert us to the shocking, defamiliarizing power of probing and jamming the automatic, mechanical activation of our schematic judgments (animals move, stone decor is inanimate and motionless) in a world whose familiarity, predictability, and anthropomorphic nature we too easily take for granted.

Cocteau's strange animistic universe recalls, in turn, the undead forces of vampire narratives, memorably portrayed in Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), where a realistically (if somewhat expressionistically) established room décor suddenly reveals an unexpected "blot" – a profound blind spot of vision – through a mirror that fails to show the reflection of a character whose physical presence has been previously established through encounters and exchanges with other characters whose empirical factuality we had no reason to question. This lacking reflection, where we have expected one, calls attention to the non-phenomenal source of *all* reflection, lending an uncanny air to the entire scene. Shadows that detach themselves from their physical sources and acquire an agency of their own in Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) further illustrate the power of cinema to evoke a demonic and uncanny double, ("a kind of *Doppelgänger*, a mere spectre of illusion"[5]), which, however, is not simply a phantom among real objects, but rather, a non-sensible 'material' phantom within a phenomenal phantom world of our own creation, whose 'unreality' and immateriality, whose constructed and projected nature, however, we repress and do not like to be reminded of.

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[5] Adorno writes, "The world does in fact become a way of concealing something unknown, a kind of *Doppelgänger*, a mere spectre of illusion" (2001, 111–2).

The intuitive association of cinema and vampirism, noted, for example, by Thomas Elsaesser, may very well be based on cinema's recreation, restaging, of Kant's duplicate (and duplicating) transcendental imaginative reality production, which is in one and the same time a phenomenal and sensible product and a supersensible (subconscious) spontaneous process of "desiring production,"[6] an "undead urge" or pure drive – as, again, Žižek describes the focal transcendental subject – which persists beyond the individual biological cycle of life and death, and which endlessly circles around its unattainable object. The indiscernible, inseparable intermingling of a sensible symbolic reality and a non- or supersensible imaginary-ideal drive that constitutes it is indeed schizophrenic, as illustrated by Deleuze's two-sided, mutually indiscernible yet distinct actual-virtual time-image.

The Reality of Illusion and the Problem of Transcendental Difference through Cinema

Kant was aware – as was Freud – that the impulsive, at once self-propelling and self-immolating, transubstantiating objective drive (Eros-Thanatos) of the transcendental subject needs to be disavowed, suspended, and sublimated in order to attain a normal, "meaningful" experience of self. Kant's recreation through "the enormous power of the productive imagination" of the world "*as it already exists*" (Adorno 2001, 179, emphasis added) has served precisely this goal, to wit, to confirm the realm of the habitual. According to Kracauer, films do exactly the same thing, replicating the work of the creative imagination: films "make the world our home" by showing us "products of habit and microscopic interactions," the texture of everyday life (Kracauer 1960, 98). When André Bazin describes photography and cinema as the culmination and perfection of the history of plastic arts, as a story of resemblance and realism, he does so with the Kantian dual reality-production in mind. Bazin makes the important distinction between realism understood in the *psychological* (pseudorealistic, deceptive and illusory) and the *aesthetic* (truly realistic, essential) sense (Bazin 1967, 10. 12). On the one hand, cinema has a reality effect that is unmatched by other arts, and which is fully comparable to Kant's first duplication of reality by the imagination, which creates our phenomenal, everyday world, Bazin's psychological pseudorealism. On the other hand, cinema appears to have privileged access to the criteria of the auto-production

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[6]"Desiring production" is Deleuze and Guattari's term to describe the process of social production. See Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 29.

of the psychological or phenomenal real – that is, to the formative functioning of transcendental subjectivity as imaginary focus trained on objectivity, which would correspond to what Bazin calls the true, the aesthetic realism of cinema.

It is the first aspect of the transcendental imaginary duplication of reality that has made Kant's philosophy the direct predecessor of the bourgeois experience of reification and alienation. It is this automatic, unthinking reduplication of the already known, this innate tendency to exclude, to suppress (or repress) anything that is incompatible with a self-propagating, habitual and conventional worldview (the status quo), which has been decried by defamiliarizing, distancing, deconstructive aesthetic and social criticism as "the blunted consciousness of the bourgeoisie," as mis(re)cognition (*méconnaisance*), or the *habitus* (in Bourdieu). The representational paradigm of classical Hollywood cinema can be, and has been, tied to this first Kantian regime, Bazin's psychological "pseudorealism." In fact, this cinematic practice can be said to replay to a marvel the Kantian logic of a transcendental imaginary reality production insofar as it constructs and projects a world evolving in a Cartesian space and a linear time according to a cause-effect logic through a "transparent" or seamless continuity system that effaces – yet cannot completely dissimulate – the mechanism of its auto-production. This is exactly the issue pressed by the neo-Marxist ideology criticism that informed much of film theory in the 1970s and early 1980s. Yet, as it has been pointed out by *mise-en-scène* and auteur criticism, as well as by a plethora of innovative and sensitive studies of the classical Hollywood paradigm, we can encounter numerous surprising manifestations of excess, that is, uncontained, inexplicable, unmotivated, ambiguous, unexpected narrative and stylistic elements within Hollywood's preordained, standardized, and formulaic system of representation. In this respect, I have already made a mention of the circular, limit-oriented, and unfinalizable, rather than progressive, discretely goal-oriented narrative structure of the western.

It has by now become a truism that our own age has brought to completion the process of self-enclosure in an auto-produced imaginary-symbolic world, or "second nature" by abolishing the distinction between surface and depth, by eradicating the idea of a "first" nature, and of ontological difference. Current claims of the flatness, the superficiality, the one-dimensionality of reality feed on a host of deterministic theories that have declared language, culture, the unconscious, ideology, the text, as well as the simulacrum, global corporate capital and electronic media networks as absolute enclosures, interfaces with no outside, no "hors de texte." In other words, there seems to be no place left for the instance of *non-identity* or excess that Kant strove to preserve, to keep

open, by putting a "block" on speculative reason through the boundary concept of the noumenon as the idea of a real, but in itself unattainable objectivity.

As Slavoj Žižek astutely observes, the problem today is that "one can no longer count on the Void" (Žižek 2000, 26–7), that is, the empty place of the Kantian thing-in-itself. In other words, Žižek and other critics of today's all pervasive consumer and electronic culture suggest, we and our world appear to have attained immediacy, insofar as we have caught up with ourselves as process, and not only as product, of mediation or reality-production, which Kant has attributed to a schematically driven yet also reflexive synthetic imagination. We have attained the technology, precisely through cinema, as film theorists from Münsterberg on have made clear, to emulate the ability of the imagination to be in several places at the same time, and to reproduce the world as it exists, as well as it is desired to be. Through this mechanical and photographic simulation of the transcendental functionality of the imagination, cinema, as Walter Benjamin reminded us early on, has become a key agent of the destruction of the "aura" or belief in an essential, unattainable, transcendental-noumenal humanity, humanity-in-itself, as well as a world-in-itself, in its never quite exhaustible and humanly ungraspable objectivity. The digital has just brought this erosion of the reverence for the unattainable, the unknown, to completion.

Returning to the versatile example of *Orpheus*, it may be said that today's global electronic culture has managed to put time on a hold – as does Heurtebise, the embodiment of the imagination in the film – and to fill the lingering moment with a multiplicity of scenarios evolving in "varied and multifarious" virtual spaces, which may even be considered as the sought-after holistic experience of transcendental subjectivity, and which Paul Virilio has called an experience of sensory overload in which physical dimensions lose all meaning, making spatial relations "abstract and ungraspable."[7] Put differently, we have entered the Zone of mind-speed or consciousness stream, again, that of the spontaneity of the synthetic imagination, which, however, has a strong tendency to move in repetitive loops – as illustrated by the 'soullessly' and habitually acting zombies at the fringe of the Zone in *Orpheus* – unless forced to stop to recognize, to pay attention to, and to reflect on, objective or limit conditions. Losing our sense of and our belief in limits and boundaries – our belief, that is, in a distinction, marked by Kant's noumenon, between what can be humanly grasped and what should remain objective, untouched and

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[7]Paul Virilio is quoted in Abbas 1997, 9.

untouchable nature – has resulted in what Lyotard has pessimistically called the "exitless nothingness" of the "global zone" that the West has given birth to.[8]

The problem today, we may conclude, is no longer that of Orpheus and the modern artist, who breaks through the mirror or plane of consciousness from a phenomenal empirical world sustained by disavowal and repression, in search of a truer, more authentic reality. The problem – if indeed it is a problem – is that the supersensible intelligible realm, the assumed code and condition of sensible empirical reality, has been laid bare, has been declared decoded, with little or no sign of an irrecoverable objective residue left behind.[9] This demystification of the unconscious, of myths, of the idea of something unattainable, has in turn changed basic assumptions of reality. We now believe that we are living in a world of codes, in a world that is encoded, and is, thus, artificial, manipulated and manipulable, mutable, clonable, mechanically and digitally multipliable and remasterable. This "decoding of flows and the deterritorialization of the socius" in capitalism, Deleuze and Guattari tell us (1983, 34), have been responsible for creating schizophrenia as the characteristic malady of our age, where we have begun to imagine, and to believe that, to quote Adorno again, everything that exists, all existing things, are really just signs" (2001, 112). The schizo is the "subject of the decoded flows" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 34). And tautology and solipsism appear to be the order of the day.

Consequently, Žižek argues, the task of art today is to *create* the Void of the unattainable object that has been denied, to reinstall it, rather than to create works of art that serve to fetishize this void away. It is my conviction that Deleuze's cinematic time-image aims to do precisely this. Through the time-image, Deleuze wishes to offer a proof, a sensible evidence, so to speak, of the existence of such an objective (noumenal) limit, an instance of non-identity, within thought. The nostalgia palpable in much of high-modernistic European filmmaking (e.g., in the work of Tarkovsky, Wenders, Kieślowski), as well as some contemporary film art (e.g., Wong Kar-Wai) – which, again, Deleuze will characterize as time-image cinema – echoes, if I may say so, the "metaphysical mourning" that Adorno diagnoses already in Kant's "vacillating" thinking, torn between the old notion of an authentic world slipping from his grasp and a dawning positivist adherence

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[8]Deleuze's yearning for "something possible, otherwise I will suffocate" is another poignant expression of the solipsism, the self-imprisonment, by and within the imaginary-symbolic cognitive system and its constructs. See Lyotard 1997, 23, as well as Deleuze 1989, 170.

[9]Lyotard, for example, is expressing his hope that there is something left behind in today's exitless global zone. See Lyotard 1997, 32.

to the given" (Adorno 176, 177). However, again, it needs to be emphasized that the *metaphysical* element being mourned is not something conceived as spiritual or ideological in a mythologizing sense of the word, but rather, as something *held* to be ungraspable and unknowable for thought, something that should remain a promise, a residue never to be used up, a limitation within thought set or constituted by the nature of thinking itself.

Exemplary of the disorientation overtaking the fin de siècle (that of the twentieth century) is the desperate fight of Wim Wenders's heroes against a dread of self-enclosure and the loss of an 'outside' reference. The motif of obsessively taking Polaroid pictures of oneself and the surrounding objects, prominent in *Alice in the Cities* (*Alice in den Städten*, 1974), and *The American Friend* (*Der Amerikanische Freund*, 1977), is a strategy to combat "the unbearable lightness of being," the dissipation of substance, a substantial difference, non-identity, and puzzling discrepancy between sensible and intelligible. Both Philip in *Alice* and Ripley in *The American Friend* have lost their bearing in a world where everything looks the same, where nothing ever changes, and where instant photos are used as proofs of existence, those of the perceiving protagonist who in fact does see, or so the photos suggest, what he thinks he may only be imagining. And yet, as Philip complains, the finished film never quite catches up with the perceived reality, so the doubt lingers.

Kieślowski's misanthropic old judge in *Red* (*Rouge*, 1994), possessed by his most prized possession, his intricate technology of surveillance, is another wonderful example of the hopelessness and meaninglessness invading the self-absorbed, skeptical subject, redeemed (as Philip in Wenders's *Alice*) by his (grudging) willingness to open himself to, and be rejuvenated by, the unaffected wonderment and unassuming self-assurance of an ingénue, a child-woman, a "becoming-woman," to use Deleuze and Guattari's term. The hopeful message of Kieślowski's *Red*, the director's most personal and last film, is that even in this age of electronic omnipresence and omniscience we do not and cannot know all, that there remains a modicum of the unknown and the undecidable in our all-too-predictable, largely self-made human universe. It is, Deleuze would chime in, cinema's mission to convey this objective illusion to us.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper I have readdressed the parallel considerations of cinema as both access to an essential, true, objective reality and as a device of deception

reproducing the fallacies of a biased and reductive human perception. I have argued that the critical consideration of cinematic mediation in these ambiguous terms stems from the traditional association of cinema with the working of mental mechanisms – whose logic, I have shown, follows neatly Kant's transcendental constructivist dualist model of reason and its reality. Kant's idea that our sensible but merely phenomenal experience is produced and projected by our supersensible, transcendental synthetic activity, which 'in itself' is as unrecoverable as is the world that it moulds, describes perfectly the imaginary-symbolic regime of cinematic signification, whose dual nature has been considered both as a hindrance and as a guarantee of objectivity.

Throughout the paper I have emphasized the significance of Kant's insistence to preserve, and to make palpable through the aesthetic, a noumenal unknown, a pure and never fully assessable objectivity within an increasingly self-referential, self-serving and self-enclosed human reason. It has been this modicum of a humanly inaccessible, yet arguably intuitable 'excess,' the pursuit and the promise of modern art, which an aesthetically biased film theory and practice have sought to foreground, to keep alive. I have joined forces with Deleuze, Lyotard, and Žižek, as well as with Cocteau, Tarkovsky, Wenders, and Kieślowski, to promote the necessity of continued belief in a non-human metaphysical dimension, an outside within thought that forever eludes capture. Cinema's at once proverbial and contested reality effect – its presence absence, its ability "to represent the absent in detail" (Metz 1982, 61) – should be harnessed to remind us of this ineffable reserve, and to allow us to keep our hope in the possibility of chance, of the unexpected, in the seemingly exitless world of electronic simulations.

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Stubborn Realism

What Kind of Fiction is Reality?

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Abstract. The essay surveys the problem of pictorial realism. More accurately it focuses on the conceptual conditions and acquired circumstances of vision which influences the perception of reality, as well as the perception of the reality qualities of pictures. The author also tries to show the significant difference between filmic realism theories (those of Bazin, Barthes, Kracauer) and the opinions which argue that the realistic representation does not depend on simple imitation but on inculcation (Goodman, Nietzsche).

According to the well-known story of Zeuxis and Parrhasius, the two Greek painters started a contest in order to decide who could paint a more realistic picture. The painting of the first depicting grapes looked so natural that birds flew over the canvas and wanted to eat the grapes. Zeuxis, feeling superior because of the judgment of the birds, asked Parrhasius to draw the curtains on his painting so that they could take a look. Parrhasius, however, told Zeuxis that this would be impossible as the curtains were the painting itself. The story recorded by Pliny raises several interesting questions in terms of what reality is and how it can be represented.

This painting contest can be understood as an ageless allegory of how the senses can be deceived. Nevertheless, if one takes into account that the participants of the contest lived in the 5$^{\text{th}}$ century B.C. then we can very well suppose that none of the paintings would have been able to charm 21$^{\text{st}}$ century audience because the painters' technical inventory must have lacked certain techniques, like that of central perspective for example, developed and invented in the last two millennia. This can lead us to see how the criteria of genuineness or the illusion of reality of a picture can be connected to certain ages and to the familiarity with the technology of representation.

The story of the painters' contest also highlights that one of the fundamental
functions and aesthetic criteria of the painting of that age was how faithfully
it could imitate reality. According to Bazin, this was true up until the point
photography was invented because after this point the new artistic branch,
photography, and a couple of decades later cinema, took over the responsibility
for developing the methods of capturing reality. When photography was born,
it was for the first time in history that nothing got intercalated between the
object of representation and the representation. As Bazin puts it, "for the
first time the picture of the external world is being formed automatically
without creative human intervention in terms of strict determinism" because
"every art is based on human presence, the only exception being photography"
(Bazin 2002, 22).[1] The French film theoretician interprets as a new, novel and
precise tool of knowing the world both the moving image and its predecessor,
photography, which even in its weakest form is "rooted in the ontology of the
model, it is the same as the model," or, in other words, "the existence of the
object being in the photograph is just as much part of the existence of the model
as that of a fingerprint. This way it is in a direct connection with nature and
does not substitute it with another creation" (Bazin 2002, 21–22). Roland
Barthes also hypothesizes the existence of a certain component belonging
to really good photographs called *punctum*, which can render photographs
"mad images chafed by reality" (Barthes 1981, 115). However, if we try to
fathom these realist aesthetic assumptions, we cannot disregard the seemingly
contradictory idea that, through photography and cinema through their
fundamental quality (and ontological status) represent reality as mediums,
at the same time, they obliterate their own mediator quality. The two
theoreticians see the main advantage of photographic representation in the
self-destruction of the medium: as Barthes writes it, a good photograph can
exceed its own photograph quality and "becomes artistic when it destructs itself
as a medium and ceases to be a sign and becomes the thing" (1981, 55). Bazin's
previously quoted thought states a similar idea according to which nothing is
intercalated between the object of representation and the representation in case
of photographs, and the image of the external world is formed automatically
without human intervention.

Going back a century in time takes us to similar interpretations. In the
second half of the 19th century photographic images, created by nature without
humans became the symbol for scientific objectivity. The development of

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[1] All throughout the paper, when the source of the quotation is a Hungarian translation,
if the original was not available, I am using my own "re-translation."

microscopic photography suggested the possibility of "replacing the observer with the self-representation of the object though the photograph" (Bredekamp and Brons 2006, 155). What is more, as Robert Koch, a pioneer of scientific photography, wrote in 1882 "the photograph of a microscopic object can be more important than the object itself under certain circumstances" (Bredekamp and Brons 2006, 156). According to this approach photography beats the eyes, the controlling organs because, as Koch puts it, "the photographic sheet can reflect better or more plainly the microscopic image [...] than the retina could perceive it" (Bredekamp and Brons 2006, 158). Such scientific approach to photography can yield an understanding that proposes that "the technical gaze" of the machine is superior to the human eye and considers the first more apt for the task of glimpsing behind the surface of the phenomenal world and providing information for scientific discoveries.

The possibility of separating the camera from the human eye and the superior quality of the image created and mediated by the camera are fundamental presuppositions lying behind the realist vision of photography. Or, in other words, the camera operates as an absolute, objective eye excluding all subjectivity which looks upon the human world from the outside human perception. This presupposition, however, encloses implicitly other theoretical fundaments. Namely the idea that reality can be separated from perception, and humans endowed with perception are standing face to face with the real world as if it was existing as an unchanging and completely independent presence. Or, in other words, the world in its completeness is always there even before man's turning his head towards it. Moreover, it is exactly the camera that is capable of recording or *catching in the act* the world with no human eyes on it. Also, the idea of absolute vision (pre)supposes that the perceiver can keep a distance from the real world, that is, there must be an innocent moment of perception *followed* by interpretation and that these two acts (perception and interpretation) can be separated from each other. Photography can catch and record on photosensitive paper the first of these acts, the moment of neutral, innocent perception before the deforming work of interpretation would start.

Jean Mitry in his *The Aesthetics and Psychology of the Cinema* (1963) presents a criticism of the realist approach – of Bazin, among others – as it supposes the existence of a camera that discovers the world, the world of essences, "beyond the world," a camera that "discovers the divine." Referring to scientific photography, it can also be anticipated to move beyond the phenomenal world where the really important events for objective research take place. According to Mitry, the source of the mistake lies in Bazin's assumption

that regards the image as an objective faculty that is independent of the human vision. If we consider the film image as a statement of the real world, if we consider its objectivity absolute, than "it is to posit the world as "in-itself" and to posit this "in-itself" as a necessarily identical (and yet "purer") thing to the object as we know it, without realizing that the object is the way it is only by virtue of our perception. This is to dabble in "transcendental realism" – a position condemned by the whole of modern physics" (Mitry 1999, 45).

Again, Mitry says it is also impossible for the camera to have a transcendental position independent or beyond of perception because the operational system of the camera was created by men. Consequently the "thing-without-me" would only be perceptible if "the vision of the camera transcend[ed] human vision. However, not only is this vision "directed" but it is dependent on an optical system designed by man so that its "reproduction" is effectively the same as human vision" (1999, 45). Mitry obviously places the camera back to the scope of human perception and subjects it to the instability and the interpretative activity of the human body. Accordingly (and in a blatantly simplifying wording), the realist image is what the eyes consider to be one. An image can only be considered real to the extent to which my visual experience of it is similar to real perception. According to Mitry, this similarity is the basis of the perception of the film image: "the world before my eyes appears to them as a two-dimensional image (though it is the image of a three-dimensional reality). To put it in another way: I might place a window between myself and the world – the world would then appear to me through the window as though projected onto a screen" (1999, 32). Likewise, citing the example of those who gained their sight surgically, Mitry also suggests that psychological plasticity or binocular vision enabling the perception of relief is acquired, it is thus not an anatomically given trait. The same experience can be achieved by film images through the use of movement as "the image immediately appears to stand out from its base (and actually does so). I am no longer perceiving a photograph projected onto a flat surface but a "space." The film image is presented to my eyes as a "spatial image," in exactly the same way as real space before my eyes" (1999, 33). Mitry linked the perception of reality of film image to qualities of sense organs that determine real perception, at the same time he shifted the emphasis from the objectivity of the camera to the physiology and acquisitional nature of perception, concluding that "in the cinema I perceive the image of the object in exactly the same way that I view the object itself" (1999, 31). Not beyond senses as Bazin presumed, we

may add, but as subjectively as determined by the physiological and acquired circumstances of vision.[2]

Even though Vilém Flusser expressed more radical views than Mitry, two points can be found where their works connect. On the one hand, both consider the catching in the act of the reality of photographs possible in the technical realization of optical notions, not in reference to reality; and, on the other hand, they both consider the (photographic) camera to be the result of historical processes that prescribe and develop the *program* of the reproduction of reality. In *Towards a philosophy of photography* Flusser elaborates in detail on the latter idea and sets out to prove that the illusion of reality is not rooted in real referentiality but is prescribed in the "program" of the camera. According to him, the camera as an apparatus generates symbols or symbolic surfaces in a way that have "been prescribed for it. The camera is programmed to produce photographs, and every photograph is a realization of one of the possibilities contained within the program of the camera. The number of such possibilities is large but it is nevertheless finite: it is the sum of all those photographs that can be taken by the camera" (Flusser 2000, 26). In this respect, Flusser compares the camera to a chess board saying that it is neither the chess board, nor the pieces that make the game possible but it is the chess program, the rules. "What one pays for when buying a camera is not so much the metal or the plastic but the program that makes the camera capable of creating images in the first place" (2000, 30). For the user, however, it is neither possible to get an overview of this program, nor is it visible. It is more like a "black box" that reigns over its user through the obscurity of the program. The latter quality results in the deception of the user by the machine: it displays the pictures generated by the preset and pre-programmed operation as if they were real even though the program in the camera translates optical notions like "black" or "white" into states of things. In the world, however, there "cannot be black-and-white states of things [...] because black-and-white cases are borderline, 'ideal cases': black is the total absence of all oscillations contained in light, white the total presence of all elements of oscillation. [...] As black-and-white states of things are theoretical, they can never actually exist in the world. But black-and-white photographs do actually exist because they are images of concepts belonging to the theory of optics, i.e. they arise out of

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[2]We should also note that in the last example Mitry studies exclusively the *moving* image and regards pictures as reproductions of "less intense feeling of reality" because the lack of movement renders the pictures lifeless, and despite the perspective that is supposed to give relief "it does not stand out against the background; it is stuck to the screen" (Mitry 1999, 33).

this theory" (2000, 42). The central perspective can essentially be regarded as a theoretical concept or program that changes the psycho-physical space into mathematical space because the homogeneous space it creates is not real but an artificially generated construct. Technical images generated by the program are, therefore, not windows to the objective world but "images, i.e. surfaces that translate everything into states of things" (2000, 16).

As it has been already mentioned, when refuting realism, Flusser expresses much more radical and overarching critical views than Mitry. At the same time, when assessing the works of Mitry, we cannot disregard the historical fact in film theory that his book in 1963 was published only a year after *What is Cinema?* by Bazin. From a 21st century point of view, it is a commonplace to say that visual representations, quoting W. J. Thomas Mitchell, "are no longer perfect transparent media through which reality may be presented to the understanding"; and that "the commonplace of modern studies of images, in fact, is that they must be understood as a kind of language; instead of providing a transparent window on the world" (Mitchell 1986, 8). It is, however, important to underline that, in spite of theoretical critical commonplaces, in the 20th century there are two distinct fundamental interpretative approaches to the photograph-based moving image: one (still) presupposes that films complement the goals of objective and unbiased representation that has been present in painting and that led to the birth of photography. What is more, theorists of this trend expected the deeper and more correct illustration of reality due to the possibilities of close-up and freezing. As for the other approach, the underlying idea behind it is summarized in the following way by Anna Eifert in her *The Image in the Aesthetics of Disappearance*: "we first experienced the loss of our trust in our senses in visual perception with the spread of photography. This technology was developed as a result of the need to record reality as realistically as we actually see it. It turned out, however, that reality is not at all as we see it. Photographs thus shook our faith vested in ourselves. This feeling grew because of telepresence: we cannot even believe our eyes any more" (Eifert 1997, 395). Using the metaphor of "medium as the transparent glass" to shed light on the approach in the quote from Eifert one can say that for her the focus is not on the "unobstructed view" but on the "window," or, in other words, the illusion of the self-destruction of the medium and its deceptive quality is in the centre of the interpretation.

One of the two interpretations of the moving image sketched above emphasized its ability to grasp reality or how realistic it can be. In the debates for the theories adhering to this approach we can usually see that they argue using references to film as an analogue imaging technology, as a

process that burns the *real* light effects of its *real* model on the photosensitive paper. Using Peirceian terminology we can say that the representation is in an indexical (signifying) relationship with the signified, that is the real object as illustrated by the picture. The appearance of new electronic and digital media questions, however, the analogical or indexical relationship, and, even though these imaging methods do not bring forth radically new problems in terms of fiction and reality, they still highlight those questions that were always there to answer since the birth of technical images but were placed outside the interest fields of theoreticians.

It seems superfluous to cite names when quoting another media theory commonplace which says that in the end of the 20th century and in the beginning of the 21st in the case of most visual media, the borders of fiction and reality are radically blurred. Using the relevant terms from Jean Baudrillard we can say that the essence of the hyperreality of digital and electronic tools is the merging of real and fictional or the creation of the eternal present tense of simulation. To cite an example, the essence of television culture is to blot out the boundaries of real and fictional and to wipe away the notion of realism (cf. György 1991). The double discourse according to which this medium works as the first-class tool to represent reality and that this very same medium unveils all such goals at the same time seems to become a single discourse by the 21st century since no one expects the moving image to grasp the reality (either in terms of facts or the truth of reality) in the sense Bazin or Kracauer meant it. No one does so because the theoretical lesson to be learned as a result of studying the new visual media makes it impossible whereas "the difference between reality and fiction is of a fictional nature itself that has gained some solidity in the foundations of modernity," but, in the end, it has been uncovered in the ruins of the foundations (Kamper 2006, 68).

Taking all these into account how can we speak about the categories of reality that are fictional themselves? Or, in other words, if it is not possible any more to determine the notion of realism in terms of the relationship of signifier and signified, then how can it be described at all?

If we go back to the age-old contest of Zeuxis and Parrhasius and associate with it the contemporary Greek painting technique, then we can say that judging how realistic something is, is a matter of conventions. Looking at these pieces today, they wouldn't seem to be as deceivingly realistic as the story by Pliny describes the situation. The spectators of the time did not have the conceptional knowledge that is available today and which influences to a great degree the perception of pictures. The realism of a picture, therefore, does not depend on the constant or absolute relationship between the picture

and its model but rather on the relationship between the representational system applied in the picture and the conventional representational system understood to be realistic. Consequently, the fidelity of a representation does not depend on imitation but on inculcation. Or, as Nelson Goodman puts it, "that a picture looks like nature often means only that it looks the way nature is usually painted. Again, what will deceive me into supposing that an object of a given kind is before me depends upon what I have noticed about such objects, and this in turn is affected by the way I am used to seeing them depicted" (Goodman 1976, 39). By linking a realistic representation to a conventional representational operation, Goodman claims at the same time that the dominant representational operation influences my perception of reality, that is I don't see the picture separately from its (real) model or object with a possibility to compare them systematically, but rather I see reality through its representational methods (too). Namely the look of an object does not only depend on our perspective, "its orientation, distance, and lighting, but upon all we know of it and upon our training, habits and concerns" (1976, 20).

If we accept the presumption that realism is relative and that it is controlled by a representational system that is considered conventional or habitual in a given culture or for a person at a particular moment, we can ask why and to what end people would agree on a dominant and all-domineering representational system in the first place.

The role of being natural and realistic is also essential in questions of controllability and, therefore, in judging the truth value of representations. The truth value of a linguistic item is decided and then accepted or rejected on the basis of a comparison with the facts of reality. Representations accepted as realistic (or conventional using Goodman's term) can become the tool for controlling truth due to their role of being substitutes for reality. (Take for example the role photographic representations play in court cases or scientific photographs mentioned earlier that take the place of reality not readily perceptible for the naked eye and that can be used to prove of falsify the truth value of scientific statements.) As a consequence of marking the representational process as realistic or in other words, making it conventional, results in the (apparent) solidifying of human truths. According to Friedrich Nietzsche, people earmark the first truths regulating social existence through the legislation of language by inventing uniformly valid and binding designations for things (Nietzsche 2006, 115). So what is it that counts as truth? – Nietzsche asks. His answer is that it is a "movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human

relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions." Or, in other words, being truthful means using the usual metaphors. Or, morally speaking, it is the duty of everybody to lie "according to a fixed convention" and to lie in "a manner binding upon everyone" (Nietzsche 2006, 117). This latter thought is very close to what Goodman claims about realistic and real visual representation (laying grounds for the truth). According to his conception quoted earlier, realism is often used as the name "for a particular style or system of representation" (Goodman 1976, 37). In Nietzsche' time, language was more influential but by the end of the 20th century the role of visual media had grown to be decisive. In both cases, however, truth based on reference to reality depends (highly) on the particular and arbitrarily selected medium of representation. Parallel with the medial/visual turn, technical images took over the formative force of language to lay the groundworks for truth and reality. These media demonstrate for people in our times the honourable, trustworthy and useful nature of truth as opposed to lies, since no one trusts the liar but "everyone excludes [him]. As a "rational" being, he now places his behaviour under the control of abstractions. He will no longer tolerate being carried away by sudden impressions, by intuitions. First he universalizes all these impressions into less colourful, cooler concepts, so that he can entrust the guidance of his life and conduct to them" (Nietzsche 2006, 118).

Those explanations of image theory that try to answer the question what is behind the spread and widespread mushrooming of pictures that tend to substitute reality aiming at a high degree of reality can be partially associated with Nietzscheian ideas on the function of language. According to Susan Sontag, "'our era' does not prefer images to real things out of perversity but partly in response to the ways in which the notion of what is real has been progressively complicated and weakened" (Sontag 1999, 84). Barthes names similar reasons for the popularity of 20th century (popular) myths including the mythic stories in films. According to these stories, the state of the world can be seen as aligning and manageable and it can offer the joy of the possibility of the world's perfect comprehension "in which signs, unimpeded, and with no contradiction or loss of meaning can eventually be in a harmonious relationship with reasons" (Barthes 1983, 25). Instead of the equivocal and multi-value (concept of) reality, technical images, as substitutes for reality canvass such a conception of the world in which the truth-laws of social existence can find their referential basis. Consequently, as Barthes writes they make reality perfectly comprehensible. At the same time, the peace and joy of understanding reality

can only be accomplished through a certain "blindness" that does not take into account the problematic nature of the traditional causal view, that is the substitution of cause with consequence or the model with the original, nor the idea that the difference between real and fictional is a fictitious act that is dependent on the selection of a conventional representations system of the given time period. It is hence important to keep in mind as Nietzsche, quoting Pascal, reminds us that "if the same dream came to us every night we would be just as occupied with it as we are with the things that we see every day" (Nietzsche 2006, 121). And, we can add, in this case the *representation of the dream* would mean the conventional model of realistic mapping.

In the era of digital pictures it can be claimed as a summary that the illusory nature of the differentiation between real and fictional is becoming more and more conspicuous. The newest imaging media are interested in the blurring of the boundaries of reality, seemingly obliterating the notion itself. However well the terrifying prophecy sounds, reality is a stubborn notion that cannot be obliterated, rather it transforms in a similar way that the conditions of the representation and recognition of the "real" transform as a result of the activity of visual media. The major question in such a situation may not be what the difference *is* between real and fictional but why we need these notions in the first place. It is important to ask why we feel the need to define what the *qualities of pictures* are, and to study what role the transformation of the notion of reality and its stubborn return play in terms of social existence and human culture.

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"Where is Reality?"

Photographic Trace and Infinite Image
in Gábor Bódy's Film Theory

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Abstract. The article deals with the question of indexicality and the nature of cinematic signification drawing upon the terms of Gábor Bódy's film theory. The trace-like character of cinema is investigated through the medium-specific possibilities of the moving image and the gap inscribed between human perception and the inhumanity of the medium. Both the photographic and the cinematic trace are subject to infinite interpretation due to the inaccesibility of the trace as trace and its transformation into a meaningful sign. Instead of minimal units, cinematic language is based on the logic of seriality and can be interpreted on different levels of meaning attribution. Serial meaning is emphasized as a site where images can enter in endless relations to each other. Finally, Bódy's theoretical work can be interpreted as a proposal to redefine the status of the image in cinematic signification. Bódy's short or experimental films are used as examples and realizations of his theoretical considerations.[1]

Introduction

The concepts or designations "reality" and "fiction" can be easily replaced in different contexts by the words "truth," "documentarism," "authenticity," "referentiality" and "untruth," "figuration," "narrativization," etc. respectively – according to the discourse one is following. As words or terms invoking different language games they are put to different uses, and often epitomized as alternative modalities or attitudes. In what follows, I would like to put forward a conceptualization of these terms not opposing each other but in a

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mutual interrelatedness. I will rely on the writings of Gábor Bódy, a prominent figure of Hungarian filmmaking in the '70s and '80s, involved in experimental filmmaking as well as in theorizing basic questions related to the cinematic language and processes of meaning attribution. According to Bódy, film is *both* "reality" and "fiction," as a result of the nature of cinematic signification.

His "document-analysis", *Private History* (*Privát történelem*, 1978) is a compilation of sequences selected from home movies made between the two world wars in Hungary. On the one hand Bódy is interested in capturing moments seemingly unimportant from the point of view of the film makers, unintended details, uncontrollable fragments like faces, gestures, movements, signifying accidents. On the other hand, these images assembled one after the other, form different patterns and series beyond their original contexts as amateur movies, in opposition to the functions of personal recordings. There are many ways by which archive film sequences enter in multiple sign relations losing their primary referentiality. Bódy uses freeze-frame, slow motion, blow-up, inserts, repetition, and split screen to emphasize, compare and oppose details and images. As documents of a past world, the images are both meaningful in themselves and exposed to new meaning attributions.

From a critical stance, it can be shown how – through the juxtaposition of sequences – the most personal images, the private sphere of life is invaded by public – political, social, cultural – relations, different forms of entertainment, etc. "Characters" mime, through their gestures, the appearance of film stars in front of the camera; they play little scenes from fiction films, especially from slapstick comedies. Dialogues from contemporaneous feature films, mostly romantic comedies, are inserted into the scenes recorded from domestic life. Popular songs of the epoch, portraits, headlines, illustrations, ads from magazines and papers, political speeches, radio announcements, posters punctuate and comment on every manifestation of life. The most explicit example of this is when the silent sequences are dubbed with the voices reconstructed through the mouth movements read off with the help of a teacher for the deaf and dumb. (A woman says in the film: "Nobody can hear us. We can say anything.") The film is both a reconstructed document and an interpretation, the epoch viewed "through private eyeglasses" (1987, 115) *and* through the superposition of different cinematic codes and genres (Lumière-like actuality films, slapstick comedies, protodocumentaries, news programs, etc.).

The main interest of Bódy, however, is not ideology criticism (unmasking the interrelatedness of personal and social, individual and cultural in the rhetoric of the images), but the nature of the image, especially the photographic image. In an article entitled "Where is reality?" Bódy's point of departure is the

aphorism according to which "Cinema is truth twenty-four times a second" (2006, 105).[2] This could be a normative statement regarding the content, and ethics of the film. But Bódy relegates it to mediality – film and photography being the only media in visual arts which have a direct, material bound with the object itself. The aphorism is erroneously (but not surprisingly) attributed to Bazin and followed by a critique of the relationship stated, linking two incommensurable concepts ("cinema" and "truth"; a technical medium and a normative statement) by a subject-predicate relation. Bódy replaces the normativity of "truth" by the concepts of the 'trace' and 'document': "As the foot of the fox leaves a trace in the snow, every frame is a silhouette, a death-mask of an instant which took place" (2006, 105). The Bazinian metaphors are obvious here, but Bódy takes this stance to a provocative formulation from the point of view of the Bazinian ontology and aesthetics: the documentary, the imprint-character of the film is visible only insofar as it is articulated as a language. "Where there is articulation, there is also meaning;" "The 'pure document', although we know that it is projected to the screen, is invisible for us, it appears only *in the ratio* of document to fiction;" and "we are always watching two films projected on the screen: one is the *document*, the other is determined by the already established conventions of perception and expression" (2006, 105).

The question of this "double projection" brings forward the double-facedness of film bringing together two conceptualizations of cinematic signification which are usually held apart. In a seminal essay entitled "The Semiology of the Cinema" (1969) Peter Wollen pointed out how film semioticians were using a narrowed concept of the sign, and hence language. "The great weakness of almost all those who have written about the cinema is that they have taken one of [the] dimensions [of the sign], made it the ground of their aesthetic, the 'essential' dimension of the cinematic sign, and discarded the rest" (1998, 97). Taking as a point of departure Pierce's taxonomy of signs, the "second trichotomy" (which includes icon, index, and symbol) Wollen demonstrates how the main theoretizations of the cinematic representation are based on merely one aspect of the sign. Bazinian aesthetics is found on the indexical sign stressing "the existential bond between sign and object" and also "the primacy of the object over the image" (1998, 97). Christian Metz, on the contrary, was in search of the symbolic character (in Pierce's terms), the code-aspect of cinema, using Saussure's concept of sign defined in the dichotomy between

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[2]If otherwise not indicated, the English translations of the Hungarian texts are my own.

natural and arbitrary. Bódy redefines both (indexical and symbolic) aspects of signification in cinema.

The Photographic Trace

It is obvious that Bódy was fascinated by the reproductive power of the filmic medium which he called tracing: "The dependence of the image on reality is so tight, as if an invisible thread would lead from every point of an image to the corresponding light wave" (2006, 308). He used to cite Antonioni's intuition on this, according to whom it may be possible that the film strip records everything, and it is our inability to process it which prevents us to see everything in the image. It is evident that the notion of documentarism, of indexicality is very far from a direct, unreflective and reassuring relation with reality.

What is the reality of the mediated photographic image then? In the first place we are dealing with a photochemical reality, an imprint of the visible world, a trace marked by the mediatory possibilities of the medium; and second, the inhumanity of the medium inscribes a gap between the recorded image and the received image. According to the narration of the *Film School* (a series dedicated to initiating young students in "filmic thinking", entitled "Encounter with the medium", 1976): "We can take endless images of a detail of reality and there is no reason to assert that one is truer than the other. At the very most we can point out which one is nearer to our sensory conditions. One image displays what the other lets undisclosed, and behind every image lies the possibility of every other image". The photographic imprint of the visible world is accessible only through different representations. The illustrations of the *Film School* demonstrate how differently lighted and developed images generate different information on 'reality'.[3] [Figs. 1–2.] Lighting, developing, copying are part of the image making technology, but the moment of contingency and subjective choice is inscribed already in the technical procedures, which makes evident that the trace is created by the tracing process. Reproduction is determined by the possibilities of the medium. Cinematography turns out to be a kind of writing in the Derridean sense of the word: the trace has no identity in itself and it is not given in advance, only through constant differentiation. The trace, as it is "defined"

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[3]A similar investigation is carried out by Branigan regarding camera position manipulating the access to knowledge in a narrative interpretation (cf. Branigan 1992, 67–68).

in the deconstructive theories of language, denotes the material condition of representation which cannot be signified, but is nevertheless the foundation of the signification: "the trace itself does not exist," "in presenting itself, it becomes effaced" (Derrida 1976, 167).

The trace appearing on the border of the sign and non-sign is accounted for by Bódy as "trivial meaning." 'Trivial' does not mean obvious or unequivocal or the denotative meaning, since Bódy stresses that trivial meaning is "determined and endless", limited regarding its source, but inexhaustible regarding the range of its interpretation. The still image, especially the snapshot selects and isolates a singular moment in time through which the image means nothing else but itself, a singular event and an isolated bloc detached from its context. This lack of context delivers the image to infinite interpretations. Unpredictable and uncontrollable by the image maker, trivial meaning is both overdetermined and empty, causing "the pain of not ever being able to complete images" (2006, 59).

The Cinematic Trace

The trace at work in cinematic signification acquires a new interpretation when considered as a series of still images. It is known that the illusion of reality in cinema is based on another kind of illusion, namely the illusion of *moving* images. It is the reconstruction of movement which, effacing the trace of the stills (the instantaneity of the moment, its eventuality or chance-character), presents us with a continuous 'physical reality.' The illusion of movement appears only when the frames are assembled 'correctly.' Projected images of a motionless object taken from a fix camera position meet the criteria of moving images in the same manner as changing views from one frame to another. In terms of reconstructing movement there is no difference between the Lumière-brothers' actuality films and the illusionism of Méliès's films. In both cases we are dealing with the re-construction of movement, with the difference that one of them bears a stronger resemblance to our experiences in the phenomenal world. According to Bódy, the movement of the film realized through the projections of the frames is an empty one, a blind force, the emptying of the movement: an "empty flow of affirmation" which "passes with the time and records and mediates the meanings of the referent" (2006, 38). This empty form which generates movement cannot dispense with the traces of the stills. Slow motion, fast motion, the projection of the frames in reverse order, these are all pertaining to the possibilities of the medium proving that moving images only imitate the human perception, but in reality they

are based on an imperceptible mechanism which resects moments from time
and reassembles them. The filmic medium creates the simulacra of time and
movement when it turns the discontinuity of stills into continuity of movement
and sense of time.[4] In Bódy's terms, cinematography is a "time interpreter."

Motion Studies 1880-1980. Homage to Eadweard Muybridge (1982) is an
experimental film study which investigates the border between motion and
motionlessness through the means of film, photography, and graphics. The
historical snapshots of Muybridge are laid out by Bódy and animated into
film. This passage between motion and stillness becomes a new form through
which one can investigate the conceptualizations of the human body in motion.
In the second part of the film Bódy turns to "proletarian bodies," instead of the
athletes' bodies and women's aestheticized bodies, marked not by the Dürerian
grid, but by entangled lines – new forms of the regulation and discipline of the
body. [Figs. 3–4.]

Documentarism, indexicality, the trivial meaning end up in Bódy's account
as "critical terms", because "he reads the trace-like recording conditioned by
technology not as a promise of immediacy, but as its impossible challenge"
(Török 2008). Trace is revealed through absence, "pure document [. . .] appears
only *in the ratio* of document to fiction", or as he puts it elsewhere: "Trivial
meaning – as something which is real for *people* – is posited by *language*" (2006,
59).

Cinema as Language: Meaning Attributions

The appearance of the trace automatically qualifies it as a meaningful sign,
and Bódy was keen on revealing the multiple aspects of this process. The
fact that cinematic images can set themselves free from the "here and now" of
their primary context, not signifying what their trivial meaning would be, but
elevating to an "imaginary thinking", accounts for a cinematic language or a
cinematic thinking. Meanings thus generated are hardly, if at all, expressible
in the verbal language: cinematic thinking emerges where words are powerless.
Even though cinema is penetrated by verbal language through and through
(considering, for example, the preparation phase, the script, the use of the
speech as a subcode, or the cinematic metalanguage as an interpretative

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[4]There is a new preoccupation with the study of film's photographical basis which
investigates the relationship between stillness and animation, life and death, continuity and
discontinuity. Cf. Mary Ann Doane 2002, Laura Mulvey 2006, Garrett Stewart 1999, Victor
Burgin 2004.

device), cinema reaches the status of art when it thinks and speaks her own language, and not only decorates meanings outside the film.

The necessary condition of language is the capability of generalization, of abstraction. Signs refer primarily to each other in a signifying chain; in fact, Saussure defines language as something with no positive entities, or rather as a system of negative differences. The central conception in Bódy's work is the series or seriality in cinema. The series is the basis of every language: it implies articulation, repetition and difference. It is a question what the series of images adds to the still image. It adds "logic and time", says Bódy. Seriality means the potential of liberating images from the confinement of the actual or trivial meaning and endowing them with a "linguistic" meaning which derives from sign-relations. There are no pre-given minimal units (like frames or shots or other sequences), the series has its own law which determines the units. Bódy gives a tripartite categorization of the relations images can establish among each other. The simplest one is the topo-chronological, when adjacent images are assembled in a spatio-temporal relationship. Kuleshov's creative geography is an example of "showing the form which serves to describe reality" (Bódy 2006, 71). A more abstract way of assembling images is one that emphasizes a common trait of images, even by negating them, neglecting all the other traits, and it is accounted for by the theory of montage. Montage-like structures resemble rhetorical figures (let's just recall Eisenstein's preoccupation with the metaphor), but cinematic language can do better than that. "The classical montage emphasized one of the attributes of the event, which then was substituted or confronted with its pair, the result was abstraction to a certain point from the spatio-temporal constraint of the event" (Bódy 2006, 73). Contrary to the rhetorical meaning, serial meaning involves every aspect of the image and relates to the entire context.

In opposition to montage, serial meaning is not dual ("there is a *structural difference* between *serial* and *binominal* meanings" [2006, 151]), it is not totalizing or integrating the parts into one meaning, it is not based on a linear juxtaposition, but infers a "memorial background" (1996, 75); serial meaning is not a visual counterpart to an already given (verbal) concept, but generates an "imaginary conceptuality" which is hardly nameable through words; it gives the "possibility for countless combinations" (1996, 75), "directing the flow of affirmation to different directions" (2006, 155). While trivial meaning in Bódy's film theory accounts for the endless trace *before* language and meaning, perpetually differentiating itself in interpretation, serial meaning gives way to infinite interpretation *beyond* the verbal language.

In André Gaudreault's formulation film is "the series of series" (2002, 33–47). As an essentially serial phenomenon, film is built on the principle of the series on a twofold level: on the level of the frames and on the level of the shots. There is a constant movement – conceptualized by him as a dialectical movement – between the single ("un") and the multiple: the snapshot seizes one moment, one view of a sight in motion, then these single moments are reassembled to a new unity; the frames lose their seriality to give way to shots which become arranged in new series again. The serial determination of the cinematic medium is a main point in Bódy's argument, as it is expounded in *Series, repetition, meaning*. Contrary to Gaudreault, Bódy speaks of a movement which is endless at both ends, never brings totalization. Photography is the sensory representation of "the biggest fiction, that of the time conceived as a point" (1996, 79), while it is constituted itself by "series of photographs or films": "you could make a ten-minute film about the moment appearing in one photo using the methods of a research film. Surprising things, fantastic-looking motions would be displayed in the beginning" (1987, 283). Chronophotography or long exposition photography condenses moments, "captures" duration as film does. Film is constituted by series of photographs, but photos also consist of series of films. There are no fixed minimal units which could define a semiotics of the moving images: behind every unit there is a multiplicity of differences. The grounding principle of the cinematic language is not the existence of detachable units, but the logic of seriality.[5] Insofar as seriality is a never-ending process of decomposing and rearranging based on the possibilities of the medium, is there a way to apply this deconstructive principle in cinematic meaning attribution?

Bódy gives many examples for this and perhaps the way to understand the concept of the serial meaning is through his close reading of film sequences. I will take one example from his analyses, of a short film made by him, entitled *Hunting a Small Fox* (*Vadászat kis rókára*, 1972). Conforming to ready-made aesthetics, the film is assembled from five different sequences, left over footages of a news program: demonstrations or protest meetings, images of excavators at work, a singer singing an aria, a television signal marking the end of a news bloc, and finally a take with a hunter running across a meadow, turning out to be chasing a small fox, when caught up with it, he kicks it, the fox flies in the air and falls to his feet. Bódy stresses the interconnection of images: every image gets (in)filtrated by the others. The sequences can be arranged in pairs: the

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[5]Bódy gives the critique of Metz' grand syntagmatique: "The definition of the syntagms are characterizations of linguistic terms by dramaturgical procedures and vice versa; as a matter of fact they are like a centaur: its hoofs stamp on the stage floor and it squeezes *Grammaire générale* under its arms" (2006, 60).

images of excavators are in conflict with the images showing the demonstrators (the oppressed vs. power), the aria images could be the abstract or emotional expression of the oppressed, they oppose the excavators by ex-pressing sounds, while the excavators grab in. The final sequence with the little fox could then be understood in this context as the oppression of a very "fragile freedom," and not, say, as the neutralization of a dangerous parasite. It is worth stressing that in serial meaning images are connected to each other through their relation to other images. For example the connection of the aria-image and the little fox is possible because the aria-sequence is already contaminated by images related to oppression and the exercise of power. The manifold interconnections among images are compared by Bódy to the pinball machine game where the winning trajectory is when the ball touches the greatest number of points, connecting them all.

Infinite Image

Serial meaning then means sign-relations and meanings established in the endless possibilities of traces that images record. It also urges us to a re-interpretation of the status of the image in the cinematic signification. In fact, the concept of the image in film is an abstract one in many ways. Not just because it is an abstraction of a flow of images, moving pictures, the parameters of which are usually changing from one second to the other, alterations which are sometimes hardly traceable by the human eye because of extreme speed, or slowness of the change. The image is also an abstraction because it is an image in the series, it is not an entity for and by itself, but it is constituted through the relations established with other images. There is also a third sense in which an image is an abstraction, as Bódy puts it: "behind every image lies the possibility of every other image". The image is not a monad, but a complex and multi-layered occurrence with a memory of past and future images. "The image is not a sign, nor an object, but a process which is synonymous with 'meaning'" (Bódy 2006, 120).

The allegory of this theoretical consideration could be another example from Bódy, "the endless reflection": two mirrors facing each other. The result is easily imaginable, but never verifiable: "For, standing in the axis of the reflection, one blocks out the reflection oneself. But if the position of the controlling eye is not overlapping with that of the axis, the infinite progression fades out from the sphere of our control at a finite arithmetical point. The infinite reflection thus can only be followed by an incorporeal, transparent

observer" (Bódy 1987, 287). It is, then, our own condition of a material observer of images, which prevents us from witnessing the endless reflection of images and which constrains us to delimit specific meanings and relations from the endless possibilities of the cinematic traces. The "incorporeal subject" is the camera turned face to face to its monitor, but here the resolution of the video image puts an end to endless reflection. The endlessness of images is conceivable, but it is not the object of a sensory experience. Images inform us of an infinity which provokes our conditioned reflexes of vision, our "conceptual cells." This uncontrollable proliferation of images is staged by Bódy in his film plan, entitled *The Cosmic Eye*. "Radio astronomers register signs constantly without being able to detect their place and origin" (Bódy 1987, 277). First they assume that alien creatures collect data from the visual manifestations of the planet. Later these signals turn to be a "Galactic Newsreel" without any human possessor, visual information "accumulates and dissects itself." This is the Cosmic Eye, a metaphor of the endless power of images.

"Image is not a sign, but a process" – Bódy unties the concept of the image from reality, the only referents of images become images themselves. The flow of images penetrates the visible world, our culture, language, history, genetics and understanding. Projections, symmetries, marks, imprints, analogies, reflections, mirror images permeate our world and our identity. For Bódy the consequence of this all-pervading imagery is that "images open to infinite meanings. The world is an extremely fascinating and menacing, encouraging and cautioning complex of images" (1987, 273).

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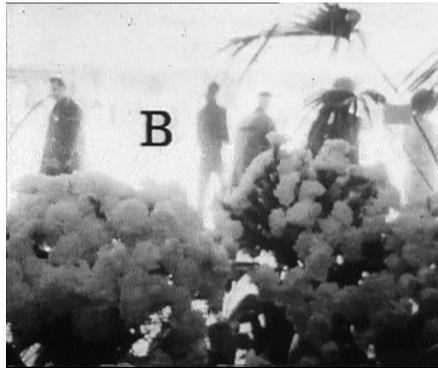
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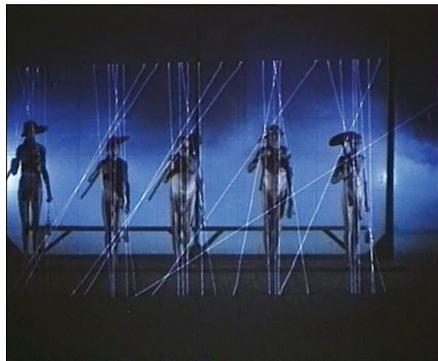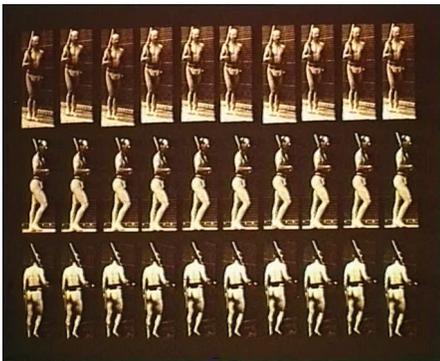
(Re)Mediating the Real

Paradoxes of an Intermedial Cinema of Immediacy

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Abstract.   The paper focuses on tendencies that qualify for the label of reflexive and hypermediated cinema, but which, nevertheless, also have the purpose of achieving the sensation of immediacy. Three different types of such hypermediated cinematic experiences of the real are analysed: Agnès Varda's film *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse* (2000), presented as a sort of "encyclopaedia of the real," then Godard's essay film cycle, *Histoire(s) du cinema* (1988–1998), presented as primarily a hand-made cinema derived from photomontage and the calligrammatic fusion of image and text. The third type is exemplified by José Luis Guerin's twin films *En la ciudad de Sylvia* and *Unas fotos en la ciudad de Sylvia* (2007), in which we can see an example of how the most transparent techniques can also end up as remediations. All these examples seen as re-mediating to an excess the indexicality of modernist cinema and challenging cinema's lack of auratic quality through the director's marked personal implication and traces of his "handling" of media. The paper also proposes the possibility of a *"remediational metalepsis"* in which cinema exposes the paradoxes of the everyday experience of metaleptic leaps between "real" and "mediated" and thus calls attention to *metalepsis* as integral part of reality itself.

Hypermediacy versus Immediacy?

Theories of medium and mediality have a wide-ranging genealogy with branches reaching as far as Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms or much more recent post-structuralist theories of literature and text, sharing with them more or less the idea that was expressed in the infinite regress of the "real."

Mediation is commonly understood as a process through which one is able to communicate not only *with the help of* different media, but one communicates *through* different media. Medium, as its denomination suggests, is supposed to stand "in the middle", to act as a sort of mediator. Ever since Marshall McLuhan stated that the "medium is the message," theories of medium have also called attention to the way in which it is never directly the "meaning" or the "pure message" that we perceive in a communication but the material mediality of the signification which unavoidably shapes our constructions of meaning. Based on McLuhan's idea that "the 'content' of any medium is always another medium" (1964, 23–24) – several theorists (like Joachim Paech 2000, Henk Oosterling 2003, among others) have also argued that the term 'medium' highlights the possibilities of modalities of communications acting as "trans-forms," of being able to produce "traces" within other media or being able to be "transcribed" onto other media.

Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin elaborated the idea even further in coining a new term to describe media dynamics in our culture, presenting it as 'remediation' in a book bearing the same title (*Remediation. Understanding New* Media, 1999 – a title openly referencing McLuhan's groundbreaking work). The main contentions of this work are that "a medium in our culture can never operate in isolation, it always enters into relationships of respect and rivalry with other media" (1999, 65), and also, that new media always repurpose and remediate older media.[1] Furthermore, there is a double logic of remediation that involves the concepts of *immediacy* (media transparency) and *hypermediacy* (multiplication of media or self-conscious over-signification). Bolter and Grusin view this duality not in an antagonistic way, but as phenomena which are often intertwined. I quote from the book: "Although each medium promises to reform its predecessors by offering a more immediate or authentic experience, the promise of reform inevitably leads us to become aware of the new medium as a medium. Thus, immediacy leads to hypermediacy. The process of remediation makes us aware that all media are at one level a "play of signs" [...]. At the same time, this process insists on the real, effective presence of media in our culture" (1999, 19). So the desire for immediacy inevitably involves the invention of different techniques that lead to processes of hypermediacy and media consciousness, nevertheless, in our present daily practices hypermediacy can often be integrated into our sensations of the real.

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[1]Sometimes the process is mutual: as seen, for instance, in TV design today: TV, a relatively older media is being more and more refashioned according to the newer model of the world wide web hypertexts, which in turn can assume the function more and more of television programs.

Bolter and Grusin's work constitutes a landmark not only in thinking about the presence of media within media, but also in rethinking the category of the "real" in an increasingly mediated world. Whereas theories of postmodern culture most often emphasize the mediated nature of all our experiences and the short circuiting of our experiences of "texts" into "texts," Bolter and Grusin claim that "despite the fact that all media depend on other media in cycles of remediation, our culture still needs to acknowledge that all media remediates the real. Just as there is no getting rid of mediation, there is no getting rid of the real" (1999, 55–56). They find that "the twin preoccupation of contemporary media" is on the one hand "the transparent presentation of the real" and on the other, none other than "the enjoyment of the opacity of media themselves" (1999, 21).

Although Bolter and Grusin focus on general cultural tendencies and take their examples from a great variety of sources, from the history of visual arts to the evolution of computer design, I have found that the general outline of their ideas is applicable to some of the recent developments in cinema as well. In what follows I will focus on films that undoubtedly qualify for the label of reflexive and hypermediated (or intermedial) cinema, which nonetheless also have the purpose of achieving the sensation of almost palpable immediacy through these self-conscious intermedial techniques. I will present some of the types of what I see as such *hypermediated cinematic experiences of the real*: in some of the films of Agnès Varda, Jean-Luc Godard and those of José-Luis Guerín. In all these examples we have a cinema that is both markedly remediational and self-reflexive. All of these examples have in common a strong affiliation to a modernist aesthetics of film and share the quality of using their techniques to the extreme, of exercising their special impact on the viewer through a certain degree of excess. Among several other aspects, the media to be remediated in each case are: painting, photography and language. These media within media produce an intermedial structure that in each case conveys not a sense of infinite regress of signification, an entrapment within a text that merely refers to another text *ad infinitum*, or a mere play with differences, but a configuration that conveys paradoxically a sense of immediacy both on a more general level (exemplifying the multiple faces of media versus reality or media within reality) and on a more specific, personal level (in the sense of recording one's own personal experiences handling these media).

Modernist Collage and the Culture of Collecting

"According to Clement Greenberg's influential formulation, it was not until modernism, that the cultural dominance of the paradigm of transparency was effectively challenged. In modernist art, the logic of hypermediacy could express itself both as a fracturing of the space of the picture and as a hyperconscious recognition or acknowledgement of the medium. Collage and photomontage provide evidence of the modernist fascination with the reality of the media" – Bolter and Grusin state (1999, 38). Collages always bear the physical marks of manual craftsmanship: by assembling bits and pieces, the materiality of the medium of expression is shown up as integral part of a palpable reality. Although cinema has no materiality comparable to that of other visual arts like painting or sculpture, modernism in cinema also meant a similar cult of collage-like effects and fascination with the "reality of the medium." On the one hand this was achieved by narrative effects of fragmentation and self-reflexivity. On the other hand, modernist cinema articulated in many ways its deep-rooted relationship to the technology and art of photography and cultivated a visual stylistics that highlighted the individual image, the photographic frame.[2] Photography (alongside painting) became the prototype of visual abstraction, the model for the construction of the image as a "world in a frame" and it was used to reveal the archaeology of the medium of cinema.[3] Then again, modernism made deliberate use of the photographic image in film as the direct imprint of reality by techniques of *cinéma vérité*, or close to *cinéma vérité*, in which people acted and reacted consciously to the "gaze" of the cinematic apparatus by looking into the lens, the films recording both the process of photographic representation (the "reality of the medium") and "capturing" moments from the infinite flow of authentic reality.

Thus modernist cinema achieved the combination of the cinema of the apparatus with the cinema of the gaze and that of the cinema of the tactile senses. The *photo-flâneur* (who extends the eye with the photographic

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[2]This can be seen not only in the famous jump-cut technique of Godard's films, but also in the abstract, framed compositions of Antonioni's or Bertolucci's films in the sixties and seventies, in the open thematization of the relationship of photography, film and reality in Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966) or Chris Marker's *La Jetée* and so on (cf. Garrett Stewart 1999).

[3]A modernist film constructed of individual shots of abstract composition (see for example Jean-Luc Godard's *Une femme mariée: Suite de fragments d'un film tourné en 1964*) conveys the similar connotation as the medium of photomontage, that can be seen according to Bolter and Grusin "not as deviating from photography's true nature as a transparent medium, but as exemplifying its irreducible hypermediacy" (1999, 39).

apparatus and roams the streets armed with a "camera-eye") joined the *photo-monteur* (decontextualizing images, fragmenting and reassembling the world into pictures). The twin fascination with the medium and the reality it could make palpable, as well as the paradoxes deriving from the acknowledgement of mediation was a defining feature of modernist aesthetics[4] and also gave rise to the idea of art as collection (and film as a collection of images of life) in close relation to the idea of the "museum without walls" (or the "imaginary museum," to quote Malraux's term) that brought together a virtually endless flow of texts and images that could generate an also endless number of associations. The films of the French New Wave, and especially those of Jean-Luc Godard, for instance, easily mix realistic representations with reproductions of painting, colloquial dialogue with intertextual references, thus the "real" and the "mediated" becoming intertwined and perceivable as "natural" parts of a world consisting of different mediations.

The films I am about to discuss were made well beyond the time frame of modernism, but with techniques that derive from its aesthetic, all of them carrying on the modernist ideals of collage (and its paradoxes of mediation), and all of them are constructed with a collector's instinct and passion for images of "life" and images mediated by all possible media. On account of this latter feature all these examples in fact also constitute a powerful artistic response to a culture of collecting in a consumer society that emerged during the 20th century and that has its own paradoxes linked to issues of objectification, possessiveness and self-assertion. The collector in general and the collage maker share the act of de-contextualizing and re-contextualizing involved in their work, and they can also merge in a unique artistic way in the case of filmmakers discussed below.[5]

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[4] As Ka-Fai Yau explains, interpreting Deleuze's categories about modern cinema: "The French New Wave can be said to be a cinema of the 'real,' not owing to its revelation of the consistency between everyday experiences and cinematic presentation, but owing to its revelation of the discrepancies between everyday experiences and the manipulation entailed in presenting such experiences in cinema" (1998, 61).

[5] A question would be well justified to ask here: Why speak of a "collection" and not of an "archive"? Certainly this latter term has also appeared often enough linked to several films that have similar non-linear techniques (like the famous lists of Peter Greenaway's films, for example, that amount to a so called "database aesthetics"). However, the "culture of collecting" differs exactly in this "hands-on" quality that can be seen in modernist collages as well, whereas an "archive," especially in the digital age, always impresses not by its quasi tangible "reality" but by its boundless virtuality. All the filmic examples discussed here convey a physical sense of handling media, of the artist's personal involvement in the material processes of his art. In a digital "environment" the so called immersion within a multilayered world, and even the possible interactivity of the spectator aims exactly to

Agnès Varda is well known for her roots in the art of photography and for her New Wave films (being also sometimes called "the grandmother of the French New Wave"). After several powerful fiction films that established her prestige as one of the most important women filmmakers alive, in her twilight years she surprised the world with a film called *The Gleaners and I* (*Les glaneurs et la glaneuse*, 2000). This is a film that one could perhaps most suitably call a documentary essay, a meditation about the different forms of gleaning (i.e. collecting things others have discarded or left for anyone else to pick). The starting impulse seems to come from more than one direction: there is the word itself ('gleaning') and its common use by people and the changing social practices that the word refers to, and then there is a compelling image seen in recurring representations of rural scenes showing women or groups of people in the fields that glean after the harvest (some of the paintings reproduced in the film include Jules Breton's *The Gleaner*, Jean-François Millet's *The Gleaners*, Jean Héduin's *Gleaners Fleeing before the Storm*). The quest that the film pursues in this way, namely to uncover the forms of contemporary gleaning is on the one hand a linguistic, sociologic, anthropologic pursuit, and on the other hand, it is driven by an art historian's or collector's curiosity for discovering rare and forgotten objects (of art). However, there seem to be some significant differences in how Varda pursues her desires of a collector and how it is generally conceived by culture theorists today. Baudrillard considers for instance that a defining feature of the "system of collecting" is the creation of the collector's autonomous world the need of which originates in some kind of failure in the individual's social communication. He writes: "whatever the orientation of a collection, it will always embody an irreducible element of independence from the world. It is because he feels himself alienated or lost within a social discourse whose rules he cannot fathom that the collector is driven to construct an alternative discourse that is for him entirely amenable, in so far as he is the one who dictates its signifiers – the ultimate signified being, in the final analysis, none other than himself" (Baudrillard 1994, 24). Roger Cardinal also considers that the action of prospecting in public spaces where the collector has no personal rights of ownership is crucial to the attitude of a collector, who then "gathers up his booty and thus removes it from public circulation," upon which returning to his private space, "he unpacks his acquisitions, of which he is now the undisputed owner" (Cardinal 1994, 77). He thinks that "to collect is to launch individual desire across the intertext of

remove those "traces" of the medium, of the artist's "handwork" that are "inscribed" within a collection/collage, and that an essentially modernist approach seeks to preserve (collect) and communicate.

environment and history. Every acquisition, whether crucial or trivial, marks an unrepeatable conjuncture of subject, found object, place and movement. In its sequential evolution, the collection encodes an intimate narrative" (Cardinal 1994, 68). Mieke Bal also emphasizes the communicational aspect of each collection, the fact that a collection of objects tells a "narrative" that falls outside the realm of language: "collecting is an essential human feature that originates in the need to tell stories, but for which there are neither words nor other conventional narrative modes" (Bal 1994, 103).

Agnès Varda's film is unique not only because it is a film about collecting, but because the film itself amounts to a genuine collection of media representations and also offers an authentic record of the passion driving the filmmaker herself to collect and assemble and display the "booty" found in the world. What is definitely missing in this gesture is the withdrawal into a short-circuited world that characterizes typical collections, the opposition between public and private spaces, the removal of the collected objects from cultural circulation. On the contrary, the film records an unprecedented success (instead of failure) of communication on several levels and in different social contexts, and pursues a relentless incursion into public spaces that are made homogenous with the private space of the filmmaker herself (the improvised shelters of the homeless or the streets and fields or even museums shown in the film become equal with Varda's own home). The spirit of it all is therefore closer to Malraux's "imaginary museum," that seems to be transposed from the "virtual" into the realm of the "real" and tangible. Through the medium of the cinema, everything adds up to a patchwork put on display, an intermedial weave that seeks to convey a sensation of a complex and multifaceted reality, a purpose that the film follows uncompromisingly. The extension of the project into its sequel, *The Gleaners and I . . . Two Years Later* (*Les glaneurs et la glaneuse... deux ans après*, 2002) that traces the developments in the destinies of the first film's protagonists (including the newer revelations of Varda herself) only underscores this ambition of an all encompassing recording of reality.

Beyond all these aspects, however, Varda's "collection" also tells a self-narrative (a function not alien to any collection as we have seen in the examples earlier), the film also amounts to an unusual self portrait: that of Agnès Varda who is first and foremost herself a collector of discarded, disregarded things or artistic topics. The metaphor of gleaning is in this way a self-reflexive one and as such it manages to avoid the connotations of the commonplace metaphor of "trash as treasure" or any picturesque glorification of poverty altogether. This is what raises the film above being about the plight of the outcast, and makes it a film about life and about the way a

filmmaker can best record life with personal passion and self-consciousness. In this way it can be related to the best qualities of *cinema vérité*, in fact, to adopt Bolter and Grusin's term, it can be seen as a remediation or upgrading of *cinema vérité* to intermedial cinema. (Let us not forget that according to some theorists, *cinema vérité* was itself none other that a remediation of the kind of street photography that had been practiced before by the likes of Henri Cartier Bresson, for instance.) And it can also be seen as the remediation of a text-based encyclopaedic form to a cinematic hypertext which is organized by the logic of metonymic association and of different links that extend and enrich its texture.

Although in the presentation of the phenomenon of "gleaning" we have a variety of media – books, dictionary entries, pictures, paintings, archival film footage, cinematic reportage, street images edited in a video-clip style, later even highly personal meditations about aging and about Varda's private life – the result does not only foreground the hypertextual structure of intermedial cinema, but the media fragments in each case offer *the context of tangible reality to an abstract notion*. For instance, the showing of a particular book (with the close details of the leather cover) on the bookshelf of Varda's home in the company of her pet cat is enough to lift the text out of abstract signification and place it into the concrete world of the real and the personal (the personal being perhaps the most archetypal level possible of the perception of the real), the pictures of the gleaners are shown not merely as illustrations but as exhibits in a museum, where people can experience them in their auratic uniqueness and record them with their own "domesticated" media tools (photo or video cameras). [Figs. 1–4.]

The film consists of a series of remediations in which the quality of one medium is transformed onto the other medium (the gestures seen in the painting are captured in real life and are multiplied by the techniques of cinematic montage and other representations, see Figs. 5–8.), and also to the level of Varda's identification with the world presented through these media. [Figs. 9–12.] Direct reference and personal experience are always the key highlights. The small digital camera presented to us in technical detail does not only represent the "cinematic apparatus" but one particular camera that fascinated Agnès Varda and that she playfully used. In addition to the fact that the presence of the camera is not hidden, Varda also allows us to experience the "reality of the medium," the way it filters the world on its own (not cutting out in the final montage the images when she accidentally left the camera on, filming the dangling of the lens cover over random images), or reveals its digital "texture" next to images of her own wrinkled and spotted skin or to other

textures found in real life. [Figs. 13–16.] "Reality" and "representation" are continually confronted, collaged, linked to another. Perhaps the most revealing part from this respect is the final scene in which Varda insists on tracking down a painting that lay forgotten in a museum cellar and insists on carrying it out into the open air exactly in the middle of a heavy gust of wind, taking genuine pleasure in participating in the act and in the fact that the reality that in this way "frames" the painting reflects its theme and authenticates the experience of the painting that shows Jean Héduin's *Gleaners Fleeing before the Storm.* [Figs. 17–18.]

Immediacy through Hypermediacy: Handling Media or Touching the Real?

If Varda managed to create a *cinematic encyclopaedia of the real* that also ultimately achieves a high level of immediacy and personal communication, Godard's essay film cycle, *Histoire(s) du cinema* (1988–1998) seems to go a step further in presenting the medium of cinema as both a vehicle for the most personal self-reflection and a reflection of the collective memory of mankind, a collection adding up to a sort of "museum of the real," as he calls it (Godard being well aware of the pun involved in the word "real"/"reel" that works both in French and English.[6]) The film is a visual *palimpsest* in which the different layers reflect the complex processes of a culturally saturated memory. What is clear from our point of view is that Godard presents the "reality" of the medium of cinema once more as a complex set of remediations, imitations of one art by another, in which again abstract notions come to be contextualized in concrete media representations conjured up by subjective associations.[7] [Figs. 19–22.] The imitation of one art by another can also be called *ekphrasis* (that Bolter and Grusin include under the umbrella term of remediation). Only the question remains, which is the medium that reflects, remediates the other? It is not the usual case in which literature is seen through cinema or vice

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[6]In English the pun works on the level of pronunciations ("reel" and "real"), in French it works on the level of spelling (the word "réel" meaning "real" that resembles the English word "reel" meaning a roll of film). The expression itself of the "museum of the real" is borrowed from Malraux's *Les voix du silence* (1951).

[7]I have elaborated on this subject in more detail in another essay entitled *Deconstructing Cinema as a Narrative Medium in Jean-Luc Godard's Histoire(s) du cinéma* that will be published in the proceedings of the international conference "*Orientation in the Occurrence.*" *Interdisciplinary Approach to Complex Cultural Processes* held at the Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 17-18 October, 2008.

versa, but cinema seen through the filter of an archaic medium of moving pictures. However, this is a form that has never existed as such, never existed as vehicle for cinematic storytelling; it can be called "archaic" only because the techniques used were available at the earliest stages of cinema, it is a sort of "hand-made cinema" derived from photomontage and calligrammatic writing (both connectable though to Eisenstein's early experiments with cinematic language). This "impossible" inter-medium is the one that ekphrastically mirrors what cinema is supposed to stand for in-between the arts.

Both Varda's and Godard's films can be seen as re-mediating in fact what can be considered as the *indexicality of modernist cinema* epitomized by the chrono-photographic rifle of Jules Marey – whose heritage is directly evoked by Varda in her film – or by Antonioni's photographer who hunted down, shot his pictures then put them on paper after carefully pinpointing with a marker details to be blown up. This indexicality was perceptible not only in the techniques of *cinema vérité* (extended here into intermedial dimensions by Varda), but also in the techniques of collage, of stopping and slowing down the images (pushed here towards the spiritual dimensions of musical-intermedial montage by Godard). As early as in the time of *Pierrot le fou* (1965) Godard declared that for him film was a tactile art; well, he accomplished a new level of "tactile cinema" here. Throughout the *Histoire(s)* we see recurring images of Godard himself writing on the typewriter often followed by an image of an old fashioned editing table. Besides the fact that this breaks down the familiar metaphor of cinematic writing, we see how literally he takes one image, one word and places them onto the other.[8] It seems to me that all the all paintings referred to, collaged into the cinematic frames in the *Histoire(s)* become metaphors for this kind of tactile handling of photographic, cinematic material.

This personal and bodily implication in manufacturing motion pictures and clearly leaving a trace of the author's personal bodily experiences on screen can be seen in Varda's film as well, not only in the images in which she presents her aging hand, but in the famous images in which she tries to capture reality

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[8] I think that the intellectual aspect of the *Histoire(s)* has been somewhat overrated, in this film Godard proves to be first and foremost not a philosopher but an ideal reader and a collector, one who reads extensively and interprets ideas in his own way, collecting, mixing and re-mixing quotations at every step in his films. Most of all, he proves to be someone who has a passionate love for making, handling, hand-crafting mixtures of words and images. Jacques Rancičre considered that the common measure for Godard's associations in the *Histoire(s)* is that there is no common measure. I would add that the possible common measure is the pleasure of this "tangible materiality of cinema," the perceptible rhythm and the texture that binds them together.

itself within her palm, as if *transforming her own body into a camera*, both framing the fleeting images and recording the physical impulses, imprints of the world upon her own eyes, body and skin. It is as if we have the opposite of Barthes' *punctum* from his *Camera lucida* (1980) that seems to "touch" the viewer. It is reaching out and touching the world through – literally – hand made pictures. [Figs. 23–24.] As we have seen earlier, it is commonly accepted that the complex medium of cinema is an elusive one. This gesture, however – just like Godard's hand-crafted photographic and cinematic juxtapositions – gives somehow a physical shape to the "materiality" of the art of moving pictures.

Moreover, both Varda's two films and Godard's *Histoire(s)* seem to work on the re-construction of a certain "aura" of the moving image, an "aura" that has been lost according to Walter Benjamin's famous essay about the "work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction." As Laura Marks emphasizes, the "*aura* entails a relationship of contact, or a tactile relationship. The 'Artwork' essay implies that aura is the material trace of a prior contact, be it brushwork that attest to hand of the artist or the patina on a bronze that testifies to centuries of oxidation. Aura enjoins a temporal immediacy, a co-presence, between viewer and object. To be in the presence of an auratic object is more like being in physical contact than like facing a representation" (Marks 2000, 140). Although film can never actually realize this actual co-presence of viewer and object, both Varda and Godard, by insistently pushing their own body as mediator between the represented reality and the reality of the viewer, and also by these gestures of indexicality and touch that emphasize both the physical presence of reality before the apparatus, before the director's body and the palpable experience of images they behold or handle, at least manage to effectively *mediate a kind of auratic experience*. It is an experience that insists on the power of media in making accessible the sensual complexity of life itself, a complexity that includes artworks as "natural" "objects" of a multimedial reality. Likewise, by insistently arresting the flow of the images, intervening, commenting and handling the images, the frames can almost be observed as individual objects of contemplation, thus challenging another crucial criterion of Benjamin's.[9]

This challenging of film's lack of auratic quality through the director's marked personal implication and indexical traces of his "handling" of media

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[9]"The painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so. No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed. It cannot be arrested" (Benjamin 2001, 62).

(something comparable to the "brushwork" of a painter) together with paradoxical techniques of remediation conveying a sensation of immediacy can also be seen in another type of film, practiced by José Luis Guerín. In his twin projects, *In the City of Sylvia* (*En la ciudad de Sylvia*, 2007) and *Some Photos Made in the City of Sylvia* made in the same year (*Unas fotos en la ciudad de Sylvia*, 2007). Guerín's art can also be connected to the same genealogy of modernist photo-cinema as that of Varda's or Godard's only through a different "branch." Here we can see an example of how the most transparent techniques can end up as remediations. To quote from Bolter and Grusin's work: "The (. . .) paradox is that just as hypermedia strive for immediacy, transparent (. . .) technologies always end up being remediations, even as, indeed precisely because, they appear to deny mediation. Although transparent technologies try to improve on media by erasing them, they are still compelled to define themselves by the standards of the media they are trying to erase" (1999, 54).[10] In this logic of thinking the technique of cinema can be seen as an upgrading in effects of immediacy of both painting and photography. Nevertheless, in Guerín's work – that has often been compared to Godard's on account of its techniques that seem to strip down cinematic storytelling to the bare essentials of images and words –, we see how the images lay bare the photographic, painterly and literary undercurrent of the cinematic texture.

In this case it is the uninhibited *flânerie* of street photography that is remediated and also remedied (refashioned and rehabilitated) by cinematography. *Flânerie* denotes a complex artistic attitude that was productive both in literature and in the visual arts. Its theorists vary from Baudelaire to Walter Benjamin and Susan Sontag. It was Sontag, who was the first to evaluate the application of this notion to photography. In her book *On Photography* (1977) she describes how, since the development of hand-held cameras in the early 20th century, the camera has become the most characteristic tool of the *flâneur*: "Photography first comes into its own as an extension of the eye of the middle-class *flâneur*, whose sensibility was so accurately charted by Baudelaire. The photographer is an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitering, stalking, cruising the urban inferno, the voyeuristic stroller who discovers the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes. Adept of the joys of watching, connoisseur of empathy, the flâneur finds the world '*picturesque*' " (Sontag 2002, 55).

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[10]For example: "In general, digital photorealism defines reality as perfected photography and virtual reality defines it as first-person point of view cinema" (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 55).

In Guerín's first film, however, we have a *flâneur* in a disguised form. The hero is not a photographer or a poet, but a graphic artist, who also has a quest: he tries to find a woman whom he met only once. In trying to find the face that once attracted him, he walks the streets, watches the passers by, and observes the faces of strangers in a bus stop or in a café, draws maps trying to retrace his earlier steps and sketches faces. Following his footsteps and gaze, the camera produces a moving picture album of human faces and streets, but also very subtly, an intermedial palimpsest, capturing the images of "life" in a "natural collage" with images of advertisements or paintings. [Figs. 25–27.] In these, on the one hand, the sheer painterly and photographic beauty emerges from underneath the thin story line, and also, we become aware of something that we could call the "cinema of the street" (in the reflections seen in the windows of trams or in the glass panes of advertisements, mixing all kinds of images, etc.). The cinematic experience of moving images is transposed onto the occurrence of the ever changing images of the street itself, obtaining a kind of everyday primordial encounter with pictures and their "traffic." At the same time, at one point in the film quite literally a sort of primitive, hand made archaic technique of moving images emerges, as we see the pages of the drawing book blown in the wind. [Figs. 28–30.] On the other hand, however, exactly the opposite happens: the thin story line slowly emerges as a reminder, re-mediator (again stripped to bare essentials) of several well known literary stories in which we have either a passive voyeur faced with the infinite flow of life, or a man who discovers that the end is never as exciting as the road that leads to it, or, most importantly, a man who is haunted by or who pursues the overwhelming image of the ideal woman, that proves to be unattainable.

This seesaw experience, alternating the levels of the "real," primary, empirical visual impulses of the world and the "represented" (i.e. framed, constructed media "texts," parts of a contemporary culture and cultural heritage), may remind us of the technique called *metalepsis.* When Gérard Genette (2004) extended the use of the rhetorical term *metalepsis* and transformed it into a narratological concept (that is, transposed the notion "from figure to fiction"), he relied on the idea that fiction itself is an extension of the logic of the trope, the figure of speech that always relies on our capacity to imagine something "as if it were real." Metalepsis as a narrative phenomenon performs a paradoxical loop between the ontological levels of the "real" and the "fictional," and as Genette emphasized, this feature is often highlighted in metafictional works by the introduction of a fantastic element (e.g. the screen actor stepping out of the projected film in Woody Allen's film, *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, 1985). However, this fantastic element is not necessary for

generating a metaleptic structure within a filmic narrative. Intermedialization of the cinematic discourse in general can also act as a metaleptic (and/or metareferential) force within a film.[11]   In Guerín's case, we see that the paradoxical "intermedialization" of visual perception: mixing in the "natural" field of vision images of different levels of mediation and remediation, achieves such a metaleptic effect. This "remediational metalepsis," however, does not convey a metafictional discourse aimed at the exposure of the artificiality of the medium or the ontological differences of "reality" and "film" (as it is seen in films like *The Purple Rose of Cairo*), but it manages to turn the cinematic discourse towards the paradoxes of a continually remediated reality, of the everyday experience of metaleptic leaps between "real" and "mediated", and calls attention to *metalepsis* as integral part of reality itself.

Guerin's two films locate the cinematic experience within the sensual "reality" of specific places, street corners and urban landscapes filtered, however, constantly through the medium of photography, painting and literature.   The film entitled *In the City of Sylvia* is in colour and uses motion pictures, its twin counterpart, *Some Photos Made in the City of Sylvia*, is a more straight forward re-mediation: it consists almost entirely of black-and-white photographs to which a few lines of text (sometimes poetry) are added, without any music.   The film is a worthy descendant of Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962) – incidentally a film that also shares this theme of a man being haunted by the powerful image of a woman.   Paradoxically Guerín's film is more powerful as a film not despite, but exactly because it is an unashamed remediation of photography (and literature). And just like in the earlier examples, there is a tendency here to open up the hypermediated cinema towards encyclopaedic generalization.   Guerín explicitly refers in the second film to Goethe's *Werther*, Dante's Beatrice, Petrarca's Laura, as parts of a series of possible literary prototypes that his film remodels. These literary references included in the form of direct quotations (i.e. books read by women portrayed in snapshots) or captured within the "cinema of the street" (i.e. in the forms of graffiti) not only contribute to the merging of the "real," the sensual with the "mediated," the "cultural," but also prompt us to recognize the interrelatedness of "picturacy" and literacy in contemporary life (cf. Heffernan 2006).   At the same time, similarly to Varda's or Godard's case, the flow of images again adds up to a highly personal storytelling as well: it is *his* camera again (as emphasized especially in the second film) and *his* quest, as

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[11]This has already been explored by studies of painterly *tableau vivants* as transgressions from one level of filmic representation to another and from the level of "reality" to that of "art" (cf. Peucker 2007).

a person, as a man. As a photographer-flâneur, the director himself is the one who is haunted, tantalized by *the image of a woman* or – as we know from W. J. Thomas Mitchell (1994) – haunted by *the image* itself *as a woman.* Ultimately this being nothing else but a metaphor of the passion embodied in the post-modern (or even post-postmodern?) *flâneur*, wandering within an increasingly remediated and metaleptic world, a *flâneur* that is doubled by the *photo-monteur* again in assembling a collection of images in order to convey a multiple sensual experience of the world.

To conclude this small round-up of some possible examples of the paradoxes of hypermediacy leading to immediacy, let me return to the ideas of Bolter and Grusin, who state the following: "Hypermedia and transparent media are opposite manifestations of the same desire: the desire to get past the limits of representation and to achieve the real. They are not striving for the real in any metaphysical sense. Instead, the real is defined in terms of the viewer's experience; it is that which would evoke an immediate (and therefore authentic) emotional response. Transparent digital applications seek to get to the real by bravely denying the fact of mediation; digital hypermedia seek the real by multiplying mediation so as to create the feeling of fullness, a satiety of experience, which can be taken as reality" (1999, 53).[12] Although these words refer to the world of digital media, we may see in the examples shown earlier that cinema, refashioning the frameworks of some of its most traditional forms (rooted in photographical representation), has managed to achieve the same "satiety of experience" of the "real" by complex intermedial techniques.

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[12]One of Bolter's latest studies again discusses "the real – not as a philosophical category, but as cultural construction" (2008, 567). The argument cited above is also consistent with the findings of Colapietro, who states that in "the markedly aesthetic dimension of contemporary existence," the self-referential tendencies evident in various media constitute "no argument against a direct encounter with the actual world; for Peircean realism insists that all our encounters with reality are *direct yet mediated affairs*" (Colapietro 2007, 39).

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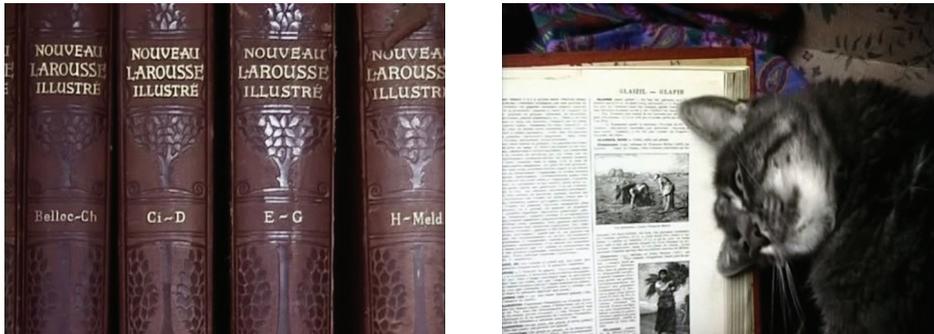
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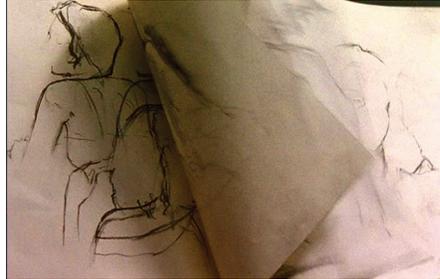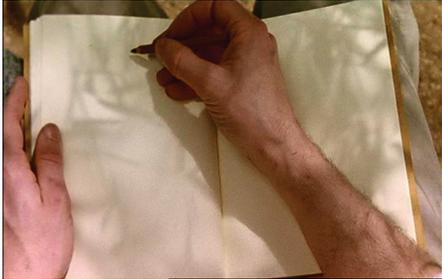
Illusions of Reality and Fiction or the Desired Reality of Fiction: Dogme 95 and the Representation of Reality

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Abstract. The paper identifies a two channel strategy developed by the authors of the Danish Dogme films having as goal the generation of the illusion of reality. The first channel is aiming at the visual layer of the movies, which shows a firm decision to break with the style of the traditional fiction films. The second channel of this strategy is concerned with the narration of the films. In this regard Dogme – contrary to what had been declared in the *Vow of Chastity* – chose one of the most popular film and TV genres: melodrama. On the one hand Dogme films created a highly self-reflexive visual style and then they combined it on the other hand with a genre which calls for extreme audience identification. Documentarism and deeply conventionalized stories are put together in most Dogme films to create the reality of fiction.

"Movie is not an illusion" states the *Manifesto*,[1] and thus it makes us clear that the movement tries to say something about one of the major themes of cinema and film theory (and of visual communication in general): the representation of reality. It is well known that the initiators of Dogme 95[2]

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[1] The two founding documents of the Dogme 95 are the *Manifesto* and the *Vow of Chastity*. Until recently they were to be found on the official website (*www.dogme95.dk*) of the movement, which in February 2009, during the final revision of this paper, became unavailable.

[2] There is no specific rule for the correct spelling of Dogme 95 in English texts as some publications use Dogma, others prefer the Danish version Dogme. This paper will employ the latter which is used in the official documents of the movement, written originally also in English.

thought that the renewal of contemporary cinema is possible through some technical issues: "by using new technology anyone at any time can wash the last grains of truth away in the deadly embrace of sensation" (Trier and Vinterberg 1995a). This is why the *Vow of Chastity* imposes some technical rules which should eliminate technology from cinema in the search of cinematic truth. It is obvious, that the rules imposed by the Dogme documents are only partial limitations of technology which is of course not suppressed completely – as this would be impossible. It is also unclear how the lack of technology could make possible more realistic images, but this is not really important. What is relevant for us at this moment is the fact that the initiators of the movement consider important to discuss the ability of cinema to represent reality and they think that the realism of film is an important issue. This is why this essay will try to understand some aspects of the realistic effect of the Dogme films.

Movie is of course an illusion, in fact in its traditional form of presentation (cinema) it is one of the most illusionistic forms of media. However, I would like to state from the very beginning that this essay – even if it uses several times the texts of the *Manifesto* and the *Vow of Chastity* – will not try to have a theoretical debate with the founding documents of the movement. The documents written by Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg are not theoretical texts, one should consider them artistic gestures so I think there is no reason to follow all those theorists who try to find logical and artistic contradictions in them. As we can read in one of Ove Christensen's papers: "There is a gap between poetics and works of art. One can not judge say a Dogma film on the basis of the *Manifesto* and *The Vow of Chastity*. These two texts present a poetics of Dogma filmmaking. However, the films made in accordance with the principles of Dogma 95 have to be regarded as individual films." (Christensen, 2000) It is much more important to analyze the films inspired by these documents and the relationship of these films to the Dogme 95 movement, than to try to force a theoretical and analytical approach on these texts. The realism of the Dogme films will be discussed focusing on the context of the reception and will not try to prove the theoretical deficiencies of the authors.

The Irrelevance of Photographic Reality

In order to shape the frames of the arguments to be presented, it seems adequate to say a few words about the well known theoretical approaches which

will not be part of this essay. The much discussed classical theories of Bazin and Kracauer on filmic realism based on the consideration that cinema is a direct development of photography will not help us in the search for the sources of the realistic effect of the Dogme films due to several reasons. First they are basing their arguments only on the photographic characteristics of film, which proves to be more and more inadequate in the era of non-photographic, digital filmmaking. Secondly they seek for answers only inside the medium without looking at the context of their reception. The third objection against these theories says that they are based on a misunderstanding of photography itself. I will shortly elaborate on this, using the ideas of Hans Belting.

The German art historian in his *Anthropology of Images* argues that photographs never showed reality, they were only presenting our gaze directed towards the world. There are no images out there, we always create them inside of us, and so our images are always fictional. This means that when we analyze the world through photographs – thinking that they are better in recording reality than our eyes – we are in fact trying to know the world through fiction. (Belting 2001) If this is true, it is much more important to know what kind of "fictional" images viewers are used to in *re*searching reality, than to find out if those images are really representing reality. It is more important to understand the beliefs that are guiding the reception than to discuss the actual realism of images, photos and films.

Our belief in perception, analyzed thoroughly by Merleau-Ponty, should also be mentioned here. The French philosopher talks about our common belief which makes us accept everything which comes to us through our sensory organs and especially our eyes. The uncontrolled gesture of masking our eyes in front of a danger shows – explains Merleau-Ponty – that we don't believe the world itself, but we think that our vision leads us to the things (cf. Merleau-Ponty 1993, 17, 48–57). This perceptional belief is extremely important for cinema, and it is also discussed from a different perspective by Peter Wuss.

Producing Realism

The realism effect of the films produced and presented in the spirit of Dogme 95 is indisputable. Peter Wuss's analysis of the realism of Dogme films focuses not only on the style of the films but on the functioning of the human perception (Wuss 2002). Of course – he says – the "so-called reality effect or impression of authenticity is a peculiarity of film reception, or, more broadly, of the processes

of reception of audiovisual media," but what we need to understand is the role of the active viewer in this process.

Based on Gibson's ecological analysis (Gibson 1986), Wuss is focusing on the role of perceptual learning in the functioning of the reality effect in cinema and especially in Dogme films. In his approach "the reality effect is [...] never simply a cinematic structure per se, but rather always the result of psychological activity on the part of the viewer" (Wuss 2002). This reality effect can be achieved through a specific combination of already known and new elements – the repetition of this structure makes us possible to accept as realistic a representation that is different from the realistic representations we were used to before through perceptual learning. "The reality effect – explains Wuss – is not an isolated phenomenon of perception, but instead becomes effectual within a feedback process that links the individual work and its innovative observations to the entire media culture" (Wuss 2002).

Here we have to emphasize two things. First it is important to note that every filmic phenomenon has to be analyzed together with its entire context, and this is also true for Dogme films. Secondly it is also very useful to observe and take into account the fact that Dogme films were part of a movement. In this way, through the intertextuality created by their "marketing" they were able to "help" each other by repeating a certain kind of representation, enhancing the perceptual learning process of the audience. As the spectators were somehow familiar with the style used by the Danish filmmakers and thus the reality effect has been established, as they have previously accepted the structure, they were even able to accept improbable events in the story.

Following Wuss's train of thought we may say, that the mixture of the already known and new elements can make a representation more or less realistic. Although we need "perceptual learning" for most of the elements, we will consider the representation less realistic than in the case in which we have already known elements. "Realism is a matter of habit" says Nelson Goodman, arguing that it is not the inherent characteristics of an image that make it realistic, because "representational customs, which govern realism, also tend to generate resemblance". (Goodman, 1969, 39) He rejects the idea that the most realistic image is the one that provides the greatest amount of pertinent information. Realism relies "not in quantity of information but in how easily it issues. And this depends upon how stereotyped the mode of representation is, upon how commonplace the labels and their uses have become." (Goodman, 1969, 36)

According to him realism is relative and it is always defined by a representational system which is standard or normative for a person or for

a culture at a given time. Realism is not a particular style, rather there is always a way for realistic representation, which is specific for a certain time, space or culture. And the norm of realism can change very fast: something which seems the authentic copy of reality today, tomorrow might be considered a manipulated representation. So the realism of an image is always based on the convention of the day. The utterance that an image is like reality means nothing more than the fact that it looks the same as reality is usually represented.

When we watch Dogme films at first glance we find an unusual form of representation, as the specific visual style developed by the Danish directors is not following the norms of the realistic filmic representation used by mainstream cinema. If we consider the norms of traditional cinema we might think that the use of hand-held cameras, the shaking and granular images, the faded colours have a self-reflexive effect on the viewer, making him or her acknowledge that he/she is watching a representation and not reality itself. However due to the same reasons Dogme films look less professional and less artificial than mainstream feature films usually do, and they create the feeling that we watch the live and unorchestrated recording of real events. And this is the moment where we have to take into account other antecedents than those of film history: the fact that viewers are not surprised by this style and they accept it as realistic representation, if we follow Goodman's train of thought, means that this representation has its roots somewhere else.

When the initiators of the Dogme movement wanted to introduce something new, when they wanted to refresh cinema they tried to get rid of the stereotyped representation which – upon Goodman – is the most important factor of realism. Introducing some elaborate technical rules and creating the imagery considered nowadays specific to Dogme films, they have in fact only changed the field of reference, the context. When viewers consider Dogme films realistic it is not because they have the impression that they look like other realistic movies they have seen before. In these situations people simply refer to other visual experiences they had outside the cinemas. In order to find those representations that make Dogme films look realistic, we just have to enlarge our perspective and take into consideration a much wider range of visual imagery than those referred usually by film historians.

The Double Strategy for Reality

There is a two channel strategy developed by the authors of Dogme films having as goal the generation of the illusion of reality. The first channel aims at the visual layer of the movies, which shows a firm decision to break with the style of the traditional fiction films. The so called "poor" looking images, which are nowadays considered a trademark of Dogme, are radically going against one of the main convictions of cinema: in order to create the cinematic illusion and the identification of the viewer, the film has to hide the apparatus, it has to hide its own production process. By the suppression of continuous editing and the extreme use of hand-held cameras, Dogme filmmakers elaborated a visual style that appeals for non-cinematic "cultural and communicational conventions" (Gombrich 1972) which exist outside of the traditional cinema and are to be found especially in the world of the television programs. The second channel of this strategy is concerned with the narration of the films. In this regard Dogme – contrary to what had been declared in the *Vow of Chastity* – chose one of the most popular film and TV genres: melodrama. On the one hand Dogme films created a highly self-reflexive visual style and on the other hand they combined it with a genre, which calls for extreme audience identification. Documentarism and deeply conventionalized stories are put together in most Dogme films to create the reality of fiction.

The New Style of News Programs

If we try to understand why Dogme films are able to achieve the so called reality effect without using the well-known methodology of mainstream cinema it is useful to look beyond the traditional forms of film, and analyze for example the recent developments of television news programs. It is easy to tell that the news programs have changed dramatically in the last 15–20 years. One of the most important changes in the way of thinking of television producers is that instead of suggesting to the viewers the professional production of news, the TV channels are more and more eager to emphasize the spontaneity, the on-the-spot recording of the events, and the participation, the witness role of the crew. Instead of well prepared, correctly filmed and edited coverage of events we see journalists "caught in the action," reacting spontaneously and without knowing the outcome of the situations. Visually these reports became closer than ever to some of the techniques used by experimental filmmakers.

This process – as Nick Rombes argues – was also accelerated by the US Army, which hosts some programs producing some of the most experimental DV films.

He calls the Joint Combat Camera Program of the Department of Defense's Defense Visual Information (DVI) Directorate "an avant-garde studio" which produces films using "the tactics of guerilla filmmaking, the New Wave, the fast-and-go immediacy of post-punk film." The US military uses DV technique, and "we see a rawer, more experimental aesthetics of DV filmmaking emerging, one that borrows in terms of its theory and its production tactics many of the signature characteristics of the Dogme 95 movement." Rombes considers that the US military is producing nowadays "some of the most startling cinema verité" (Rombes).

One would think that this kind of filmmaking is inevitable on a battlefield, where it is impossible to produce professionally looking footage. But recently it has become more and more usual that reports from normal, peaceful locations are using low-budget techniques. For a few years now the Hungarian National Television shows its Washington correspondent through a webcam connection. Beside the evident cost-effectiveness of this solution we have to observe the message of this medium: the low quality, ragged images transmit to the viewer the information that the image has been taken on the spot. The well-polished images of a studio are not able any more to make us feel the presence of the journalist on the location of the events.

Nick Rombes also draws attention on another feature of this visual style: its self-reflexivity. The shaking images of hand-held cameras, the spontaneous, unexpected camera movements, the "faults" of the coverage create a feeling of medium awareness in the viewer. He distinguishes a self-theorizing dimension of films in movies and even music videos. (His main example is Michel Gondry's music video, *Lucas with the Lid Off*, where "the story the video tells is essentially the story of its production, although without resorting to the usual methods of revealing the camera"). One of the main features of non-fictional cinema is that it does not need to hide the fact of the recording – this is why continuous editing is ignored and jump cut is often acceptable.

These practices of mainstream films and media made possible for Dogme films to be presented in an environment where the representation techniques that were crucial for the movement were already known by the audiences. Elements of the non-fictional films were brought into fictional cinema, but without becoming *cinéma vérité*, as the story still remained highly fictional. The link towards more traditional narrative film is created by a very conscious appeal to genres.

Genre, the Forbidden Fruit

The refusal of genre movies by the founders of Dogme is complete: "Genre movies are not acceptable" (Trier and Vinterberg, 1995b). However, essays and reviews of Dogme films continuously point out the powerful presence of quite popular genres. Genres – as Jenő Király states – are the elements of stability in every work of art (Király 1998), even in those which seek novelty and try to break up with the traditions. The recognition of already known situations, characters or dramaturgical stereotypes provide the points of anchor that viewers need in order to be able to accept a shocking story or a radically new visual style.

In a remarkable essay Palle Schantz Lauridsen draws our attention to the fact that Vinterberg's *Festen* (*The Celebration*, 1998) in its dramaturgy uses the conventions and the solutions of the classical Aristotelian tragedy and of the television docu-soaps (Lauridsen, 2000). Although the *Manifesto* specifically states that the well developed dramaturgy results in extreme predictability, Vinterberg neglects this rule in the very first film of the movement. He adapts almost without any change the classical rule of unity of space, time and action. From the point of view of the dramaturgy, *Festen* (and most of the Dogme films) is quite conventional, and respects the rule that every story has to be composed of several distinct parts. The different parts of the story can be precisely observed, they are based upon each other, and when a small detail is emphasized somewhere, we can be sure that it will have an important role to play at a certain point of the story. From a dramaturgical point of view – says Lauridsen – "*The Celebration* is flawlessly Hollywood" (Lauridsen 2000).

The classical dramaturgy is however presented through a visual style (shaking and granular images recorded with hand-held camera, obvious "mistakes" in editing) which is not usual in traditional fiction films. This style has been used for a long time in documentaries, but it is very important to follow Lauridsen in finding its presence in some much more popular genres: reality shows and docu-soaps. "The aesthetics of *The Celebration* provides the film with a strong documentary coding, no matter how fictitious the story and how Aristotelian the dramaturgy." (Lauridsen 2000) Besides the use of non-conventional images and editing style, the uncredited director pays attention to the switches between different dimensions of space, time and consciousness (reality – dream – fantasy) which are always easy to identify: the viewer is able to follow the story. In this way audiences are simultaneously given the possibility to intellectually perceive the artistic style and to enjoy

the story. In Király's definition this is the most important characteristic of the midcult.[3]

Melodrama is one of the most frequently used genres in Dogme films. As I have shown it in an earlier article, Lars von Trier's *Breaking the Waves* (which is not an official Dogme film, but it is considered their direct predecessor) presents most of the characteristics of classical melodrama (Gyenge 2007). The presence of melodrama is important due to the fact that – as András Bálint Kovács notes it – this is the genre which bridged art films and popular movies even in the time of modern film (Kovács 2005, 106). Besides this, Lars von Trier also bridges classical and modern melodramas thus creating a powerful tension between the complex, overdecorated declarational style of classical heroes (Brooks 1985) and the inability to speak of the modern situation emphasized by the rigid, economical and laconic visual style.

Reality of Fiction

Ove Christensen talks about three different meanings of Realism in the history of cinema. First he discusses the epistemological level, which refers to the situation when we consider cinema as a *re*presentation of a world outside of it. "The truth is placed in the external world and the task of the medium is to represent it" (Christensen 2000) In this case a comparison of the image with the outer world can make us decide if a film was realistic or not. Of course we can use this approach only regarding documentaries, as they try to present actual events, places and characters. The realism of fiction films has to be analyzed on other levels. Christensen calls formal the level which describes the realism of conventional filmic storytelling. In this case "the truth is contained within the film's world (of make-believe) and the task is to give access to this world." Conventional stories create a reality of their own, a reality of the fictional situation – so the task of realism in this case is to make the viewer believe (at least for a moment) that the events and feelings presented are in a way real even if the actual characters and places are fictional.

There is also a third, thematic (or ideological) level which refers to the films where the emphasis is only indirectly or symbolically related to a defined reality and it is more based on an idea. "The truth is an apprehension or an opinion that is not directly accessible, so the task is to convince the spectator, who has to see the truth for him- or herself." In this case the fictionality of the whole

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[3]More details on the relation of the films of Lars von Trier and midcult can be found in Ildikó Bartha's article (Bartha, 2006).

situation presented in the film is not important until the truth of the idea can be seen.

It is clear, that Dogme films are especially concerned with the second and third level of realism. As we have shown above, Dogme filmmakers are using the conventional dramaturgy full of passion of melodrama in order to let the viewers operate in the reception of the story those practices they are already used to. In order to make the films' realism function on ideological level, they are using the visual style of non-fictional filmmaking borrowed from documentaries and especially television news programs. This visual style attracts the viewer's attention upon the importance of the main message, which is often related to some frightening sides of the "normal" human behaviour. This is how Dogme films create the reality of their fiction.

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Between "Facts" of Genre and "Fictions" of Love

Happy Together (1997) and *In The Mood for Love (2000)*

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Abstract.   Hong Kong New Wave director, Wong Kar-Wai's two films constitute the focus of analysis, Happy Together (1997) and In the Mood for Love (2000) being compared along questions of genre (degrees of melodrama(city) and "pseudo-genres" created for the sake of citation), and observing the clashes between love stories of a homosexual, respectively a heterosexual couple. Besides exhibiting the characteristics of "pure" melodramas and mythical tales, these two of Wong's films radicalize such categories of understanding as the exact time-frames of the diegetic worlds, placing a heightened emphasis on visual and auditive elements of style. Thus they lead the viewers into perceptually saturated experiences (an interpretative direction indebted to Lóránt Stőhr's analysis) and offer them the possibility to live through "affective intensities with no name" (Ackbar Abbas' term).

"These films [of the Hong Kong New Wave] *do not so much thematize Hong Kong culture as they give us a critical experience of Hong Kong's cultural space by problematizing the viewing process. This may also explain why so many of the innovative films are situated in a space between 'fact' and 'fiction,' allowing the specular, the given-to-be-seen, to retain a certain critical speculative edge."*

(Abbas 1997, 26.)

Two Films about Love

It is a truism to analyze the films of Hong Kong New Wave director Wong Kar-Wai in relation to the commercial genres that his films recreate or

reinterpret. Furthermore, it seems typical to establish (sequential) links between his films and find repeating motives – as if the works somehow constituted a cycle, worthy of an auteur's efforts. From this perspective it may appear as accidental to compare two of his films that do not succeed each other, and choose as a basis of comparison the simple fact that both are about two human beings falling in love. These two films of Wong Kar Wai – *Happy Together* (1997) and *In the Mood for Love* (2000) – are perhaps the best known and mainstreamed representatives of East Asian cinema in Eastern Europe. Screened at film festivals, in art cinemas and on (art) televisions, they may boast a wide audience. No wonder that for many of us they have become the synecdochic signifiers of a vast corpus of films – a reason, no doubt, for my having chosen to examine them.

Watching both mentioned films – the 1997 *Happy Together* and the 2000 *In the Mood for Love* – is advisable to fans of the director and his team of production, yet anyone should engage with the two pieces if they would like to face the fact that screen relationships to be deciphered as love are dependent as much on fictional codes of representation and narrative conventions as they are on certain similarities with (objective) reality. The elaboration of this statement constitutes one axis of this essay.

Yet, in a different order of thoughts, my observations may be categorized as being about "the melodrama(tic) qualities of Wong movies", an important pathway of interpretation in generic criticism referring to the Hong Kong director's oeuvre. Lóránt Stőhr argues that Wong approaches the different generic models only not to fulfill them and to construct out of their ruins the one genre that most suits his interest in time and its characteristics: namely, melodrama.[1] Quoting Torben Grodal's cognitive assessment of filmic genres, Stőhr states that the perceptual awareness the melodrama's passive viewer experiences is in perfect harmony with the visual excesses of "glossy" generic

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[1]"It is commonplace to speak about genres and their transformation in the case of Wong Kar-Wai's films, yet critics and theoreticians examining the oeuvre of the director up to now have placed the emphasis on the deconstruction of the genre used as a starting point, and have not given enough attention to the fact that during deconstruction there is always a new narrative pattern emerging. Behind the action genres employed as public-catchers and narrative starting points there is another genre appearing, the melodrama, which can be regarded as Wong's true, personal mode of speech. My paper sets out to analyze the ways Wong uses, turns upside down and re-interprets the leading genres of Hong Kong film production, how he creates art out of the vulgar filmic language meant for mass consumption, and finally the question of why melodrama is adequate for narrating and showing the nature of Wong's great theme, time (itself)." (Stőhr 2005, 36, translation mine, A. V.)

examples.[2] Furthermore, he finds that the theoretical model most adequately explaining the specific Wong stylistics (in the case of images: abrupt cutting, slowing down, doubling, abstracting forms into patches of colour, the cyclical treatment of time in narratives, etc.) is the masochistic aesthetic presented by Gaylyn Studlar (Stőhr 2005, 40–41).

While certainly regarding my below analysis as a "subclass" of the viewers' perceptually saturated experiences of melodramas – and in this I am more than indebted to Stőhr's insights, in the conceptualization of Wong's visual stylistical trademarks I take a route other than the one provided by Studlar's masochistic aesthetic and the idea that Wong's films are "pure" melodramas. My reason for doing this is, as hopefully demonstrated by the below analyses, that these two of Wong's films – even though being exclusively about love relations – somehow go further than the generic formulas of melodrama. Therefore I propose to link them to the gender and sexual orientation of filmic characters and actors performing, and suggest that the idea of Ackbar Abbas about New Wave Hong Kong cinema developing a cultural representation of the *déja disparu* is most adequate, even without supposing a thorough knowledge of Hong Kong historical realities[3] – which is the case with (East Asian) Wong's most East European viewers.

Histories and Melodramas

While *Happy Together* paints a homosexual relationship in Argentina, and is accompanied (mainly) by Astor Piazzolla tango melodies, *In the Mood for Love* stays with heterosexuality in Hong Kong and the "good old" cello/violin solos composed by Michael Galasso. There are thematic crossing points that organize both narratives: the usual relational drawbacks and mutual infidelities

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[2]"As a result of passivity [in Grodal's sense] not only emphatical, but also perceptual identification comes in the foreground, therefore the viewer of the melodrama gives a much bigger attention to images and sounds, s/he is more sensitive to compositions, objects, colours, music, and noises. By stating this Grodal gives a new and general explanation to the question that presented a challenge to many theories, namely why the auteurs of "sensitive" 1950s American melodramas, foremost Sirk and Minnelli, are using such a dense and over-aestheticized imagery. The other basic trait of melodrama, besides the passive leading character, is its specific temporality. In contrast with canonical narration, time does not proceed in a linear manner; it is rather cyclical or timeless: the narration of melodrama is often composed of timeless repetitions, or repetitions without past, and repeating activities in the perfect (tense)." (Stőhr 2005, 39, translation mine, A.V.)

[3]Most notably the change from a British to a Chinese government in the year 1997.

programmatically end up in partings. Perhaps it is this narrative trajectory that conditions the palpable retro atmosphere of the two movies.

In *Happy Together* we may speak about the patina of an eternal turn-of-the century up to the 1930s Argentinean tango culture, filtering over the first-order diegesis which takes place in a contemporary, fully technologized world. In his well documented piece about (the production of) *Happy Together,* Marc Siegel also elaborates on the temporal markers the creators wanted to attribute to the boys' melodramatic story, and these are not the eternal turn-of-the-century up to the 1930s, but the 1970s. However, the team proved incapable of "finding" 1970s Buenos Aires (spaces), an incapacity mirrored by the present writer's inability to correctly determine the films' (metaphorical) temporal allusions: "when Wong and his crew went to Argentina in August 1996 to begin work on *Happy Together,* they sought the space of 1970s Buenos Aires. Financially incapable of recreating the earlier period and style, they gravitated instead to that aspect of contemporary Argentina that resembled Hong Kong." (Siegel 2001, 277) And if we consider Siegel's further observations about the mode of "remaking Hong Kong" at the other end of the globe slowly pervading the production process[4], we may argue that a correct assessment of the time coordinates (based on the visual elements) is not a must in *Happy Together,* since the sense and memories of a place/site (with a real geographical original) dominate the movie.

In the film presented to the public in 2000, *In the Mood for Love,* we may witness the coming to life of a micro historical, intimate and familial 1960s Hong Kong, certainly in a most stylized variant, which in most cases would send the viewers – especially those from different cultural backgrounds – to their other East Asian film experiences. By this last statement I mean that we are not urged to attribute historical faithfulness to the detailed and richly "decorated" scenery, rather to reflect upon the primacy of style and atmosphere involved.[5]

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[4]"Unacquainted with Buenos Aires, Wong and his crew found themselves returning to the transient spaces that are familiar to any international traveler. These bars, barbershops, fast-food joints, and trains, as well as the temporary, fleeting human encounters associated with them, are also familiar to viewers of Wong's other urban films [. . .]. In this sense, *Happy Together* does not really tell us very much about Buenos Aires. Instead, it uses certain Argentine spaces in order to localize Hong Kong concerns and perceptions. As Wong has put it, "It's more like I'm remaking Hong Kong in Buenos Aires" (Siegel 2001, 278).

[5]This is a critical observation which is by no means singular in Wong-criticism, as Ackbar Abbas writes about *Chunking Express* that "[a]ll events therefore are mediated by a style that puts them at a distance and reduces their seriousness." (Abbas 1997, 56).

Even though writing a propos Wong's first feature film, the 1994 *Days of Being Wild,* Ackbar Abbas' observations can be quoted in this respect, since he elaborates on the relational mode the different time planes are constructed in: "If the visual details locate a time, the soundtrack dissolves it back to prior moments. The result is then a history of the sixties that, like the experience of disappearance itself, is also there and not there at the same time. The film does not give us Hong Kong in the sixties viewed from the nineties, but another more labile structure: the nineties are to the sixties as the sixties are to an earlier moment, and so on and on." (Abbas 53-4). Such a regressive structure – time of actual production (1990s) relating to time deciphered from metaphorical visual allusions (1960s/1970s) relating to time of soundtrack/music (1930s tango in *Happy Together, In the Mood for Love*'s "eternal" classical music) – characterizes both of the analyzed films. Thus we can conclude that the fluidization of time periods and their transformation into atmospherical-topographical constructs is an important feature of Wong's poetics, at least in the analyzed movies.[6]

As for the generic patterns graspable in the two films (besides the evidence of both being melodramas), I would argue that we are faced with simulacra of otherwise perfectly logical genres which may have existed (or actually did) in world film history: 1960s Hong Kong heterosexual melodrama or 1930s Argentinean homosexual dance/tango romance. In Wong's *Happy Together* and *In the Mood for Love* one cannot ignore the double conceptual process happening: the creation of a (virtual, fictional) genre in order to be able to perform its retro-atmospheric citation in stories of love relations doomed to fail. I suppose the nostalgia for an original that might have existed but never did is infinitely more retrograde and to be mourned more deeply than the "simpler" sorrow felt for a golden age that just passed away. This observation echoes the complex argumentation of Abbas who elaborates on the quality of the already mentioned "*déja disparu*" in films of the Hong Kong New Wave: "Furthermore, the binarisms used to represent Hong Kong as a subject give us not so much a sense of déjà vu, as the even more uncanny feeling of what we might call the *déja disparu*: the feeling that what is new and unique about the

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[6]Cristopher Doyle, the director's chief cameraman (and, no doubt, equivalent creative partner) in these movies, has written: "I don't know what to call our "trademark" shots in English. In Chinese we say "kong jing." They're not your conventional "establishing shots" because they're about atmosphere and metaphor, not space. The only thing they "establish" is a mood or a totally subjective point of view. They are clues to an "ambient" world we want to suggest but not explain" (quoted by Siegel 2001, 290).

situation is always already gone, and we are left holding a handful of clichés, or a cluster of memories of what has never been" (Abbas 1997, 25).

Be they re-enactments or ironic quotations of the relational pessimism suggested by these pseudo-genres – Hong Kong melodrama and Argentinean dance romance – in both movies harmony is born of the incapacity for harmony and peaceful idyll. This solution is in a sense similar to the mode the films deal with the frustrations of viewers hoping for a happy ending, avoiding at the same time a weepy and truly melodramatic closure of the narratives. This other double bind is performed through a simple mode: the change of narrative planes and the creation of symbols capable of carrying mythical dimensions. In the context of the primary diegesis about the meetings and partings of the pairs, the naïve and at the same time primordial question of "What is to happen to sadness (as such)?" sneaks in, and the answer, *per definitionem*, is not to be found in their (un)lovers' world, but in another time and space continuum, at the end of the world – the Angkor Wat ruins in Cambodia or the Iguatzu Falls in Argentina. In *Happy Together* the sorrow of the unhappy lover is carried on a tape to the lighthouse and it is let free in the wind there, while the lonely journalist of *In the Mood for Love* whispers (the causes of) his sadness in the hole of the sacred Cambodian ruin, covering it – for any occurrence – with mud.

A same function – that of creating a second-order, poetic and mythical sphere where sadness and disgrace lose their importance – is performed by the lyrical insert of the coloured waterfall in *Happy Together:* a visual and photographical masterpiece in itself, joined by a perfectly harmonious soundtrack, which transposes the viewer in a different dimension, ravished and fascinated, while watching it.

These symbolic-metaphorical settings and the scenes widen the horizon of the traditional melodramatic love-story towards tales, at the same time as they entangle the initial story-line. I conceive of them as narrative pillars or closures, which organize the narrative as self-conscious narrative moments, or as the repetition of motives and scenes, ensuring that the happy end somehow and somewhere takes place.

Bodies, Genders and Love

The person and body of actor Tony Leung may serve as a direct link – and actually it does, if we surf on the internet on a certain route – between the two films, him being the cheated, more sincere and ready-to-sacrifice-everything

counterpart in both movies. His physical characteristics and dramatic gestures recreate the homosexual background in the beautiful man-woman duo and suggest traditional heterosexual longing in the immigrant boys' home- and lovesick tale.

Such a double performance is not a singular one – we may recall Guy Pearce's appearance in *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* in 1994 as a transvestite gang-member and in the 2000 *Memento* as a memory deficient avenger whose relation to the pursuing cop is not lacking homosexual overtones. The screen personas thus created by Tony Leung or Guy Pearce appear as open towards both types of sexual identities, always balancing on a bisexual terrain at least, and on a confused homo-heterosexual field at most. Making unstable not so much the man-woman dichotomy as the "compulsory" homosexuality versus heterosexuality opposition, the consistent use of an actor's body and character – in this case that of Tony Leung – in alternative roles of desires directed to a man and to a woman is an adequate mode of creating awareness. A similar perspective can be decoded from Marc Siegel's analysis of Wong's gender agenda: "*Happy Together* shares with Wong's other films a concerted refusal to relegate intimacy to the private form of the couple or to the privatized space of the apartment. It is perhaps in this way that we could make sense of Gross' temptation to refer to Wong as "the last heterosexual director" (...). He is the last heterosexual director because his films picture the limits of heteronormative constraints on intimacy. In other words, Wong's films challenge the idea that intimacy can be confined within the form of the couple and within the realm of the private." (Siegel 2001, 286)

Trying to compare Leung's screen characters in *Happy Together* and *In the Mood for Love* one arrives to the conclusion that the basic differences, ironically, lay in the dressing and hair-code of the two characters. Nevertheless, these non-verbal signs are also conditioned by the social status and profession of Lai Yiu Fai and Mr. Chow, respectively: a night-shift worker and a journalist cannot resemble each other, by definition. Is there any other essential difference between them? I suppose that by producing and screening his two films "together", Wong Kar-Wai succeeded to raise this question in the mind of most of his viewers. Tony Leung's repeated performances call for an effort to understand the halo of homosexuality in the heterosexual relationship and vice-versa, an experience all viewers must conceptualize having seen both films.

Man-to-man and woman-to-man: how are they different? Certainly, this is a question that comes to mind if we set out to analyze two movies made by the same team, with a difference of three years and interested in examining the parameters of homosexual and heterosexual love.

One of the least spectacular, yet most curious differences between the relationship of the Hong Kong boys in Argentina, respectively the cheated scribbler husband and wife in Hong Kong lays in the grade of conventionality they are ready to assume. The only aspect with reference to the boys, which is worth to be mentioned, is that of non-normative sexuality: besides that they lead the most everyday life of a married and one-household couple. They cook, they clean, take care of each other, go shopping, make love and have fights. Marc Siegel points to the clear intention of the makers in turning the homosexual pair into a most ordinary couple, in the case of whom the same sex and gender is more or less a simple chance: "As Wong stated in a press conference at the 1997 Cannes film festival, where the film won a prize for *mise-en-scène*, this film is not merely about two men, but about human relations, human communication and the means of maintaining it. It's two men but it could have been any other couple. [. . .] Doyle reiterated the director's sentiment: 'At a pinch, there are no gays. One is what one is and this film shows that.'" (Siegel 2001, 279.)

Compared to the immigrant male couple's story, the conventional heterosexual trajectory of the journalist and the secretary is lacking such familiar "ingredients": no trace of a common household, despite their being neighbours and supposedly lovers as well, bodily contact is limited to hands touching each other, and the conflicts lived together are basically addressed to their unfaithful spouses. Everyone may remember the famous scene of the dinner in the hotel, when and where the two figures seem to dispute the appearance of a lover in the man's life, only to be informed several minutes later that this was a main "rehearsal" for Mrs. Chan's interrogation of his unfaithful husband.

What happens is that the homosexual love is placed in a jungle of love relation stereotypes, while the heterosexual variant is torn out of such a film genre historical or even reality tradition, therefore forcing us to re-write or re-consider our formulas of understanding. In the Wong universe the homosexual pair resembles infinitely more the arguing young couple in everyone's neighbourhood than the woman-man distribution of Maggie Cheung and Tony Leung, as the latter ones do not even attempt to create a world of reference common to both of them. We, as viewers, are made aware that (gendered) sexual orientation is but one feature of human relationships constituted on the basis of love, and perhaps not the most essential one for that matter. This may be so in an objective reality around us, and totally so in the presented filmic universe.

Besides Tony Leung we may find so many similarities between the two films exclusively dedicated to the anatomy of sexual/love relationships that the filmic universe created by "conflating" *Happy Together* with *In the Mood for Love* becomes a playground of elements of filmic love and eroticism as such. The Wong type of eroticism, or better said the screen construction of human relationships based on this element is fundamentally dependent on the human bodies' situatedness in well-defined spaces. In both movies there is a sharp contrast between the actors/figures and the surroundings they are meant to live and move in. Their physical beauty, sensuality and desire for the other are constituted in opposition to (with the background of?) the falling plaster, the bare furniture, the crowded and noisy neighbourhood.[7] We, as viewers are to identify the minimal number of scenes by simply taking a look at them, as no other information comes through the dialogues with reference to sites of the story.

This type of engaging the reader's attention to a maximum degree leads us into a state of heightened visual awareness and we find ourselves waiting for the red patterned blanket or the kitschy lamp to enter into focus in *Happy Together*, not to speak about the labyrinthine rooms and the food-carriers, or Mrs. Chan's robes in the film *In the Mood for Love*. Such a lead exercised over the viewer is different from the well-known classical creation of suspense situations or the sustaining of viewer's curiosity by witty and suggestive dialogues. An exclusively visual fixation of the attention is achieved by setting, lighting, photography and editing in both films: viewers who are ready to follow this path are already and halfway seduced. And more than that: if incapable of such a visual immersion into and of identifying the scenes by quick and short visual clues, they are to loose the narrative thread as well. To exemplify this, we may think about the tourist bureau where Mr. Chow's wife is working: this is only symbolized by the information bar, the half-side of the mirror and the postcards exposed. Failing to identify the place and its importance for the narrative of layered infidelities, the viewer will not see the point of repeated asymmetrical and well emphasized shots of it.

Colours and non/figurative elements must play a crucial role in such a scheme, and so they do, we may remember the numerous analyses devoted to Mrs. Chan / Maggie Cheung's wardrobe to suggest the importance of the

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[7]Lóránt Stőhr has a similar observation, further speculating on the overerotization of space and objects, with reference to *In the Mood for Love*. "The narrow spaces, the visually overcrowded apartments, the clocks signalling the passing of time become aestheticized and eroticized: they reappear as fetishes, as objectified prostheses of the desired lover." (Stőhr 2005, 44, translation mine, A.V.)

question. The close-ups of such – basically and otherwise – insignificant pieces as staircases, clothing-patterns, window-frames, vegetables and food-portions contribute a great deal towards a sense of "materiality" being born while watching the movies. The scene when the sick Lai Yiu Fai in *Happy Together* – covered with the well-known red blanket – is preparing a dish for his whining mate, the camera closing up on his hand breaking the egg and pouring it on the pasta is a good example for the mechanism alluded to.

The mode when the viewer is the desiring subject of a love relationship, lingering and looking for the beloved one, paying extreme attention to every perceivable trace of the person, is evoked by the detailed camera analysis, the strong colours and the exquisite camera-movements, since we are bound to sensually enjoy such a spectacle. The difference is that the object of our erotic(al) attachment in the case of these two Wong movies are not the otherwise beautiful, iconic star-actors, rather the filmic image itself. The slowing down of movements, the minutely choreographed dance-steps, the recurrent melodies and the repeated angles, the constant employment of mirrors and mirroring offers the viewer a much acclaimed position: that of the fascinated lover, seduced without even realizing it. A less poetical, yet more cognitive genre theoretical account of this process is offered by Lóránt Stőhr: "Slowing down narration and making it cyclical finally leads to the emancipation of images: sequences become musical spectacles, which, according to the basic cognitive-emotional function of melodrama, offer pleasure to the ears and the eyes" (Stőhr 2005, 46).

I have proposed to take a look at the methods the makers of the films employ to create the images and narratives of homosexual and heterosexual love. These methods and elements are numerous: from the construction of settings and colour/form of the costumes on to the musical tunes and the slowed down camera effects, not to speak about the emphasized materiality of the actors' bodies. I conclude that besides the theme and subject these two movies represent love and the state of being fascinated on a different plane as well: this is the situation of the viewer who cannot resist but "fall in love" with the extreme perceptual beauties – visual, aural, even tactile – presented by the moving images in question. In Ackbar Abbas' interpretation the viewers of Wong's movies find themselves reacting to "affective intensities with no name", a metaphor most adequate to illustrate the mechanism: "one of the features of New Hong Kong cinema is its sensitivity to spatial issues, in other words to dislocations and discontinuities. [. . .] Rather, what we find represented now are emotions that do not belong to anybody or to any situation–affective intensities with no name" (Abbas 1997, 27).

The Hungarian title of the first version of my paper – then in the form of an article in a monthly film magazine – was the following: "Being Seduced without Knowing It". This formulation summarizes adequately the conclusion I intended to arrive to: namely, that the Wong method of making films about love is intent not so much on the representation of love as a series of activities but on transposing the viewers in a state of mind and perception similar to that of being seduced and falling in love. This is being achieved through an extremely rich texturing of the filmic image and soundtrack, that is, an exaggerated enhancement of the illusionary filmic experience. The "fictional" codes of films about love and the lingering attitude of the "really" immersed and seduced viewers may clash, but also mingle while watching these movies.

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Appearance, Presence and Movement in Benedek Fliegauf's *Milky Way* (2007)

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Abstract. In this article the author analyses Benedek Fiegauf's latest feature film, the *Milky Way* (*Tejút,* 2007) in view of Abbas Kiarostami's *Five* (2003) and the works of the Canadian artist, Mark Lewis. Fliegauf's aforementioned feature film is also a contemporary work of art, which was first exhibited in Hungary, in the Ludwig Museum in Budapest. The work is thus on the more and more fading and weakening border between film and contemporary art. The images of the Milky Way, evoking the recordings made in the late nineteenth century by the Lumière brothers, reside in the original essence of cinema, bypassing the two paths of showing reality and of creating fiction, that is to say, they are inherent in the presentation of bodies in motion and of objects in movement. Re-thinking the movement in cinema, through the exhibition of films in the illuminated museum halls, has become interesting again. Bazin's question, "What is Cinema?" and Chris Dercon's question "Where is the Cinema?" also seem relevant in reference to Fliegauf's work. The author tries to show in this article that the purely passive creational approach, as described by Jacques Rancière, which brushes aside the presentation of actions in linear order to present stories, assists in the birth of pure movement. We encounter this pure movement, observed without interference, in the works of Benedek Fliegauf, Abbas Kiarostami and Mark Lewis. Beyond shedding light on theoretical questions, the author treats Milky Way in view of the artist's other feature films, which further illuminate the path leading to Fliegauf's third feature film.

Reality or fiction? For a long time, the classification of cinematic products was only imaginable along these two segments, but these two roads have been insufficient for quite some time to systematize motion pictures. Benedek Fliegauf's *Milky Way* (*Tejút,* 2007), in comparison with Abbas Kiarostami's

and Mark Lewis's similar works, seems like a perfect example to illustrate a third road, which perhaps we could, in advance, call the essence of cinema. A cinematic product's essence is above all representation, the possibility of representing images. Other means of expression (music, sounds, or dialogues) are only optional, and their use is up to the director, these elements do not contribute primarily and unavoidably to the primary role of cinema. The richness of the world in front of us, or rather, the lively, unsettling life unfolding in front of the camera was shown to the contemporary audience by the "Lumière brothers, whose names are not simply useful for retrospectively marking an artistic branch, but whose work permitted the conservation and the application of movement in the disposition of cinema" (Vancheri 2008, 9). These contemporaneous shots therefore do not comport with the possibility of documenting the events in the world around us, through which they could be shown to be in symbiosis with. Cinema is showing a magical world, the reconstruction of pure movement on the screen. It is therefore not out of pure coincidence that the contemporary viewers, used to the admiration of still pictures, were startled by the train approaching the railway station, and similarly, the gentle vibration of the leaves above the dining baby's head didn't enchant the audience because of their desire to document life. Instead, the public of the late 19$^{\text{th}}$ century were amazed by the vivification of objects and persons appearing on screen. It seems that in the heart of the phenomenon that has been around in galleries and art centres for the past decades, called *effet-cinéma* by Philippe Dubois (2006), pure movement has yet again raised its head as the conceiving, creating and propellant principle, moreover, a number of artists have put forward works resembling those of the Lumière brothers. According to Youssef Ishaghpour's indisputable elucidation, the images, taken by the scientific apparatus considered future-less by its inventors, in other words, the "Lumière brothers' still and frontal takes arrived a hundred years later at an infinite orderliness, through ten minute-long takes, becoming art in *Five*, at the border of two visual arts" (Ishaghpour 2007, 129).[1] Benedek Fliegauf's *Milky Way* and some of Mark Lewis's creations attest to the same elevation of the inventor brothers' takes to the height of art. Although the subject, the questions raised by cinematic products in the setting of museums, warrants an in-depth study of different movement types, in this paper I will only concentrate on the movements internal to the image, movements that are strictly part of the work itself. Therefore, I will not treat the theoretical background of questions raised by other kinds of movements of cinematic works

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[1] All the quotations taken from French and Hungarian texts are the author's translations.

shown inside museums, neither will I treat the work in motion due to the recipient institute's circumstances and the exhibition's concept, nor do I take as the subject of my research the concept of *flâneur*,[2] a notion thought to be controversial by many, as dissected by Walter Benjamin and later re-examined by Dominique Païni. I will be searching for the answer to the question of how, and moved by what artistic impulse, movement becomes the principal part, which thereby once again gives the occasion to redefine the notion of cinema in the work of Benedek Fliegauf (prized at the Locarno Film Festival in 2007), and in several works by Mark Lewis and in Kiarosami's *Five* (2003). Naturally, not all cinematographic works shown in museums aim at visualizing the movement inside the images or between the exhibited works. These works could dispose of very different starting points or goals. The endlessly repeated example, Douglas Gordon's *24 Hours Psycho* (1993), tries for instance to bring to the surface the subliminal substance of the movie, its goal is therefore to unveil the additional, excess content present in the images. While some investigate the relation of the feminine body with the image (Pipilotti Rist's *Be Nice To Me*, 2004) thereby giving place to multiple feminist readings, many other artists' creations bear visual artistic allusions by invoking particular paintings or genres. It is enough to think of Bill Viola's *The Greeting* (1995),evoking Jacopo da Pontormo's work, or of *Catherine's Room* (2003),evoking the work of the Renaissance painter Andrea di Bartolo, while Sam Taylor-Wood's work, *Still life,* made in 2001 as well, treats a well-known fine art genre. The confluence of diverse fine art genres is the motivation for the creation of films made of still photos (primarily, we could think of Gusztáv Hámos's *Rien ne vas plus*, 2004; and *Fremdkörper*, 2001). Apart from these, we could encounter a number of works while traipsing the rooms of museums, illuminated or shrouded in the dark, that re-use archive takes (for example Péter Forgács's *El Perro Negro*, made in 2005) or the images of already existing movies, reemploying their scenes and re-cutting them, transforming them into new, original works (e.g. Pierre Huyghe's *L'Ellipse*, made using the 1998 movie *The American Friend* by Wim Wenders). Therefore, the presentation of movement as the work's sole or most important begetter, cannot be considered as the foundation of all cinematic works that are not confined to the movie theatre. The works in discussion of Kiarostami, Fliegauf and Lewis are only a segment of the realm of moving and gleaming pictures, though this segment does seem to be overly significant insofar as we search for the goal and function of the cinema in the

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[2]More on the subject: Benjamin (1974), Paďni (2000), Turvey, Foster, Baker, Iles and McCall (2003), Rancičre (2000), Russell (2000), Groys (2003) and Zabunyan (2008).

presentation of original movement, as incited by the exhibition *Le mouvement des images* (2006) by Philippe-Alain Michaud in the Pompidou Centre.

Mark Lewis, as his multiple statements attest to, is moved by the objective of creating a work that unfolds through calm and passive contemplation. When talking about his films, the Canadian artist expresses that his goal is to paint everyday life through the representation of objects, natural phenomena and bare appearance of people, leaving behind the desire of putting on film exciting adventures and plots (Le Maître 2008, 20). In his 1998 film, *The Pitch*, he declares that according to him, the biggest invention of cinema are the extras, who cannot be present in such a way in any other storytelling genre as on the screen: with their own bodies. In this film, Lewis expresses his wish to shoot films without protagonists, dialogue, or plot, leaving no other than extras that he wishes to put in the spotlight. Let us now see how this call appears in the films of the artist. The discovery of tiny movements in the beginning of the 2000s becomes without doubt the leading element of Lewis's work. In *Smithfield*, made in 2000, the slow travelling of the camera left and then right discloses the evening world of the ground-floor of an empty building. In the halls, separated from the outside world by windows, a cleaning lady is working, whose work, carried out in a daily routine can be observed either directly through a window, or through a reflection. The very wide shot of *Tenement Yard*, made three years later, shows youngsters playing football in front of pre-fabricated social housing, whose apparent passivity reflects on the activity of the football field, which is only broken by the movement on the first and the third floor; the residents' movements up and down the balcony, and the gentle rocking of the colourful sheets by the slight wind. [Fig. 1.] These two works, the movement-less work made in 2007, the *Roundabout*, and the *122 Leadenhall Street*, affirm the declarations made in favour of extras by Mark Lewis in *The Pitch* manifesto. The worker, appearing near the housebreaking in the background of the *Roundabout*, and the strolling housewives and businessmen hurrying to a meeting in *122 Leadenhall Street* form the essence of these works, therefore they are the people who in fiction films, in report films and in newsreels serve solely as the background, as a part of the set. The films *North Circular* (2000), *Windfarm*, *Algonquin Park*, and *September* by Lewis attest to the intent of painting everyday life's movements on the celluloid. In *North Circular*, through one of the artist's most favoured techniques, the zoom, we discover the originally deemed unidentifiable, unknown movement, which we notice at the second floor of the industrial building in the background of the scene [Fig. 2]. Thus the three boys in play only reveal themselves slowly to the spectator. In the 2001 film, the *Windfarm*, the appearance of the wind turbines

is direct, and the unrelenting, rhythmic work of the turbines is shown by the still camera for four minutes [Fig. 3]. What might not be readily apparent to the human eye, but which could enchant the viewer is the shadow of the wind turbines in the foreground, and the swaying and gentle vibration of the plants near the camera. A particularly interesting part of the work is that the dance of the shadows seems faster on these moving plants and thirsty ground, than the turning of the turbines themselves. *Algonquin Park, September*, also made in 2001, brings forth the phenomenon of appearance through the variation and metamorphosis of a natural phenomenon. The slowly dissolving fog, looming over the river, reveals not only the dense forest in the back and the slow and subtle movement of the water, but also gives place to the appearance of the slowly moving boat on the right of the screen. Thus, in this film, the appearance/emergence of things does not come about through the use of a cinematic apparatus (e.g. travelling, zoom), instead, Mark Lewis literally lets the world reveal itself on its own, in its inherent rhythm.

With *Five*, shot in 2003 and exhibited separately (divided into parts, the work comprises five pieces) in the New York Museum of Modern Art, Kiarostami probably had intentions similar to what Mark Lewis professes of his work. The Iranian director himself demarcates his works from fiction and the narrative schemes found therein, and invites us to observe the otherwise insignificant objects and events unfolding in front of our eyes (Barbera and Resegotti, 2003). The log, brushed then caught by the wave, its undulation on and with the water, the people strolling up and down in front of the rail facing the sea, the dogs panting beside the water, and the ducks passing in an almost soldierly line, recorded on celluloid without any intent to narrate can be considered a directorial approach which impels the author to stop and concentrate as much as it impels the viewer [Fig. 4.] Kiarostami expresses himself similarly and his words no doubt parallel those penned by Mark Lewis, and prove to be true for his films as well: "The question of camera movement is always a problem for me [...] The reality sometimes tells us not to cut the film. [...] We must give time to ourselves and wait to see things right and discover them" (Laurent 1997, 30).

This desire to discover, followed by a passive attitude of mind both from the creator and the observers, is perceptible in Benedek Fliegauf's work, prized in Locarno in 2007. Insofar as the scene in *Five*, where people stroll in front of a seaside harbour, can be matched to the scene filmed near a floating-stage on the bank in *Milky Way* [Fig. 5.], and furthermore, insofar as Mark Lewis's *Tenement Yard, Roundabout, 122 Leadenhall Street* and *Algonquin Park, September* all show remarkable similarity to the way Fliegauf's work

relates to movement, then the Hungarian author's movies can be studied in light of the previously mentioned viewpoints. Most probably Fliegauf was also driven by the desire to let the world in front of the camera unfold by itself, a suspicion which is reinforced by one of his statements during an interview, according to which we can think about *Milky Way* as a nature film, since "the film does not take humans as its principal part. Here, humans are equal to landscape and nature around them. And this is not a typical point of view of feature films. This is more the viewpoint of an alien" (Dercsényi). Even if not only an alien can perceive the world around him from this point of view, it is true that the human eye, used to the deluge of moving pictures, expects a new action from every new flash, ergo the expectations of the viewers are action-orientated, the audience does not tolerate any waiting and must learn to enjoy the pleasure of discovery through patience. Although *Five* and the works of Mark Lewis mentioned until now stand closer from the point of view of *mise en scène* to the presentation of the untouched landscape without intervention from the director, and while *Milky Way* approaches the artistic level of organization, it still does not create a fictional world. The work of Fliegauf likewise does not try to address the position between reality and fiction; instead, it revolves around the question of the origin, the goal of the author's intent, and the birth of genuine movement.

This artistic desire is theorized by Jacques Rancière in his book, *La fable cinématographique* (2001). The French philosopher starts off from the thoughts laid down by Jean Epstein in his work, *Bonjour cinéma* (1921). In the theoretical work of one of the greatest director of the twenties, the author questions the ruling logic in film that allows for telling tales through arranging actions in linear order, and states that this does not correspond to real life, because the latter does not know of actions oriented towards goals, that is to say, it does not know tales. From the point of view of Rancière, since cinema "does not reproduce things the way they appear to the eye," but "records them the way they cannot be seen by the human eye, the way they are, in the form of waves and vibrations, before any kind of narrative classification" (Rancière 2001, 8), hence cinema can turn over the well-known Aristotelian logic, which favours mythos?, the rationality of junctures over *opsis*. This is the reason why he deems cinema the instigator of anti-representative art, which, after all, during the 20th century, revitalized the canon of representative art (Rancière 2000, 50). The opposing of dramatic action and real tragedy was first perceived by Epstein and appeared first in theatre, in the works of Gordon Craig, Appia, Meyerhold and Maeterlinck. Rancière opposes the connected actions and the model of representation of well-known subjects, the art which was originally

divided between the two extremes, thereby naming the genuine passive as well as the genuine active creative attitude (Rancière 2001, 15). The latter, which is more interesting to us given the works in examination, is engraved into objects and persons independently of any tale-telling intent, and it tires to tear down the fictional arrangements and "incites the splendor of goal-less existence behind the drama- or novel-like conflicts to shine" (Rancière 2001, 15). This creational approach facilitates ordinary things to come to the surface. This is the point which Flaubert also reached during his literary career. The French writer dreamed of an oeuvre which leaves out subject and substance, to give way to the style of writing. However, his dream could only come about in a contrasting matter, as for there to be neither succession of actions nor subject, the writer's identity must also have stepped back, thus the text written was completely stripped of writer's voice. All its trace was lost, and so a passive, invisible style of writing emerged (Rancière 2001, 16), which also rhymes with Kiarostami's statements. When the Iranian filmmaker says that, after shooting multiple films, he became convinced that the director must be taken away (Laurent 1997, 34), he talked in the name of the same artistic approach that Rancière described and that appears in the book about Kiarostami by Youssef Ishaghpour. Ishaghpour formulates that in order to show the true face of nature "self-restraint, distance and silence" (Ishaghpour 2007, 11) is of essence, and another aspect is needed, the abolishment of self, which creates the state of "présence non présente" (Ishaghpour 2007, 19). And the same creational attitude implies the use of long takes in the films of Kiarostami, which brings about the appearance of the free viewer: "I had to do away with some close-ups, and instead I favored the long take, in order for the viewer to get in direct touch with the fullness of the subject. In a close-up we take away all elements of reality, while to get the viewer into the state to be able to step into the situation and to judge it, it is of essence for all elements to be present. An accurate approach, the respect for the viewer, allows for the viewer himself to be able to choose what to focus on the screen. In a long take the viewer selects the close-up himself in function of how he feels." (Laurent 1997, 31.) The deficiencies of the above mentioned passive curatorial attitude, which opposes those of fiction films, the lack of, or circumvention of tale-telling and plot, is a phenomenon not unheard of in the universe of films shown within the walls of museums. These films, leaving behind narrative goals, turning their backs on them, accentuate the plasticity of images, for example the already mentioned work of Gordon. Furthermore, the present of tale-telling, fiction film, would also be problematic in the world of museums, since in the halls of museums the strolling visitor's often entirely erratic roaming excludes the building up of a

fictional world, since the visitor does not spend enough time on a given work to discern its full story. Additionally, the viewer, released from the disposition of cinema, can step into a room at any moment, and can join in the world of the film being projected at any time, therefore if it wanted to show a chronologically built fictional film, it would be destined to failure. Some people would only see the end of the story, some would only catch some moment from its middle, thus the work, seen only in parts, would be indigestible.

Moving pictures, shown in museums and born from Rancière's genuinely passive creational attitude therefore strip from themselves the intention of tale-telling, and therewith we can observe in them a certain process of slow-down, which often goes together with a fix camera and a shot-sequence. This process of slow-down is not independent of the process conceptualized by Serge Daney in 1989. The inversion, as described by Daney, brings about the mobilization of viewers relative to the images, while from the part of the images an immobilization can be observed. To illustrate this, Daney takes the examples of Godard's *Ici et allieurs* (1976) and Fellini's *Ginger and Fred* (1986), where the passing in front of images becomes more accentuated than the reel unrolling in the cine-projector (cf. Daney 1989). To create the concept of *cinema d'exposition* (exhibited cinema), Jean-Christophe Royoux himself also goes back to the thoughts of Daney, and in his article writes about the birth of Mallarmé's cinema, where immobility becomes substantial (cf. Royoux 2000). Works that have underwent this process of slow-down are not, however, completely deprived of movement, as even perfectly immobile objects and pictures put next to each other for a certain reason bring about a certain movement. This movement, which, after the aforementioned process, remains in the work, constitutes an influential, if not the principal, part of theoretical thinking of these works. Moreover, this also starts to show up in the movie theatre, thus in the classical disposition of cinema thanks to some contemporary films. This pure movement is the primary actor of Gus Van Saint's *Gerry* (2002) and the same director's film, the *Elephant* (2003), as well as Kiarostami's *And Life Goes on...* (1991), but also in Takeshi Kitano's *Dolls* (2002) and Tibor Szemző's *A Guest of Life – Alexander Csoma de Kőrös* (2006) movement takes a similarly important role, which lives on in a different atmosphere, freed from the dark halls of movie theatres. In the case of films shown within the walls of museums, movement is similarly present, or present with even more importance, even if we are talking about a disjointed, slowed down movement (e.g. Douglas Gordon's well known *24 Hours Psycho*) or a movement that is inherently slow (e.g. Benedek Fliegauf's *Milky Way* or Bill Viola's *The Greeting)*. In case of the films shown in the setting of museums, the

vivification of forms in the images, their rhythmic or irregular, disconnected movements attract the visitors' view, the same movement that magnetized the audience of the first movies through the bursting out of dormant objects or people on the screen. We are not talking about a movement whose direction is of importance, which we are observing in order to understand its intent, instead, these works are possessed by a kind of movement that is interesting in and by itself. The almost imperceptible gestures and sometimes abrupt and outstanding movements in this perpetual change enchant the viewers of such works, it is through the quality of movement that motion becomes interesting, and not through the goal or function accomplished by it. This type of movement is the one that Ishaghpour calls the primary movement, which realizes in the movement of nature in Kiarostami's *Five*, "which entails in itself the movement of animals and humans. The most original motion, which never ends, with its endless patience and permanence, changing, but nevertheless identical form, the movement of the sea, those of the waves" (Ishaghpour 2007, 130). This "original movement" realizes itself in the motion of plants in the foreground of Mark Lewis's *Windfarm*, in the twinkling of water in *Algonquin Park, September*, and in the rocking of colourful sheets, hanged outside the balconies in *Tenement Yard*. In the film of Fliegauf, this same concept realizes itself through the slow movement of the windmill gradually emerging from the darkness [Fig. 6.], through the fisherman's and the young woman's strolling with the baby carriage on the floating-stage, or through the vivification of the tent by the morning wind.

Let us now have a look at how movement becomes the principal part in Benedek Fliegauf's *Milky Way*, how can Rancière's purely passive artist's attitude be shown to be more and more apparent in view of Fliegauf's past works. Fielgauf's first feature film consists of pictures taken solely from very close, and the close-ups, only showing very few details, they are filmed in isolated environments (the kitchen, the living room, the bedroom) [Figs. 7-8.]. But the characters of the scenes are isolated, torn out from their environments, even when they are in the outside as well, there is no space for their movements neither on the level of the story nor on a physical level. None of the characters of the *Forest* (2003) get to evolve, talk over, or solve the problem embittering their life; all discussions come to a standstill, all stalls at the point where it started. This lock-in is further exacerbated by the isolation subtly suggested by the tight images, which thereby restrict the characters' movements even in the physical space. Nevertheless, the form of movement that embraces the whole film, that which interlinks the different scenes, already appears in this movie. We are talking about the slow movement of an unidentifiable, mud-coated man,

which can be associated with the also scene-vowing movement of Fliegauf's next feature film, that of the displacement of the protagonist on a bicycle. In the *Dealer* (2004), the viewer encounters much wider camera shots, which leaves more space to the characters of the film. Additionally, in this film, the movement of the camera becomes noteworthy, but the circular motion dominating the entire film still gives the depressing feeling of lock-in, as each performed round quasi encloses the characters in a cage. The wider shots are therefore of no avail, the camera running on larger arcs, the far more scenes in the outside, the protagonist and all his entourage, after all, can only revolve around themselves. And even though the conclusion concerning the advancement and development of the characters is similar to the previous two films, the *Dealer* nevertheless signals the road towards the creative impulses realized in *Milky Way*. The *Milky Way*, from the point of view of the director's older films, encompasses the expansion of potential movements. The shots dominating in the film are even wider than in the *Dealer* and even though the fixed camera never follows the movement of the moving forms in the picture, this does not cause a feeling of lock-in, and the figures inside the image dispose of more space, can fill in more room with their movements. Therefore, on the road from the *Forest* to the *Milky Way*, we can witness a continuous expansion, an opening to the outside world. The figures of Fliegauf arrive from the cramped, locked-in internal spaces to the open outside, giving them more space to move. Their problems no longer form part of the work, their identity is of no account, the situations behind them and those waiting for them in the future are of no importance, be them tiresome or full of joy. These figures' bare presence fills up the work; the spectacle of their never-ending movements is the essence of *Milky Way*. The progress of breaking down the Rancièrian intention of story-telling can also be shown on a different level in analyzing Fliegauf's all previous works. While the *Forest* is an over-talked film building on dialogue, *Milky Way* is free of any uttered word, and dialogues are present rarely even in the *Dealer*. Also, in the second film, the dominating long takes become complete scenes, thus no scenes are fragmented by cutting, the directorial hand does not alter the material. The process of slow-down, the Rancièrian genuinely passive creational attitude determines the journey taken by Fliegauf. While in the first film the director invited the movie-goers into feverish, tense situations, spicing it with the feeling of anxiety created by the use of shaky handy-cam, in the *Milky Way*, Fliegauf arrived at a state where the very wide shots, making up the movie, only reinforce what Ishaghpour characterizes with the words low-keyed, distance, and calm. This pure contemplation, without the desire to interfere, can thus be taken as the

essence of *Milky Way*. In contrast to the nerve-straining feeling brought about by arrhythmic camera movements and close-ups in the *Forest*, which produces the feeling that the camera is a third character attending the discussions, the photographic equipment is a camera that is not present, which does not form part of the events and developments unfolding in front of it. The Rancièrian attitude, embodying the passive observation, through the use of long takes and very wide shots aids in the appearance of pure movements, as it does not break its continuity.

The road from the Aristotelian necessity of storytelling to its absence, as well as the road from the disposition of cinema to the bright museum halls, holds in itself the movement that encompasses the change of cinematographic art, of which Fliegauf, with his *Milky Way*, took part of. Movement within the picture, movement on the walls, or perhaps on the ceiling (e.g. in the *Milky Way* as shown in Ludwig Museum), movement in front, below or around the image: the quintessence is the perpetual variation of forms, the changing of the work from exhibition to exhibition and thereby its transformation, which could consequently underlie the appropriateness of re-thinking the concept of cinema.

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Cinema as Art and Philosophy in Béla Tarr's Creative Exploration of Reality

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Abstract. Rather than in terms of fiction or reality, Béla Tarr's cinema can be perceived as a creative exploration that is neither realistic nor non-realistic, but the "sum-total of our dealings with the world around." The absence of a storyline, non-professional actors, found locations and long shots "uninterrupted" by editing, carefully thought through and choreographed at the same time, are the effect of this exploration. The director refuses to tell a story, but his aesthetics move beyond that of social realism. In this sense the sombre image of Hungary that defines the mood and style of the films can be thought of not as realistic representation of the world, nor as the metaphysical beyond, but as an event, a situation "locked" in a wandering movement in which anything or nothing can happen, both real and virtual (Gilles Deleuze). Here the world, the film, the viewer and the outside are intertwined in the process of becoming (Deleuze). Drawing on Deleuze's proposition of time/thinking image, the article explores the imagery of Béla Tarr's later films – *Damnation* (*Kárhozat,* 1989), *Satan's Tango* (*Sátántangó,* 1994) and *Werckmeister Harmonies* (*Werckmeister harmóniák,* 2000) – in terms of the real (rather than realistic) and the creative (rather than fictional).

A herd of cattle drifts out of a barn, and wanders off to a muddy, open ground past the houses of an apparently deserted village before disappearing between the buildings. This is accompanied by a ghostly sound of wind and deep tolling bells. The almost ten minute long opening shot of *Satan's Tango* (Sátántangó, 1994) is the time-image, a "pure optical and sound situation" where the narrative causality of action/reaction gives way to the architecture of aesthetics, and where the meaning of a story consents to the logic of poetic thought.

Hungarian director Béla Tarr's films are set in small Hungarian towns where the people seem stuck, and drenched under persistent rain. The inhabitants of *Werckmeister Harmonies* (*Werckmeister harmóniák,* 2000) seem to have tragically fallen under the spell of a mysterious circus visiting the town. The main characters of *Damnation* (*Kárhozat,* 1989), longing to escape the mundane and senseless existence, traverse the empty streets [Fig. 1.] or pass time in a local pub. *Sátántangó* revolves around the slow decay of a small farm collective, where the dreams, weaknesses and betrayals of its people are revealed in the slow rhythm of a tango. As András Bálint Kovács has pointed out, these wretched souls seem to have just arrived here somehow and cannot escape. We do not know who they are, what they do, how they got here, and when or where the story takes place. This world which does not promise anything good keeps the people living in it captive, while they desperately try to get out. The characters "simply move toward their grim fates as if they were no smarter, no more audacious in their choices than the lumbering cows of *Sátántangó*" (Kovács 2000, 132). The absence of a storyline, the non-professional actors, found locations and long shots uninterrupted by editing might be reminiscent of Italian Neorealist tradition where ideas or points of view are omitted in favour of being lost in the experience of reality. As Tarr commented in an interview: "It is not like shooting a movie, it is like a part of life" (cf. Eric Schlosser). At the same time the long takes and "painstakingly choreographed shots" based on the novels of László Krasznahorkai, are the results of meticulously thought out directing. One could argue after Bazin that reality here is filtered, not analyzed or interpreted, but containing both a depiction of perceptual reality and more abstract qualities associated with time and the flow of life; qualities such as the fortuitous, the unexplained, the ambivalent.[1] Here, however, it is a neither realistic nor non-realistic representation but "a sum-total of dealings with the world around" – which is real –, both imaginative and very concrete. The long, slow, black-and-white time-image of Béla Tarr's world, verging on hallucination or *déjà-vu*, opens by re-evaluating the very category of "reality."

It could be argued that in these films reality functions on two levels interacting with each other and operating between creation and perception. As presented by the director, it is a world informed by the post-communist reality of Hungary, a consciously constructed image of "misery and moral decay." It is a "state of amnesia," where the characters are condemned

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[1]Bazin proposes a complex and ambiguous concept of reality, and its representation, as filtered material but containing both perceived reality and more abstract qualities associated with life itself (Bazin 2005).

to repeat the past, the life of tragic or tragicomic (as might be the case) immobility, in a hopeless search for something or somebody to liberate them. On the other hand there is a "collection of sensations," the indescribable "something," stored in the subconscious of the film, reaching our innermost feelings to bring up some obscure memories and experiences, "stirring our soul like a revelation that is impossible to interpret in any particular way" (Petric 1989/90). That inner experience to which we will never find a strictly appropriate language – pure *affects* or *percepts*, irreducible to the affections or perceptions, non-subjectified, virtual entities – as proposed by Deleuze – equivalent to philosophical concepts.[2] Film is a construction, a world of its own, an art. As a work of art, it departs from the domain of representation in order to become an experience, the "science of the sensible" (Deleuze 1994). It is not reality objectively perceived and independently existing, nor a metaphysical beyond, but rather a presence, both actual and virtual, in the process of becoming.[3] Thus, despite the seemingly realistic portrayal of the world stricken by poverty and corruption, the reality constructed in the films is not that of social realism, nor is it the representation of historical events, but a creative exploration of reality in the form of a thinking image, where real is not a representation of reality and virtual is not a negation of the real. It is art and philosophy.

In place of an argument or story, we are presented with a series of events which, instead of creating an illusionistic space of judgment/identification, offer a different space – that of encounter, where the film, the viewer, the world and the outside are interconnected in the process of creative transformation. How is this reciprocal "encounter/event" possible?[4] Béla Tarr's rainy image of Hungary is a powerful and unique "vision" stored in long takes, deep focus photography, "any-spaces-whatever," characters' faces, "architextures" of settings, and sound. Like the spider web of interwoven pieces of a non-told story, it is an image of time reflected now in the long shot of beer glasses or in the slow scanning movement through the walls of buildings, objects and faces. The formal configurations employed by the director acquire a style that

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[2]These for Deleuze are the virtual entities, non-personal and non-linguistic signs that art and literature are capable of "producing" (cf. Deleuze 1997 and 2005b).

[3]Becoming is the key theme of Deleuze's philosophical thinking and refers to a process of production (or "return" of difference), and presentation anew. It is the very dynamism of change, situated between heterogeneous terms and tending towards no particular goal or end (Parr 2005).

[4]Encounter-event is the term used by Bracha Ettinger to discuss the intersubjective, matrixial (border) space of encounter outside of the Oedipal structure of subjectivity in psychoanalysis (cf. Ettinger 2006).

produces affect and thinking through creation. Aesthetics of duration – a style, "controlled" by the rhythm of cerebral and haptic visuality, determined by the camera consciousness defined no longer by movement but by mental connections that it is able to enter into. The art of description, obsessive framing, low light, and stark black-and-white photography are the means that endow the image with the intensity of the real and the space of encounter.[5] Long takes enable the actors to live, the landscape to breathe, and the light to persevere, rendering the film with a cosmological significance and the viewer with a space of affect and thought.[6]

Brilliantly conceived opening scenes announce the wandering characters of the films whose 'amnesiac' reality is inscribed in the style of hopeless/timeless repetition. Such are the sluggish, automated motion of coal dumpsters, creaking around in a circuit above the town in *Damnation*, the aimless wandering cows of *Sátántangó* and the first scene of *Werckmeister Harmonies* where János choreographs the local drunkards into a working model of the universe. What follows are the endless walks and endless camera prowls capturing the spaces and the characters from every possible angle in the narratives of disconnected and directionless, concerning no-one events. Independent, singular sequences tend to break free from the overall shape like polyphonic composition, locked in a directionless, rhythmic structure in which anything or nothing can happen. At times inanimate and somnambulistic dance sequences break the narrative, locking the characters and the viewers in a mad perpetuation, providing a kind of circular dance in which the walls, the rain and the dogs also have their stories. Locations have faces, in a certain kind of space, which Deleuze calls any-spaces-whatever, irrational, disconnected, aberrant, no longer obeying commonsensical causality. Man and space become one. Blank, shrouded in fog looks, and non-expressive, alienated faces coexist and intermingle with the light, textures of crumbling buildings, "schizophrenic" landscape, and stray animals. The characters are played not by professional actors, but by different types of artists, all with distinctive faces and characters that seem to be matched by the scenery, weather and time, creating the necessary tension; the professional non-actors, actor-mediums, capable of living

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[5]Description is used here in relation to Deleuze's idea of description as "process" of "creating and erasing the object" which enables the collapse of the oppositional dichotomy between subject and object, real and imaginary, which he developed from French novelist Robbe-Grillet, also in relation to Svetlana Alpers's discussion of Dutch seventeenth century painting as descriptive rather than narrative, as a characteristic of Italian Renaissance art (Alpers 1983).

[6]Béla Tarr often talks about the cosmic dimension of his films in a number of interviews.

the situation or seeing rather than acting. On the other hand, the sound, camera and landscape also become characters. The autonomous, rhythmical and 'otherworldly' haunting sound endows the image with strangeness and reiteration - outside it is pouring with rain and dogs wander by. Spectacular moments give way to the most banal ones and vice versa, or tragic to comic ones, without any sense of rational logic. The scenes of cat torture and the girl's subsequent suicide in *Sátántangó*, to give one example, interwoven with the drunken monologues and absurd/comic dance sequences [Fig. 2.], are far from both the principles of narrative continuity and the dialectic logic of montage. In the end, "the cinema's 'trip' into ambiguity is so overwhelming that the imaginary and the real become indiscernible" (Frampton 2006, 68).

In this hallucinatory world of the towns' lives, without a beginning and without an end, time has no meaning – it is "out of joint." In long, monotonous and repetitive shots past, present and future merge or exchange generating a sense of vertigo, or a dream. As the films end, "we are waking from a bad dream that is about to start again" (Romney 2001, 8). The films' wanderings, plodding along, lead nowhere. There is only the framed image, and torturous emotion arrested in time.[7] Neither spaces nor characters reveal anything, or point to anything outside the situation itself. Instead, the viewer is left to read the "freeze-frame tableau and the contradictions held within it as an open image."[8] Tarr's characters are visionaries but it is a labyrinthine view, neither or both subjective or/and objective, where the film, the director, the viewer and the outside coincide and interact. At every turn the hope for resolution is frustrated.

Deleuze called this kind of narrative, or rather the lack of it, the "crystalline narrative" developed out of anomalies, irregularities, and false continuity. Here the spaces are disconnected, characters are no longer defined by their actions but by their visions and narration becomes essentially falsifying. Both the "real-ism" and the "story" are disposed of in favour of what he called "the false" and its artistic, creative power. The "story" of a film does not refer to an ideal or the truth but becomes a "pseudo-story," a poem, "a story which simulates or rather a simulation of a story" (Deleuze 2005b, 149). What we have is the perception of an independent aesthetic consciousness (Deleuze 2005b, 77).

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[7] The image is no longer restricted to what we "see." There are moments when discursive "hiatuses, holes or tears [...] widen in such a way as to receive something from the outside or from elsewhere." This "something seen or heard" that seeps through this hole, Deleuze says, is called Image (cf. Flaxman 2000, 12).

[8] On the idea of the open image see Chaudhri and Finn 2003.

While the characters sit or drink or walk, the camera is scanning: the space, the faces, and the objects. In an "insistent" or "obsessive" framing it moves between spaces and characters, stopping for a while, hesitating on the space, lingering a little longer after the characters have left or returns again and again to the same spaces each time from a different point of view; as if in search for some truth. It never rushes into the depicted space, inviting the eye to linger on the surface and the viewer to remain on the edge. [Figs. 3–4.]

It is through "the art of description" that Tarr's poetic vocabulary resists realism and symbolism. Most concrete, earthy and embodied situations and textures are brought to the surface of the screen by the equal treatment of visual elements in incomposable compositions. Meticulously observed, mundane and detailed everyday chores are performed as if in slow motion or in a dream. Time is carried by the outer and inner surfaces of buildings, reduced to their own descriptions. Derelict buildings, dark, empty squares covered by rain, swamped by harshly lit attics and muddy streets, rise up to the surface like old black-and-white photographs, where the utterances of forgotten worlds might resonate. As if attempting the pre-symbolic grasp of agile reality that leads not to illusionistic depth but to the "untimely meditation" of shape, light and texture begins again in order to obliterate its object, like the body in the world, neither fully conscious nor unconscious, erasing the opposition between subject and object. Time exhausts the image, which becomes its own "matter," description without before or after like a microcosm of eternity. These are no longer "long takes," but as Daniel Frampton pointed out: "thinking of the human gaplessness of experience" (Frampton 2006, 139). In other words the long take becomes the long *durée* of lived experience. Description no longer describes a pre-existing actual reality, but stands for its objects, creating and erasing them at the same time in "fantastic decompositions."

Perception becomes overwhelming, hallucinatory, and unbearably intense. In one of the most "hypnotic" scenes of *Sátántangó*, the camera performs a 360 degree tracking movement across the sleeping people, returns to the first sleeper, then continues again in the same arc, and again, and again. The movement and the space covered create the impression of a slowly moving ceiling fan's point of view (cf. Totaro). In *Weckmeister Harmonies* the camera gets lost in the loop of "blurred," crowded faces gathered in the town's square. These extremely long, disconnected and enduring moments, no longer images but thoughts, establish the contact with the real – the unclear and dispersive outside. It is "hypnosis that reveals thought to itself" (Deleuze 2005b, 119).

Reality becomes "the memory, brain, superimposition of ages or lobes" (Deleuze 2005b, 121). Simultaneously, "the screen itself becomes the cerebral

membrane where immediate and direct confrontation take place between the past and the future, real and imaginary, the inside and the outside, at a distance impossible to determine, [and] independent of any fixed point" (Deleuze 2005b, 121). It is no longer the social reality of a particular historical time – post-communist Hungary – but any time of "this world." The oppressive and alienating environment – the landscapes of identities – is dissolved in the any-spaces-whatever and brought back in the event of becoming something else; something that is at the edge of language as it is on the edge of the narrative. The deglamourizing, disaffected style rises up as "the powerful, non-organic Life that grips the world;" a new kind of health that the cinema, as proposed by Deleuze, is forced to discover in the nauseating, devastated, death-strewn landscape (Flaxman 2000, 42). This is the "vitalism" as accepted by Deleuze: not a mystical force, but the abstract power of Life as a principle of creation.[9] It is a manner of thinking "towards the world" or with it, a belief in this world, and not another, transformed one.

What might be perceived as prolonging the never-ending hopelessness and deterioration is in fact a strategy that endows the image with a creative, productive potential, which transcends the language as a system of signs, beyond syntax or signification.[10] Hence, it is being taken beyond narration and symbolism. These are the signs that we cannot simply recognize but encounter, as such, at the very limit of the sensible. The sudden encounter of a man in a bath at the end of the muted and ritualized violence of the hospital massacre in *Werckmeister Harmonies* for instance, or the silent look of a girl in the pub's window in *Sátántangó* – the "irrational cuts," beyond language of representation or communicative speech, are not merely a sign of alienation or impossibility of communication. They are sensations "stored" in the image – "opsigns," "sonsigns," "tactsigns" as Deleuze calls them, which do not refer to anything outside themselves. They are pure "mechanical" intensities before or outside of any meaning that have a "capacity to derange the everyday, to short-circuit the mechanism of common sense and bring a different kind of thinking at the threshold of what we might call 'the thinkable'"[11] (Deleuze 2005b, 172). This is something one can only sense, ambiguous, singular beyond individual experience; physical, concrete, and virtually present, real in a non-realistic sense; a space of "unfixed" identity. Here the outside, the virtual

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[9]See Daniel W. Smith's introduction to *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Deleuze 1997).

[10]For the discussion on what he refers to as Deleuze's "theory of language" see the work of Jean-Jacques Lecercle 2002.

[11]These are affective signs, the idea of which Deleuze developed from the semiotics of C.S. Pierce as an alternative to the language-analogy based semiology of Saussure.

nothing, opens into other outsides to infinity; embracing all: the "negative," the pessimistic, the sad, the melancholy, the real, and death, in the eternal return of no longer amnesiac repetition of the same but of difference; a creative process of eventing, where one and the same event is played out in these different worlds, in incompatible versions. Such a universe goes beyond any lived experience; it exists only in thought and has no other result than the work of art. But it is also "that by which thought and art are real, and disturb the reality, morality, and economy of the world" (Deleuze 1997, xxvii). With cinema, it is the "world which becomes its own image, and not an image that becomes the world" (Deleuze 2005a, 59).

This beyond is not an existential, human redemptive void and neither is it nihilism. Rather it is an intuition that restores "faith in the world" precisely by tapping into the intensity that creates it, giving forms to nothingness.[12] It is the "whole" which brings out the thing in itself, literally, in its excess of horror or beauty, in its radical or unjustifiable character, because it no longer has to be "justified," for better or for worse (Flaxman 2000). These images have their own logic of non-linguistic communication, the logic of utterance, enacting a free, indirect, trans-subjective film thinking. Unspeakable, non-representable, silent image, like a stamp or a birthmark "implanted" on the body of experience no longer possible and which "pierces" through in a desperate attempt to voice itself. No longer one's own experience but an "experience-event." The image that is living, vibrating, real and dynamic in its "emptiness" touches the level of existence from before existence, an image without any point of reference, immersed in a virtual history of the world, an "image" that transcends nothing.

With no particular entry or one point of view, outside of familiar paradigms of identification, the viewer is pushed off the path of conventional reading and placid acceptance of meaning, and instead into a state of intense curiosity and yearning. Béla Tarr sets the world in motion, then traverses it slowly, and patiently, allowing his work to "live" on a personal or particular, as well as cultural or universal, plane of creative consciousness. His films enable the art of encounter: fragmentary, ephemeral, missed encounters. These are the "real," open and affective interactions with an image from the position of not-knowing "haptic visuality," as Laura Marks would have it, or "reflective judgement" proposed by Deleuze.[13] Explaining the cosmos to the drunks, Valuska pleads,

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[12]Steven Marchant (2008) has written interestingly about the event of *Werckmeister Harmonies* in relation to nothingness as developed by Heidegger in *What is Metaphysics*.

[13]On the concept of haptic visuality (sensual rather than cognitive) see Laura Marks 2000. The reflective judgement, which he adopted from Kant, is for Deleuze the shift from metaphor to the position where "nothing is given from the standpoint of the active faculties;"

"All I ask is that you step with me into the bottomlessness," and that perhaps is, as Jonathan Romney argues, essentially Tarr's invitation to the viewer (Romney 2003). At the bottomlessness sensations are born and change is made possible.

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where there is no pre-existent context but rather "free and indeterminate accord" between all the faculties (Flaxman 2000).

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Images of Strangeness
in András Jeles's Films

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Abstract. The paper discusses the perpetuation of unconventional stylistic features of the modern film, as well as its possibilities of introducing a new, existential meaning in the Hungarian film production of the 1970s and 1980s. "New-narrative" films experimenting with narrative forms display an ambition of the filmic medium to join other, extraneous formations (such as music, literature, theatre), fulfilling thus the modernist ideal that the film as a "free indirect discourse" will demolish the monolithic unity of filmic narration. In a Hungarian perspective the experiments with narrative forms were similarly approached by three names as representative for the period: Miklós Erdély, Gábor Bódy, and András Jeles. Although film language experiments result in strongly medium conscious forms with all three directors, they are stylistically very different nonetheless. Experimentation in Erdély's films leads to a minimalist form, in Bódy's to an analytical construction, while in Jeles's to a non-film-like form. The stylized world of Jeles's films proves a particular concern with form, which, similarly to literature and theatre, must be able to transmit abstract (symbolic) meanings articulated at the same time in an existential experience.

> *„Strangeness, the consistent non-adequacy*
> *of expression at a given place"*
>
> (András Jeles)

The study highlights three focal points of András Jeles's films, examining: the collision and confrontation of documentary and fictional narrative forms; the asynchronous relations of image markers not subordinated to the narration, as well as sound markers; and finally the presence of the paradox visual field

occurring with the refraction of the filmic nature. All three aspects subserve the investigation of the *experience of strangeness* or eventlikeness, understood in the sense of an unrepeatable individuality (ipseity) and otherness (alterity), which in Jeles' art emerges as a result of the overdrawn film image, or the insertion of some sort of peculiar viewpoint.

Film Language Experiments in Hungarian Films of the 1970s

The end of the 1970s witnessed a common ambition directed to the fundamental renewing of film language and the subversion of filmic conventions. In a Hungarian perspective the experiments with narrative forms were similarly approached by three names as representative for the period: Miklós Erdély, Gábor Bódy, and András Jeles. According to András Bálint Kovács, it was Miklós Erdély who most radically opposed narrative conventions, Bódy was the most anarchic, while Jeles proved to be most dangerous from a political perspective[1] (Kovács 1989, 2). All three of them sought a "new narrative" in the film, and this endeavour was matched with concept art with Erdély, music with Bódy, and literature and theatre with Jeles.

In characterizing the films of the new sensibility unfolding in the first half of the 1980s, Miklós Erdély relies to a certain extent on Bódy's classifications regarding the Hungarian film of the 1960s, and the tradition of "subjective" and "objective" filmmaking.[2] However, the specificity of Erdély's views is the fact that he regards this experimental and unconventional filmmaking in its connection with the documentary ambitions developing in the second half of the 1970s. He writes in connection with Béla Tarr's film entitled *Autumn Almanac* (*Őszi almanach*, 1984): "Hungarian filmmaking gradually outlines a particular tendency, which was prepared on the one hand by the documentarists, while on the other hand it fed on a philosophical ambition as a compensation of isolation and oblivion, pointing well beyond national issues. Artists such as

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[1]András Jeles's film *Dream Brigade* (*Álombrigád*, 1983) was confiscated even before it was released, as it outlined one of the most delicate subjects at the time, the low people of a society directed from above, it pictured the conditions of simple workers.

[2]In Bódy's approach there are two defining tendencies of the Hungarian film of the 1960s: *subjective* filmmaking, which goes back to the tradition of author films, and is characterized by the emphatic presence of the director's personality; and *objective* filmmaking, characterized by a kind of realism taken in the best sense of the word, as the understanding and love of reality, a general and deep knowledge of humanity. (Cf. Bódy 2006, 26–34.)

Péter Gothár, András Jeles, Gábor Bódy and others represent a particular mixture of microrealism and an endlessly enlarged meaning" (Erdély 1995, 260). Generalizing Erdély's thoughts, one may conclude that the basic feature of the films in question is that they work as representational processes contrary to the trivial meanings of the represented plot, which they eliminate or elevate to new levels of meaning. In other words, the objective reality represented with microrealistic accuracy is embedded into a representational (fictional) frame which, on a conceptual level, significantly enlarges, modifies, and rearranges the primary level of meaning. It is by no means a kind of "new symbolism" which gains place in these films; on the contrary: the primary level of meaning does not get dissolved in the general meaning guided by the representation, instead, it appears in its strangeness diverging from the customary. If one considers all this as pertaining to the working of perception as well, then one might grasp the basic feature of experimental film in that it aims not only at the transformation of film watching habits, but also the "liberation" of sensory perception – particularly seeing – from under cultural conventions and the autocracy of consciousness. This idea is congruent with László Beke's general definition about experimental films, formulated at about the same time, according to which this kind of film attempts at creating motional visual combinations by which *it influences the hitherto untouched domains of the eye and consciousness* (Beke 1997, 197–198).

Although film language experiments result in strongly medium conscious forms with all three directors, they are stylistically very different nonetheless. Experimentation in Erdély's films leads to a minimalist form, in Bódy's to an analytical construction, while in Jeles's to a non-film-like form. The stylized world of Jeles's films proves a particular concern with form, which, similarly to literature and theatre, must be able to transmit abstract (symbolic) meanings articulated at the same time in an existential experience.

Intersection of Documentary and Stylized Film Forms

In Gábor Gelencsér's view the form history of the 1970s revolves around those works which manifest a *transparent style*[3] in intertwining documentarism and authorial stylization (or fictional film form). In this perspective, he perceives

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[3]Transparent style does not refer here to the transparency of the film medium, but on the contrary, to that non-film-likeness where the narrative patterns and styles of the film become unconcealed. (Cf. Gelencsér 2002, 383).

Bódy's radical innovation in that he mixes for the first time documentarism with a conscious film language in such a way that the film language and the world it represents mirror each other (2002, 389). Jeles takes one step forward in his films, he no longer believes in the possibility of separate documentary or fictional film forms. For this reason the centre of Jeles's art is not the theoretical or practical issue of "documentarism and/or fiction", but the *style* (2002, 395). In this interpretive framework[4] this means that the issue for Jeles is to confront the *styles* of documentarism and fiction.

The films of Bódy and Jeles may be regarded as experiments which show a simultaneous sensibility to both the elements of spectacle and the way of representation structuring these. The *what* defining all-time representation and the correlation and breakpoint issues of the *how* has been a concern for both artists. The method which Bódy termed analytical stresses the tension resulting from the superposition of the documentary and fictional representational systems. According to his definition: "we may call analytical any kind of solution which forms an *explicit*, combined document of the objective reality transposed to film and the fact of filmmaking; in which, that is, the *'double projection'* takes on a conscious shape" (1996, 64). In a primary sense, this duality is of course a basic characteristic of all films: in documentaries, besides the objective reality they capture, the forming marks are, among others, cutting and lighting, while in case of fictional films the settings and the actors form a basic documentary stratum. However, due to the particularities of the film form, both sides can never be expressed at the same time since that would weaken the validity of the requirements towards the film.

It should be noted that for Bódy the document usually does not mean a film form or the documentation of the objective reality present at all shooting, but a self-reflective act: first of all, it means the documentation of the cinematographic capturing. It is not the captured, but the filmic representation of the capturing process which has an authenticating value. In opposition with the ideal of the traditional documentary form,[5] here it is not the event before the camera, but the relationship of the event and the camera, that is, *the decisive presence of the camera which makes the document.* When the camera documents its own presence and creative force, then – paradoxically –

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[4]Gelencsér's analysis is mostly based on Jeles's study *Teória és akció* (*Theory and Action*) (1993, 39–43), and his first feature film, the *Little Valentino* (*A kis Valentinó*, 1979).

[5]The ideal of traditional documentary form, valid even today, is that the objectivity of the presented world can be attained if the camera disappears behind the events.

it authenticates as a "document" that which is impossible to be represented as a document. Already in his first feature film, the *American Torso* (*Amerikai anzix*, 1975), the continuously modified masking and the thematization of the viewpoint (cross-hairs, drawing on the image, etc.) frames the archaic-looking, granular images modulated by light-cut technique. This method brings to the forefront the structuring, organizing activity of seeing as opposed to a documentary view or the presentation of historical events. The way of presenting the narration penetrates the system of representation so far as to make it static, stretch it apart and unmask it. It can be noticed that the documentary and fictional modes of representation are hierarchically organized here: the document is subordinated to fiction as a structuring principle, and this is repeatedly underlined in the film.

For Bódy, film form subserves the formation of abstract meanings; however, since abstract meanings are always reconnected with the medium of a contingent shot or with raw matter, the projective illusion of the fictional system is permanently impeded. Connecting the obscure and uncertain first level meanings into an abstract, symbolic network of meanings, he does not dissolve them nevertheless (the actor's character or way of speaking does not disappear in the roles he plays either), but by the effect of the fictional system the film permanently reacts to this manipulated first level. This mutual reaction results in an ostentatious presence of the artificially formed construction on both levels: on the "document" side by the alienating elements appearing in image and sound media (sound distortion, painting, and light-cut effects), and on the "fiction" side by polarized characters and situations, and the stylization of the setting. Often the scenes shot with documentary techniques, the improvised texts of the civilians create a declaimed, stage-like effect as well, while the fictional order of the plot shows unmasking contingencies. This means that Bódy does not merely apply the two well definable representational systems of documentary and fiction, but stratifies them in a way that the one takes on the characteristics of the other, and vice versa: *the document shows createdness, while fiction shows either possible rawness, or it becomes an exaggerated and incredible fantasy.*

Owing to his literary affinity, András Jeles keenly clashes concrete images deriving from the nature of the film with the stylized and abstract forms of textuality. More precisely, he plays off the possibilities lying in visual representation and textuality against each other. On the one hand, it escapes transparent images and the projective illusion deriving from the photographic nature of the film, and in this endeavour he is aided by highly stylized literary

texts and theatrical language.[6] On the other hand, however, searching for the zero degree of expression, his lifework proves a strong suspicion against a culturally determined symbolic order (that is, language). The broken forms of communication can be observed already in Jeles's first theatre direction, the *The First Day of Freedom* (*Szabadság első napja*, 1975) in Kaposvár, when he made his actors walk on pieces of glass, with the effect, among other things, that their speech was incomprehensible (Nánay 2004, 44). Similarly, the maid in the *No Man's Land* (*Senkiföldje*, 1993) stutters and in the Constantinople scene of the *The Annunciation* (*Angyali üdvözlet*, 1984) there is a lisping little girl. The dialogues are fragmentary, the people speak too fast about incomprehensible things. As Nánay writes, "these are sound effects intentionally deprived of their meaning, rather playing a musical or alienating role" (Nánay 2004, 44) It seems that it is not speech that is important here, but the eventless passage of time, the small gestures, the role of unexpected, surprising, and sometimes grotesque simultaneities and contingencies. One finds a similar solution of invalidating textuality in the ring-buying scene of the *Little Valentino* (*A kis Valentinó*, 1979), when the caption covers the sound of the dialogue, and the director withdraws these instantly with a conditional structure ("he could say"). This solution is a good example – in Gelencsér's formulation – "of the original difference between filmic transparency and linguistic-logical negation" (2002, 410).

Asynchronous Relations of Image and Sound

In Jeles's films, starting with the *Dream Brigade* (*Álombrigád*, 1983), besides the confrontation of documentary and fictional styles, there is a more particular sense of overdrawing the film image, which may be connected to the production of an experience of strangeness understood in the sense of unrepeatable individuality (ipseity) and otherness (alterity). For this end it does not only aim at the destruction and breaking of the narrative modes of traditional film forms and genres, but it also corrodes the simplest elements and usual relations of the audio-visual medium.

The first experiment with the asynchronous relation of image and sound appeared in Hungary in Tamás Szentjóby's *Centaur* (*Kentaur*, 1976), and

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[6]Cf. with Jeles's thoughts: "*amint a szép híves patakra a szarvas kévánkozik* [just as the deer yearns for the nice cool stream" – fragment from a 16th century poem by Bálint Balassi], the film also yearns for literature and real theatre. Nothing has disturbed more the mind of filmmakers than *film-likeness*" (2006, 6–7).

Tibor Hajas' *Self-fashion-show* (*Öndivatbemutató*, 1976). Miklós Erdély also employed the same technique in the 1970s. Jeles experiments with this deconstructive form for the first time in the *Dream Brigade*, when it is not only image and sound that are separated and incompatible, but the text itself also falls apart into parallel phrases (Kovács 2002, 271). This technique later becomes Jeles's particular use of form, emphatic not only in his films, but also in his theatrical directions. Like, for instance, in his later performance, *Dramatic Events* (*Drámai események*, 1985–86) directed for the Monteverdi Birkózókör theatrical company, in which the actors utter consonants and vowels separately. The sometimes completely undetachable sung or uttered sounding text splits into articulated and inarticulate manifestations. By this method the film develops from the drama everything which is the opposite of the original text, the "other side" suppressed by the text (Kovács 2002, 271). It is not about the duality of "appearance" and "reality", but rather about undertaking the program that reality must be exhibited within concealed appearance, while at the same time this ideologically constructed reality must be made transparent.

Already in his first feature film, the *Little Valentino*, the destruction concerns the ideological stratum of the language, while the social critical tone lies merely in the presentation of misery. The film is set in a familiar, realistic environment, and stylization only occasionally alienates the image from the concrete setting. Still, the sound and imagery of the film shows unusually interesting relations and intersections. Its stratification creates on the one hand the documentary naturalism of the image, while on the other hand, by the insertion of misplaced elements, it points to absurd stylization. Sometimes neither the speech of the actors (due to distortion and the use of noise curtain), nor the captions (due to the elliptic and inarticulate form of the writing) set up as an articulated language; but the images are determined by their rendering the fantastic nature of the everyday, of created existence. Nevertheless, stylized, distorted speech is not always an instrument of irony for Jeles; indeed, it serves the creation of an aesthetic experience of strangeness. In addition to unmasking the ideological content of film form, genre, or speech, it serves the elimination of customary cultural reflexes.

Owing to the frequent repetitions, the noises and speech often become musical. Speech reduced to a mere sound or emphasizing its incomprehensibility unwillingly exhibits its own pulsation, rhythm, and melody. Jeles uses human speech, music, and noises not only to cover one another, but also to sometimes approach one another: by the musicality of its sound the world of objects gains an expressive power, while the spoken sound approaches the noise because of its distortion. Moreover, Jeles often

uses music instead of text on certain emphatic points of his films. This use of music does not necessarily mean Mozart or Bach – he is keen on mixing the elements of elite and popular culture. The musical material is not employed as "background music" merely for the sake of atmosphere, but as a quotation, as cultural debris, which operates in a productive tension with other filmic means of expression. Elevated scenes are usually clashed with popular musical genres, and conversely, trivial or "boring" stories are blown up by lofty music (Nánay 2004, 46). One characteristic example thereof is the famous series of images of the *Little Valentino*, when the hero burns his coat and watches the dust-bin in flames, while lying on a bench. Apart from camera movement, the scene is completely ordinary, but certain unexpected instances re-evaluate and "elevate" the situation. The ordinary atmosphere of idleness becomes strangely tensed by the appearance of the bridal party exiting the church and the sound of Bach's *Pastorale*. Furthermore, the end of this scene becomes one of the strongest parables of this associative technique which couples cultural values with fragmentary, ordinary gestures: a statue representing a female nude emerges from the ruins of the burnt dust-bin – this could as well be Jeles's *ars poetica* (cf. Gelencsér 2002, 413).

For Jeles, repetition is not merely an instrument of form and style, but also an existential question concerning a traumatic experience of strangeness. In addition to the repetition of audio-visual material – let us think of the rehearsals of the *Dream Brigade* or the sound technique of the *Joseph and his Brothers – Scenes from a Peasants' Bible* (*József és testvérei – Jelenetek egy parasztbibliából*, 2003) – the plot also contains a circularity based on particular repetitions. Péter Balassa gives a perceptive account of the circularity in the structure of the *The Annunciation*: "It deepens, dissolves the historic, evolutionist, national, and traditionally accepted problem of the *Az ember tragédiája* (*The Tragedy of Man*, a Hungarian drama written by Imre Madách, 1862) in circularity and repetition; we see a circulating, repetitive existential structure, which passes in front of our eyes as juxtaposed parables almost as a social dance we watch" (Balassa 1989, 276). His stories seem to be eternal repetitions of the Passion, all break-out attempts end up there: beginning already with the hopeless possibilities of escape in the *Little Valentino*, through the *The Annunciation* to the parallel Passion of the *Joseph and His Brothers*. In the *The Annunciation* this arc connects birth and death, burdened by the tribulations of expecting death. Birth and death stand at the intersection of two spheres, just as the title itself makes reference to that canonic topos of literature and the art of painting in which celestial and terrestrial things

chiastically[7] meet. The placement and setting of the plot also carries this particular duality: besides literally earth-like environmental elements, theatrical immobility and ornamental forms reminiscent of the viewpoint of eternal things are particularly stressed in the film. The representation of frail existentiality seems to be made from a *sub specie aeternitatis* viewpoint, from which everything that belongs to life is terrible and wonderful at the same time – that is, tragic. The film only hints to the viewpoint of a non-human regard – it lies in the background of a more familiar viewpoint as a burdening alienness – representing a point of mobility in the contemplation of things.

Experience of Strangeness and Eventlikeness

It was Pasolini who first recognized the peculiarity of the modern film as depending on divergent aspects which refract the "prosaic" nature of classical film – that is, the *unary*[8] continuity of space and time – and replace it with unpredictable variability and "free indirect discourse" (Pasolini 2007, 211–233). Pasolini experiments in several of his films with applying this free indirect discourse, not reduced to the double (direct and indirect) use of a parabolic discourse. He usually refers the plot of his films to an external,[9] to a viewpoint which does not fit into the given situation, and is thus alien, which questions the unity of the narration, while at the same time places it into a different light. This viewpoint introduces a polyphonic character into the visual space which reveals cracks, discrepancies, and incompatibilities within the film image: they open up to alien meanings. Deleuze's idea, according to which one basic

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[7]The reference to this concept of late phenomenology and Merleau-Ponty is not accidental, as in this case also we are speaking about the intersection of viewpoints, the interrelatedness of the seer and the seen. The concept of chiasmus refers to the intersection of incompossible viewpoints, which means not only the inversion of the I and the other, but also the interrelatedness of the I and the world, and the perceiver and the perceived (1964, 264.).

[8]Roland Barthes applies this term for a group of photographs which only emphatically transform "reality" without breaking it apart or making it insecure. A photograph is unary for Barthes if there is nothing indirect, ostentatious, or divergent about it. (1985, 49).

[9]The relationship of the represented and the representer, the internal and the external, the issue of a viewpoint always external to the represented objectivity and the (external) viewpoint appears most clearly in his film *La ricotta* (1963). The reference to the external is sometimes formulated linguistically as well, but the selection of black-and-white and coloured images also underlines it. In the presentation of the Passion, the inversion of the internal and the external is best represented by Stracci's crucifixion, as also highlighted by the last sentence of the film: "He had to die to show us that he was alive." See the analysis of Maurizio Viano on this (1997, 99–110).

characteristic of modern film is "the obliteration of a whole or of a totalization of images, in favour of an outside which is inserted between them" (1989, 187) is a familiar one. Related to this, Jacques Aumont also reaches to the conclusion that the film art of both Pasolini and Godard – by the peculiar use of shot–anti-shot, cutting, speed, and viewpoint – causes a *transmigration* within the film image which follows the canonic representation of the Annunciation scene: it creates the simultaneous presence (*coprésence*) of two heterogeneous ontological entities within a paradoxical visual space (Aumont 2002, 64).[10]

Diegetic and Non-diegetic Narrator

Jeles also employs an instrument of sound technique for creating the experience of strangeness: he sometimes doubles filmic storytelling with narration. However, contrary to the general use, here the employment of the narrator does not assist the understanding of the plot, but withdraws the narrator's external viewpoint. Traditionally, the narrator either explains the plot – transmitting important information to the viewer – or reflects upon the entire work by "speaking out" of the film; this happens in the case of a media-conscious use of film. In Godard's films for instance the narration approaches the author's commentary or is even completely equivalent to it: the narrative activity can be understood as a manifestation of a personality completely independent of the plot (Bordwell 1996, 329–330).

Jeles' films contain two kinds of narrators: the diegetic and non-diegetic sound narration. The employment of the diegetic narrator is characterized by its partaking and involvement with the situation. The narrator's inclusion into the plot invalidates in fact its privileged position due to its extra-diegetic situation. Jeles mostly uses this form in the *Dream Brigade*: the visible and thus unmasked narrator begins narrating time and again, but he always gets lost among the possibilities and ravels of the "tempting" stories; then he passes his role on to a more objective narrator, returning again later, and then disappearing for good.

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[10]It is more than interesting that Jeles asks for a similar heterogeneity in Pasolini's *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*: "the Jesus-story would not be boring, it could even be intriguing if – say – I met the Gospel episodes as recounted by an eye witness who *had a wrong knowledge of the Galilean events* and interpreted the crucifixion as an initiation ritual for example, etc. In such cases [. . .] the reflexes attached to codified images disappear and every scene – as the narration mode is almost perpendicular in relation to the traditional story level – is enlightened in a dramatic sense, acquiring a new, unexpected meaning." (2006, 37).

In his film *Joseph and His Brothers* one finds shared and multiple narration. As the characters of the shadow theatre do not speak to each other, the external narratorial voice is an organic part of the plot. The basic story is connected to Joseph's story intermingled with the stories of Jacob and Rachel, Judas and Tamar, Isaac and Abraham, and Jesus. The narrator's voice (Dezső Mészöly) completely replaces the character's speech, it is rather a storyteller or the voice of certain characters. However, another narrator also appears in this same line of the plot: the sacrifice-story of Abraham and Isaac embedded into the Joseph-story is told by a different narrator (Péter Haumann). His way of speech is less archaic, he speaks out to the viewer, interrupts the speech of the first narrator, reflecting sometimes even to his own text (Varga 2004, 65–66). The story of the film basically follows two strings, the other one is a present-day story of a prostitute, subordinated to the first one. The alternation of the two stories seems to contain certain points of connection, but the use of the narrating voice is essentially different.

The appearance of the non-diegetic narrator in Jeles's works is mostly identical with the authorial voice. This form appears already in his first film: "Cry, cry, cry" – the external voice says in a pub scene of the *Little Valentino*. At the end of the film a hitherto unheard, silent narration of an insecure voice offers a new possibility of interpretation. The sound material connects the story of the sinking Titanic as a parable of the destiny of the 20th century to the paraphrasing of Wittgenstein's thesis of unutterability: "It is not befitting to utter everything, then let us be quiet, Sir, about the sinking ship..." – while it starts to roll around itself, causing thus the stratification of a multiply denied and overwritten film language structure (Gelencsér 2002, 411).

The prostitute-story in the *Joseph and His Brothers* also shows a different use of the non-diegetic narrator, when the narrator (Mrs. Ferenc Kiss) dispassionately repeats all the dialogues. Here the actors' speech and the narrator's voice are redundant. Someone superfluously *repeats* everything that the actors have already said. The film undoubtedly cites the doubled narration of Miklós Erdély's *Spring Execution* (*Tavaszi kivégzés*, 1985). At the end of the film, in the credits, Jeles considers important to note that the sound technique employed in the frame-story of the *Joseph and His Brothers* is a tribute to Miklós Erdély. In the *Spring Execution* the uncanny effect of the narratorial voice's unjustified redundancy is increased by the fact that it is the story of a man awaiting execution. The narrator of the frame-story in Jeles's film repeats the jargon of the prostitute and her pimp with a similar objectivity (Varga 2004, 66), while obtaining a peculiar alienating effect. Even in this completely reduced jargon one may feel something of the prophecy of art, that

our deepest discourse is the self-revelation of the human world (Balassa 1989,
8). In this narration concerning sacrifice and the Passion, the theatrical and
stylized traits deriving from the shadow play render the narration ahistorical.
The story – both the biblical and the present-day string – emerges from its
concrete spatial-temporal environment – as if marking that the story does not
bridge a beginning and an end, that the Passion does not and cannot have an
end. Such a use of this repetitive pattern – besides a stylistically appearing
musicality (rhythm) – also diminishes the privileged place of an "omniscient"
narrator: *the narrator's position remains the prisoner of the diegetic speech*,
because it is temporally belated as compared to the actors' speech. It is
only its neutral and passive discourse which reminds of its externality. As
any repetition, this also remains a prisoner of origin, marking that there is
no external position in relation to the Passion. The absence of the external
position questions at the same time the issue of narratability, invalidating the
possibility of narration and by this also of the form of expression.

The Eventlikeness of the Sight

Jeles's "technique" can be partly opposed to Bódy's analytical construction,
inasmuch as the former may rather be likened to a disposition of expectation,
to a basic position of openness or sensibility necessary for accepting
eventlikeness.[11] Jeles is guided exactly by the film image's transgression of
the authorial intention, generating a foreign viewpoint wherefrom that what
was seen before (the reality of the film image) is placed in an originally different
light. Almost all his films enforce this foreign viewpoint, which in the plot is
usually located in a naïve, childish (angelic) regard. In the *Little Valentino* this
viewpoint is not only attached to the adolescent hero, but is also inscribed into
the film structure. It can be grasped in the always branching and interrupted
strings of the plot, and in the construction that it is immaterial what the
camera follows, as it could as well follow something else. This is particularly
enforced by the last scene, when the film leaves the hero during a long coach
ride and starts to follow a hitherto unknown figure. The film does not aim at a
detailed representation of everyday life, but at the constitution of a naïve and
uninterested regard, unversed in the things of life. Besides the structuring of
the narration, the stylization of the film image and the series of grotesque

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[11] See the discussion of György Báron and Jeles: "In our work at the Monteverdi Birkózókör
it was a basic principle that the production was alive if we created the possibility of
unexpectedness" (Báron 1993, 4).

oppositions all play an important role in the construction of a viewpoint completely alien to a practical and rational perspective. Stylization in this context means not the unmasking or negation of the documentary form, but serves the introduction of a foreign viewpoint, whence all well-known things appear in their strangeness.

The *Dream Brigade* also continuously experiments with the strangeness of events seen or heard. The film advances from a strongly fictional discourse to a less fictional nightmare, raising the ultimate question – "for what reason?" – of human existence. True, already the beginning of the film dislodges from the usual viewpoint: the imageless sound material reflects upon the situation of the spectator sitting in the darkness and waiting; the form of address is direct and ironic. Even with the appearance of the narrator, it is not the promised "moving life" which fills the screen, but a fictional and multiple framed film form. The display of the narrative viewpoint questions the possibility of representation: "life" should be represented by a literally petrified narrative form, "alien to life". In the piece entitled *Premium* (*Prémium*), during the direction process with civilians (workers), a plurality of fictional frames is stratified upon each other in the film. In parallel, but contrary to fiction, a kind of existentialist life reality gains ground, formed by the informality of speech situations, and the contingencies of the process of acting. Occasionally, the roles/arguments and the status of the workers acting them out are stratified up to the point of delusion. This narrative form, overwritten and framed several times, gradually demolishes and turns itself inside out due to the tautological nature of the narrator and the narrated.[12] The narration is continuously broken by inappropriate incommensurable elements, which almost permanently threaten the spectator's consciousness with the danger of misunderstanding, that the nearly constructed plot will suddenly fall apart, or take a radically new turn.

In the *The Annunciation* the roles played by the events and the children receive a grotesque and strange substratum, because they are not played by "professionals". This strangeness breaks a fantastic hole in the film, it is present in all uttered words and vague gestures. The sharpness of the tragic is conveyed by the fact that the Passion's failure-burdened story as told by Madách – the end, the fall, the meaninglessness – is shown from the naïve perspective of children.[13] They speak and act as unprofessional angels in a ruthless world

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[12] Just as the risky acceptance and censorship judgment of the concrete work (the *Dream Brigade*) is getting increasingly inscribed into the plot of the film.

[13] Jeles explains the frequent presence of children's perspective in his films in the following way in an interview: "I cannot get used to the fact that innocent beings are exposed to

infected with suffering, where the transition from being to non-being emerges
as the basis of all narratable stories. The rebirth in all scenes keeps necessarily
towards death. It suggests the hopelessness of life stretched between birth
and death, and the grotesque superposition of these two events in the London
scene, staging one of Beckett's sentences ("They [mothers] give birth astride of
a grave").

The eventlikeness of lifeless, asynchronous and immobile gestures and series
of events are evoked by ancestral things, impregnated with the mineral and
the sacred. [Figs. 1–2.] In relation to a theatre performance which has never
been completed, the *Winter Journey* (*Téli utazás*), Jeles declares about an
immaterialized idea: there is hardly any movement, but if there is, that is
a sensation (significant and functional), there is hardly any speech, but if
there is, it is poignant, as if it was an oracle or a psychotic. Movement and
sound, any theatrical event is like a natural catastrophe, which signals that the
eternal laws try to express themselves in a way understandable to humans"
(Jeles 2006, 144). Here, as in the *Dream Brigade*, stylization moves in the
direction of immobility reminiscent of eternal things,[14] which may as well be
interpreted in connection with the eternity of the Passion of the outcast. From
this perspective everything can be *misrepresented* and recognized: it carries
the eventlikeness of the experience of strangeness and the possibility of new
meaning creation.

The Overdrawing of the Film Image

In his reflections about the film image, András Jeles emphasizes that aspect
of form usage which is able to eliminate the transparent and illusory nature of
the reality of film image by overdrawing it. The idea emphasized in his text
entitled *Az ötödik elbeszélő* (*The Fifth Narrator*) is decisive in this respect:
"Invention is that idea – "law of game" – which in the course of unfolding is
capable of overdrawing the reality of the film image by "metaphysical" accents.
(Because the "reality" of the film image is at issue here!) I claim therefore that

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everything that has already been created and made fatal before us. I think it is the greatest
drama that children are born, and immediately get mixed up into something that they have
nothing to do with. [. . .] This is the human drama itself." (Báron 1993, 6).

[14] Jeles also writes in relation to the *Winter Journey*: "Let us not forget, the trick of the
doll (the mask) is that while everything around it is alive, changing, fretting, and flashing:
it reacts to all these with an eternally existing, immobile face (personality). [. . .] It is
as if it declared: I only care for the immovable, I only perceive eternal things (life-death,
mobility-immobility, soul-body, darkness-light, etc.)" (Jeles 2006, 143–144).

the film which cannot enchant its own images (settings) is afilmic (amusical). [. . .] What is the point after all? It is, I think, that beyond the visible, beyond individual film images, and again beyond the randomness of these images – something invisible would emerge in the spectator's imagination" (2006, 11). But how should one understand the overdrawing of the reality of film image? Paradoxically, it is precisely the elimination of the reality of film image which may lead to its essential reality. When saying essential reality I do not mean speculative metaphysical subjects, but the aesthetic values decisive for European tradition. It seems that Jeles's conception deals with a twofold reality-concept, constructed of a *direct reality* deriving from photographic fixation on the one hand, and an impossible *Real* in a Lacanian sense on the other.[15] The real operates with idealities pertaining to the symbolic order of desires, while it is still an alien power with a particular ethical and traumatic structure, opposing linguistic constructedness. In the context of the film, this is to be understood as the real pertaining to the use of form which articulates and creates it. However, I wish to stress at this point that the emphatic formal stylization of Jeles's films never becomes an arbitrary ornament; instead, it is a means to voice something of the "impossible real" which proves unmanageable from direct reality.[16]

In a discussion, the director explains the stylized, alien world of the *The Annunciation* as follows: "the body of the film had to be combined of two qualities. One of these, of course, had to be formed from our historical knowledge, and the other quality from the dream-like representation, aberration, overdrawing of these. Even if I don't take into account that something here dreams the things, it is still compulsory to *include an unexpected element*, in order to suggest the atmosphere of life, of unrepeatability, and so on. I have to show at once that these events are real, and at the same time I have to overdraw reality in a way that it is clear for everybody that *this is it*, and it still isn't" (Jeles 2006, 89, emphasis added). The experience of dream or strangeness with the effect of eventlikeness – which is a characteristic of outstanding moments – also appears in the quality of the

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[15]About the differentiation of the *symbolic*, the *imaginary*, and the *real*, see Jacques Lacan's lectures *On the Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan 1986). On the importance of Lacan's thinking for film theory, see Todd McGowen's book, mainly its introductory theoretical part (McGowan 2007, 1–23).

[16]Cf. with László Tengelyi's outstanding analysis of Lacan's ethical seminars (Tengelyi 1998, 314–326). Tengelyi's opinion about the Lacanian structure of desire may be of use also in discussing Jeles's perception concerning the reality of film image: "the real – the real as such, the weight of the real – never becomes present in our activity without losing direct reality given as a limitless presence" (Tengelyi 1998, 320).

image, because they used specially manufactured objectives for the shooting.[17] The aim of this film is not merely the palpability of created existence, but the grasping of the rare moments of creation: when something exceptional, almost miracle-like appears on the image. Here the images and words alike carry the traumatic strangeness of the nightmare of creation/createdness. Jeles' exquisite directorial trick appears in the fact that he deprives the language of its original function of articulation by repetitions and distortions, and he also deprives the film image from its reality – and accommodates the spectator with this strangeness.

Similarly to the tension between the opposition of death and "have faith" in the *The Annunciation*, a film closely defined by its title (Balassa 1989, 275), the narration of the *No Man's Land* also refers to a tragic shock, as the main character little girl's naïve regard confronts the deportations to Auschwitz, consistently misunderstanding the events going on around her. It is not only a didactic, document-based reconstruction of a historical event, but the dramatic clash of two kinds of vertically intersecting human mentalities: a regard open to the Other, able to accept it in its strangeness, and a rationality which eliminates, demolishes the Other in its otherness.[18] The viewpoint of the archaic and folkloric narrative in the *Joseph and His Brothers* carries this same naivety, although it does not point out this naïve viewpoint as seen in the previous examples. The logic of the narration emphatically raises the presence of an ahistorical and external viewpoint which is able to mobilize the usual everyday approach. What is more, the structure of the stories offers the possibility of misunderstanding: the lascivious and tale-like passion stories are crossed over by the present-day story of the prostitute, which holds forth a possible mutual misunderstanding.

The overdrawn image has another meaning as well in Jeles's art. The aesthetic meaning of strangeness is nothing else for him than the consistent non-correspondence of expression at a certain point (2006, 144), that is, a systematic disorder, the destruction of the artistic form. However, the

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[17]The memories of Sándor Kardos, the cameraman of the film, are interesting in this respect: "When during the preproduction we accidentally met with Jeles we talked about how unimaginable it is for somebody to make photographs in Paradise. So I imagined some completely strange image quality, to make it somehow acceptable that a camera got into the Garden of Eden". (Jeles 2006, 88).

[18]See György Báron's interview with Jeles: "Auschwitz *works*, is always revealed, in many visible forms. [...] This mentality can be discovered in the European man's everyday activity. By European man I understand that educated being over-loaded with self-consciousness, who is the creator and beneficiary of modern industrial culture and failure." (Báron 1993, 6).

destruction of the artistic form is never a merely aesthetic or ornamental question, but a *problem of destiny* referring to human existence: this is what lends a special tragic quality to his art.[19] Adorno's ideology critical remark regarding the artistic form may be revealing in this respect: "As it is gradually becoming impossible to imagine events to be rational in themselves, the ideal of the aesthetic figure as the unity of appearance and conception increasingly becomes an illusion. [...] Never has horror sounded this true" (1974, 327) Just as for the theatre performance *Dramatic Events*, or in the *The Government Inspector (Revizor)* made with the homeless, it can be extended to Jeles's entire art that the degraded means of expression and their inadequate use *voice the horror of human existence.* The inability of verbal expression, the deprivation of articulation, the series of inadequate gestures and grotesque stylizations reveal at the same time a kind of refined culture criticism, and surface the deprivation of the world of the poor, the underprivileged (Balassa 1989, 289–290). This is why Jeles's stylized world cannot be called ornamental, no matter how similar it seems to Parajanov's films, the timeless nature of beautiful form and an "existence carved in stone".[20] In Balassa's understanding Jeles's accomplishment lies in the fact that the traditional instruments of his art – from direct quotations to stylized ornamental forms – refer to the stations of the destiny of an entire culture, as the source of the tragic (1989, 299–300).

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[19]Cf. with Jeles's thoughts: "this age is in the condition of sinfulness. [...] Now, it is possible that the *Valentino* is a special documentary, especially by external life, of this sensation, the *Dream Brigade* is also about something similar, but perhaps with the painful calling and necessity of redemption, [...] and in the *The Annunciation* it is perhaps about the fact that, whoever was touched by this sensation, turns away from present reality, and shows the opposite of this world in a film medium which does not deny sin and the thirst for redemption" (2006, 98).

[20]Cf. with the ideas of Ákos Szilágyi on the ornamental film: "In the ornamental film image it is always the living which is resembled to the lifeless, the organic to the inorganic, the natural to the artificial, and not the opposite way. [...] For the existence carved in stone, beauty is not transient, not frail, not a defenceless existence – it is a timeless, finite existence, as a beautiful form ought to be" (Szilágyi 1987, 35).

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Reality and Fiction
in Classical Hungarian Documentaries

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Abstract. Closer scrutiny of international classical documentaries (*Nanook, Land without Bread, Spanish Earth*, etc.) has put big question marks behind the traditional (or naïve?) concepts of documentation and reality, as if any theorist looking for documentary could only find fiction. On the other hand, the 'non-existing' documentary is flourishing, both in the commercial media and the art houses. Cinema-goers or TV-viewers (though not all of them) seem to appreciate something special in these offerings. The aim of this essay is to analyze some of the classical Hungarian documentaries from Höllering to Schiffer, Ember and Gulyás: do the artistic methods they used, the documentarists' discipline and ethics they followed offer us some useful clues to the contemporary discussion about the essence of documentary filmmaking?

The Real and the Truth

There is a Hungarian poem, which has played a crucial role in defining the public thinking in Hungary about the concept of the "real." Attila József, one of the justly canonized Hungarian poets of the 20th century, wrote in early 1937 a poem of 36 lines: *Welcoming Thomas Mann* (*Thomas Mann üdvözlése*) upon the occasion of the famous German writer's visit to Budapest.[1] In line no. 14 József asks Mann to "tell (us) the truth, not only the real" ("az igazat mondd, ne csak a valódit"). The poem has since become part of the secondary school curriculum, and this line has been quoted great many times. The basic

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[1] The Hungarian original and an English translation both can be found here: http://visegrad.typotex.hu/index.php?page=work&auth_id=127&work_id=514&tran_id=955. Last downloaded 16. 03. 2009.

situation of József's poem is that of a child, in bed, waiting for a bedtime story – but also longing for the presence of an adult. Both the tale and the presence are needed to fight angst ("his heart throbs with little anxious beats," "kis szive nagyon szorongva dobban.") And here is the crucial part of the text, this time in my own prose translation: "You know this well, the poet never tells a fib: / Tell us the truth, not only the real, / (give us) the illumination which fills the mind with light, / Because, without each other, we all are in darkness. / Like Hans Castorp did see through Madame Chauchat's body, / Let us see through ourselves this evening." From the context it becomes clear, that to Attila József, telling only the real equals telling a fib, a white lie. To avoid fibbing, the poet has to tell more than the real: has to tell the truth. But what kind of truth? "The illumination which fills the mind with light, Because, without each other, we all are in darkness." – comes the explanation. (Who are the "we" in this sentence? The poem allows both interpretations: we, the audience or the audience and Thomas Mann.) It seems that for the poet truth had a collective and/or mutual quality, dynamism. We have to be together, to co-operate, in order to shed light into each other's minds. Another quality of truth is obviously its transcendence. Truth is like X-rays, says József's ample association to the persons of Mann's novel *The Magic Mountain*. And the poet takes the situation a step further: while H.C. sees through Mme Chauchat's body (not through her soul!), József expects from Mann's reading that we (the audience) will be able to "see through ourselves." The ultimate truth, it seems, is for József to see through ourselves. Then, in the poem, the perspective opens from private illness and grief to the "monstrous states" which devour humanity and which form a threat to the guest and his audience alike. (Remember: the time is 1937.) Here, at the peak of the poem, there is the wish that mankind (and womankind...) has to preserve its humanity against all odds. Then the poet offers the floor to the writer-guest: let him "begin the tale" (an expression which brings back to mind the opening image of the child and his bedtime tale).

In the light of this famous poem, it seems strange, that so many theorists of the documentary cinema speak about the real as the most important ingredient of the documentary. As William Rothman observed: "Documentaries are not inherently more direct or truthful than other kinds of films. [...] What particular documentary films reveal about reality, how they achieve their revelations, are questions to be addressed by acts of criticism, not settled a priori by theoretical fiat" (Rothman 1997, xiii). Bearing in mind both Rothman and Attila József, one may conclude, that the truth of a documentary film is what the film reveals about (the otherwise hidden aspects of) reality – and

about ourselves, the director and the audience. The process of revelation is (has to be) the documentary film itself. The child (in the poetical image of Attila József) has to be (during the making of the film) inside the director himself – no documentary without a childish curiosity! Then, with the film ready, the child has to move into each person of the audience – the audience of the documentary has to re-produce the child-like curiosity of the director during filming. "Let us see through ourselves this evening" – says József, and the words "this evening" can be interpreted (in our context) that the revelation ends with the evening, that the work of art (for us: the documentary) has a beginning, a duration, and of course an ending. At day's end, the child has to stop being curious and has to go to sleep. The work of art is a finite piece of communication.

What, then, is the difference between films of documentary and fiction? Most fiction films have to preserve (or cannot but preserve) documentary qualities (a reference – Branigan), in order to have the audience accept the story's believability. All documentaries are made with (some degree of) fiction-like intervention into "reality" by the director, by the filming process itself. Still, the distinction between documentary and fiction (as we have implied at the beginning) seems to be working at all levels: production, distribution, exhibition, and of course, consumption.

In the process of recording reality on film, the result is not an imperfect record of reality. The result is a *perfect record* which is at the same time a *partial falsification* of reality, too. It is perfect as a record, due to the physical and/or chemical processes at work. But at the same time it is necessarily imperfect or falsified, when compared to the "God-perspective": to the knowledge of an omniscient, omnipresent transcendental being, who does not have a point of view or a (defined) place in time, because (s)he is by definition omnipresent and timeless. Because of its universality God's perspective cannot have a standpoint and cannot become a work of art. These possibilities open up only for us, humans just because our perspective is limited in space, viewpoint and time. The huge gap between the all-encompassing perspective of God and the minuscule perspective of a human being is (seen in a different approach) the field given to us humans for reasoning, observation, for our scientific or artistic formulations.

The main difference between documentary film and fiction film lies (from our present point of view) in the "basic agreement" between the filmmaker and the audience. Any human communication contains markers about some basic agreements between the communicating parties. One of the questions which have to be agreed upon is about the nature of the content communicated:

is it "real" or "fiction"?   While the default agreement in human speech communication is "real," the default of entertainment cinema is "fiction." If a friend of ours tells us some surprising, astonishing story, we ask him: "Are you kidding?" On the other hand, if a child gets "too" frightened during the bedtime tale, the adult says: "Don't be afraid, this is only a tale…" In both cases, there was a need to verify, to confirm the basic agreement. While sitting in a cinema, and watching a (fiction) film, the spectator would never ask: "Are they kidding?" – as "they" obviously "are kidding," that is, the actors are playing the roles of somebody else. Not so in a documentary.[2]

There the basic agreement states, to quote Branigan, that "the images and sounds of a film documentary [. . .] have a relationship so close to reality that they become proof of, or at least evidence for, the events that were in front of the camera and microphone at a past time." And: "the spectator assumes in a documentary that there is a close (casual) connection between the logic of the events depicted and the logic of depicting" (Branigan 1992, 202). With documentary films (and only with documentaries!) the spectator is checking repeatedly "the logic of depicting", that is the film language employed by the filmmaker that this language does not stray into the directions of fictional filming. With fiction films the spectator exercises his/her "sound scepticism" mostly regarding the content of the film, while the methods of filming are basically uncontested. With documentaries, the scepticism is directed upon the methods of filming, "the logic of depicting," and if the method of filming is being found impeccable by the spectator, the content of the film is being accepted as "real"[3] and can be judged as such. Otherwise, the spectator may reconsider the documentary status of the film, and say: "This film has obviously been written and enacted; this is fiction, not documentary." With the postmodern, several authors have playfully mixed the documentary and the fiction conventions, exactly to destroy the supposedly petrified perceptions of the audience. But our examples are in the classic tradition, where a mixing of documentary and fiction can happen, but from very different reasons.

To sum up these introductory remarks: following the Hungarian tradition of confronting "the real" with "the truth," we will examine both aspects of the filmmaking process. How do (the directors of) classical Hungarian documentaries achieve the benchmark of "the real" and how do they transcend this "real" to arrive to "the truth" or to "a truth."

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[2]See Rothman's analysis of Griffith's *True Heart Suzy* vs. Flaherty's *Nanook* (Rothman 1997, 1–4).

[3]Branigan quotes a book from 1945: "by avoiding obvious 'arty' touches, the director can produce a true documentary feeling on the screen" (Branigan 1992, 206).

Hortobágy (Georg Höllering, 1934–36)

To begin with, *Hortobágy* by Höllering is not a documentary, it is a fiction film played by laymen in real showplaces. The film however contains long documentary sequences. An explanation can be found in the history of the making of the film.[4] Austrian-born Höllering started shooting documentary sequences at Hortobágy plains, Eastern Hungary in 1934, probably (then yet) without sound. The startling ethnographic and aesthetic quality of the material has led him to the idea of developing it into a feature film. He showed the material to probably the greatest Hungarian writer of the time, Zsigmond Móricz and asked him to write a treatment for a scenario. Móricz, himself of peasant origin, paid a visit to the scene and wrote a short story very quickly: it appeared in the Christmas 1934 issue of the Budapest daily *Pesti Napló*. Höllering continued filming in the summer of 1935, using a sound camera. To the dismay of the writer he transformed Móricz's story at several points. Still, Móricz participated at least for one day at the shooting, and wrote a vivid account of it. Höllering had the roles played by Hortobágy herdsmen, young and old. At the start of the film, Höllering lets Jancsi, the young csikós boy hero of the film tell a few words about themselves, that they are herdsmen, not actors. This introduction has been recorded both in Hungarian and in English (!). (Jancsi knew no English, he studied the text word-by-word.) [Fig. 1.]

Höllering employed the devices of the feature film without any self-imposed limits. As he had changed his mind from documentary to fiction, his aim was not to fit fiction into documentary, but the contrary. The structure of the film got suddenly re-defined by the introduction of the narrative via Móricz's story. Móricz (having seen the documentary material from 1934) obviously did make efforts to keep the story within the framework delimited by the already filmed shots. Höllering in 1935 wanted to make that story into a sellable feature film. His end product is a documentary *malgré-lui*, but also a forerunner of later, narrative-based documentaries.

What is documented in the film *Hortobágy*? Not only in the original material of 1934, but also in the fiction-type material of 1935? Let's make a list: a way of life, the big marketplace *Hidi vásár,* nature, the environment (the *puszta,* horses, cows, sheep), the outside characteristics of the people, their clothes, their tools, and, in a way, the philosophy of Zsigmond Móricz as well, in spite of the poor quality "acting" of the lay actors.

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[4]We have several contemporary accounts, see Passuth (1935), Móricz (1935) and Móricz (1934–1936). For a recent analysis (with a slight bias for Móricz and against Höllering) see: Hamar (2009).

This way we can call Höllering's Hortobágy one of the first *docufictions*,[5] following e.g. Eisenstein's *Old and New* (1929), but preceding by more than ten years *Louisiana Story* (1948) by Robert Flaherty.[6] *Louisiana Story* has some startling resemblances to Hortobágy.[7] Both films have a teenage boy as a central hero, who is in some conflict with his family. In both films the boy meets a crew drilling for oil. In both films the world of the machines (oil rig) is being confronted with the animals, with nature. In both films the machine and modernity wins, though the spectators' emotions bend towards the ancient environment and the animals, towards the disappearing old way of life.

Gyuri (Pál Schiffer, 1978)

When Pál Schiffer started to prepare his film about a young Roma, Gyuri Cséplő, [Fig. 2.] he made two very conscious decisions.[8] First, he wanted to make a narrative film. Beyond aesthetics, this decision had an economic cause: Schiffer wanted the film co-produced by the feature film studio Hunnia, which meant better financing. *Gyuri* was, for a documentary, extraordinarily costly: it was shot in colour 16 mm (a novelty at the time in Hungary), it had to be blown up for 35 mm abroad, to reach the full cinema circuit (at least theoretically), and it had a lengthy shooting time, with long intermissions. Second, he nevertheless wanted his film to be a documentary. For Schiffer this meant that he did everything possible, lots of little and big tricks (though never crossing the line of filmmaking ethics) to keep the filmed events of Gyuri Cséplő's life free from the interference of the camera. Schiffer wanted to avoid interfering with Gyuri Cséplő's integrity, with his control over his life.

In the film three young Roma, Gyuri Cséplő and two relatives, are leaving the third-world-type gypsy settlement in West Hungary for the capital, Budapest. They are looking for a job as unskilled labourers. It had been their decision to go, and Schiffer took pains not to influence the situations with the different companies: these were real job seeking situations, with real positive and

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[5]For the term 'docufictions' and Flaherty, see: Bayer 2005, 168.

[6]Let us not forget that at the Mannheim Film Festival 1964 both *Old and New* and *Louisiana Story* have been voted among the (then) 12 best documentaries of all times.

[7]As *Hortobágy* was shown in London first in December 1936, then re-issued in 1945 and shown widely in film societies, we cannot exclude the possibility that Flaherty might have seen it.

[8]Personal communication: the author has spent several months in the team of Pál Schiffer, doing a sociological study of the discussions, following organised film club projections of the film *Gyuri* (cf. Szekfü 1980).

negative outcomes. Also, the three were free at any moment either to continue or to give up. An example: at one of the companies, the clerk examining the three asks whether they can read. Two of the three admit to being illiterates, Gyuri Cséplő says yes, he can. The clerk hands him over a daily paper, and Gyuri slowly but flawlessly reads aloud the paragraph given to him. For the spectator, a further level of artistic effect is being achieved, this time irony. Gyuri has to read aloud the following text: "Premiere of the new series of traditional operas. The Orchestra and Chorus of the Attila József School will perform Absalom by ... Weber, conducted by József Sas."

Conclusion: the clerk accepts him, while rejecting the two others. Gyuri Cséplő, without hesitation says that without his relatives he does not accept the job either. Two decisions, which were born in front of the running camera – but still two real decisions, with all the consequences. The clerk decides to accept one, reject two. And Gyuri decides not to accept and stay with his relatives. At the end, the two relatives did give up, while Gyuri Cséplő continued his search. This open-endedness of the situations gives the film *Gyuri* its unique tension.

Never Give Up! (Ne sápadj! Gyula Gulyás, 1982)[9]

This film of the Gulyás brothers (Gyula Gulyás, director and János Gulyás, director of photography) began originally as a multi-part TV-documentary, *Under Domaháza Hills* (*Domaházi hegyek között* . Domaháza is a small village in Northern Hungary, near the Slovak border.) Based on the material of the TV documentary, shot upon several years, *Never Give Up!* is a portrait of a man, Alfonz Medve, a peasant-citizen, as the filmmakers fondly call him. The documentary technique of the film is absolutely traditional: episodes of his daily life, work and leisure, interviews with him, his family and acquaintances. The title of the film comes from the credo of Alfonz: never turn pale, never give up. [Fig. 3.] In the film we have all the ingredients of a quality documentary: the interviews of the film are empathic, the observation is non-obtrusive. Alfonz Medve is an extraordinary character, who suffers prison from the communist authorities because of his efforts to make the village co-operative more competitive on the market. In spite of his imprisonment of sixteen months he is anything but broken, he goes on cultivating his little land, and raising the best cattle in the region. But all these, the good work of

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[9]"Ne sápadj!" was translated as "Never give up!" Literally, the translation is "Don't turn pale!"

the filmmakers, the extraordinary personality and fate of Alfonz Medve would not suffice for a film like *Never Give Up!*.

Looking for the "secret" of *Never Give Up!*, I found in a detailed structural analysis (Szekfü 2004, 295–301) that the episodes of the film follow a multi-layered structure, giving the film a peculiar dynamism. Looking for structural unitsin *Never Give Up!*, one can find 26 temporary-spatial blocks, or scenes. In the film, these blocks can be positioned on different levels of Alfonz Medve's life, of human life. Here we can distinguish eight such "levels": the personal-bodily, including health, the family, the livestock, the ploughland, the meadow, the forest, the village, the co-operative, the country (Hungary), the Carpathian basin with Hungarians living in- and outside Hungary, world history (reference to the Polish events of 1981).

If for analytical purposes we draw eight lines, like on a musical score sheet, we can position the 26 blocks like the notes of a melody. This "melody" of *Never Give Up!* is polyphonic: our "notes" often form "chords," that is, several scenes have connections to more than one level. These chords resonate in the spectator. It is through this polyphony that the spectator has a living experience of the interconnectedness of Alfonz Medve's life scenes. This "melody" of *Never Give Up!* is like the line of a tender hill: there is an ascending part, more than two-thirds of the film, there is a 70 seconds peak (more about this below), and there is a descending line with a quiet outstretching tail. During the ascension we witness Alfonz's work and (political) struggles, his peasant skills, his ways with humans and animals.

The 70 seconds "peak" of the film is a scene, where seemingly almost nothing important happens. Alfonz gets on his coach, and with his horses running, like on a race, drives the coach through the village. There is bright sun, a dog is running along, and geese stretch their wings against the light. This is not a journey with a purpose, the film does not tell us, what his destination is, and there is no arrival at the end of the 70 seconds. This lack of explanation has an inspirational effect on the spectator: one has to find out the missing motivation, and to do this, the spectator is forced to evoke the preceding hour of the film, and to construct a meaning to this incredibly beautiful, unexplained coach journey. Thus, the ride becomes an accumulative symbol of the values in Alfonz's life, a visual metaphor for his freedom and his ceaseless activity.

Then comes the last quarter of the film, the descent and the calm ending. If in the ascension part we are symbolically in the Empire of the Sun, here we arrive in the Empire of the Moon. The episodes tell us about the price Alfonz had to pay for his integrity (prison, family problems, deteriorating health.) We see him taking a cow to the slaughterhouse, we see the family's visit to the

cemetery at All Souls' Day, and we see Alfonz at a spa, curing his rheumatism. The scenes suggest in a very calm and tender way that men and animals all have to pass some day, and with age our bodies slowly give up functioning. *Never Give Up!* ends with winter scenes, we even see hunters returning from the hunt, like in Brueghel's famous painting.

Everything in *Never Give Up!* is strictly documental. There is no enacting or re-enacting, things happen naturally, the camera is a witness only. There are interviews but these are like everyday conversations. The secret of *Never Give Up!* is the subtle oscillation between "real" and "truth". This oscillation has been made possible both through the complex ("musical") structure of the film and through the human quality embedded in each scene. The general tone of the film is of the understatement, which after a time leads to a deep, lasting viewer experience. A cosmic, spiritual experience emerges from down-to-earth observations.

Pócspetri (Judit Ember, 1982)

Pócspetri is the name of a poor village in Eastern-Hungary. In 1947 the villagers protested against the taking over of their Catholic school by the state, already led by the Communists. During a protest rally, a dog-fight broke out, and the gun of a policeman present killed the policeman himself. Nobody knew exactly who pulled the trigger, but during a show-trial, two persons, the priest and a well-to-do peasant have been sentenced to death. The priest has been pardoned by the President of the Republic, the peasant was executed. Many peasants were sentenced to imprisonment. Due to well-organised Communist propaganda, Pócspetri became the symbol of the so-called "clerical reaction," it was declared a sinful village, was deprived of investment and development during most of the Communist era.

Judit Ember has in many films sided with the oppressed, the underdogs. A Holocaust survivor herself, she often spoke about turning the memory of Jewish suffering into solidarity with the current oppressed, like the innocent villagers of Pócspetri. Making the film was anything but easy. The shooting was financed by the (state-owned) Béla Balázs Studio of young filmmakers, practically as an historical record, without the hope of a public showing. Though more than thirty years have passed, the people of Pócspetri were still full of fears. (The Communists were still in power in Hungary, and nobody could foresee the collapse of the system in a few years.) The shooting of the film was also a fight against fear.

For the purposes of the present study, let us pick only two aspects of *Pócspetri*: first, the strategies of the director and of the interviewee during filming, and second, the biblical/mythological dimensions.

Uncle Peter is a beautifully aged, frail old man. [Fig. 4.] He is sitting during the interview, accompanied by a younger, but still elderly relative. He is telling the story of his interrogation – he was tortured, his teeth broken. Several times the torturers asked him to sing a church song – and then beat him even more. Then the director (off screen) asks him: how was it, when the policemen instructed his brother Miklós (the man who was to be executed) how he "shot" the policeman. Uncle Péter answers: "I don't know." He does not know about "instructions". But he can tell what he did see. And he tells the story of the instructions in a graphic way. But without interpretation. He can tell what he saw, but he cannot name it. The spectator in the cinema senses the fight of fear and speaking up in Uncle Peter's soul. Uncle Peter's strategy is to tell about the sight, but decline the explanation. Who knows, the filming might cause trouble...

The interview continues, and the director (still in off) asks Uncle Peter to sing his role. It turns out that in the village there used to be a passion play, and Uncle Peter was singing Apostle Peter, who rejects the Saviour three times. An incredible moment of the film Pócspetri is as we hear this very old man singing the part of the apostle: "Even if all the others reject you, I never will!" And later: "I don't even know that man!" Why is this documentary moment so forceful? First, because of its impeccable authenticity. But also because of the parallels to the happenings of 1947: the torture, the faith, the betrayals. And, on the third level, Uncle Peter is singing here, just like he had to sing in front of his torturers. And this singing, before the camera, becomes a withdrawal of the humiliations of 1947, a spiritual atonement and compensation for the suffering. Here Uncle Peter is recovering his dignity the torturers stole him in 1947.

There is a less direct, but still very forceful mythological reference in *Pócspetri*: to the Greek mythology, namely to the Electra myth. The story of the last day of the executed brother, his execution, his burial, and the family's efforts to find him, to identify the body – all these are told in the film by a middle-aged woman in black. The key moment here is that the woman is standing during the whole interview, standing behind a table, like a black exclamation mark. Two patterns mingle here in the minds of the audience: the elements of the Electra myth (standing up for the dignity of the dead) and the elements of the Pócspetri story (looking for the body of the executed brother). As Electra could not be persuaded to lay down the mourning-dress, Mrs. Bardi

of Pócspetri is in black, 34 years after the crime, standing rather than sitting. Again, here we have absolutely authentic documentary material, where the connections to mythological structures enhance the effect of the contemporary narrative.

Starting from a 1937 poem of Attila József, which (by pointing to the difference between the real and truth) had enormous influence on Hungarian public thinking, we took a look at four classical Hungarian documentaries. As it could be expected, each filmmaker applied a different strategy to get to the real and then to transcend this real and to get to the/some truth. We had two docufictions (*Hortobágy, Gyuri*) and two documentaries in the traditional sense. (*Never Give Up!, Pócspetri*). All four films succeeded in catching the real, and then transcending it.

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In and Out of Context

On the Reality Effect and Evidentiary Status of Home Videos

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Abstract. Based on Richard Chalfen's two basic types of contexts of home visual media: the private and the public, the essay analyses contexts that represent paradigms of the evidentiary status and production of meaning: the "what did they look like," the "open window" attitude and the "how they looked at" paradigm. One of the most characteristic situations for home videos, a primary context is when the people producing and watching the movie is one and the same. In this approach home movies show an affiliation to autobiographic texts. When used as an attribute of feature films or embedded in different contexts, the term home video bears different meanings which I discuss in the analysis of relevant cases.

The present essay discusses the roles assigned by the different theories/analyses to context in defining home movies, and to what extent this is an inherent part of the notion of 'home movie.' The analysis takes into consideration not only the scientific discourse on home movies, but also the scholarly writings on home visual media[1] which are in connection with each other based on the role they assign to context in defining the types of pictures. It is not a negligible viewpoint that the authors of these texts, although not always consciously, temporarily suspend the differences between

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[1] Richard Chalfen defines the following as home visual media: snapshots, picture albums, albums containing cut-outs from magazines or pictures, scrap-books, home movies/videos, video-mail etc. He treats these as a separate group of home media. Audio recordings (recorded phone conversations), written materials (diary, letter, email, postcard etc.) are also considered to be home media (Chalfen 2002, 143).

the two media, and instead of presenting their specific nature or discussing their differentiations, they mix them by referring to writings on family pictures in texts written on home movies and vice versa. Nevertheless the specificity of media is not at stake in such a definition which considers the creation of meaning as a contextual act. The contextual, cultural analyses perceive that the matter of the two media does not influence the possibilities of representation as much as their usage and function does.

A scale can be outlined based on the extent to which the context of production and reception is part of the intension of the notion of home movie. At one pole of the scale there are those definitions which differentiate home pictures/movies based only on their context. Most attempts to describe the phenomenon start from the community of users and define its methodology and field of study similar to the following: "In our research we have dealt less with the perceptual components of movie codes and mediation because we considered more important the analysis of those forms of social behaviour which produce these forms. We assumed that movies and pictures are formed rather by social than psychological or technical factors" (Musello 1984, 28).[2] Departing from Chalfen's socio-divistic theory, he uses and widens his system of description developed for home movies so that he can even more thoroughly describe the complex act of photography. The parts of the procedure are the following: planning, behaviour behind the machine, behaviour in front of the machine, processing, selection, and presentation. In his description these parts of procedure are connected to the following five communicational factors: participants, environment, theme, the form of the message, the code. The parts of procedure and the different procedures create a matrix-like system and can be interconnected in thirty possible ways (Musello 1984, 28). That is why all contextual factors are dissected and the least is said about the pictures themselves. This approach starts from the premise that this group of pictures can be differentiated from other pictures only through their usage, and this leads to the conclusion that by placing them into a different context, they could not be recognized as family photos. "On a formal, syntactic base family photos cannot be differentiated from other forms of photography" (Musello 1984, 48). Thus the meaning of the family photography does not emerge from its existence as autonomous photography, that is why it cannot be presented as such. The meaning is formed by other parts of the cultural system. "The popular readings of photography create a transcendental link between the sign and the sign vehicle, but it is not reduced to this completely. The

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[2]Translations from Hungarian were made by the author of the essay.

photography is far from being interpreted as something meaning only itself and nothing else, but is challenged as the sign of something else, although it is not" (Bourdieu 1982, 240). Thus pictures are adequate to characterize communities, to present their features and systems of values to such an extent that they consider important to discuss the pictures only from the iconological point of view, and they are content with a catalogue of symbols or smiles. One can meet similar definitions: "the last part of the picture in the table, the 'form' and 'code' of the message can be dealt with briefly" (Musello 1984, 47). The picture in this case is not defined as an autonomous entity: its meaning is created from its context, from outside (in the process of their making and viewing). Departing from the impossibility to define the code of amateur photography, the author eventually states that "on formal, syntactic base family photos cannot be differentiated from other forms of photography," this can be done only "through communicational interactions, contexts and finite products" (Musello 1984, 48–49). As opposed to this. in the case of movies the movie styles and the forms of message can be characterized with filming conventions, routine as well as the schemes of behaviour in front of the camera (Chalfen quoted by Musello 1984, 48). Based on these arguments the theoretician does not consider photos taken by professional photographers as family photos, as their professionalism exceeds the popular concepts on the formal elements of family photos, and he excludes those art and consumption products (e.g. commercials) which deliberately mimic the style of snapshots, as the story behind their formation and usage is not the same as the main factor in the above definition: the home/private context. This approach very much tries to differentiate the topic of the study not from the viewpoint of form but that of social meaning; however, with the exclusion of the above mentioned picture types a paradox situation is created. The author speaks about the style of the photographs, the popular concepts of formal elements of family pictures, without giving any examples or attempting to define them, although he justified the impossibility of merely formal differentiation with the lack of form.

According to Boerdam and Martinius, besides the context of the pictures their theme becomes a relevant aspect of definition as well, and consequently pictures are considered to be family photos: they can be named "together with their theme and the social environment in which they are used. Based on the first definition, all photos are family pictures which represent relatives or family members. Based on the second, all pictures which are preserved by the family and sometimes looked at are family photos as well" (Boerdam–Martinius, quoted by Bán 2000, 26). This definition does not exclude studio photos or

ordered wedding videos but can lead to further questions: what happens to the pictures in which the relatives and family members are present but not as relatives but as the characters in a fictive, staged story? Can we consider the media consumed at home as home media or the programme videocassettes, DVDs, films which are watched and preserved by the family as home video? András Bán – without the aim to contradict[3] the arguments for these context-based definitions – presents a new dilemma within this anthropological frame of image studies. He objects the fact that the systematic analytical methods excluded from the discourse the idea of "functional aesthetics" (Jaques Maquet's term): "the thing these texts do not speak about is the poetic, aesthetic act which happens nonetheless during the watching of these pictures (somewhere far from any interpretation of art), the moment through which, even if only for a glimpse of the eye, there is an ease in the congenital bad fate of man" (Bán 2000, 27).

The diversity and sometimes conflicting nature of the definitions can be explained in part by the fact that the underlying questions of these studies differ themselves: some of the answers imply the issues of "what is home photo/video," some that of "when can a photo/video be considered as home photo/video." Probably this can explain the terminological proliferation characterizing the way the scholarly writings define the topic of the study, often without explaining the choice of term: *amateur film* (Kuball 1984), *family movie* (Kuball 1984), *private film* (Forgács 1995). As I have presented in a previous study (Blos 2003, 319–321), in these cases different aspects of the topic are addressed with these terms. The *amateur* notion is present as synonym for low quality, rudimentary, dilettante, arbitrary and instinctive, the form referring to being outside of the canon to a certain extent, but the term is used also to denote some forms of institutional movie-making, its aesthetics and a certain type of publicity. The *family movie, private movie* terms do not refer to formal characteristics but to the environment of making and the social behaviours in connection with these. The enhancement of the family aspect raises some other questions: what importance do they have in the organization of small community identity, how is the self-image and the hierarchy of the

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[3]He presents the main questions and results of the scholarly writings on family photos: "they studied questions like: to what extent the self-representation of the family, its inner system and hierarchy is present in these pictures (the answer: it was more explicit in the past, in the present it is less represented). They concentrated on whether the behavioural characteristics are present in these pictures (of course). They asked to what extent were the pictures, the objects, or the helpers the starting points of family story-telling (the answer: it depends on the story-teller)" (Bán 2000, 26).

family present? That is why they do not have the same meaning outside this community (it is private). The English term *home video* localizes the place of production and usage of these pictures and at the same time it refers to the rudimentary, simplistic means of representation (*home-made*, something makeshift or artisanship).

The anthropologist Richard Chalfen places the question of private pictures in a wider context as he broadens and gradatess the discourse. He calls *home media* every representational form with the following characteristics: it is the significant part of everyday life, represented by the vernacular, the banality of free-time culture; it is firstly the product of a socio-cultural exercise and only secondly determined by technological or cognitive processes; and it is the combination of several forms of communication, may that be a phone conversation, a printed electronic letter, or family websites, within which the visual media forms a separate group. Compared to mass-media exercises there is an important difference in the relationship between the producers and consumers as well as in the social organization of the target community (Chalfen 2002, 143). According to this, the home visual media is determined by the private, personal ways of production and by the intention of private or personal consumption. The first criterion excludes the mass media products consumed in a private environment, at home, while the second factor integrates the visual forms which were intended for personal use and not created personally. The criterion of intention differentiates the home visual media from those which were created in a private environment, and yet they are to be considered art or experiment due to their intentionality. I consider part of this group the one-minute family scenes which are so frequent in early cinema, which were created for a wide audience with the purpose of attraction and not documenting family narratives (Gunning 1990). Most of the avant-garde creations can be included in this group: e.g. the silent footage recording the birth of the American avant-garde movie-maker, Stan Brakhage's child, the *Window Water Moving Baby* (1962), which was motivated mostly to subvert the conventional relation between picture and sound, and not an exercise to immortalize or remember.

Thus Richard Chalfen defines the adjective *home* metaphorically and by doing this he dodges the explanations needed when using the term in its verbatim meaning and the presentation of exceptions (Chalfen 2002). At the same time, unlike the above presented theories, intentionality and not context becomes the cognitive background. Another important statement of the author is that in the common sense the intentionality of the home visual media is connected to a specific notion of evidence which functions as the

driving force of the creation of home pictures (Chalfen 2002, 141). Pierre
Bourdieu calls this popular attitude, which interprets the picture as evidence,
the *social definition* of photography[4]. Nevertheless, probably because of its
unconscious and achievement-like nature, which materializes in interaction,
the term *social definition* is ambiguous to a certain extent. That is why, based
on the theory of social representations,[5] I consider the usage of the term *naïve
picture theory* (Blos 2008).

In Chalfen's opinion the way a home video becomes evidence and the
notion of evidence we apply in connection with it depends on the context
and culture. It is important to consider how the situations and viewpoints
differ in which these types of pictures acquire an evidentiary status and are
considered to be documents. In his logical-analytical train of thought on the
ways of documenting through pictures, Attila Horányi presents the following
thesis: "in order for something to become the objective evidence of the thing
(i) it needs to be an object; it needs to be (ii) symbolic, something which
– in a specific context – can refer to something else (a picture can become a
document only in the context of picture watching, as otherwise the relationship
between the sign and the sign vehicle and thus its nature as a documented
object is not determined), where the intention to prove, testify and certify
must be part of the reference"; (iii) it needs to be genuine to give an external
certification of this reference (Horányi 2000, 86). From the point of view of
the connections between the evidentiary status of pictures and their context,
the author presents some useful hints. He outlines three possible situations
according to whether the picture/movie can fulfil the third criterion, that of
genuineness. One of these situations is when the picture becomes the tool of
transparency: pictures are seen not as the image of evidence but the evidence
itself, this theory considers genuineness as something which is connected to the
picture. In the following two cases its evidentiary status needs to be attested
and this can be performed by introducing and following conventions outside
and/or inside the picture. The external conventions are in fact contexts of
attestation: for example the environment of its production is known. On-site
identification pictures, when all phases of the production are conscious and

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[4]"We consider the photography an absolutely realistic and objective recording of the
visible world because (from the beginning) it was assigned social functions which were
considered 'realistic' and 'objective' […]when giving objective degrees to photographs, the
society does nothing else but validates its tautological certainty that the picture of reality
which matches its picture of objectivity is truly objective" (Bourdieu 1982, 226–228).

[5]The theory of social representation studies the processes in the course of which scientific
theories, cultural objects stream back to the common sense as they become the leaders of
everyday behaviour and the tools of commissioning of meaning (László 1999, 9–41).

controllable, are considered to be part of this group. In the interpretation of the contexts of home or private pictures the most usable handhold is provided by the distinction of the types of conventions within the picture. This group is formed by such visual conventions or markers which are meant to create an appearance of genuineness inside the picture. Such a sign is the haphazard, spoilt image which excludes conscious composition or the presence of elements which refer to randomness, which are incidentally connected to the theme of the picture. The appearance of genuineness can be achieved through the stereotyped, banal composition as well (Horányi 2000, 86–87).

The above classification of the document/evidentiary value of pictures suggests that the naïve picture theory described as the main driving force in the production of private pictures, the everyday notion of transparency of the medium is not at all homogeneous, it can be further articulated, or in some cases several types of convention can prevail. The category of the conventions within the picture refers to the fact that private pictures can not only be defined based on their context, but also based on certain formal features as well. This can lead to further questions: how do these pictures behave when uprooted from their private context? Based on what formal features can they be considered home visual media? In what contexts do they appear, in what way are the public presentations different from the private reception environment? And how can the conventions behind naïve picture theory be described, which are mentioned in context-based definitions ("common notions of the formal elements of family photos"), but are considered irrelevant in analyzing the semantic structures of pictures?

Chalfen's metaphorically interpreted *home* adjective is adequate to describe not only those contexts which interpret pictures as documents, but it can also imply the naïve style of the pictures. Chalfen distinguishes two basic types of contexts of home visual media: the private and the public.These contexts also represent two paradigms of the evidentiary status and production of meaning, in the metaphorical language of the author the "what did they look like" (how these people appear) and the "how they looked at" paradigm (Chalfen 2002, 142). As one of the most characteristic situations for home videos, a primary context is when the people producing and watching the movie are one and the same. In this approach home movies show an affiliation to autobiographic texts.[6]

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[6]Some of the criteria in Lejeune's definition of autobiography – with the exception of the formal criterion (it needs to be a prose narrative) – can be applied to the home videos/movies: in some cases the illocutionary value assigned to them matches the criterion of the theme (personal life), the author (being identical with the narrator) and that of the narrator (being

Within these contexts the movie becomes for the viewers a kind of evidence for "how they looked," "how was it then," "what happened to us" (Chalfen 2002, 142). Thus the pictures merge in the perception of the initiated viewer and they create a symbiotic relationship with the experienced reality. That is why in this case it is not the picture that has document value as this document nature is not diegetically enclosed in the picture, but it emerges from the symbiotic relationship between the picture held up by the viewer's knowledge and reality. The forms of this knowledge of the viewer are, on the one hand, the *narratives*[7] or realms of implication, which incorporate the experiences connected to the theme of the picture into meaningful frames, but are not necessarily presented in a discursive form, and, on the other hand, the texts, *discourses,* which are formulated, textualized in a certain medium in the process of the viewing. In the contexts in which the pictures are used as evidence or for the purpose of memory, the information carried by the picture becomes not only medially articulated but is characterized by the *externality*[8] of the creation of meaning.

identical with the character and the perspective of the narration). Gérard Genette gives a similar definition of autobiography in his work entitled *Fiction et diction* (1991) in which he tries to create a theoretical framework with the help of narratology and speech act theory to describe the differences between fictive and factual texts. Genette's narratology is not only adequate to categorize written texts, it is a kind of meta-theory the film theory applications of which were encouraged by the author's terms built upon visual metaphors, and it became the text of reference for the newest film-narration theory texts (cf. Branigan 1992). Such a visual metaphor is the term of focalization which studies the distribution of the knowledge transmitted through communication, the way the different levels and agents (focalizers) of narration provide the receiver with the information. In the case of home movies it could be an interesting issue to decide what kind of narrative information the medium focalizes if in the above named type of context parts of the narrative information are external. At the same time it could provide a uniform theoretical framework to describe the differences between the factual narrations created with a purpose of documentation and the private fictions (self-fictions?).

[7]Genette divides the elements of the narrative in the following way: story, discourse and narration. Edward M. Bruner studies the stories defined as syntactic structures which determine in a latent way the ethnological studies on the transformations of indigenous American culture. In his use of terms the narrative is an implicit structure behind the descriptions: "narrative structures provide an organized framework and meaning to experience, but there will always be such feelings and experiences which cannot be fully grasped by the dominant story" (Bruner 1999, 185).

[8]The externality of the relevant information was an important feature of early films in Noël Burch's opinion, who defined this early period of cinema as a *primitive mode of representation*. He describes as primitive externality the early forms of film narration in which the film did not function as autonomous narration entity, the show was accompanied by the commentary of a lecturer and music, and a similar function was assigned to certain types of intertitles (Burch 1990).

In this case visual representation is nothing else but *real visual illocution*,[9] in which the usage of the picture is an act in itself, may it be remembrance or proof.

What role do the naïve picture theories assign to the code of the message, how can we describe the medium of these phantom-like documents? This evidentiary status is paired up with a naïve picture theory/mode of perception which identifies the product with the subject of the picture, the portrayed instead of the picture as object. Barthes calls this coming into power of the sign-vehicle *magic*. The picture is no longer sign, it becomes the object itself. Another metaphor of this viewpoint is the window-metaphor, based on which a picture is transparent; it is like an *open window* which one can see through.A family photo is capable to evoke because seeing through its margins we identify the image as something non-mediated, non-transmitted.

Another different situation would be when the viewer of the private pictures has no knowledge (or disregards it) about the reality of which the film can be considered an evidence (in the above presented meaning). In this case he/she will consider the picture a document based on a different notion of evidence. While in the previous situation the pictures witnessed how somebody "looked like," here one can discover "how they looked at." The picture can become a document of the beholder, of the act of image creation. In this case mediation is emphasized and the attention is shifted from the represented to the way of representation. The extent the viewing of the picture as object differs from the "open window" perspective can be best presented through old pictures that can be found in almost every album which represent our ancestors the name of whom we do not know, or the part of the family he/she belonged to, and still we hold on to these as beloved items. The connections between these pictures and the reality they represent cannot be reconstructed any more; there is nobody who could free the world or the great-grandmother from the frames of the picture. What remains is the anonymous face in the picture, the "what did the past look like" and "how they looked at people with cameras back then." According to this notion of evidence a home video can create, for example, the atmosphere of an age in a movie. But there are experimentations which create independent films from home movies using the collage-technique. An example of this is Péter Forgács's serial documentary entitled *Private Hungary* (1988–2002), which groups the home movies created at the turn of

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[9]In David Novitz's opinion the pictures depending on their contexts can be used with different illocutionary values and such usage is "nothing else but visually representing something – depending of course whether the acts of illocution in which they are used are meant or refer to something the pictures of which they are" (Novitz 2003, 380).

the century thematically or by their authors. The director – according to his personal testimony – is interested in the *language of the subjective diary*, the pictures as found objects not only make possible the reconstruction of the life of the filmmakers but present the themes they were interested in, the personal filming techniques, the paradigms of looking. That is why he does not try to reconstruct personal life stories and the symbolic relations between the movies shot in the course of 20-30 years, which would make the films transparent. He presents only crumbles of the filmmakers' lives, the ones recorded by them and we can see only those events which they considered fit to become parts of their movies. In the movie called *Bartos Family* (*Bartos család*, 1988) besides its "family novel"-nature the following questions become important: "How did Zoltán Bartos look?" and "what does the world look like with the eyes of Zoltán Bartos?" Or in the film called *Dusi and Jenő* (*Dusi és Jenő*), what kind of gaze is characteristic of Jenő Kőnig, the filmmaker? While Zoltán Bartos, who was the buffoon of the family, liked to construct his images, to interact with everything through his camera and to instruct the family members as if they were actors, Jenő Kőnig's view is that of a gentleman: he prefers to gaze from a distance and to observe with resignation.

These movies incorporate also the ways in which the past "looked like." From this point of view the part of the series entitled *Bourgeois Dictionary* (*Polgári szótár*, 1992) is important as it is the thematic collection of all those topics the filmmakers considered intriguing: coffee-shop, street scenes, the stories of smiles, homemade erotic. The only reality which – in the first meaning of the notion of evidence – can be assigned to the images could only be the topics of history lessons. Partly because of the lack of context can the texture of the image be felt, and the dialectical nature of movies becomes possible to be observed as opposed to the institutional film language. In addition to this, Péter Forgács continuously provokes the viewers in the "how they looked" paradigm: he artificially interferes, slows down, stops the pictures, and repeats them. We think of the same "how they looked at" type of evidence when we call a style of representation home video-like. In these cases we think of the clumsiness of the image quality such as bad composition, the lack of sharpness, grainy pictures, abundant colours, the rudimentary representation (e.g. important events remain out of the picture or redundant images remain, which have no narrative logic). It is as if these objects were randomly created. That is why because of the naïve filmmaking style the unprofessional films seem more genuine. The "open window" perspective can be simulated as well without any known people to be in the pictures. Most of the mock-documentary films mimic the cliché-like settings of documentaries or in order to exclude

intentional composition, make mistakes so that we accept it as a mimesis of an objective reality.

The Reality Effect and the Evidentiary Status of Home Videos Taken out of their Contexts

What do we understand by the term home video when used as an attribute of feature films? How can something simultaneously be called *home*, *video* and *cinema*? What is in a 'home video' as opposed to the institutionalized modes of representation? What can private films signify when embedded in different contexts? The following discussion of feature films will attempt to reveal different types of hybrids formed due to an intentional overlapping of the cinema aesthetics with that of the home made.

Tarnation (2003)

The seemingly strange title (being a colloquial euphemism for damnation) is actually appropriate for designating the motivations of the filmmaker when making an autobiographical documentary based on his own home videos spanning over 20 years. The film is based on the life of Jonathan Caouette, directed by Jonathan Caouette and acted by Jonathan Caouette. The experimental, underground character of this documentary lies mostly in this narratively and texturally performed solipsism or self-absorption. In concordance with Michael Renov's remarks regarding the new subjectivities on display in contemporary documentaries, this self-inscription in *Tarnation* "enacts identities – fluid, multiple – while remaining fully embroiled with public discourses" (Renov 1995). The presentation of the autobiographical story becomes an exploration of different identities: gay identity, personality disorder, a middle age-crisis, and the relationship with a heterosexual schizophrenic mother.[10]

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[10]Michael Renov regards this type of autobiographical work as a schema or trope: "Frequently, these works attempt to situate the artist-subject in the familial order, to witness or account for the difficulties of accommodation of rigid family structures to queer sensibilities and life choices. [...] Sexuality and its sources or aetiology are only occasionally the overt subject matter of such work. Instead, these films and tapes affirm the degree to which the (queer) identities of the makers are bound up with those of certain special (but "straight") family members. These mothers and grandmothers, heterosexual but unerringly eccentric, have helped create the people the artists have become. [...] These works are perhaps the next generation of the new queer subjectivity on film and tape. Janus-faced, looking behind

The autobiography begins with the re-enactment of a recent event: Jonathan Caouette gets informed about the lithium overdose of his mother, Renee Leblanc. This event urges him to embark on a journey to find his mother and in the same time to set out on a visual journey into his past. The autobiographical flow, the remembrance gradually becomes a performance, an act of defence, as suggested by an extended shot of a dilapidated wall with the following inscription (a paraphrase of a famous line by the poet George Santayana): "those who remember their past, are not doomed to repeat it." The filmic narration follows the chronological logic of the autobiography and it is constructed as a collage of different types of home media: family photos, home videos, found footages, private fictions (home made amateur movies), and records of telephone conversations.

Tarnation shows an interesting interplay between two paradigms for looking: the "open window" attitude and the "how they looked at" attitude. On the one hand, we know that these are genuine home videos, we watch them as we presume their author watches them: in this regard the film becomes a window on the life of Caouette, which was opened by the author/character himself. This "what did I look like, what happened to me?" aspect becomes emphasized by the intertitles interrupting the flow of images. The contents of these intertitles share with the viewer the knowledge which only the filmmaker and the participants of his recordings can dispose of. However, this knowledge, which is being made public, has its boundaries. The knowledge of the viewer cannot become the contextual knowledge of the participant: we are nothing but tourists in somebody else's visual life path and we are in need of guidance. These intertitles convey even the most shocking information in an objective, detached manner (although this is somehow motivated by the story about depersonalization and psychosis): these items of information are phrased in third person singular[11] without the slightest hint to subjectivity or emotions. So, on the other hand, the viewer must take into consideration, and interpret

as well as ahead, personal yet embedded in the commonality of family life, these are works which bridge many gaps of human difference - those of generation, gender, and sexuality" (Renov 1995).

[11] In Gerard Genette's categorization those factual narrations where the author and the character (persona) are the same, but the author and the narrator and the narrator and the character are different entities, constitute a separate type. Genette calls this type of narration heterodiegetic autobiography (Gyimesi 2000, 342). According to this theory, two types of opposed focalizers are distinguishable in this film: an extradiegetic narrator articulated through the intertitles in third person singular, and a diegetic character articulated through the collage of the "first person"-like home media.

the texture of the images, the "how did Jonathan look at" aspect of the pictures as well.

The director intentionally provokes this paradigm of looking: with the means of a user-friendly technology (the entire film was cut with the Macintosh iMovie software) he multiplies, mirrors and occasionally deteriorates images, thus producing prism-like compositions. These special effects and the home made fiction films are more than just an illustration of the story about schizophrenia and abuse: they become visual-formal equivalents of the content. The amateur gore horror movies and the gay themed features (modelled upon films like Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho*, 1991 and Slava Tsukerman's *Liquid Sky*, 1982) made by the director and his queer friends gradually become similar to home videos: woven together, intercut with the home videos and the intertitles they come to represent the horrid experiences of the autobiographical story, and on the other hand, also the visual fantasies of the director: his ideas and expectations about how films should look like. There is a sequence in *Tarnation* when the teenage Jonathan Caouette imagines/dreams about his life as a collage of his favourite films: *Hair* (Milos Forman, 1979), *The Little Prince* (Stanley Donen, 1974), *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973), other horror films, and music videos, shown simultaneously in split screen. This collage suggests that the author of this autobiography needs the images (as well as the viewer) as visual evidences in order to be able to construct a visual identity, possible to narrate only in third person singular.

Capturing the Friedmans (2003)

In Andrew Jarecki's documentary the narration evolves around the turn-about in the life of the Friedman family: Arnold Friedman, head of the family and teacher, is charged with paedophilia and sentenced to life imprisonment. While in prison he commits suicide so that his sons can inherit his life-assurance. The film is constructed from materials coming from different sources, and with different intentions: interviews and establishing shots about the scenes made 15 years after the event, footages made for television news programs, and the home videos of the Friedman family. The interviewees are the members of the family, relatives, police officers, detectives, lawyers, journalists and the victims themselves. The recollections about the events are not in unison, they contradict each other even in the most trivial details: the story variants are as many as the number of those interviewed. The diffusion of the variants, the contradictory character of the statements renders it impossible to construct a

single coherent version, the absolute truth of the story. The divergences of the accounts prevent the viewer from recognizing the interviews as conventional television-documentary situations correlated to the reality, to the factual. Thus, in this family-saga the story versions are not to be understood in the true/false dichotomy, as the brother of the convicted father puts it: they cannot find out the truth and, consequently, neither can the viewer by watching this documentary.

Thus, the *Capturing the Friedmans* can be considered an alternative to the positivist approaches to documentary conventions aiming at a coherent narrative structure, which, supposedly, can reconstruct reality. In this documentary the conventional usage of home videos in documentaries (as visual evidence of an account, illustration of factual information or iconic images of a specific era) is deconstructed, just as the cognoscibility of reality. Home videos are easy to identify in this documentary with the help of the narrative information and due to some visual markers, like centred compositions, too much or not enough light etc. The home videos presenting Arnold Friedman while playing magic tricks with his children, celebrating Christmas, or giving piano lessons are presented in the textual context of the interviews about him and his paedophilia. The recurring images about the celebrating, happy family, and the family members arguing about the trial, eventually capture the story of the disintegration of a family. In such a context these private films cannot fulfil their evidentiary status; the images of the everyday, the ordinary become questionable. The narrative context does not deny the veracity of the images, and does not prove that the images about the happy family are fake; instead it situates the evidentiary status of the home videos outside the true/false dichotomy, just like in the case of the above mentioned contradictory accounts. This raises the question whether a person's life, the private can be captured or not. The factual claims, the contents of the home videos in this documentary are not the illocutionary act intended by the director: situating home videos in a context where the ordinary, the everyday becomes strange and inexplicable, it becomes an act of demonstration about how unrecognizable, unknown a person, a series of events, and eventually truth can be. The series of interviews are framed by two similar situations: at the beginning of the film one of Arnold Friedman's sons declares that he is going to introduce a particular person to the viewer: his father. In the epilogue of this movie there is a reminiscent situation: in a home video the father is being interviewed by his son: "Anything about your personal life, sir?" and his answer is: "I cannot. It's personal!" After all this we can do nothing but doubt and question any information, even the stereotypical text carved on his gravestone: "Arnold

Friedman (1931–1995) loving father, devoted teacher, pianist, physicist, beach bum". So, who exactly was Arnold Friedman?

The Kid Stays in the Picture (2003)

The film directed by Nanette Burstein and Brett Morg is a biopic, an adaptation of the autobiography of a Hollywood producer, Robert Evans. The film starts with a motto by Robert Evans which eventually becomes the *ars poetica* on the biopic's relation to the real: "There are three sides to every story: your side, my side, and the truth. And no one is lying. Memories shared serve each differently." The subjective character of the narration set in the Hollywood of the seventies is emphasized by the usage of private photos, snapshots enhanced with visual techniques and special effects. The visuals of this biopic refuse the conventional imagery of the genre usually constructed from talking heads and re-enactments. Simultaneously with the voiceover narration (first person singular) a series of still pictures are presented. While the voice of the narrator brings back memories, the snapshots come to life as well: with the help of special effects they gain certain attributes characteristic to moving pictures. The private snapshots are divided on layers, on foreground and background, using focus-effects, zoom and miming camera movement; the two dimensional pictures become three dimensional, cues of depth are introduced and some repetitive motion is simulated. These animated still pictures are not meant to function in either of the two aforementioned looking paradigms: neither "the open window" nor "how they looked at." The pictures are detached from their original contexts and meanings and function as attractive illustrations of the story, a decorative background while the verbal narration becomes the salient information.

Blair Witch Project (1999) and Cannibal Holocaust (1979)

Despite the fact that the narrative of the *Blair Witch Project* (D. Myrick–E. Sanchez, 1999), and the *Cannibal Holocaust* (R. Deodato, 1979) shows similarities and both films are examples of the horror genre, they produce their effects differently. In both cases the horror-effect is based on found footages, discovered after the disappearance of the filmmaking team, and after the viewing of the recordings the members of the team are declared to be dead. While in the *Blair Witch Project* the amateur filmmaking group searches for

traces of a legendary witch, the professional documentary team in the *Cannibal Holocaust* aims to capture the life of a cannibal tribe in the Amazonian jungle. One of the main differences between these situations is,that, while in the latter movie the team does find the cannibal tribe and manages to capture their man-eating ritual in scenes of graphic violence (the cannibals will eventually eat the filmmaking team, and the director chooses to make the recording instead of saving his colleagues), in the *Blair Witch Project* the source of all the horror that the team has to endure remains invisible, there is no visualization nor any sign of corporeality of the witch. While in the *Cannibal Holocaust* the footage is found, viewed and interpreted in a diegetic world, the footage in the *Blair Witch Project* is allegedly found in an extradiegetic world: the reality of the viewer (this premise is supported with other extradiegetic items, like the diary of one of the filmmakers, which is made public on the internet). Thus, in this case the effect of the movie is based on contextual information about the found footage consisting of material proofs, narratives laid outside the filmic construction contributing to the evidentiary status of these recordings, stating that they share a symbiotic relationship with reality. In the case of the *Cannibal Holocaust* the viewing of the found, raw footage leads to questions of media ethics: with what means can films show the truth, how can they produce the effect of reality? In the other movie the usage of the handheld camera, the accidental character of the compositions and the fake extradiegetic information about the context of these images leads to different dilemmas, situated outside of the realms of the real: are these images really faked? And how was this simulacrum constructed? This shift of paradigms suggests another dilemma: how long are we disposed to believe according to our naïve media theories that home videos are real and evidentiary, when we have to accept that they can be so easily forged?

In my essay I have distinguished between two categories of the private films' contexts based on Chalfen's interpretation of home videos, which defines this type of film based on the criteria of the personal, private modes of filmmaking, and the intention of personal or private consumption (on behalf of the viewer). In my opinion, the context-analysis of private films will lead only to a partial interpretation; consequently I have enlarged the epistemological frame with the notion of interpretational paradigms, and with that of the naïve media theories. Only in such a complex interpretational frame I consider it possible to accurately describe the narrative and representational characteristics of private films. Naturally, further case analyses would be needed in the analyses of home videos consumed privately, in order to be able to typify the illocutionary values of these films.

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The Official and Hidden Scenarios of Role-Playing in István Dárday's *The Prize Trap* (1974)

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Abstract. This paper analyses the film entitled *The Prize Trap* (*Jutalomutazás*) directed by István Dárday, which counts as one of the most emblematic examples of the so-called docu-features in Hungary. The The Prize Trap represents an exciting and idiosyncratic symbiosis of documentary and feature cinema, and as such, it may offer useful insights into the nature of reality and fiction as represented by cinema. The author examines the film from a new perspective. He begins with the gap filling survey about a method engaged by numerous directors belonging to the Budapest School, that is, the employment of amateur actors. With the analysis of their role playing, the role conflicts and role confusions manifested in the process of acting, the author reveals the "double consciousness" of contemporary society, the encounter between the official and hidden scenarios of that time. The theoretical frames of the analysis are the role-theories of social sciences, Jay Ruby's reflections about the anthropological film, together with Scott's idea of everyday resistance.

The Budapest School

The Prize Trap (Jutalomutazás) directed by István Dárday in 1974[1] stands as an important turning-point in Hungarian film history. It marks the beginning

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[11] Györgyi Szalai has been a lifelong companion of Dárday and her role is just as central in *The Prize Trap* as in other films. She is credited with the screenplay of the film, although – unofficially – she counts to be the co-director of the film (therefore I refer to them as "the Dárdays").

of the so called *Budapesti Iskola (Budapest School),* and counts to be one of its most emblematic examples. In my essay I will also mention the documentary entitled *Study of a Specific Case (Egy egyedi eset természetrajza,* Györgyi Szalai, 1976) which is a kind of sequel, "background study" to *The Prize Trap* and contains conversations with the people whose story originally served as inspiration for the film and thus offers minute details about the nature of communal relationships and the reception of the film.

The Budapest School as a cinematic movement produced films that are far from being uniform. There are various attempts of definition and self-definition of the name: some wish to understand it along stylistic and thematic terms, others in relation to groups/generations of directors, yet others offer definitions based on common traits of production and distribution. The Budapest School refers to a rather flexible group of films made in the seventies by the second generation representatives of the Balázs Béla Studio who entered filmmaking in the early 1970s and made films which are sometimes referred to as docu-features and fictional documentaries. The main characteristic of these films is the marriage of documentary features and the mode of address characterizing feature film, the intermingling of these two traditional cinematic forms into a hybrid aesthetic form in which the language of fiction and documentarism mix. In this regard the Budapest School represents an exciting and idiosyncratic symbiosis of documentary and feature cinema, and as such, it may offer useful insights into the nature of reality and fiction as represented by cinema.

The values the artists involved in Budapest School shared were rejuvenation and a readiness to redefine the roles and possibilities offered by filmmaking. Participants were united by a feeling of collective dissatisfaction towards the contemporary conditions of Hungarian feature and documentary filmmaking and all hoped to renew cinema stylistically and/or thematically. Representatives of the Budapest School were ready to radically rethink and thematize contemporary socialist reality, uncover the sphere concealed by party slogans and propaganda-reality and discuss taboos using that relatively undisturbed sphere which cinema enjoyed over other forms of publicity. There has always been a strong, yet latent motivation to reveal a subsequent reality, to turn cinema into the representation of those social and political messages which were eliminated from public speech. "To dive under the surface and reveal that which is hidden" – as Dárday argues (2005, 54). "A new word dawns upon the spectators in these films, 'another' Hungary, a social condition that was meant to be silenced and disguised" – adds Zalán (2005, 17).

Some of the documentarist features in this fashion are "sociofilms" dealing with actual social issues. They rely on new insights reached by the then

relatively unknown science of sociology. Social tendencies became known as the result of sociological research projects that had started in the sixties and were published in the early seventies. One of the most remarkable features of the Budapest School was the comparatively successful cooperation between filmmakers and sociologists. As a result of this the socio-consciousness and social scientific sensibility became stronger in documentaries. There have been aspirations to gradually institutionalize the filmmaker-sociologist cooperation (see the manifesto entitled *Szociológiai Filmcsoportot!* [*For a Sociological Film Department!*] at the end of the 60s, or *Társulás Stúdió* [*Association Studio*] from the early 80s which was a partnership of filmmakers and sociologists). Due to the explicit intention to give legitimacy to cooperative filmmaking of strong social scientific consciousness, script writing was often preceded by extensive fieldwork, and films not only showed a high degree of awareness as far as the choice of topic was concerned, but also found their theoretical and empirical base in sociographies, scientific analyses and surveys. "For a certain period the high-profile artist had to give over the position of the ideal filmmaker to the analyst possessing accurate and actual knowledge" – writes Vince Zalán (2005, 15).

The documentarist representation of social issues was achieved through the method of direct portrayal of reality in many of the films of the Budapest School. The criteria of "new objectivity" put raw everydayness, "unbound concreteness" into focus. Along this path, documentarist films adopting the spirit of "new objectivity" as a filiation of the social scientific approach arrived to the direct representation of people and their gestures, mimicry and language. In sum they opened new paths towards microscopic levels of social existence. Many films with a keen eye for details are characterized by empiricism and a "close textual analysis focusing on detail" (Fekete 2005, 219). This type of bottom-view exploration, the micro-perspective approach and the "thick description" of the portrayed reality call attention to the similarities between anthropological filmmaking and the Budapest School.[2]

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[2]Further inquiries in this direction would have to examine the theoretical and methodological analogies between works of visual anthropology and fiction films, furthermore investigate if the films of the Budapest School can be regarded (and if yes to what extent) as the forerunners of Hungarian anthropological filmmaking.

The Specific Case of The Prize Trap

The bottom-view perspective, peeping into the private lives of selected individuals, the introduction of selected cases reveal a reality beyond itself (according to the principle of *pars pro toto*) and models the functioning of a broader social institution or a comprehensive social mechanism. In a similar manner, *The Prize Trap* balances between presenting both an individual case study and a general situation, a singular and a comprehensive social model when it offers "the study of a specific case" – as the already mentioned documentary (intended as a background study to the film) suggests.

As far as the case is concerned, the Dárdays used an apparently insignificant yet true incident with no real "dramatic stake" as the story of their film. The tension of the film is created not by the story but by the play of the "double social consciousness" that I shall be describing in more detail later. The main conflict of the film arises after the district committee of pioneers receives the order from the national leaders to choose a child who will go on a prize trip to England for a month. After some hesitation – as there seems to be no one who would fit the description – the committee appoints Tibi Balogh, a sixteen year old teenager who plays pop songs to the girls of the village, thus fits at least the parameter of being able to play a musical instrument. The committee has the astonished parents (who are out on the fields hacking) sign the declaration of acceptance and the organization of the trip is well under way when – at the peak of the story – the parents change their mind and decide not to allow their son to go on the trip. Consequently another pioneer gets the opportunity to visit England. This banal story contains one absurd and ambiguous detail: the resistance of the parents, who do not accept this honourable prize, offered as a privilege. Their resistance at the time was met by the total incomprehension of the local political elite with the relentlessness of the parents being interpreted by the superiors as a historically inherited stubbornness characterising soil-bound, un-illuminated peasant mentality. This annoying incident would have nevertheless been long forgotten had the cinematic attention of the Dárdays not put it into the centre of public attention.

The Dárdays' choice of content, the uniqueness of Tibi's story reveals the authors' interest in the peculiar, idiosyncratic phenomenon of micro-realities. At the same time the uniqueness presented in the documentary reveals another tone and additional political meanings. "This is an unfortunate specific case, which despite all our efforts to prevent it does happen occasionally" – says the district secretary of the pioneers at the end of *The Study of a Specific*

Case. This sentence is far more important than it sounds, and suggests that in the eyes of the political elite this incident is nothing but an "isolated case," a rare disgrace in the otherwise effective and successful history of the pioneer movement: it is a deviation from the accustomed; it is a case of deviance. The question of deviance becomes especially emphatic in the political climate of the mid-seventies: within this gradually softening, yet in its fundamental logic still totalitarian system anything that breaks the norms, fractures authority and deviates from the official ideology and scenario falls into the field of isolation, punitive sanction or passive toleration. Within this field deviance will be either dropped out from publicity, left out from official statistics, narratives, its pure existence being neglected, or, if it receives some publicity, like in the case of Tibi, it will officially be labelled as deviant. As we shall see, the social reception of *The Prize Trap*, the waves of opinion generated by it also illuminate this dual technique of obliteration and blacklisting, which was put in motion when the contemporary political system encountered deviance. One of the key privileges of contemporary authority was the power to determine which forms of everyday action counted to be deviant and which were to be "overlooked". Everyday action, daily routine were deviant as long as the authorities regarded them to be such. The Dárdays' film decides to portray a "deviant case" that does not have an appropriate portrayal in terms of the official scenario, which slips away from it. This calls attention to the cracks, anomalies within the authoritative system.

Amateur Actors – Role-Playing in Culture

In the next section I describe the method engaged by numerous directors belonging to the Budapest School, that is, the employment of amateur actors. *The Prize Trap* could be a showcase of this. Naturally this was not the first time that non-professional actors starred in films, the most notable examples being Italian Neorealism and the Czech New Wave. Also there are Hungarian examples of the use of amateur players already from the sixties, and Dárday himself employed non-professional actors in his diploma film entitled *Impression (Lenyomat)*. Still it was in *The Prize Trap* that this concept became a canonized one, a method looked upon as a model by future films.

Non-professional actors are usually employed in films that reconstruct real or fictitious incidents and for the sake of authenticity people of the portrayed social status and occupation are invited to take part in the project. These participants will be allowed to shape the roles to their own personality

made possible by the widespread use of improvization. This latter is a technique of intertwining personality and role, giving rise to a new degree of directness. It resulted in instant success, documentarist filmmaking and realist representation discovered a new source of authenticity in this method. The "action in process" is seemingly indirect, yet kept under accurate control as a result of which it is capable of producing frenetic filmic experience. What we see on the screen, what happens on the screen is almost self-organizing – it makes us believe that it would have commenced exactly the same way, even if the camera had not been present. There is no enforced authorial opinion or montage" (Zalán 2005, 13).

Taking a look at the circumstances of filming of *The Prize Trap*, an unobtrusive, almost totally invisible authorial presence seems to take shape. The retreat of the author into the background is exemplified by the lack of a script and the consequent limitation of middle-class language use. "We only outline a situation and the actors add their language, thoughts, reaction to one another" – describes Szalai (Szalai 2005, 70). The screenplay also relies on real incidents, which in this context expresses the wish on the part of the filmmakers to withhold their own urban-intellectual frame of mind and not allow middle-class narrative patterns permeate the film. Editing also serves the sensitive exploration of the material. "The structuring principle is the exploratory analysis" (Grunwalsky et al. 2005, 134).

To reduce the disturbing presence of the crew the Dárdays worked with a smaller number of personnel. They used two cameras in order not to break the continuity of action within a scene, and despite the fact that they used location sound, no clapperboard was used. They did everything to ensure that the shots were recorded as if a real situation, a lifelike moment occurred in front of the camera. They filmed on natural location; the actors were not familiar with the whole screenplay, only with the subsequent scene; there were no rehearsals, there were no test-shots, sound was also recorded on the spot just as in the case of "cinema direct" and situational documentary filmmaking. The filmmakers, after discussing a scene in general terms with the actors retreated into the "fly on the wall" position of situative filming, an approach identified by the theory of visual anthropology as an attitude of non-intrusion (Heltai 2002, 96).[3]

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[3]With this method of filming the Dárdays virtually followed on the footsteps of situative documentary filmmaking. The traditional interview-based, interrogative method was replaced exactly at the turn of the 60s and 70s by the so called situative documentarism, in which a dramatic situation is filmed directly and without breaking dramatic integrity (Gelencsér 2002, 251).

The actors found themselves in front of the camera in barely intentional, highly amorphous, consequently lifelike situations and started acting out roles that were hardly different from those played in their quotidian lives. Amateur actors did surprisingly well in these non-rigidified situations: social reflexes, background knowledge and the reactions arising from self-conscious acting came to life 'in situ' and actors began to behave according to the role-expectations of the given situation, as wives, husbands, colleagues, people in hierarchical relations.

Another convincing example of the employment of amateur actors is Béla Tarr's *Családi tűzfészek* (*Family Nest*, 1979), a film which starts with words that could be the motto of this method: "This is a true story, and although the people in the film act out the events, these could have happened with them." The latter momentum contains the key to the success of this method. The actors are essentially close to the roles they enact, the situations are well-known for them, these incidents "could have happened with them." This is the source of the extremely strong empathic capability characteristic of amateur actors and their familiarity with the mimicry, phrasing and behaviour necessary to authentically play the role. The employment of non-professional actors relies on the idea that authentic acting is only possible if one's social role is close to his/her cinematic role. This is why it is significant that age, sex, and occupation are all matched when selecting people for the roles. In *The Prize Trap* for example the troop leader is played by a local head of the pioneers. Due to the concurrences between the original and the enacted roles, amateur actors will have an advantage over professional ones. Dárday refers to this advantage (which on the other hand is a disadvantage) when he remarks that "there are wonderful actors and yet it is my conviction that they are more limited in their repertoire than simple civilians" (Tóth 2003, 65).

This experiment of employing amateur actors was inspired by the quite popular sociological role-theories of the time. Role-theories based on the analogies with drama (be them sociological, socio-psychological or anthropological) make the most of the similarity between social interaction and dramatic roles and respectively between contexts of interaction and the theatrical set-up. These theories regard people as agents playing roles which best fit their social statuses, agents who quasi step onto the stage during interactions and enact prescriptive scripts which are nevertheless open for dynamic modification and customization. Many cinematic situations reveal this model. According to Jay Ruby, leading theorist of visual anthropology, the anthropological filmmaker, in order to perceive culture in a visually relevant way uses a lot of theatrical analogies. In the eyes of the film making

anthropologist the visually significant elements of behaviour come together into the "scenario of culture" "in which each character has his/her own line, a corresponding costume, decoration and role [. . .] The socio-cultural ego of the individual is the totality of all the scenes in which one has starred as actor or participated as audience. Culture is nothing more than a stage-play performed by actors as socio-cultural beings" (Ruby 2004, 76).[4] At the same time according to Goffman a role is the assemblage of such activities that people would do when they had to act exclusively according to normative circumstances. As opposed to this, real behaviour, role-fulfilment moves away from activity regarded as ideal (Goffman 1981, 299–351). Ruby argues in similar manner: "People rarely act as they should, not even in those occasions when, as it happens, someone is aware of what would count to be rational or proper behaviour. We forget lines, invert monologues, change clothes, put on someone else's clothes, improvise or invert roles [. . .] The social life of a person is structured by the constant interaction between ideal and real behaviour [. . .] In most cases we pursue to arrive to a compromise [. . .] The gap between ideal and real may be conversely wide and thin" (Ruby 2004, 76–77).

If we want to understand *The Prize Trap* from the point of view of role-playing, it is clear that the above mentioned ideal behaviour is nothing more than the repertoire of roles prescribed for the socialist ideal of man. In this respect, the film points out the specific failure of the socialist ethos and the ever present gap between ideal and real behaviour on the level of everyday life. The film grasps this failure as a result of employing amateur actors whose "non-exquisite", even "rough" acting style lead either to overacting or the unsteady delivery of roles. The documentary power of the film lies largely in the accidentally framed, possibly unintentionally verbalized half-sentences, unguarded expressions, unintentional gestures, from which we learn as much about the contemporary world, as we do from the story. Most of the time while watching the film we see actors, especially the local representatives of the state administration doing everything to live up to expectations, and still their addresses are full of artificiality, blunders and slip-of-the-tongues. In this regard the film holds a mirror in front of the representatives of lower-level political administration, who are "the type of people who identify with their social role at the cost of self-deception, direct or indirect lies" (Gelencsér 2002, 255-256). Actors are in continuous conflict of roles: the local secretary of the party is also a brother-in-law, and as such he is easily pacified by Tibi's parents. Socialist role-expectations result in role confusion as seen in the scene where

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[4]Translations from Hungarian texts were made by the author.

Tibi gets in a tangle while singing a pioneer song in front of the committee. He feels similarly at odds with his new role of the eminent pioneer.

The role-playing of the local political elite was not without flaws, partly because it was impossible to fulfil the idealistic expectations and party orders on local level. The national leadership of the pioneer movement was determined to send on this prize trip a child who had working class parents, could play a musical instrument well and furthermore was an eminent student and a distinguished pioneer. It is impossible to meet all these requirements, especially because the seventies were still lacking the kind of physical workers who were pursuing the otherwise middle-class and bourgeois habit of educating one's kids musically. Although the local leaders of the pioneers do everything to find a kid who fits the parameters specified by the movement headquarters, finally they offer a half-solution. The choice of Tibi only looks good on the outside: though he is of working-class origin and can play a musical instrument to a degree, he is far from being a prominent student and a distinguished pioneer. (In the end a child of middle-class parents goes on the prize trip.)

The fulfilment of non-lifelike party guidelines is especially difficult on the level of local society, where the primary frame of reference for most people is not the sphere of socialist ideals, but the still existing and very influential norms of peasant existence. An essential frame of reference is represented by religion, which is thematically present throughout the film in the form of visual representation of various religious symbols and events. In one emblematic scene the troop leader is tying his tie in front of the image of St Mary. In the first scene of the film, while portraying the All Saints' Day crowd, the camera is panning between socialist badges, blazons, religious devotional objects and the stickers of pop-stars. The freedom characterizing the camera-use calls attention to the polyphony of symbols, the interaction and parallelism of many different frames of references peculiar to the local society.

Official and Hidden Scenarios in *The Prize Trap*

The value system professed by the local society besides and instead of the official socialist one may defeat the will of the power holders. The most complex and hidden momentum of the film is the surprise decision of Tibi's parents to turn down the prize trip "assigned" to their son. The reasons given by the parents – namely the irrationally strong motherly anxiety (over any unforeseen tragedy awaiting his son during the trip) and the traditional division of labour characterizing agricultural work (as a result of which work on the

lands cannot go on without Tibi for a month) – are absurd and are met by the total incomprehension of the local authorities. It seems that the parents' gesture of refusal is according to a hidden scenario, the motives of which are incomprehensible and unavailable for the village leadership.

According to James Scott this hidden or secondary scenario belongs to the "behind the stage", to the non-public sphere which is not controlled by institutions, but which is present in the everyday life flourishing in the cracks of institutional order. As opposed to this, official or primary scenarios crystallize "on stage". These are embodied by the formal institutes and official ideologies. The two scenarios encounter each other in the communication between the dominators and the oppressed, where they take the form of some kind of deal (Scott 1996).

The hidden scenario evokes forms of everyday resistance. According to Scott this social phenomenon characterizes those symbolic practices which come alive in the relationship between the authorities and their subjects. These practices, built on the high-level implicit cooperation of the subordinate groups, discredit and undermine the non-consensual provisions and expectations of the rulers. The practice of everyday resistance does not take shape in well-articulated political action, but lurks on the level of everydayness uncontrolled and not appropriated by political authority (Scott 1996). Inscribed within the stubborn disobedience of the parents, one can recognize the refusal of the authoritative system, a specific embodiment of everyday resistance. This rejective behaviour is directed against authority hoping to infiltrate into the personal sphere of the family. The moment Tibi is appointed to go on the prize trip his family gets in the centre of the authority's attention, which through paternalist persuasion, through instructions masked as goodwill tries to push its sphere of influence to the innermost shell of the privacy (the marriage bed). The resistance of the parents reflects a basic mistrust towards power which is willing to interfere with family life and the future of children from above. The political regime in Hungary in the 1950s – as an outcome of its totalitarian logic to bring all aspects of life under control – started to besiege the border between public life and private life. Private life, which was difficult to control from "above," which hid in the cracks of institutional order, could easily escape control and supervision. According to a popular political slogan of the era, "The enemy is there where we are not." That is why the private sphere and family itself became a "dangerous assemblage," the main target of ideological appropriation and political control. The surveying and "political reorientation" of the family and other traditional communities was carried out by the centralized and institutionally controlled "communities"

that took shape in grandiose, unified social and mass institutions led by the Party like the trade unions, KISZ (Alliance of Communist Youth), Hazafias Népfront (the Patriotic Popular Front), etc. Besides the Party and labour, the ideologically formed and idealized community also started to play a central role in the socialist value system. The contemporary political regime wanted to demonstrate "communities" everywhere: in workplaces, schools, and villages. The pioneer movement itself is an exemplary socialist community. Similar to other organizations, it had the function of the "transmission gear:" it helped enhance "political reorientation," "enlightenment" in order to plant mass obedience towards the party in early childhood.

One of the scenes, in which a member of the local pioneer committee is portrayed playing with little pioneer-puppets, elucidates through irony the paternalist social politics and pedagogy inherent in the movement. In another scene where the troop leader uses the expression "our Tibi" to express that from that point on the young man will feature as the pride of pioneers, the mother reacts with the same formula "our Tibi." The mother's attitude recalls the 'I will not give you my child' type of everyday resistance, which does not allow his son to be appropriated through the pioneer movement. Everyday resistance tries to preserve Tibi for the family and the private sphere.

The bottom-view perspective of the film helps to reveal the hidden scenario of the events running parallel to the official scenario of the pioneer movement. The film discloses the contradiction of social life, the duality of the ideal and the real, the official and the hidden scenario through the handling of the camera and montage (the counterpointing of consecutive scenes and the change of planes within a scene). *The Prize Trap* expresses the social conflict which does not reach the stage of open confrontation;it captures the "development of a dual consciousness" (Gelencsér 2002, 250) characteristic of the long decades of the Kádár-era.

The Afterlife of *The Prize Trap*

In the case of *The Prize Trap* it is not just the film but its afterlife that needs to be examined. The Dárdays attribute to a special social mission documentary filmmaking, which evolves in the phase of distribution, during the afterlife of the works. Besides the traditional channels of distribution (television and cinema) and partly also independently, the authors argued for a new practice of "social distribution" taking the film back, on the one hand to the original actors, on the other hand to the narrow social stratum or institution featured in the

film. The goal of this practice is direct feedback, "escalation" (Bódy), dialogue and self-reflection. "To screen is not enough!" – argued the contemporary slogan of social distribution. As a consequence, a "new visuality" enters the scene, which "dismantles the walls between the screen and the seats" (Zalán 2005, 16) and in the deliberate meeting with the involved social actors "the circle is completed" and cinema fulfils the social function attributed to it (Zalán 2005, 18).

This new social function originated from the New Leftist beliefs of the Dárdays'. According to this belief cinema is a tool of knowing and changing reality. The starting point of this attitude is that through the method of distribution mentioned above the social system or process presented by the film can be made more effective, more rational, it can be modernized, that is, humanized. *The Prize Trap* was screened to the people who inspired the story. Their reactions and a detailed analysis of their social milieu are preserved by the documentary entitled *The Study of a Specific Case*. The filmmakers also organized a screening followed by discussion and debate in front of the national leaders of the pioneer movement in Zánka. Györgyi Szalai remembers the events as follows: "They had a great time in the darkness of the cinema; they laughed more light-heartedly than others, possibly because they were more closely affected." The darkness of the screening room is the sphere of anonymous laughter, of (self-)irony and the hidden scenario of criticizing the authoritative system and its concrete institution. After the screening, in the now well-lit room the rules of the official scenario came into effect. "The leadership sat by a long table with red table-cloth on it [. . .] They brought examples of what they thought was inappropriate and unreal in the film: the fat troop leader with the tie for example, who was by the way an actual troop leader. They also thought that portraying the foremen sitting by a table with red table-cloth on was also an inaccuracy – when we were actually sitting by an identical table" (Szalai 2005, 72). The outright critical edge of the film, the portrayal of a "singular case" in which the agitational activity of the pioneer movement fails miserably inspired the Pioneers Association to take concrete measures: they prosecuted the filmmakers, the studio, even the Cinema Chief Administration. The film grew to become an affair, it was screened in the party headquarters and they issued several official statements. The afterlife of *The Prize Trap* still turned out good: at some point of the contest among the representatives of power a certain kind of "deal" was made and the reception of the film turned to positive. The prosecutions had no consequences and the film that was now openly praised had more screenings. "To our luck we did not become martyrs, but filmmakers with new possibilities" – remembers

Dárday (Tóth 2003, 63). "Behind the tense interest – manifested in telephones always ringing, newspaper, television interviews – we could sense something of a clumsily imitated mechanism of a socialist star-factory; after all the regime needed young and successful people" (Tóth 2003, 63). This very specific afterlife of the film full of swings calls attention to the "muddy wrestling of making deals" (Dárday 2005, 38) which best describes the relationship of authorities and intellectuals in the consolidated Kádár-era. The different representatives of the ruling class and directors, circles of filmmakers, members of the Budapest School took part in a permanent negotiation and bargaining as a result of which the scope of films regarded compatible with the official scenario of the political elite was constantly changing.

One last remark: according to Gyöngyi Heltai the historical dimension of Hungarian filmmaking on a social scientific basis, as well as of Hungarian anthropological films at large is as yet undisclosed. I hope to have added further perspectives to the work still ahead of us. The "methodology" of *The Prize Trap* is remarkable in this regard as well, not to mention its rich anthropological material with the close insight given by the film into the workings of the bygone social system.

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