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Contents

The Revolution Will Be Performed.
Cameras and Mass Protests in the Perspective of Contemporary Art

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Abstract. This article offers an analysis of *Videograms of a Revolution* (1992) by Harun Farocki and Andrej Ujică and *The Pixelated Revolution* (2011) by Rabih Mroué, which both reflect on the role of amateur recordings in a revolution. While the first deals with the abundant footage of the mass protests in 1989 Romania, revealing how images became operative in the unfolding of the revolution, the second shows that mobile phone videos disseminated by the Syrian protesters in 2011 respond to the desire of immediacy with the blurry, fragmentary images taken in the heart of the events. One of the most significant results of this new situation is the way image production steers the comportment of people involved in the events. Ordinary participants become actors performing certain roles, while the events themselves are being seen as cinematic. This increased theatricality of mass protests can thus be seen as an instance of blurring the lines between video and photography on the one hand and performance, theatre and cinema on the other.

Keywords: performativity of images, amateur videos, revolution, mass protest, theatricality.

Between the Autumn of Nations of 1989 and the Arab Spring of 2011, a certain transformation in the role of image production and dissemination took place. This article focuses on two instances in that transformation captured in two distinct works of art.[1] The first, *Videograms of a Revolution* (*Videogramme einer Revolution*, 1992) by Harun Farocki and Andrej Ujică was made entirely out of found footage from the so-called Romanian Revolution of 1989. The second, *Pixelated Revolution* (2011) by Rabih Mroué is an ongoing project reflecting on the videos from the civil war

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in Syria. Through these two instances a certain shift is visible in the position, role and impact of the camera image. In it, technology, image, theater and performance intermingle to collectively create a new, mediated reality. Both *Videograms* and *Pixelated Revolution* proceed by an era in which claims to political issues are suspended in order to focus on the role of the images alone. Yet their aim is not to reassert our belief in images as a truthful or adequate representation of reality. Rather, it is to demonstrate how images become actors in that reality, influencing the handlings of their makers and changing the parameters of the visual media.

Cameras and Participants in the Historical Events of 1989

The velvet revolutions of 1989, which swept through Eastern Europe, occurred at the moment in history when technology of film and video recording became easy, cheap and widespread enough to be all-present. The effects of that development could be perceived on several occasions, for example in Czechoslovakia (Dayan and Katz 1992, 51–53), yet there is one particular history of a regime collapse which stands out. In December of 1989 in Romania, the people, the citizens, amateurs or semi-professionals filmed all stages and facets of the violent protests which resulted in the communist dictator Nicolae Ceauşescu's escape, subsequent capture, trial and execution on the 26th of December. For their film on the revolution, Farocki and Ujică deployed solely found footage from the private and public archives of Bucharest. These fragments range from official television broadcasts, through professional recordings done outside of the official television system, to amateur registrations of street and private events made in that very intense period of six days between the 21st and 26th of December. Yet, quite surprisingly, these recordings are so abundant that it was possible to construct a chronological narrative as if there was a director orchestrating the various, in reality unconnected, camera operators in public and private spaces.

　　Two different modes of image-making appear crucial for the shaping of the events: the television – as a medium and a site of power struggle – and the amateur, hand held camera. In the course of the revolution, the television is transformed from being the instrument of the authoritarian propaganda to a site of struggle in the effort to topple down the dictatorship. The amateur, or semi-professional, camera joins in to register the events from the public and the private perspective, intuitively foreseeing a future for such images.

　　The moment of rupture in the official protocol of image production happens live on television. *Videograms* shows the awkward moment in Nicolae Ceauşescu's

last public speech on the 21ˢᵗ of December, when the usually peaceful and orderly crowd on the square in front of the Central Committee building starts hissing and jeering at the dictator. Ceauşescu interrupts his speech, suddenly overtaken by a strong sense of a menace in the crowd. And although the peace and order are quickly restored, allowing Ceauşescu to resume his speech, the short sparkle of dissent causes the strictly controlled live image to generate a chain of extraordinary events. In accordance with the safety protocols, the camera operators stopped the broadcast at the first signs of civil unrest. Farocki and Ujică uncover the recordings made by the cameras while the broadcast was interrupted. Thus, we see the static image of the dictator perturbed and subsequently broken down into grey horizontal stripes, whereby the camera pans into the air. At the very beginning of the mass protests, there is a technical disturbance.

Technology fails, but by virtue of its failure signals the epochal change. This formative role of the disrupted television image – the image which was meant to entrench and strengthen the regime, but which unintentionally helped in its collapse – is captured in an amateur recording found by Farocki and Ujică.[2] In the footage registered by the film directing student Paul Cozighian, we first see the television screen in a living-room while the same live speech is broadcasted. At the crucial moment of the disruption, Cozighian decides to pan from the TV set to the window and onto the street in order to see if anything of the germinating protests can be perceived in the behaviour of the passers-by. As crowds are gathering and the collective protest takes its form, this cameraman decides to film from the rooftops, to register the clashes between the army, aided by the Securitate, and the demonstrators. His recordings are then shown by foreign news rooms, thus entering the mainstream circuit of images. In a short interview on the BBC in January 1990, Cozighian says he started filming because he thought this might have been the only day of the revolution and therefore he wanted to register it and show the images to the rest of the world.[3] In the subsequent

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2   Even if almost all aspects of the so-called revolution in Romania have been subject of heated debate, there is one fact which seems to be uncontested. Ceauşescu's public address on the 21ˢᵗ of December, for which large numbers of workers were brought to the capital, and which was transmitted live on television, unleashed the protests and precipitated the regime's demise. See for example Tismăneanu and Călinescu 1991, 281–82.

3   The interview was part of the BBC *Panorama: Triumph over Tyranny* broadcast on 8 January 1990. The broadcast is archived online: *http://news.bbc.co.uk/panorama/hi/front_page/ newsid_8424000/8424361.stm.* Last accessed 03. 03. 2015. In other interviews, made twenty years later, Cozighian changed his account of these crucial moments, saying that he already felt these events were groundbreaking and a real change was coming (see: Regizorul Paul Cozighian, despre Revoluţia din '89: Oamenii aveau starea propice de a ieşi în stradă, www.b1tv.ro.*http:// www.b1.ro/stiri/eveniment/regizorul-paul-cozighian-despre-revolu-ia-din-89-oamenii-aveau-*

days, many other citizens in possession of a camera go down in the streets to participate in – and to record – the revolution. Some of these documents deliver little visual information, as is the case of the footage from the late night protests. Some leave us in confusion as to what is really taking place, as for instance, in the scene of a capturing of an alleged terrorist, who pretended to be with the protesters. While the film is not an investigation into the political meanders of the revolution or into the different theories of a staged or internationally orchestrated toppling down of the dictatorship, it does show the perplexing unreadability of the spontaneous and direct images. At the same time, it catches a significant change in the character of image-making. From that moment on, all facets of the events, private or public, are being filmed by the participants themselves. The resulting visual records are direct, random and ubiquitous, giving the spectator the sense of having an access to the events in an unaltered form. Yet the pictures prove to be opaque and chaotic – just as, to use Siegfried Kracauer's words, "the half-cooked state of our everyday world" (Kracauer 1995, 58).

The Rebellion of the Television Viewers

The iconic moments of the transformation are registered in the now-famous Studio 4 in Bucharest when people storm the television station – the Bastille of 1989 – and announce, in the first, heated, spontaneous broadcast, the triumph of the revolution. The crowd of protesters, equipped with flags, proclaim: "We are victorious, the television is with us." In this historical moment, television is and remains the main means of news dissemination and has a crucial importance for the success of the revolution.[4] It is important to see this re-appropriation of the television as the main means of communication in the context of the highly politicized broadcasting practice in Romania in the 1980s. In the period directly preceding the tumultuous events of 1989, the broadcasting time was limited to 16 hours per week, leaving little space for anything else than propagandistic news. As Pavel Câmpeanu has argued, the limitations imposed on television programming combined with restrictions on the energy use and the virtual isolation from any foreign contacts provoked Romanian citizens to install special antennae on the rooftops of their houses and apartment blocks in order to watch television from the neighboring countries. The

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starea-propice-de-a-ie-i-in-strada-video-17430.html, Last accessed 03. 03. 2015). This shift of perspective demonstrates the need to see coherence and purposefulness in the events which, from the immediate perspective, seemed chaotic and open-ended.

4   As Anne Jäckel observes, the television was limited to almost exclusively ideological messages and hardly delivered any genuine information or entertainment (Jäckel 2001).

ostensive presence of these antennae in the urban landscape of Romania was the first – even if relatively small – act of collective resistance to the all-controlling state power.[5] Câmpeanu thus advanced the idea that this practice led to the forming of the new community of television viewers, the community which was activated again, more forcefully, in December of 1989 (Câmpeanu 1993, 114–115).

In the very first days after the television headquarters have been taken over by the protesters, the medium is used by the people to communicate with the people. Citizens of different walks of life come to the studio to make public pronouncements for the revolution. These day and night broadcasts are spontaneous, chaotic and unpredictable (Morse 1998, 51–55). Also politicians, dissidents and self-proclaimed leaders of the revolution find their way to the television headquarters, the democratic broadcasts become the site for the forming of the new political elites. The change is visible in the gradual transformation of the news broadcasting, in which the large crowd of people is slowly reduced to a few leaders, eventually showing Ion Iliescu alone.[6] This centrality of television for the development of the events in Romania has led theorists to call it the first tele-revolution (Kittler and Rau 2010; von Amelunxen and Ujică 1990). The term "first" would suggest the beginning of a new tendency. Yet Mroué's contribution shows a different course of development, in which the opposition between television as the medium reserved for the authorities and the amateur footage as the instrument of the protesters becomes more and more apparent.

A Revolution of Mobile Cameras

More than twenty years later, in Syria, another wave of protests is being captured by the – mostly anonymous – citizens. As Rabih Mroué observes, citizens and activists assume the task of journalist reporting. Using mobile devices, often

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5   It remains a puzzling question why the all-controlling state apparatus with an army of informants and the secret police allowed for the spreading of this obvious practice of resistance, visible in the presence of the external television antennae on private houses. A similar question has been asked by Harun Farocki with respect to the presence of the amateur cameras in the country in which every typewriter was registered and controlled by the state. Both Câmpeanu and Farocki suggest that the regime was probably too slow in realizing the possibilities of the new technologies for forming significant acts of resistance (Farocki 2001). Other authoritarian regimes were careful not to make the same mistake. As shown in the documentary *Burma VJ. Reporting from a Closed Country* (Anders Østergaard, 2008), opposition journalists in Burma can film only in secret and are immediately arrested when their cameras are discovered (this documentary is discussed later in this article).

6   The crowded television studio, during the heated announcements of the revolutionaries, gradually turns into the usual setting for a single person speech, corresponding to the power seizure by the new government.

phones or other small cameras, they record and – what is important – disseminate information on the conflict. This phenomenon, which has been called citizen journalism, crowd-sourced or grass-roots journalism, is obviously not limited to this particular geopolitical moment (Allan 2007; Gillmor 2004). The short, unsteady and often blurred records of any kind of incidents can immediately be uploaded on the internet, making it possible for the whole world to see or even participate in the events on a scale unknown before. It is on the internet that Mroué finds the examples of amateur recordings which he then analyses in his *Pixelated Revolution*. More than twenty years after the events of 1989, the internet thus becomes the main medium to spread messages outside of large media circuits. As Mroué contends, the television has become (again) a tool in the hands of governments (Mroué 2013c, 254–55). The path of a democratic television station, which surfaced for a short moment in Romania, seems forever closed. The protesters, the militants, the people have only the "poor images" at their disposal (Mroué 2013a, 106; Steyerl 2009). *Pixelated Revolution* is also not a single, completed work, but instead mutates and develops in various stage and exhibition formats. Similarly to its source, the internet, it is an unstable and evolving entity encompassing video, installation, theatre performance called non-academic lecture, reenactment and a written text. All of these forms approach and remediate the video material from the Syrian revolution found on the internet.[7]

A lot has been said about the limits and risks of citizen journalism, especially about the unreliability of such resources, the lacking or incomplete context of the images, and the easiness of staging or faking of such poor visual materials. Yet even the mainstream, large media corporations, including the main television stations, embrace such poor images as records made by bystanders or participants. This tendency can be explained both by economic reasons and by a larger shift in the news style and aesthetics.[8] These issues are not the main focus of *Pixelated Revolution*'s reflection, although they are acknowledged as being an indelible element of crowd-sourced reporting (Mroué 2013b, 379). For Mroué,

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7 My analysis is based on several installments of *Pixelated Revolution*: the Documenta version from 2012 (the 20-minute video of the non-academic lecture), the published and extended text from 2013 (Mroué 2013b) and the exhibition in Museum Tot Zover, Amsterdam, 2014, which included installation, photography and video.

8 Julian Stallabrass indicates the economizing rationale behind such development: "Economically pressed news organizations often prefer to provide cameras (but little training) to willing locals rather than fly professionals out to some scene of conflict" (Stallabrass 2013, 43). Alfredo Cramerotti stresses the participatory character of such inclusive news broadcasting, placing it among the new tendencies in the mainstream media to give the viewer the possibility to make the news (Cramerotti 2009, 26).

it remains of deep significance that this type of journalism eschews the official, mainstream media channels, delivering a direct, unmediated, non-orchestrated reporting from the very epicenter of the events. *Pixelated Revolution* focuses on one particular type of recordings found on the internet, namely the instances in which the camera-man registers a sniper or soldier aiming exactly in his direction. An exchange of shootings takes place – the camera shoots images, the gun shoots bullets. Often in those short videos, the image collapses as the camera is being dropped from the protester's hand while he films his own aggressor. This has led Mroué to begin his inquiry by quoting a sentence, apparently uttered by a friend, that Syrians are filming their own death. This strong, unsettling body of video images gave the incentive for the artist to address the role of images in the revolution. Ensuing from that analysis, Mroué also restages this scenario, filming the "double shooting" on a different location (in Lebanon) and with actors instead of real protesters. He thus unsettles any clear-cut division between what is real and what is merely theatre.

Intermedial Situation

Both *Videograms of a Revolution* and *Pixelated Revolution* disclose a collation between the making of an event, or at least participating in an event, and the filming of that event. The stakes of this conflation can be unfolded when these two visual works of art are seen as instances in which the double logic of hypermediacy and transparency are played out against each other. As Bolter and Grusin demonstrated, the process of remediation between old and new media takes place in a constant oscillation between hypermediated and immediate experience of the real (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 19). Both *Videograms* and *Pixelated Revolution* investigate the role and functions of the new types of images in the unfolding of the collective and historically significant events. *Videograms* show (semi)amateur footage and the revolutionary broadcasts from the first and the most tumultuous days of the Romanian revolution. *Pixelated Revolution* is a theoretically weighted investigation of the anonymous, amateur recordings from the protests and fights in Syria. They thus operate at an intersection between video, film, television, performance and documentary.

Bolter and Grusin show how the development of the media, and particularly the process of replacing of old media by the new ones, includes complex operations in which elements of the old media are included or imitated in the new ones in the general striving for a better, more saturated, comprehensive experience. This

development takes place in two separate yet intertwined movements. On the one hand, the new media expose their hypermediated nature, demonstrating how they are constructed as signs of signs. On the other hand, they strive for a greater transparency and ostensible immediacy, promising to give access to an authentic experience. These two seemingly opposite movements are in fact two sides of the same process. Hypermediated forms act through their oversaturation while the seemingly transparent media are always mediated. One clear example of that logic is the replacement of photography by film, where the mechanical reproduction of reality in photography has been "improved" by including movement and, subsequently, sound in the image. Yet film offers a skilful artifice, showing us a well-framed and edited section of the reality which it carefully (re)constructs – in fiction cinema as well as in most documentary films. When television "replaces" cinema, it offers a more direct and all-present medium for experiencing the world in distant locations and times. In the live broadcast of world news, viewers are transported to any place in the world in real time, by which the gap between the reporting of the events and participating in them seemingly collapses. These increasingly mediated forms of experience – even when outwardly inviting to immerse oneself in pure simulacrum, as in virtual reality – aim at reconnecting us with the real.

Both *Videograms* and *Pixelated Revolution* deal with variously understood documents of real events and place them in a new intermedial situation. By focusing on movements of collective passion resulting in civil unrest, demonstrations and, eventually, military conflict, they offer a glance into the role of images in a transitory, as yet undetermined moment. They both show how the act of recording by protesters and participants has a crucial impact on the development of events. Visually, these images might strike as quite similar. Yet it would be inaccurate to equate the shaky images from Romania with today's overabundant image production. These recordings, apart from a few exceptions which made it to the mainstream television, were never shown to a larger public. They were found by Farocki and Ujică in local archives in Bucharest. Some materials were stored in the art school archives, where they were donated by their makers not knowing what better to do with them.[9] In the perspective of today's developments in imaging technology and practice, it can be argued that in Romania we witnessed a first, intuitive impulse to record all facets of the revolutionary events, while at that time it was still unclear what role such images might subsequently fulfil.

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9   Only some of these materials find their way to the internet now, but this is a different, historicizing tendency appearing with the temporal distance. For example, the aforementioned Paul Cozighian published an edited compilation of his own footage on YouTube (*http://www. youtube.com/watch?v=uf4E2iaVR6s*, last accessed 03. 03. 2015)

At the moment when Rabih Mroué turned to the immense and ever expanding archive of moving images from the Syrian revolution, the situation significantly changed. The wave of protests and revolutions which swept through many Arab nations took on a significantly visual form. In some cases, the small mobile cameras remain the only "weapon" protesters have at their disposal against the live ammunition of the police and military forces. An iconic Egyptian graffiti, which depicts a machine gun aimed at a camera, adequately summarizes this conundrum.[10] The amateur recordings of the events also found their way into numerous feature films. For instance, the acclaimed documentary *Burma VJ: Reporting from a Closed Country* (2008) by Anders Østergaard shows the efforts of citizen-journalists, so-called video-journalists (or VJs) to grab the attention of an international community by persistently reporting on their struggle against the authoritarian regime. The film exposes the footage made during the protests and manifestations which would otherwise go unnoticed by the mainstream news. Its narrative revolves around the lives of a number of people engaged in the clandestine reporting and disseminating of the independent material, showing episodes from both their private and public lives. Such a documentary form, however, necessitated a reconstruction of events which were not recorded or the recordings of which were lost. Thus, the film interlaces original footage with reenactments, but neglects to make clear distinctions between the two. The viewers are thus instructed about the dire situation in which VJs in Burma risk their lives to capture real images, but at the same time no special value is given to those actual records of real events as distinct from reenactments.

Assuming a thoroughly different strategy, the 2013 film *Uprising* by Peter Snowdon is, just as *Videograms of a Revolution*, constructed exclusively by means of found footage. It combines images from different protest movements and revolutions in Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, Egypt and Syria in a montage devoid of any comment or special editing. Various images of differing quality and length are grouped together in an impressionistic portrait of mass protests. Despite the fact that the various languages spoken in the footage are subtitled, it is virtually impossible to understand the exact meaning and context of each particular situation. The only narrativizing structure is introduced by means of intertitles, grouping the fragments in seven days preceding the outburst of an imagined, global revolution. The resulting string of images conjures the universal

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10   This graffiti became the icon and the main idea of the documentary film *The Weapon of Choice* (*Une arme de choix,* 2012) by Florence Tran, portraying a number of young Egyptian filmmakers in their efforts to wage a struggle against the regime. The camera thus becomes their "weapon of choice."

quality of many different mass struggles in the world but steers clear from any political commentary or a contextual interpretation. Seen from this perspective, *Pixelated Revolution* sets forth a different engagement with the amateur footage. Abandoning a larger filmic narrative, it analyses the selected footage from a particular standpoint.

A Lesson in the Making and/or Filming of a Revolution

Resembling Farocki's earlier film *Inextinguishable Fire* (*Nicht löschbares Feuer*, 1969), in which the filmmaker reads out a statement while seated at a table, Mroué chooses the format of a lecture which seemingly indicates a pedagogical project of a sort. The lesson begins with pragmatic instructions for the public on how to correctly shoot images of mass protests against authorities. A number of rules should be followed to prevent the subsequent use of the images by these authorities to pursue and persecute protesters. Thus, images of riots and uprisings should show as much as possible without revealing too much of an identity of its makers. Mroué advises that one should try to film from afar, preferably from an elevated position, in order to give a broader view of the scene. At the same time, the faces of protesters should not be shown to avoid easy identification.[11] Only in case of an assault on a protester, faces of the aggressors should be filmed, whereas the director of the film should never be credited.[12]

While drafting the guidelines on the correct filming of protests, Mroué discovers similarities with the manifesto entitled *Vow of Chastity* issued by the Dogme95 group (Mroué 2013b, 380–81). This Danish movement of radical filmmaking, gathered around Lars von Trier, established a set of rules which were meant to increase the degree of authenticity of the film such as hand-held filming, the lack of artificial lighting, filters or other effects, and shooting on location. Surprisingly, the manifesto for the fiction film and an instruction for the recording of historical events merge into each other. The videos recorded and disseminated by the Syrian protesters are intended to make their struggle known to a broad public. They are also meant to authenticate their charges against the brutal and undemocratic regime. Their shaky, fragmentary, pixelated quality

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11   It became clear in the aftermath of the Prague Spring in 1968 that journalist images, spread in the West, served the communist authorities to identify and capture the protesters. This lesson is learned by Mroué.

12   Here we see how the difficulties with identification and contextualization of such videos are a result of a conscious effort not to disclose the identities of the protesters, as a means of ensuring their safety.

strengthens this effect, assuring the spectators that they are being transported closer to the real. Seen in terms of remediation theory of Bolter and Grusin, these videos expose their mediated nature in order to provide – paradoxically – a sense of immediacy. Yet, in a reverse movement, they call forth an association to a filmic aesthetics. Surely, it is a special kind of aesthetics one invented in order to break away from the stultifying "cinematic" effects which distance filmic reality from lived reality.

Filmic Narrativization and Theatricality

If there is no coincidence in the fact that a theatre-maker turns to visual documents of the Syrian protests and that he associates these documents with an artistic manifesto for an authentic aesthetics in film, then this is perhaps because a particular intermingling of fiction and document takes place during these events. As a result of that process, the recording and the making of history cannot be dissociated from each other, while theatre or play-acting intersects with documentary image-making. *Videograms* captures the two crucial moments of that development. On the one hand, Farocki recalls that he and Ujică embarked on the project with the intention of initiating a debate on the ubiquitous images of the revolution. Upon seeing the visual material in detail, they changed their minds and decided to construct a filmic narrative, which, conventionally, must have a limited number of characters reappearing in different settings and guises in order to assure the continuity and coherence of the plot (Farocki 2001, 264). The sheer abundance of available footage allowed, or perhaps even demanded, such treatment of the historical material. It is as if the random and autonomously videotaped fragments of historical events naturally crystallized in a filmic structure. In one of the most enigmatic moments of the film, the voice-over concludes "Camera and event: since its invention, film has seemed destined to make history visible […] Film was possible because there was history. Almost imperceptibly, like moving forward on a Moebius strip, the side was flipped. We look on and have to think: if film is possible, then history too is possible." The camera recording thus seems to precede the historical event and precondition its appearance in our perceptual field.

On the other hand, many of these recordings disclose instances of reality becoming theatrical. In the heat of the Romanian revolution, various groups appear in the occupied Studio 4 in Bucharest in order to articulate their support for the revolution and appeal to the fellow citizens to join in the popular

movement. This urge to appear in front of the camera features on many instances in the footage found by Farocki and Ujică. Various "actors" of the revolution consciously perform in front of the camera, dragging the collaborators of the regime before the popular tribunal of the screen. Memoirs and accounts of many people witness to an intense feeling of having to play a completely new role without knowing the script (Cristea 1990). The omnipresence of the cameras and the importance of television in advancing the revolution created a new reality in which the events are made in front of and for the camera, thus becoming part of history in the making. This urge to act in front of a camera entails the necessity to rehearse or repeat utterances and statements deemed particularly important. In *Videograms* we see the resignation of the communist prime minister repeated three times. The terrified politician is brought by a large crowd to the balcony of the Central Committee in Bucharest, where he is expected to utter his resignation. Yet he is asked to repeat the utterance twice, to which he submits in passive surrender. Apparently, the cameras responsible for the live transmission were not ready and so the media event could not and did not take place when it was not properly recorded and broadcast.[13] People believed in the revolution because they immediately saw it being recorded and broadcast. Cameras triggered the progression of the events themselves, but, on the reverse side of that process, reality became theatrical.

This effect of theatricality caused by the presence of the camera has been identified already by Roland Barthes. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes phenomenologically investigates his own reaction to a camera lens, recognizing, not without abhorrence, how he tries to strike a pose and anticipate the image which is about to be taken of him. Thus he already becomes an image even before the photograph is made (Barthes 1982, 10–11). In photography theory it has been acknowledged that the event of photography, which reconfigures the agents involved in a situation into those photographing, the photographed, and the spectators, takes place even when a camera is only suspected to be present (Azoulay 2012, 23). Through *cinema verité,* on the other hand, it became apparent how the act of filming can trigger surprising reactions or confessions of people filmed. In brief it can be said that the abundant use of the camera as a source of more direct, authentic images of reality has elicited a significant transformation of that reality.

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13   Media events, as theorized by Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, appear to be very similar to fiction films in their staging and the dramatized form (Dayan and Katz 1992, 114–15).

The Double-Edged Effect of Image Performativity

On the one hand, images thus become operative in reality, which means they move beyond the dimension of representation to take on a performative role.[14] On the other hand, reality itself appears to be increasingly theatrical. The term performative is useful here because it indicates both the agency of images and their relation to the theatrical. The camera images are thus performative similarly to utterances, which can – in the sense established by J.L. Austin – be performative. It means they not so much show a section of the reality but also make something happen. The many instances of the Syrian protesters filming their assassins on their mobile phones despite the danger for their lives can be seen as performative, in the sense given to that term by Judith Butler, since they are repetitive and citational with respect to the filmic antecedents (Butler 1993, 12–13).[15] Yet while these images can be said to act in and upon reality, they also cause the events to appear as fictions.

When the term fiction or theatricality is used with respect to reality, it generally has a negative connotation. It suggests pretence, artifice and perhaps even fabrication (notably, a term of preference for Mroué). Performance and performativity have in fact often been enlisted in order to criticize theatricality, the first being a positively connoted term, introduced to replace the latter, which was discredited on the grounds of its association with deceit and masquerade (McGillivray 2009). Yet it seems that both positive and negative facets of these terms are useful in trying to understand the current dealings with lens-based images, as they stress different aspects of the same evolution. When Janelle Reinelt states that we live in theatricalized times, by which she means that public events and political handlings are increasingly being designed as spectacle, this is not to lament the loss of authenticity (Reinelt 2010, 27–28). Instead, it is an invitation and an urge to analyse reality as already partially theatricalized or staged.

World, Seen Through Camera Lenses, Cinematically

In an analogy to that theatrical metaphor, film theorists indicate that we increasingly understand the world in cinematic terms, which suggests that from the perspective of film studies, our experience of the everyday life is already, to some extent,

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14   Farocki talks about images which produce the revolution instead of reproducing it (Farocki 2001, 260). He later uses the term "operative images" (Farocki 2010, 66).

15   Mroué analyses the similarity of one of these videos with a scene from the film *The Time That Remains* (2009) by Elia Suleiman (Mroué 2013b, 390).

mediated and remediated by the filmic imagination (Elsaesser 2005; Rodowick 2007). The use of authentic images in *Videograms* and *Pixelated Revolution* testify to art's (be it film, performance, installation or exhibition) obsession with capturing the real. At the same time, they capture essential characteristics of that real which mutates and is constantly reinvented. The intermedial approach to these two works of art makes it possible to expose different analogies for the experience of reality. If performance studies use performativity, theatre studies theatricality and film studies the cinematic as a dominant metaphor for reality, then the insights provided by Farocki, Ujică and Mroué suggest that these approaches should be combined. Each of these analogies seems to add to the pervasive sense of reality being already fictionalized to some extent.

In Mroué's investigation of the "double shooting," a thought-provoking instance of such fictionalization of reality is uncovered. It remains an unsolved riddle why the protesters who spot a sniper aiming at them continue filming instead of running away and avoiding death. On the one hand, it can be said that the protesters attempt to catch up with the raw reality in order to make their visual documents more authentic. In this effort, they go even as far as to risk their own lives to deliver a proof of their struggle. Although they create yet again a video footage, at the same time they transgress the theatrical towards the real. On the other hand, Mroué suggests, they seem to be caught in the internal logic of the image. They start to see their situation only through the mediator of the small camera, which they use as prosthesis of their own body. When during a film screening the spectators see a nozzle of a gun directed straight towards them, they can be certain that the scene will not end with real bullets reaching targets outside of the frame. "[The bullet] will not make a hole in the screen and hit any of the spectators. It will always remain there, in the virtual world, the fictional one. This is why the Syrian cameraman believes that he will not be killed: his death is happening inside the image" (Mroué 2013b, 387). The real struggle of Syrian protesters is being transposed onto the image. Therefore, Mroué argues, "it seems that it is a war against the image itself" (Mroué 2013b, 387). This war is waged on aesthetic grounds too: the regime keeps hold of the official, large, professional image of the mainstream news TV. The militant opposition reverts to poor, imperfect, shaky images of the small, mobile camera. The poor image clearly displays its makeshift manufacture. Yet it is aimed to disclose the fabrication of the official image.

In his reflections on infancy and history, Giorgio Agamben sees the ubiquitous use of cameras in the twentieth century as a sign of a loss of real experience. Yet this remark is not meant to deplore this new condition of deprivation but

rather take note of it and prepare for the emergence of a new form of experience (Agamben 1993, 14–15). When Hito Steyerl returns to these reflections, she suggests that we should expect and anticipate the reappearance of experience somewhere "in the twilight zone between reality and fiction" (Steyerl 2006). Wojciech Marczewski's film *Escape From the Cinema "Liberty"* (*Ucieczka z kina Wolność,* 1990), staged in communist Poland, shows how the fictional characters of a film screened in a local cinema rebel against the censored, conservative script in which they are supposed to play part. They "leave" their roles and embark on an on-screen protest, which causes an unwanted stir in the cinema's public. The local censor, initially engaged in quelling this odd form of dissent, changes sides and joins the protest by literally stepping into the screen of the film. Seeing this escape into fiction, the communist party secretary present in the cinema theatre tries to dissuade the renegade censor from joining the rebellion by using the typical intimidation and threats. The censor looks back from the "inside" of the film onto the cinema audience and retorts to the baffled party dignitary "you look so unnatural!" The escape into the fiction of the film allows the censor – this "real" character who chose to inhabit the screen – to see the reality as something less real than it pretended to be. This is perhaps the indirectly formulated but repeatedly – performatively – identified intention of the Syrian protesters who keep filming their own death – to reach the inside of the image from which to criticize the reality becoming less and less real. The enigmatic statement of the voice-over in *Videograms* about the reverse side of the Moebius band finds here a new postscript. "If film is possible, then history too is possible" seems to suggest that it is through fictionalization and theatricality of the image that a new experience of the historical event can occur.

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Holding Your Scream in Your Hand.
3D Printing as Inter-Dimensional Experience in Contemporary Artworks by Alicia Framis, Martin Erik Andersen and Hito Steyerl

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Abstract. During the last couple of years, 3D printing has been widely discussed as a technology with the potential to revolutionize production methods as we used to know them. However, hitherto not much has been written about the aesthetic aspects of this new possibility of transferring bits to atoms. What kinds of (3D) images are awaiting us? This article focuses on how three contemporary artists are including 3D prints and the process of 3D printing in their work. The article offers a short introduction to the characteristics of 3D printing followed by indebt analysis of art works by Spanish installation artist Alicia Framis, Danish sculptor and professor at The Royal Danish Art Academy Martin Erik Andersen and German filmmaker and writer Hito Steyerl. The article points out how these, very different, works of art use 3D printing to offer the viewer a sense of inter-dimensionality. The central experience here lies somewhere between 2D and 3D.

Keywords: 3D printing, contemporary art, new technology and image-making, Alicia Framis, Martin Erik Andersen, Hito Steyerl.

Introduction

Those familiar with the science fiction universe Star Trek will remember the lines: "Tea, Earl Grey, hot!" A typical command from the bald captain Picard to "the replicator;" the incredible machine capable of transforming energy to mass and, in a split second, satisfy the crew's craving for "afternoon-tea," fish-and-chips and other intergalactic necessities of life [Fig. 1]. Still, 3D printers need something more substantial than the captain's orders to be able to spit out objects: data and – raw materials. However, with the so-called CAD-programs (Computer-

aided design) in user-friendly formats capable of translating digital image files into three-dimensional digital models, Picard & Co.'s quotidian conjuring acts by command are not all that far-off.[1]

The rapid progress within the 3D printer segment intended for the mass market is currently described by economists as the "new industrial revolution" [Fig. 2]. Amidst the swell of technological enthusiasm, however, there is still a poignant lack of knowledge about exactly what is being printed and which aesthetic problems and opportunities are likely to accompany this unique ability to turn digital data into physical objects.[2] You could also ask, as did the American media and image theorist W. J. T. Mitchell, which new kinds of (three-dimensional) images are likely to be realized by this technology (Mitchell 2010, 38) – Mitchell's point being that technical innovation and new media typically give rise to an image crisis, because people generally perceive new image types to be potentially dangerous and invasive (Mitchell 2010, 38).

An obvious example from the 3D printing sphere is the debate sparked by the publication of the "print recipe" for a functional pistol in May 2013. Its distribution was due to the American crypto-anarchist and weapon liberalist Cody Wilson, who called his weapon "The Liberator" [Fig. 3]. In a YouTube clip about his political project, he says that it is "more than information, less than an object."[3] The American government immediately asked Wilson to remove the files for fear that they contravene current arms exports legislation, but at that point "The Liberator" was already safely embedded in computer memories worldwide. Hence two copies of the world's first 3D-printed pistol have now been included in the collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

The interesting point about Wilson's statement in the context of this article is the fact that he characterizes his pistol as being in a kind of "limbo." As he sees it, the "dangerous" part of his project is the fact that it is more than information, but less than an object. In other words, it is an unstable product with "materialization potential." Similarly, a number of artists have explored 3D printing as a medium exposing inter-spatial experience or inter-dimensionality. Their ends and means, however, are quite different to Cody Wilson's, whose open-source design is intended to secure all Americans the option of carrying a gun. A feature shared by all, however, is that the 3D printer

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1   E.g. *www.123dapp.com*. Last accessed 01. 03. 2015.
2   A few of the many new publications on 3D printing do however, partly, address the question of 3D printing and aesthetics (cf. Hoskins 2013; Warnier 2014).
3   Cody Wilson on *The Liberator*: *http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Spm_zrjedzk*. Last accessed 01. 03. 2015.

is not used exclusively as a facility for producing (art-)objects, but also as a means to thematize the actual technology.

In the following, a mainly analytical approach to the works has been adopted with the aim of examining the potential of inter-spatiality and inter-dimensionality in 3D printing by specifically analysing works by the artists Alicia Framis, Martin Erik Andersen and Hito Steyerl. Using examples such as these effectively shifts the focus on 3D printing away from a purely technological production perspective to an aesthetic one. In this context, an analysis centred on the sensuous and cognitive potential of 3D printing. During the process, I will be looking to the Danish writer and linguist Per Aage Brandt's ideas about "the 2½ dimension" for theoretical support. Initially, I will outline the current status of 3D printing, starting with an exhibition on the design and production potential of the technology. The overall functional and technological perspective of the exhibition was effectively challenged by an art installation encouraging you to "scream a cup."

3D Print Technology

The exhibition *3D – Dreidimensionale Dinge Drucken* (*In 3 Dimensions: Printing Objects*) at the design museum Museum für Gestaltung in Zürich, in 2013, showed the type of objects and products that designers, architects, engineers, medical doctors and biologists are currently able to produce by means of 3D printing [Fig. 4].[4] In this context, 3D printing is seen as an additive technology where extremely thin layers of material are applied on top of each other. This means that the object is created, particle by particle, according to data fed to the printer by the computer. Other types of digital production methods exist as well, which are, in effect, a continuation of various manual techniques where objects are milled or cut from specific materials using a 3D cutter on a robotic arm connected to a computer. However, it is the additive technique that is regarded as the actual breakthrough because it implies a hitherto unknown freedom in shaping and controlling specific materials.

The Spanish architect and 3D printing scientist Marta Malé-Alemany, who organized the exhibition, summarizes the risks and potential of 3D printing technology as follows: "the materialization of the digital world made possible by new fabrication tools will have a significant number of economic and sociocultural

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4   The exhibition in Zürich was an adapted version of the exhibition *FULL PRINT3D: Printing Objects*, Disseny Hub Barcelona Museums, Barcelona, 2010–2011, curated by Marta Malé-Alemany. *www.dhub-bcn.cat/en/exhibition/full-print3D printing-objects*. Last accessed 03. 03. 2015.

effects: we are all of us potential fabricators, we can fabricate anywhere – meaning that production is completely delocalized – and carry out our own customized fabrication. Which practically means that we are able to reinvent the world: invent it for ourselves and build it together. […] What new forms await us? What kind of barriers will crop up on the creative horizon as a result of the shift of the digital realm into the physical world? These are exciting questions, the answers to which are necessarily speculative" (Malé-Alemany 2012a, 15).

According to Malé-Alemany (and others, see Anderson 2012; The Economist 2011), 3D printing can potentially revolutionize production methods as we know them, because it is now possible to progress from bits to atoms without having to activate and fund bulky production plant. If Karl Marx's maxim that political power goes hand in hand with the power of production still holds good, then 3D printing technology carries within it the germ of world revolution. But, as hinted by Malé-Alemany, predicting the future is fraught with uncertainty, also where applications and proliferation of 3D printing are concerned. There are, however, a number of characteristics inherent in the technology that will decisively influence its proliferation. At the *3D – Dreidimensionale Dinge Drucken*, 2013, these core characteristics (starting with Malé-Alemany 2012b, 17–48) were thematized as follows:

1) No form restrictions – providing the scope for producing extremely complex geometric shapes.

2) Scope for variation – ten different objects are no more costly to print than ten identical ones; no one needs completely identical candlesticks.

3) Specialized production – 3D printing is particularly suitable for individualized products such as prostheses based on 3D scan of the user's body.

4) Complexity – 3D printers can produce complex units in one production run such as interlocked links or parts embedded into hollow spaces; no need to assemble the parts later.

5) Material options – which are wide-ranging. The raw material could be rolls of plastic cord, but also plastic, metal, sand, wax, chocolate, rubber, or food in liquid or powder form.

As far as materials go, the scope is ever-widening, although it might be costly if you want to print in materials other than plastic. Depending on the type of printer you have access to, it is potentially possible to print in all conceivable materials from glass and metal to sugar and sand – or living cells. The latter – known in English as "tissue engineering" – is presently undergoing further exploration with a view to enable the "printing" of human organs (Anderson 2012,

95). The prospects of organ printing for real-life surgical applications are still some way off.[5] The general point being, however, that although many people's experience of 3D-printed objects is still restricted to smallish plastic gadgets with a dubious finish, 3D printing is not limited to a specific type of material. In some contexts, you would hardly notice that the object had been printed rather than traditionally produced, i.e. cast. For the person using a hearing aid, it is likely to be of little consequence that the hearing enhancing gadget was "customized" on a state-of-the-art 3D printer. 3D printing is not, therefore, necessarily significant for one's immediate *experience of material and materiality*.[6] In other cases, 3D printing technology will be the decisive factor in the perception of an object, for the development of new combinations of form and material, and for making new inroads into knowledge. This is true of innovative design as referred to by Malé-Alemany or, as we shall see, critical positions in contemporary art.

Alicia Framis: *Screaming Room*

The Spanish artist Alicia Framis's installation *Screaming Room* (2012–2013) [Figs. 5–7] from the exhibition *3D – Dreidimensionale Dinge Drucken* posed a challenge to the impressive and contagious enthusiasm surrounding technology at the imminent prospect of new refined and complex design forms and production methods brimming with ideas of freedom and flexibility imagined by their pioneers. In comparison, her use of the 3D printer appears basic and tangible, perhaps even deliberately naïve in all its simplicity, since the "product" merely consists of a series of incredibly wonky plastic cups. This was a glaring contrast to the technically and aesthetically sophisticated – and mostly useful – design seen at the exhibition.

   With *Screaming Room*, Framis encourages visitors to enter a soundproof box, activate a button and – when the light inside the box flashes – for four seconds, scream as loudly, shrilly, quietly or wildly as they can. The scream is then transformed by some specially designed software into a unique 3D object by means of the 3D printer connected. The basic form is a common white plastic cup familiar from coffee vending machines and so common to us that we hardly

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5   In connection with the exhibition *3D: printing the future* at the Science Museum in London, the museum asked experts to discuss eight widespread myths about 3D printing, including the scope for organ transplants using 3D-printed organs: *http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/ visitmuseum/3D_printer_exhibition.aspx*. Last accessed 01. 03. 2015.

6   Here, "materiality" refers to the quality of something perceived, not the mere fact that something is a physical reality. For a distinction between these concepts see Brown 2010, 47.

notice its design. In the *Screaming Room*, this form is put through a process of distortion, and the exact design depends on your scream: the pitch, the tone, the duration. Apart from having to persuade yourself to scream in a public gallery, a significant part of the experience in *Screaming Room* is to observe the 3D printer during the 14 minutes it takes for your own sound to materialize into solid matter. Firstly, the technology is sufficiently new to most visitors that the mere fact of seeing the printer at work is fascinating. Secondly, you get a special opportunity to compare your own scream with those of others to the extent that visitors decide to leave their "sound cup" on the exhibition platform.[7]

The special thing about *Screaming Room* is that you, cup in hand, recall your scream and realize that this, in fact, is what your scream looks like. It is not only an artistic interpretation of sound – this physical object reflects *my* scream. In other words, my special sound has become an object. In my own case, this means a wavy container whose oscillation frequency effectively prevents it from ever holding water.

Afterwards, you do realize, of course, that everything depends on a software sensitive to sound waves. In this way, a three-dimensional digital model is created that the printer translates into physical form.[8] Helped along by the printer, mediating would seem to take place between various human senses. Sound becomes a synesthetic experience, since the scream – which is measurable in time, pitch and decibels – becomes accessible as a spatial form, we can "cup" it in our hands.

The Concepts of Material "Reality" and Digital "Fiction"

Exploring the scope of digital 3D design within ceramics, the ceramic designer and assistant research professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Design Flemming Tvede Hansen describes a similar situation as a "conflict of materials" (Tvede Hansen 2010, 122). In his case, perceived as a tension between digital design and material, exemplified by the natural qualities of porcelain (will

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7   *Screaming Room* has been installed in different ways, please see images in the publication Alicia Framis, *Framis in Progress*, 2013, available at www.aliciaframis.com.

8   Other printing projects have, in similar ways, used sound to design form. In the jewellery design series *8hertz*, the English exhibition group 1234lab used the user's/buyer's personal voice recordings as a basis for materialization. The basic design consists of a sound-sensitive algorithm which is subsequently translated into physical form (Tvede Hansen 2010, 154). Here, too, the 3D printer "develops" a "sound-map" thereby making the audible open to the senses of touch and sight. For other examples of designs using sound, see *Cloudspeaker* and *Soundplotter* projects offering ideas on your musical taste translated into object form (Ipser 2010, 22–25).

run and settle over time) offset by the momentary character of the 3D print [Fig. 8]. The conflict is characterized by providing: "a sense that something is fictitious and something is what we might call real. [...] When we observe the artefact, we will be dashing between fiction and reality and between representation and material as such" (Tvede Hansen 2010, 122).

Describing the material as real and the digital as fictitious is the prevailing perception of the contrast between old and new media. In this context, the American literary critic and thing theorist Bill Brown talks of "the hypothesis of dematerialisation," according to which new media exert negative influence on our ability to maintain contact with the real world (Brown 2010, 51). Here, Brown is referring to the tradition extending from Karl Marx and Max Weber to Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard, in which the modern and the postmodern are generally characterized as a process of abstraction (Brown 2010, 50). In the context of such arguments, modern media – especially digital ones – have a dematerializing or alienating effect. In other words, they engender a loss of reality or of the idea of original reality.

Contrary to this, you could argue that 3D printing materializes the world for us, making the virtual real. That is certainly the case with *Screaming Room*. Nevertheless, Tvede Hansen's observations of the material as real and the printed image as fictitious offer a good opportunity to consider what it is exactly that the 3D printer materializes for us. Why is the printed matter perceived as less real than "old-fashioned" rigid materials? I would venture that it has to do with our fascination of the idea that the 3D printer makes physical, real objects for us while we tend to forget the fact that it actually also produces physical, three-dimensional *images*? That is to say "something imagined," something which, in the widest possible sense, is a representation (Mitchell 2010, 38–39).[9] This means that the "material conflict," as Tvede Hansen calls it, is (also) about how to characterize and perceive the three-dimensional in a figurative sense. Perhaps certain 3D prints render us especially susceptible to the gradual slide of materiality as material and texture, and materiality as three-dimensional imagery.

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9   W. J. T. Mitchell has discussed and isolated the nature of an image in several contexts. The introductory definition in the short article *Image* runs: "An image is a sign or symbol of something by virtue of its resemblance to what it represents" (Mitchell 2010, 38–39). It is essential to link the idea of representation to what he writes about the character of appearance and recognition in respect of the image: "An image is always both there and not there, appearing *in* or *on* or *as* a material object yet also ghostly, spectral, and evanescent" (Mitchell 2010, 38–39).

The linguist and writer Per Aage Brandt has, in a different context, introduced the idea of the "relief stage" or the "2½ dimension," which illustrates the potential of 3D printing to draw attention to any "material conflict" or slide in image formation. According to Brandt, the relief stage is the notion of a representational stage somewhere between the two- or three-dimensional, where perception has not been finally resolved, and where sensation remains open and explorative (Brandt 1998). Per Aage Brandt's concept is not specifically intended for 3D printing, but evolved in connection with the play *Hvorfor bli'r det nat, mor* (*Mum, why does it get dark?*, 1989) by the theatre company Hotel Pro Forma. The audience was allowed inside in a strictly geometric stage set where singers and dancers conjured up spaces, figures and vanishing points in a way "as if floating in a world without gravity" (Bichel 1989). During the performance, the audience stood on balconies looking down and getting a bird's eye view of a narrow, oblong space – virtually a well, in which the performers were acting and challenging one's perception to capture a condition and a perspective between 2D and 3D. Per Aage Brandt himself describes the observation of the 2½ dimension as a "more unresolved and reflective phase of sensation" (Brandt 1998).

Martin Erik Andersen: *Etageri* (*Levels*)

The sensuous and philosophical qualities in the unresolved or the transient are also central to the Danish sculptor Martin Erik Andersen's use of 3D printing. This is true, for example, of the work *Etageri* [Figs. 9–12], in which the physical prints have actually been burnt off, displaced in the process of an analogue casting technique. His dialogue with digital design remains, as we shall see, central to the overall work.

The installation *Etageri* was dedicated in June 2013 and was created as a decorative assignment for the architectural beacon Krystallen from 2011, the domicile of the mortgage bankers Nykredit. The building was designed by schmidt hammer lassen architects and is situated at Kalvebod Brygge in Copenhagen. *Etageri* reaches like a fearless but delicate pedestal up into one of Krystallen's two covered atria. From a solid, five-square-metre aluminium base plate and very high up, you can trace this delicate lanky thing, a sort of bewildered hall stand, fixing itself, from time to time, to the atrium wall with a "branch" and, finally, to the ceiling. Other branches form a resting place for rugs and knits, and aluminium casts based on 3D scans and 3D prints are placed on a number of small platforms. A cast is also placed on the base plate where your eyes initially

home in on a living tree whose crown reaches up several levels. In line with other smaller plantings, the finely leafed, exotic tree is placed in a homemade, simple, white-painted stoneware pot.

Etageri, in other words, is a materially complex work. Behind the large pot, a computer screen has even been concealed and covered in fine-meshed knits disclosing the work's website in embroidery – *Etageri's* digital universe: *www.etageri.dk* (last accessed 03. 03. 2015). At one and the same time, the website serves to document *Etageri*, its details and execution, and, not least, several links indicating the different directions your dialogue with this "bank decoration" may take.[10]

 There is a further addition of several physical "work-satellites" distributed on the six levels of the building. These consist of small accumulations of planted stoneware pots, a "hall stand" complete with hangers and casts made of 3D prints. The idea is that Nykredit staff may, in principle, make use of these satellites – hang a coat on the hall stand or bring a plant pot along to their desk for the day. Hence there is a leap in terms of both scale and function between *Etageri*'s design in the representative atrium, which also doubles as the local bank, and more intimate if office areas are open.

The work's 3D print casts also mediate the scales of the building as well as of the installation. The prints are based on scans of the architecture, the stoneware pots and the planting. The scan was then converted into a digital 3D model and printed. Nevertheless, what you see in *Etageri* is not the actual 3D prints, but castings of these made according to a classic so-called "direct cire perdue" technique. This is to say that the original form – in this case the 3D print – is burnt off in the casting process. On the uppermost platform of the central pedestal, you see a sketchy model of the atrium. The various decks in this area are visible and, if you look carefully, you will also notice the installation *Etageri* complete with pots and lanky structure striving upwards. The small-scale model is a scan of a hand-built model of the work. The scan was then converted into a digital 3D model which, like the other models, was printed and then cast.

In this way, the model refers directly to itself and to the architectural and artistic whole of which it is part – like a picture of the picture *in* the picture. But equally important, the figure is also an attempt at defining the significance of merging and correlating digital and analogue registers. The 3D-based cast of

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10   The website includes images and information from a broad perspective of art and cultural history, nerdy details about Persian rugs, politics and philosophy, including an Aljazeera interview with the American philosopher and political activist Noam Chomsky or a wonderful clip with an American bank official singing out his enthusiasm about a company merger (*http://www.etageri.dk/v/one.html*. Last accessed 03. 03. 2015).

the atrium appears unfocused in comparison with the architecture that it reflects and in which it is placed. Krystallen is characterised by clear-cut lines and crystalline geometry outside as well as inside. Martin Erik Andersen's model of the interior of Krystallen, on the contrary, is flighty, the form is uneven, and the paint is flagrantly dripping. A form just as close to imploding or collapsing as to straightening itself up. A couple of the other 3D-print-based casts appear to have collapsed even more. The folds and forms of the surface are complex – or indistinct – and it is fairly difficult to recognize the architecture or the plants and pots forming the material framework for the 3D scans.

In Martin Erik Andersen's work with the scans for a digital 3D model, "data extraction" was an important element: instead of aiming for an exact reproduction of the structure to be made into a 3D print, a deliberate imprecision has been incorporated into the print, a series of "dead spots" or data holes, which, in prints and the subsequent casts, leave the figures "unresolved." Hints of clear-cut geometry and crystalline forms merge with soft, organic parts that have definitely not been "sanctioned" in architectural or constructional terms. The sculptures are like stills of an organic process that most certainly does not follow a predictable line of development.

Here, the casts made from digital prints trace a line from the other materials used in the installation. The knits have a porous quality full of holes and the loose ends have not been cut off, but run like unpredictable rhizomes over knits, plants and casts. Thin bamboo sticks, often carefully painted in delicate white and lilac or covered with paper from old Donald Duck comic strips, have been linked to the plant stems by fine yarns like useless flower supports. The fine woven Oriental rugs are typically frayed, worn by years of use so that they, too, appear like thread work, a kind of "connective tissue." The building's stringent materiality of surfaces in flow is, in *Etageri*, met by carefully staged hesitation. The basic structure of the work may inspire a heavenward glance, but there are plenty of alien stations along the route where the eye will have to make sense of a mass of colour, material and scale transitions.

The role of the cast 3D models seems to be one of material "condensations." According to a note about the project written by Martin Erik Andersen, both motif and process reflect the "digital thinking" which determines many of the spaces and surfaces we find ourselves in today. In the same note, he remarks: "on the positive side, you could say that the digital aspect of our digitalised surroundings offers a kind of ecstasy in relation to the elasticity between our reality space and our thinking" (Andersen). This means that the digital may be

perceived as an opportunity to experience unresolved spatiality in line with Per Aage Brandt's "relief stage," characterizing an unresolved but potent condition between the two- and three-dimensional.

In a physical sense, of course, the casts are three-dimensional. But when seen "through" the work, they appear to be reproducing an *image* of such an "inter-spatial" condition. Their condition of potential dissolution and collapse has been stretched out between traces of digital design – geometries – and the "material itself." Rather than being a dividing line between reality and fiction, as Flemming Tvede Hansen described the difference between analogue and digital forms, *Etageri* appears largely to be about making the encounter with material digitalization available as unresolved, as an inter-dimensionality to be considered a space of perceptual options – and, as such, a "reality."

Hito Steyerl: *The Kiss*[11]

The use of 3D printing as an inter-dimensional space of options is perhaps even more explicit in the German visual artist Hito Steyerl's installation *The Kiss* [Figs. 13–16]. The work consists of a three-part video projection shot with a 3D scanner, a 3D-printed sculpture and three light boxes, each containing a written eyewitness report. The reports originate from a dramatic and ultra-violent, but also mysterious event taking place in 1993, during the war in Bosnia. On 27 February, 19 passengers were abducted from a train somewhere between the cities of Belgrade and Bar. A Serbian paramilitary unit stopped the train and led all 19 people away whereupon the train continued its journey with the remaining 1000 or so passengers. The identities of the abducted people were quickly made public, but ten years would elapse before investigations were able to prove that the captives had been robbed of their possessions, tortured and then killed and thrown into the River Drina the same day they were abducted.

The Kiss focuses on a certain detail in this tale of horror. Several witnesses have independently mentioned the abduction of a twentieth passenger. A tall, elegantly dressed black man, who has remained a mystery ever since because no one knows him, no relatives reported him missing, and no authorities have made attempts at establishing his identity. Witnesses report that he was the last person to be abducted from the train and that the leader of the paramilitary unit was

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11   *The Kiss*, 2012, installation with 3 HD video projections on plexiglas screens, 2 videos on flatscreens, documents in light boxes, 3D print, display. Idea: Boris Buden, producer: Alwin Franke, realization and objectification: Hito Steyerl.

seen tapping his shoulder, kissing him, saying: "There is my brother." Steyerl's installation focuses on this mysterious kiss that some claim to have witnessed, but which we, in reality, cannot prove ever took place. We do not even know whether the man actually existed – perhaps the story is just a myth – but we do know that nobody made any attempts at investigating the case.

By means of a 3D reconstruction technique used by the police to recreate crime scenes, we are, in Hito Steyerl's video, able to follow the abduction from the train. The pictures show so-called "point clouds," meaning point readings of the material caught by Hito Steyerl's scanner in the reconstruction. The sculptural 3D print also reproduces the situation of the mysterious kiss. Here, in the shape of a number of figures who, like sketchy pop-up models, form a rough circle. The sculpture does not spell out what actually happened – *whether* it happened, at all. The material, printed documentation, the three-dimensional "proof" of the decisive moment when the relationship between the militia leader and man no. 20 was established, appears rather like a blurred vision, as an attempt at captivating some insight "between movement and stasis, between certainty and uncertainty," according to an essay about the work (Franke 2012). Here, the 3D print is further described as "a blur that bears the marks of time, hovering between the abstract and the figurative" (Franke 2012).

The printed abduction scene makes it possible to alternate between a very detailed reproduction of the implicated persons and their physical relations when committing the act, and a series of hollow shells and sketchy outlines signalling a considerable lack of information. At the precise moment that should have been the revealing climax of the scene – the mysterious kiss – the sculptural image, in other words, disintegrates and advances towards a highly entropic state. Here, the idea of entropy implies the degree of randomness in a system, and the 3D print in *The Kiss* could be seen as a shape veering towards structural collapse or meltdown. The sculpture is drawing close to figurative collapse. There is simply insufficient information to be distilled into a meaningful image. It becomes virtually a "data void" that, all at once, defies decoding while nudging us into attempts at exposure; the solution seems just round the corner, but nevertheless quite impossible to retain in a dimension suited to producing evidence. In *The Kiss*, the 3D print is used to materialize the missing elements, the things that defy documentation: the fatal kiss – which, in this particular war memory, illustrates how individual identities, in a split second, can change status and become eradicated when faced with acts of terror. Alternatively, how such acts may provoke a kind of mass suggestion, so that we

end up with a materialization of an approximation of people's inaccurate ideas about a given situation.

In an interview, Hito Steyerl stated that she (too) sees *The Kiss* as a general thematization of the status inherent in 3D technology as a form of representation and documentation in our present use of images. 3D reproductions of events and places influence and manipulate our perception of space and physical reality in ways that we may be unaware of. Steyerl says, "people tend to think of 3D as something that gives a more complete picture […] But what I think it does, it gives a more complete picture of what is missing from the picture" (Steyerl 2012a). According to Steyerl, 3D is capable of pointing out to us what is *missing.* Things we can neither see nor translate into material form. An area where the "final" picture refuses to emerge, but operates somewhere between abstraction and figuration, between fiction and reality or 2D and 3D.

Inter-Dimensional Material Experience

In the same way as the works by Alicia Framis and Martin Erik Andersen, 3D printing in *The Kiss* is used to materialize and visualize a kind of zone of untouchability, an interim stage that we would otherwise have to regard as being inaccessible to sensation. Steyerl herself describes this inter-dimensional space as "2.3D" or "2.4D" in an attempt at describing a movement and a reality between 2D and 3D, "where the documentary elements become an index of the non-documentable" (Franke 2012, note 6 and Steyerl 2012b).

This thinking and rhetoric resemble the observations made by Per Aage Brandt in respect of the 2½ dimension as a "more unresolved and reflective phase of sensation" (Brandt 1998). It is worth pointing out that there is a certain amount of visual accord in the point clouds and the blurry figuration from the 3D print in *The Kiss* and the stage pictures from Hotel Pro Forma's *Hvorfor bli'r det nat, mor?* for which Brandt's text was written. The inter-dimensionality established in *The Kiss* portrays the historical space and the political past to which access is denied – knowledge that cannot be experienced. The imagery in the performance *Hvorfor bli'r det nat, mor?* may serve as a scenic perspective of this experiential dimension where perception is forced to keep the figure–ground relationship open. Further, it is worth noting the special position that this puts the viewer into. We become witnesses of sorts to the picture that can never be *resolved.*

At present, 3D printing is hailed as a revolutionizing, global extension of production facilities: now everyone is capable of producing physical things –

share things digitally and printing them physically. The analyses in this article, however, point to an alternative approach to 3D printing, namely as a medium for "material expansion of consciousness." In the works reviewed here, 3D printing is interesting as a means to materialize or produce pictures of something which is, as yet, unresolved as form or as knowledge.

The five characteristics of 3D printing from the Zürich exhibition – freedom of form, variation, special production, complexity and breadth of material – should perhaps be extended with a sixth one about the new medium's ability to precisely define spatial experience and cognition of inter-dimensional spatiality – certainly when it comes to the hands and mind of the artist. Sensuous experience, spatial experience and gaps in knowledge can be given form and texture in a way that retains focus not only on the physical object, but on the virtual data which created it – whether insufficient or complete. As far as I can see, 3D printing also involves material experience, which is specifically capable of connecting, in new and startling ways, to the information that created the object. A central, newly acquired quality is the scope for recognizing the processual status of the object. Not only is it adaptable to change, it is forever "volatile." Or in the words of Cody Wilson about the 3D-printed "Liberator," "more than information, less than an object." And perhaps this visualization of an inter-dimensional field could more aptly be described as "*more* than information and *more* than an object." For, although it is actually an object that I hold in my hand, it feels like a scream.

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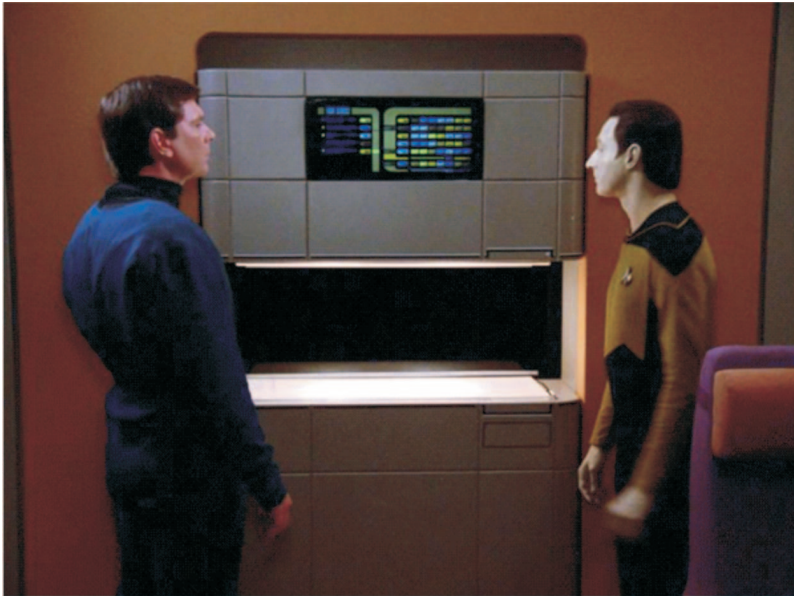

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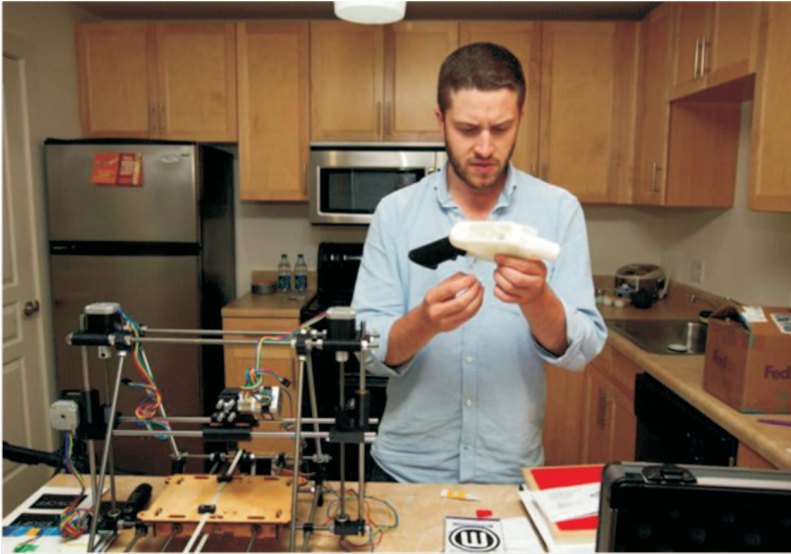
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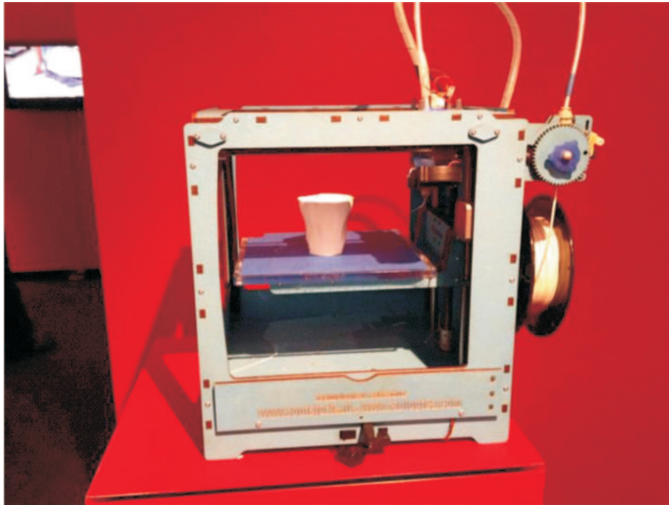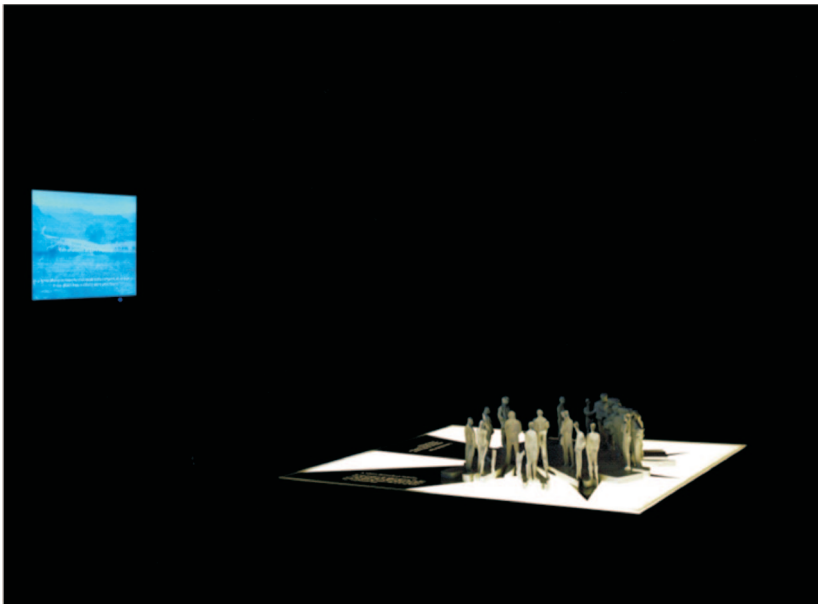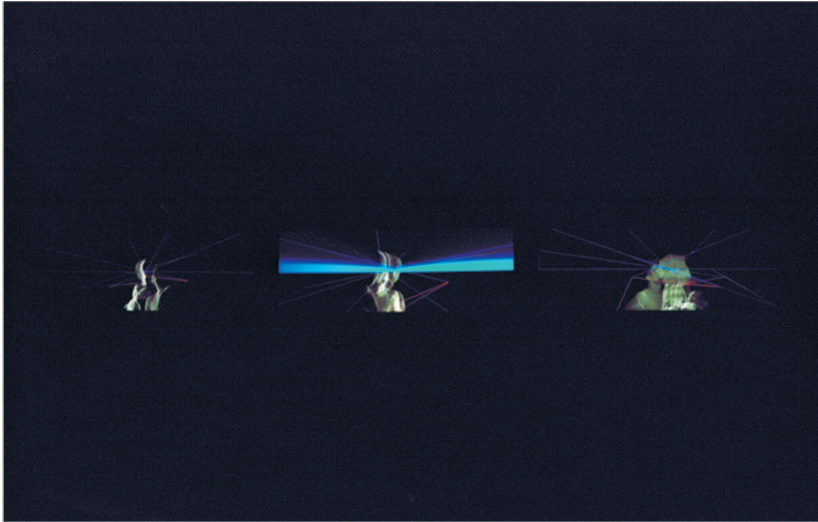**Figures 13–16.** Hito Steyerl: *The Kiss*, 2012. All images copyright of Hito Steyerl, courtesy of Portikus. Frankfurt; Wilfried Lentz, Rotterdam, photo: Leon Kahane.

The Intermedial Cluster: Åke Hodell's *Lågsniff*

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Abstract. Avant-garde aesthetic movements react on and appropriate new technological media in a process of breaking down the boundaries between different media and different "arts," in an attempt to generate meaning from the sheer materiality of the artwork. Avant-garde artworks will therefore by necessity be marked by media in different ways, at the same time as these art forms are processual, performative and transgressive. One of the prime Swedish examples of this avant-garde strategy is Åke Hodell's many realizations of his manuscript *Lågsniff*. The manuscript, written in 1963, was in the form of a text-sound-composition, which means that *Lågsniff*, already in this form, took many configurations with a plurality of genres and media modalities involved. Later the manuscript was realized as a series of performances, a TV-film, a book, and in 2002 as a DVD. For such a collection of art works, I would like to suggest the term "intermedial cluster." The point of departure for my discussion is the DVD, a remediation of the TV-film from 1966, and I will focus on two of the juxtaposed discourses in the cluster that this DVD represents: the package tour and warfare, and on two thematic foci in the film: media and memory, and man as automaton.

Keywords: intermedial cluster, media, Åke Hodell, avant-garde, performance.

Avant-garde artists often focus on materiality and processuality in the creation of art, and as a result the avant-gardists are at the forefront when it comes to employing new technological media, with the consequence that the borders between different media and different arts are eroded. A case in point, exemplifying how the awareness of the contemporary media ecology can be framed in a "single" work of art, is the Swedish avant-gardist Åke Hodell's work *Lågsniff* (1963 and onwards). Hodell's work also illustrates how such awareness is expressed through different juxtapositions: of high art and popular culture; of art and life; and of the different mediations of this work (for example, from manuscript and performance to the final DVD) as well as within the piece itself (voice, code, noise etc.). To further elaborate on these different mediations, I will base my argument on the

concept of media modalities as suggested by Lars Elleström: "I would say that all kinds of sign systems and also specific media productions and works of art must be seen as parts of a very wide field including not least the material, sensorial, spatiotemporal and semiotic aspects" (Elleström 2010, 4).

Avant-Garde

A second essential background to my discussion is the radical division between avant-garde and modernism, two of several aesthetic movements in the 20th century, a separation that is evident when it comes to media and "low culture."[1] Here, I want to relate to the "great divide" between high and low culture, which Andreas Huyssen (1986) suggests to be a distinguishing mark of modernism, while pointing out that the avant-garde tries to undo this divide in every way, since it is clearly under attack in *Lågsniff*.[2] Richard Murphy elaborates on the difference between avant-garde and modernism in his book *Theorizing the Avant-Garde* (1999): "what distinguishes the avant-garde from modernism in general is its institutional awareness: firstly, unlike modernism the avant-garde not only renovates the means but also deconstructs the *ideology* of art, while reflecting upon those social demarcations of culture for which modernism seems to show a complete lack of awareness or interest. The avant-garde sets out to expose and alter art's status as a socially differentiated and segregated mode of discourse, and to make it clear that its position is always mediated by the social mechanisms responsible for the institutionalization of culture. [...] the avant-garde's goal of overcoming the enforced separation of art and life springs precisely from its insight into what Habermas defines [...] as the process of 'bourgeois rationalization' responsible for producing this functional differentiation of the separate spheres of social activity. For behind the avant-garde's eccentricities and seemingly meaningless antics in ridiculing, exposing and overthrowing art's rules lies a profoundly meaningful purpose: the interrogation of the historically specific means by which art is mediated and administered by society's dominant cultural discourses" (Murphy 1999, 258).

The avant-gardists distort – in a very concrete way – art and society in an attempt to understand them in relation to their own lives. And the different

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1   While modernists of course use new media and technologies as well as low culture in their art, they do so only as means to create their art, while different avant-gardists use new media and low culture in a wish to achieve integration between art and life, in their investigation of life.

2   Even though Huyssens's "great divide" has been much discussed and also critiqued, the notion in itself does make certain differences between modernism and avant-garde clear.

stands taken by the avant-gardes and modernism in popular culture here become distinguishing marks, as Murphy continues: "modernism for example responds to this disappearance of the 'original' and to the effacement of the real-life referent not only by differentiating itself sharply from the reified forms associated with consumerist mass culture and the commodity form (for example through its emphasis on the high cultural status of its hermetically distanced forms), but simultaneously compensates for the loss of 'aura' by reasserting with all the more vehemence the notion of newness, originality and artistic innovation – a response amounting in a sense to a new spin on the Classic-Romantic use of the concept of the 'genius.' By contrast, the artists of the avant-garde and postmodernism both respond to this development by taking the opposite tack: they present the 'referent,' the object itself, as both the 'referent' *and* its artistic 'representation' in one – paradigmatically in the 'objet trouvé' – thereby questioning not only the conventions of aura and of original artistic creation (as Bürger has shown), but also disclosing the overlaps *already existing* between the two levels of reference (referent–signifier), that is to say, the points at which these levels already begin to 'short-circuit' and explode the conventional artistic/representational system" (Murphy 1999, 269). To "short-circuit and explode the conventional representational system" indeed seems to be the real aim of the avant-garde, and this is especially true of the Swedish neo-avant-gardes in the 1960s.

One of the distinguishing marks of the Swedish avant-garde of the sixties is the relation between literature and media, as Jonas Ingvarsson points out: "In the Swedish literary climate of the sixties, the examples of the cross-fertilisation between literature and other technologies are obvious, especially in the second half of the decade. Concrete poets moved into the electro-music studios and the happenings staged by the young avant-garde at the Museum of Modern Art used tape recorders and amplifiers as tools, authors published 'prose machines,' and Göran Palm claimed in his unfair reflections in 1966 that his starting-point is the fact that he learned to 'travel with his sense organs' with the help of the transmitting media" (Ingvarsson 1999, unnumbered, my transl.). Here is the mixed media craze of the sixties, where language becomes one of many media, and art grows out of a wish to make a cross-aesthetic work, in line with what romanticism entitled *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but without the metaphysical implications of this age.

Lågsniff

One of the prime Swedish examples of the avant-garde strategy mentioned is Åke Hodell's many realizations of his artwork *Lågsniff*. A manuscript was written in 1963 with the intention to be performed as a text-sound-composition, which means that it straight away crossed media borders and exposed the media modalities of the artwork at once.[3] The manuscript in itself looks more like concrete poetry than a script for a play or performance, although scene instructions can be found in the text as well since, as mentioned, it was used as the basis of the later performances [Fig. 1]. *Lågsniff* was performed for the first time at the legendary Swedish *Svisch*-performance at the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm on the 4th of November, 1964, which was one of many avant-garde manifestations during the 1960s, and thereafter, in a slightly reworked version at the Pistolteatern in January 1965. It was recorded by the Swedish television on one of these occasions, and broadcast in December of the same year (Olsson 2005, 385). In 1966, *Lågsniff* also appeared as a book [Fig. 2], in combination with a record. And finally, the TV-film was digitalized and released as a DVD in 2002 [Fig. 3], a remediation that is crucial for the possibility to view the original film, which remains hidden in the archives of the Swedish radio and television.

This means that *Lågsniff* takes many configurations, with many genres and modalities involved, and for this compound of artworks I want to suggest the concept "intermedial cluster." Compared with the notion "remediation," which (put simply) concerns a transformation of an artwork from one media into another, the notion of "intermedial cluster" refers to different artworks that *together* form a larger, multifaceted artwork.[4] It would have been extremely interesting to investigate in-depth the different works in this intermedial cluster in relation to each other to see how their modalities both interact and change depending on genre, but it is not possible within the scope of this article.[5] I will therefore use

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3   "Text-sound composition" is a notion proposed by the Swedish composer Lars Gunnar Bodin and the Swedish poet Bengt Emil Johnson to signify poetry that exists in the borderland between music and literature. The poetical artwork is based on recorded texts used both as pitch source and semantic material, often combined with electronic and concrete sounds.

4   The notion of "intermedial cluster" is even more necessary for phenomena such as land art, since, for example, Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) is an artwork that consists of a variety of documentation material, sketches etc, but where the artwork itself no longer exists. The artwork *Spiral Jetty*, as it exists today, is therefore the intermedial cluster that this material forms.

5   Due to the complexity of this artwork and the extensive archival research that the study implicates, a profound analysis should result in a book or doctoral thesis. First of all, there are a great many different realizations of the manuscript, which alone demand more than the few pages

the DVD as my basis for an illustration of how an intermedial cluster functions, while keeping the other genres in mind as well.

The Swedish word "lågsniff" is used by pilots to mean "low range flying." Åke Hodell himself was a combat pilot until he crashed with his plane in 1941, after which he spent several years in hospital, becoming a poet and a radical pacifist. The DVD-film is 20 minutes long, and many of the leading Swedish avant-gardists had a role in the single performance documented in the TV-film (released on DVD): Åke Hodell, Torsten Ekbom, Beng Emil Johnson and Leif Nylén. The Spanish poet mentioned in the play, Carlos Álvarez Cruz, had his works banned during the Franco-regime. The movie starts with the actors chatting about soccer in a café before they stroll to the theatre for the performance. They simulate an airplane take-off for a package tour to fascist Spain, with the audience acting as the naive tourists. During the performance, Hodell tries to read a poem by the Spanish poet, but is constantly interrupted by the white noise of the TV-medium, while Ekbom transmits the poem in Morse code without problem. Close to the end, the tourist flight is turned into a bombing mission before the plane lands safely on Mallorca.

The manuscript, the book, the performances and the TV-film all deal with the relation between different media and their modalities, especially media in the form of various technological apparatus. The intermedial cluster *Lågsniff* is too intricate to be discusseed here, as mentioned before, but also the DVD in itself is too complex to be discussed, which is why I will concentrate on two of the combined themes within this heterogeneous film: popular culture, exemplified by the package tour, and warfare; and on two thematic foci in the film: media and memory, and man as automaton.

The first theme in the film is the package tour, which was a new means of transport at the time. The avant-gardes in the sixties were very quick to pick up on this new popular culture of mass transportation, completed with songs from Spain. Actually, package tours are still seen as a popular phenomenon and not really an accepted way to travel according to high culture, which still insists on individual travelling or on high quality travel organizers who maintain a cultural capital. This is a highly clarifying example of the shifts between high and low in the art of the avant-garde.

Several attempts are made to make the audience part of the play, for example, at the beginning, the actors sit in a nearby café talking about soccer, a low culture

offered here for a comparison of the different modalities between different media; secondly, and worse, many of these realizations do not exist anymore, such as most of the performances (we only have a documentation of one of them left, a documentation that furthermore is *edited* into the TV-film and later digitalized for the DVD discussed above).

sport, until they stroll to the theatre to do their "job;" or in the scene where the airhostesses, dressed as nurses, serve the audience chewing gums.[6] In this way, the audience becomes part of the play, in accordance with the avant-garde intention of breaking up the barrier between audience and actors.

The second theme is war, both the – in 1963 – fairly recent Second World War and the acute cold war at the time. The manuscript was written only a year after the Cuban missile crisis and the risk of a total destruction of the earth and its population – as Hodell very interestingly put it in 1966: "Our world consists of errors in language and thought. The same word means different things in East and West. The technology of Gutenberg still dominates all political struggles for power and buttons in robot bases. I claim that if the world vanishes, it does so because of a language and thought error" (Hodell 2003, unnumbered).[7]

Hodell was a political artist, who protested against war, the military and politics in his poetry, plays and other arts. He had seen at close distance what war does to people and what people can do to each other in totalitarian states – as well as in Sweden. As Torsten Ekbom writes: "The military drill, the brainwash that transforms humans into robots, the technological systems that outgrow the human being, the anonymity of dying in the total war – the ethical perspective will always be in focus for Hodell" (Ekbom 1995, 225, my transl.). In *Lågsniff*, this is thematized, among other things, in the airhostesses dressed as World War Two nurses, and the package tour to Spain turning into a bombing mission where the tourists are associated with a bomber crew, i.e. are given responsibility for the repression and terror in Spain.

Media – Memory

Different forms of modern technological media have a very central role in this play. Actually, without broadcasting and storage media, there would have been no play at all, since – in a very literal sense – we could not have seen it at all today without Swedish television and the preserved tape that was converted into a DVD.

Åke Hodell was ambivalent about technology. He disliked commodification and commercialism, which he saw as means of power. He was aware of the fact that new technology penetrated every possible part of human life, which then could not be undone. And at the same time he was fascinated by the technology that gave him the means of experimenting.

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6   When I saw the film for the first time, I associated the handing out of chewing gums with the dealing out of drugs, which would have been appropriate to the *Zeitgeist*, and to a more general idea of travelling.

7   Originally published in the Danish little magazine *ta'* no. 1, 1967, p. 18, printed in Swedish.

Discussing the new avant-garde and its ability to react on new media, Torsten Ekbom observes: "It is the artist who will have to teach us how the media function, either by using the old media in a new way by creating hybrid forms between different media, or by working directly with the new media" (Ekbom 1966, cited from Ørum 2005, 314). Leif Nylén also describes the avant-gardists' fascination with technology: "But the aspect of technology that primarily attracted the young and experimental artists was the new media: as tool, object and a means of distribution. With Marshall McLuhan, the interest in the media was thus ascribed a kind of cultural philosophical foundation" (Nylén 1998, 133, my transl.). From this testimony by one of the avant-garde artists in the sixties, it is clear that Marshall McLuhan, especially through his book *Understanding media* (McLuhan 1964), was one of the most important thinkers for the Swedish neo-avant-garde.[8]

One should also be aware of the democratic impulse in the avant-garde aesthetics, something that we can also see implicitly in the play, in the constant disruptions of Hodell's reading of the jailed Spanish poet Carlos Álvarez, while the poem is easily transmitted in Morse code. But this also illustrates a very important observation by Friedrich Kittler, concerning the connection between the new technology and memory. He writes: "Technology triumphs over mnemotechnology. And the death bell tolls for poetry, which for so long had been the love of so many. In such circumstances writers are left with few options. They can, like Mallarmé or Stefan George, exorcise the imaginary voices from between the lines and inaugurate a cult of and for letter fetishists, in which case poetry becomes a form of typographically optimized blackness on exorbitantly expensive white paper: *un coup de dés* or a throw of the dice. Or for marketing reasons they can move from imaginary voices […] to real ones, in which case a poetry of nameless songwriters appears, or reappears, on records. Illiterates in particular are their prime consumers, because what under oral conditions required at least some kind of mnemotechnology is now fully automatized" (Kittler 1999, 80).

The poetry of the jailed poet is cut in pieces, and the reading soon takes the nonsensical character that Kittler continues to write about: "Mechanization relieves people of their memories and permits a linguistic hodgepodge hitherto stifled by the monopoly of writing. The inrules governing rhyme and meter that Wildenbruch employs to arrange his words when speaking into the phonograph; the general concepts that Stransky's colleagues use to arrange theirs during the

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8   Marshall McLuhan was rapidly introduced and translated into Swedish in the little magazine *Gorilla* in 1966.

first test runs – Edison's invention renders them all historically obsolete. The epoch of nonsense, our epoch, can begin. This nonsense is always already the unconscious. Everything that speakers, because they are speaking, cannot also think flows into recording devices whose storage capacity is only surpassed by their indifference" (Kittler 1999, 86).

Hodell reads the Spanish poetry with a certain emotional expression, in spite of the fact that he is reduced to the role of a talking head, but is constantly interrupted by the "white noise" of media [Fig. 4]. The poem is left to the indifference of media, i.e. translated into Morse code, which is not easily understood by non-trained listeners. At the same time, one can note that Hodell repeatedly stops in his reading and starts to repeat what he has already said; the words do not want to come out, they get stuck in his mouth. This effect can hardly be conceived without new media such as the gramophone and the new editing possibilities in the tape recorder. In the poetry of Åke Hodell, there is a thematization of the conflict between language and reality. If the close and painful reality was put into a poem, the traditional poetical norms must be exploded. When the verses in Álvarez's poem are distorted by jamming and sabotage, it is on the one hand a picture of the conditions of Franco's tyranny in Spain, and on the other, an attack on the tradition of emotional and "high" poetry.

Man as Automaton

The attack on "high" poetry, however, should not be seen as a "deconstruction," but rather as a constructive process. The avant-garde of the sixties is not as nihilistic as Dada; instead, they present an alternative, as Torsten Ekbom points out: "The eighties deconstructed society. The sixties were rather preoccupied with constructing it" (Ekbom 1995). In their construction of reality, (technological) media is to a high degree an integrated part of the process, both as a means to create art and as extensions of the body, while the posthuman being is conceived of as an automaton, a machine in line with other machines.

In the play, all the participants behave in a rather mechanical way. The actors arrive at the theatre, inspect their technological equipment and start to act. The most striking example of this mechanical behaviour is when they perform machine noise [Fig. 5]. They have become machines, demonstrating interest in machines in the epoch when the human being was experienced as an extension of the machine – in line with the earlier quotation from Hodell. Kittler notes that this has its roots in a change of how we perceive communication technologies:

"Nietzsche's notion of inscription […] has validity only within the framework of the history of the typewriter. It designates the turning point at which communications technologies can no longer be related back to humans. Instead, the former has formed the latter" (Kittler 1999, 211). Preoccupation with the new media in the avant-garde art of the sixties does come out of an understanding of the human being as part of a nest of technological extensions. Man is no longer in control of the machine, but shaped by it.

Conclusion

A discussion about Hodell's different realizations of *Lågsniff* is by necessity intermedial in its character; but to strengthen my analysis, I want to return to Lars Elleström's modalities because what we see thematized in all the versions of *Lågsniff* is actually the four modalities of media: material, sensorial, spatiotemporal and semiotic. First of all, the DVD clearly points to both its material and technological character; particularly the specific use of codes, noise and technological sounds show how the materiality of the different media is in focus. Secondly, the sensorial comes into play – especially in the performed text – not only through visual and aural sensations, but also through the smell, taste and feeling experienced by means of chewing gums and loudspeakers, where amplifiers give the audience a direct bodily experience of noise. So, even though the DVD has its limitations, the play works on all five senses. Thirdly, the spatiotemporal could not be better put into "play" than through a rather short tour in a confined airplane, an event clearly marked by a beginning and an end; but this spatiotemporality is also violated when the package tour turns into a bombing mission, thus marked by its own historicity. Finally, the different semiotic systems in the play are highly in focus; not only that ordinary language plays a great part, but so do other semiotic systems which contribute to the production of meaning: noise, white noise, code languages, onomatopoetical renderings of technological sounds and the Morse code, which is the only system that survives throughout the greater part of the play. These different noises, sign systems and codes produce meaning in the film – in the same way that Sami Sjöberg has shown to be valid for the use of visual apostrophes in lettrism (Sjöberg 2010) –, and therefore partakes not only in the material mode of the medium but also in the semiotic one. The avant-garde highlights the modalities of the medium in its art works – they so to speak lay their devices bare –, thereby estranging the audience from the play itself while giving them a rather unusual experience.

At the beginning of this article, I mentioned how *Lågsniff* displays awareness of contemporary media ecology, and here, I want to relate to some important questions that this ecology proposes. What do we hear and see in *Lågsniff*'s different appearances? And how do we approach a work of art in the age of digital reproduction? It is clear that the transformations from a typewritten manuscript that adheres more to the genre text-sound-composition than a theatrical play into the play or performance itself at the Museum of Modern Art and the Pistolteatern in Stockholm, into the TV-film which was broadcast in 1965 and then nearly forgotten, into the book and record published in 1966, and finally, into the digitalized version put on DVD in 2002 form the intermedial cluster *Lågsniff*. The specificity of this cluster is that many of the different realizations are lost forever (the different performances) or very hard to access (the original manuscript and the TV-film), which sets the frame for our experience of it, since what we do see is an edited version of a singular performance with all the restrictions a film puts on what was once something experienced as "Hier und Jetzt"(with Walter Benjamin's formulation concerning the aura, in Benjamin 2010).

So, what do we see in the different versions, in the different genres, and what is actually the artwork itself? The answer is that the intermedial cluster does not consist of one of the versions, but is built on all the versions together. The intermedial cluster requires us to rearticulate the notion of "artwork" into *the art works*, a phrasing that better reflects the avant-gardists focus on the performativity and processuality of an artwork. The TV-film is only one version of this act, heavily mediatized by the TV-medium itself – with TV disturbances instead of noise when Hodell is interrupted etc.[9] And the DVD is a weak copy of the film, since a digitalization consists, among others, of compression that reduces the contrast, the audio range etc. It is therefore crucial to understand that the different versions do not simply exist as diverse documentations of the highly sophisticated artwork the performance once was, but form the intermedial cluster *Lågsniff* in toto.

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9   Mediatized in the meaning of permeated by (technological) media, as suggested by Philip Auslander (2008).

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Figure 2. The printed book *Lågsniff*, 1966.

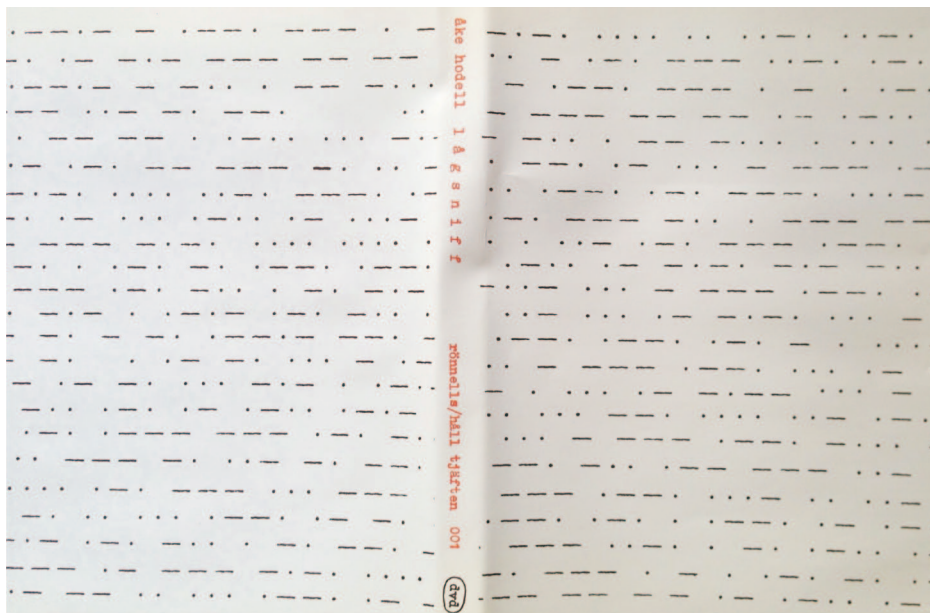**Figure 3.** The cover of the DVD *Lågsniff*, 2002.

Figure 4. Åke Hodell performing *Lågsniff*.

Figure 5. Leif Nylén performing *Lågsniff*.

Rhizomatic Narrative and Intermediality in *Treme*

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Abstract. In this paper, I study the narrative structure and the layers of meaning in the *Treme* (2010–2013), using the concept of rhizome introduced in *A Thousand Plateaus* by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and the Hannerzian "root metaphor" of creole culture. As for New Orleans in the *Treme*, music makes the narrative structure not just multilinear but rhizomatic. Moreover, spontaneity and hybridity highlight dialogicity and poliphony as well as a strong ironic and subversive capacity concerning music and creole culture. On a narratological level, analysing the critical representation of social problems after the destruction of Hurricane Kathrina raises the problems of focalization and narratorial distance.

Keywords: rhizomatic narrative, hybridity, intermediality, creolization, lived experience.

The present paper focuses on the special narrative structure of *Treme* (2010–2013), the peculiarity of which is in great part due to its musical aspects. I have to note that my remarks concern principally the first season of *Treme* and in a less degree the second, third and fourth season, since these are much more similar to the first season of David Simon's *The Wire* (2002–2008), reflecting on the phenomena of institutional corruption and dysfunction. Instead of these similarities, I shall point to such narratological features as hybridity, diversity, otherness, rhizomatic narrative and intermediality.

The concept of rhizome articulated in *A Thousand Plateaus* of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) has recently proved to be very fruitful in narratology. Actually, rhizomatic narrative is not just a special case of non-linear narrative structure which has no beginning or end, consisting of a series of links where every link creates multiple other links, always growing and moving. David Simon's and Eric Overmeyer's "fictional cine-journalism" in *The Wire* and in *Treme* can be considered "aiming for some giant truth" (Knight 2011), while *Treme* does

not just tell us something about the USA, but shows us a local culture from an ethnographic view-point. As a television drama series that makes us hear the sounds of New Orleans through various musical scenes, it is something like the book of Deleuze and Guattari itself: "*body without organs*, which is continually dismantling the organism, causing signifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate, and attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 4). The city in the state of disintegration and the quest for its identity share the very feature of "assemblage". This "machine" of "multiplicities, lines, strata and segmentarities, lines of flight and intensities" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 4) functions in *Treme*, that is why the ideology should be considered of secondary importance here. The openness and unpredictability of the plot ensue from the principles of connection and heterogeneity (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 7).

Thus, the music does not just illustrate the storylines, it becomes the main theme of the show being made narrative by introducing characters and plotlines. The improvisative music and the well-known musicians here serve not just to provide a kind of *couleur local*, but present an effect of spontaneity and contingency. As Nietzsche put it in *The Birth of Tragedy*, music can "transport people to drunken enthusiasm" (Nietzsche 1923, 52) causing "the orgiastic feeling of freedom" (Nietzsche 1923, 160), an "orgiastic self-annihilation" (Nietzsche 1923, 163) uplifting us from conscious, conceptual thinking. The Dyonysian artist "become altogether one with the Primordial Unity, its pain and contradiction, and he produces the copy of this Primordial Unity as music" (Nietzsche 1923, 45). The ecstatic feature later lost its tragic dimension in the Nietzschean concept of Dyonysiac music and he shifts the focus on the rhythm encompassing the whole body in the dance, while "the whole affective system is excited and enhanced" (Nietzsche 2013, 45). The *Attempt at Self-Criticism*, written in 1886, before the second edition of *The Birth of Tragedy* emphasizes the subversive character of this Dyonysiac music, quoting Zarathustra: "raise up your legs, you fine dancers, and better yet, stand on your heads!" (Nietzsche 1923, 15.)

Moreover, music transforms the narrative structure of the series from a multilinear story to a rhizomatic narrative in an intermedial way. In this rhizomatic structure, music represents New Orleans as a connecting space for every character and their life-stories. In this subversive manner, traditional narrative structure in *Treme* gives place to non-narrative music as symbol of New Orleans and becomes its particular narrative vehicle that "ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 7).

The Creole City

In a broader context, *Treme* has its roots in those films that portray the everyday life of a city, as Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927) or Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). Ruttmann's work is an important piece of non-narrative experimental cinema using the documentary filmmaking technique. The montage technique of these early city movies is evoked only in the intro of *Treme*, but the juxtaposition of narrative sequences is typical of the whole series. This narrative structure can be described using Allan Cameron's concept of database or modular narrative, as well as the concept of rhizome. Since David Simon's intention was to make an argument for the American city that serves as a melting pot (cf. Beiser 2011), I prefer the latter concept, focusing on interconnections, organicity and contingency. The authorial intention also sets the topics of city and creolization together. As for the rhizomatic feature, this is obvious, and shows that "there is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 7).

Even the word "creole" has its roots in Louisiana; it originally referred to old French families and their local dialect, cuisine and music. For Robin Cohen, creolization has a subversive potential because of its "diversity, complexity, hybridity," and traditional jazz is the *par excellence* creole music (Cohen 2007, 7). "Creative, transformative, and sometimes improvisatory dimensions of creolization" (Spitzer 2011) are interconnected with the rhizomatic narrative structure of *Treme* based on the central role of local music. Intermediality tends to represent the cross-fertilization in a special, rhizomatic way, which makes the multilinear narrative less linear. This minimal narrative linearity shows up in the slow pacing of the film, disliked by some. This characteristic stems from the special genre of reportage/portrait/fresco of the series in which "New Orleans speaks for itself" (S2E9). It implies also "the overwhelming focus on character over plot" (Sepinwall 2010). Moreover, as Paul Owen emphasizes, "it ignores the structure of the medium Simon works in, and the episodic way most people still watch television programmes" (cf. Owen 2011a). Moreover, the commitment of the "implied author"-like narrative instance is obvious, it takes a stance against the "order," i.e. the federal politics that is not based on solidarity. This social and cultural protest implies some structural characteristics in the narrative that emphasize the otherness: the central role of music as a non-narrative, non-rational experience, and the rhizomatic plotline, presenting the variegation of New Orleans, a place where the local icon, Kermit Ruffins has not ever heard

about Elvis Costello. Nevertheless, both of these narrative features constitute a tension, since "'the' truth and 'the' reality does not exist within rhizomatic thinking" (Sermijn, Devlieger and Loots 2008, 6). It seems that rhizome functions here as a narrative and ideological device subject to a far-from-post-structuralist authorial intention.

Thus, rhizome means here a narrative structure in which the multiplied linear storylines (in the first season: the search for Ladonna's brother, the struggle of Creighton Bernette, or that one of Jeanette's and Albert's efforts to save the traditions of Mardi Gras Indians, Antoine Batiste's way back to his sons, the relationship of Sonny and Annie, both being also musicians) span the episodes in a way that makes the plotline of a single episode nonlinear, even chaotic. There are episodes consisting of gigs for the most part (e.g. S1E2, S1E4), pushing (linear) narrative further into the background. (In the second and third seasons, the role of music is much more traditional in terms of narrative, that is, it illustrates or slows the plot or provides the shift between the storylines.) The narrative fiction's fictiveness is loosened by the transgressive fact that some characters are played by real-life musicians in *a cameo*, like Annie by Lucia Micarelli, and many real-life musicians appear in *Treme* playing themselves. Thus, the artificial linearity of narrative is somehow neglected by life's vagueness. Paul Owen is right: "it is clear that Simon and his co-writers and directors were intent on creating something deliberately, wilfully, defiantly undramatic, in an attempt to mirror New Orleanians' slow, narrative-free struggle to rebuild their lives" (Owen 2011c).

Nevertheless, the thesis of non-narrativity must be defined more precisely. There is plot and progression, as Simon itself points out in another interview (Sepinwall 2010), but it is a matter of fact that it does not check up with the standard tropes of a standard television drama, the narrativity of which is based on typical dramatic moments. Simon rules out these *clichés* because he does not want to tell a story which is pure fiction, that is, a lie. This committed realism is represented by Creighton's dead-end trying to write a novel that is too "academic" for him (S1E5) (which is a transcendental *mise en abyme*[1] in Dällenbach's terminology). He feels it superfluous compared with becoming the vulgar, popular Youtube voice of his city. "There are times when raise is the rational response" – as the famous American writer Roy Blount appearing in *a cameo* (in S1E5) tells about him.

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1   The French narratologist states that the transcendenatal *mise en abyme* does not just duplicate an element of the story, but through this analogy, the author interprets and evaluates certain common features of the story and his own reality (Dällenbach 1977, 120).

Subversive, critical power of creolization is rooted in the outsider or in-between position that "allows the periphery to talk back" (cf. Hannerz 1992, 265). The protestation against federal government politics after Katrina is obvious. It raises the problem of aesthetic distance in a fiction even in the case of a television drama. Using mouthpieces, formulating social and political criticism, aiming a "big truth" is unsettlingly "unsubtle" for some (e.g. Knight 2011, Owen 2011b).

In the ninth episode of the second season, Davis said: "You know what Katrina made clear? I'm no longer from the United States of America." The intermedial effects and the rhizomatic narrative structure are made for representing this special status of The Big Easy as a Dyonysiac city (in the Nietzschean sense), where music, weed, cuisine belong to everyday life. Thus, the Mardi Gras carnival can be interpreted as a symbol of the city's subversive otherness (from a Protestant American perspective) and in the Bakhtinian sense as a symbol of plurality, polyphony and dialogue. This heteroglossia and polyphony is the very characteristic of local culture, represented by various musical scenes, implying the idea of rebel versus Order. For instance, in the sixth episode of the second season, Davis holds *Public Enemy* and *The Clash* up as models for the young rapper, Lil Calliope. Moreover, Davis's hybrid hip-hop metal brass funk project as "musical insurrection" (S2E9) can be interpreted as a *mise en abyme*-like discursive figure of ironic self-reflexivity. The living tradition of African American music represents "the greatest American cultural contribution" for David Simon (Beiser 2011); this is why he inverts the traditional roles of story and music in *Treme*, focusing on the latter.

As a place, New Orleans represents a special deterritorialized space, a virus, a Pink Panther (in the Deleuzian sense) (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 10–11) through music, that "has always sent out lines of flight, like so many 'transformational multiplicities,' even overturning the very codes that structure or arborify it; that is why musical form, right down to its ruptures and proliferations is comparable to a weed, a rhizome." (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 11–12.) It is the "smooth space" of Go where "the movement is not from one point to another, but becomes perpetual, without aim or destination, without departure or arrival" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 353).

Moreover, there is an at-once ethnographic and hermeneutic implication that must be mentioned here. Because of the density of local references, an intensive activity of the viewer is needed to understand the show. A stranger has to follow the *Times-Picayune* or search the *Treme Wiki*, the *HBO Treme homepage* just like an ethnographer when mapping out cultural meanings. The mission is always

impossible, even for a New Orleanian who is not Indian but shares the more traditional layer of New Orleanian identity. (See the bar scene of Ladonna and big chief Albert Lambreaux in the third season: "you ain't indian" but "there's always hope" S3E6). As a self-ironic *mise en abyme*, it alludes to the ethnographic perspective shared by the authors and the audience, as well.

Identity, Difference and Irony

In the ninth episode of the first season, Creighton has to explain to his students that "creole in the old sense of creole" does not mean coloured, because they do not know that when capitalized, "Creole" refers to the self-identification of people inhabiting 19th-century New Orleans, descended from early (primarily francophone and Catholic) settlers. Thus, the word means to be different from the American neighbours (Dawdy and Matthews 2010, 273). Since "everyone in New Orleans eventually becomes Creole," Creole consciousness became less specific in terms of ethnic and social roots: a new identity was forged (Dawdy and Matthews 2010, 282). The difference between the New Orleanian identity as a lived experience ("the city that lives in the imagination of the world," "good food, companionship, community") and the image seen from outside (music, exotic but "too fat, too rich" provincial food, stereotypes) is one of the main topics of season one. The interview with Creighton and the restaurant scene (Creighton at Jeanette's) put this in the focus, as well as the end scene of the third part of season one, when Mardi Gras Indians sing "Joc-a-mo-fee-nah-nay," a ritual chant, as part of a funeral ceremony, while catastrophe tourists are coming on Katrina Tour.

Similarly, Davis refuses the stereotypical, commercial "New Orleans canon" of music, illustrated by ironic shots of the destroyed city while Louis Prima's *Buona sera signorina* is playing. Meanwhile, these spokesman-characters (two community activists, a writer and a DJ) are represented being involved in an ironic matter, which can be interpreted as a sort of self-irony. For instance, Davis considers himself culturally black, but after being provoked, then knocked down and thrown out of a bar by black "bros" (in S1E5), it is evident that he remained a stranger "white boy" for them. Similarly, Creighton is also an enthusiastic convert, whose eccentric emotions lead him to depression and suicide. Quite bitter conclusion if we take them as self-reflexive narrative constructions. In addition, as a narrative instance, an ironic and self-ironic "implied author" manifests itself in Davis MacAlary's *Musical Heritage Tour* (S3E1), pointing at the anachronistic, even virtual position of the tradition in a city where the sacred

places fostering rock and roll and jazz are ruined, closed or turned to laundry. Identity and otherness from a New Orleanian perspective lead to bitter irony. Apropos of Jewish studies, women studies and African studies, Creighton says: "It's all about identity. Who am I? I am a black Jewish woman" (S1E2). His irony is directed against the whole university system with its infertile, purely theoretic cultural studies: "don't do nothing but contemplate, it is the cult of me."

Another source of irony is the anachronistic aspect of traditional, tribal community, represented by Mardi Gras Indians. Delmond Lambreaux, son of Big Chief Lambreaux is not involved in this subculture, but he plays as session musician with Dr. John (S1E3), who is an emblematic propagator of N.O. heritage. When his agent wants to make a N.O. brand of him in the fourth episode, he says: "I'm from New Orleans but I'm not playing New Orleans." When musicians talk about New Orleans in the third episode, Delmond criticizes the lack of respect: "New Orleans hypes the music but don't love musicians;" while others say: "there's no place to like musicians" because of the tradition. Finally, he takes part in the Mardi Gras Indians' march, and becomes a combatant for the living tradition of New Orleans (S2E1). This fact symbolizes that tradition goes on through music – not by pre-fabricated narratives.

Thus, music has manifold importance in *Treme*, appearing as the only way to represent the lived experience in this Afro-American creole Indian community, which is "all connected somehow" (S2E6). It is the lived experience's shapelessness and contingency what results in non-narrative scenes and reflexive statements such as Creighton's ("there is no closure in real life," S1E9) or that of Jeanette's response to David (S1E9): "There are so many beautiful moments here." – "There are just moments, but not a life." Transgressive elements of real life as *cameo* appearances and documentary traits have the same effect as juxtaposition and rhizomatic narrative.

Music, especially with lyrics, can illustrate, dub the plot, expressing characters' emotions or the "implied author's" opinion about the way things are going in this at once factual and fictional world. In a special case, the character who is listening also sings up, transgressing the borderline between facts and fiction. That is the case when Antoine sings a blues in the hospital in an ironic way (S1E4) or when Ollie & The Nightingales is playing in the radio in Ladonna's bar and Antoine sings it to her.

More interesting is the case when music does not merely illustrate the story, but oppositely, music itself is illustrated by the rhizomatic narrative structure of life, that is, contingency and spontaneity. Thus, spontaneity of jamming

(especially that of Mardi Gras Indians practising, e.g. S1E4) is at once a structural *mise en abyme* (and this self-reflexive character is very important in *Treme*) and a metonymy of a bottom-up organized ("rhizomatic") cultural community. Its life is rather spontaneous, just like jamming in music.

Rhizome vs. Mimesis

As mentioned before, though apparently spontaneity and rhizomatic organization characterize the narrative of *Treme*, there is an inconsistency with the mirror function, put down to a committed authorial intention. Multiplicity does not fit the binary Aristotelian logic, the one and only truth. One way to resolve this paradox is to redefine what a rhizomatic narrative is. Thus, some new narratological models might be worth mentioning, which derive from the traditional ones of Gerald Prince, Dorrit Cohn and others. For Dorrit Cohn, "narrative is a series of statements that deal with a causally related sequence of events that concern human (or human-like) beings" (Cohn 1999, 12). This is in accordance with Gerald Prince's definition, by which narrative is "the representation of at least two real or fictive events in a time sequence, neither of which presupposes or entails the other" (Prince 1982, 4). Sequentiality and causality are interconnected in this vision of linearity. On the contrary, Beatriz Penas Ibanez analyses narratives "in which narrativity and intertextuality interact in order to create a branching text whose virtual space is a multidimensional network of possible routes" (Ibanez 2008, 214). Similarly, the model of narrativizing (instead of narrative as rigid entity) stems from the multilinearity of kaleidoscope narratives discussed by Jukka Tyrkkö (Tyrkkö 2008). This kind of narrative is always the reader's – or in our case, the viewer's – work in progress. (In an ideal kaleidoscope narrative, the variety of possible alternative plots depends on hypertextual links or associations instead of linear causality.)

Though David Simon has an obvious affinity for these non-linear narratives, and New Orleans as the Dyonysiac city would be a perfect material in accordance with the intermedial capacity of music, it seems that the lack of "narratorial distance" (that is, the unsubtle presence of the implied author's vision in spite of the zero focalization) makes *Treme* a radicle-like fake rhizome that has no confidence in the viewer's judgement and hermeneutical capacity. However, to become dialogized in the Bakhtinian sense, Simon's documentarist fiction should have followed the poetics of John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* and the German New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*), focusing on montage, on

simultaneity and on reportage to break the illusion of reality, having the aim of making the audience think about certain social phenomena, not to tell them the truth about themselves. Without this consequent narrative a-linearity, the carnivalesque stays restricted and lacks the real subversive potential of the Socratic dialogues. Thus, Simon did not manage to produce "indeterminacy, a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the openended present)" (Bakhtin 1981a, 7) while being attached to "historically concrete, living things" (Bakhtin, 1981b, 330). On the whole, Simon's social criticism resulted in a univocal mimetic representation of a *par excellence* Dyonysiac, dialogic, rhizomatic, hybrid topic: the lived experience of the Big Easy.

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The World of *The Walking Dead* – Transmediality and Transmedial Intermediality

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Abstract. As transmedia franchises increasingly populate our cultural environment, many questions arise about the effect of the different media involved in the depiction of storyworlds. Through the analysis of different examples, with special emphasis on the particular case of *The Walking Dead*, and drawing primarily from Henry Jenkins's concept of "transmedia storytelling" and Jens Schröter's concept of intermediality, this paper aims to show how different media aesthetics contribute to the process of storytelling and enrich the experience of the consumer. Usually overlooked in other analyses, we argue that these formal and aesthetical characteristics, such as the interactive nature of video games, call for a broader approach that transcends the accustomed search of common narrative aspects. This will be exemplified by a closer comparative look at the adventure game *The Walking Dead: The Game* (Telltale Games, 2012) and *The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct* (Terminal Reality, 2013). The transformations that the different media demand contribute not only to the narrative, but also provide different tools for the construction of storyworlds and different ways to engage with it.

Keywords: computer games, intermediality, transmedia storytelling, storyworlds, *The Walking Dead.*

In the course of digital media change, contemporary media franchises are increasingly becoming transmedial phenomena, exceeding the limits of their own media dispositifs. Films, television series, comic books or video games migrate to other media platforms and enrich their narratives through transmedial extensions (cf. Jenkins 2006; Evans 2011; Mittel 2012; Smith 2009; Askwith 2007; Dena 2009).

From a media-economical perspective, this development can simply be seen as a franchise strategy within multi-media value-added chains (cf. Brookey 2010; Hardy 2011; Johnson 2013). However, a media-aesthetic approach shows that the efforts to create a "harmonic" digital media convergence (Jenkins 2006) remain

questionable. In this paper, we will argue that many transmediality theories – most notably Jenkins's widely discussed convergence culture approach – have an "intermedial blind spot" because they reduce transmedia storytelling to a search for narrative fragments spread across different media platforms. Still, such a strategy would ultimately reduce transmedial extensions to their narrative aspects.

Using Jens Schröter's theory of intermediality and his concept of *formal or transmedial intermediality* (Schröter 2011), we will demonstrate that an analysis of transmedia storytelling techniques requires an intermedial perspective, which emphasizes different media aesthetics (i.e. the interactive nature of video games).

After some (more general) remarks about contemporary adaptation strategies and convergence culture, we will illustrate this approach by taking a closer look at one of the most successful contemporary transmedia franchises, *The Walking Dead*, especially concerning two recent video game adaptations: an adventure game (*The Walking Dead*, Telltale, 2012) and a first-person shooter (*The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct*, Activision, 2013). Our analysis will show the complex intermedial connections and transformations between the different transmedial extensions, which contribute not only to a larger transmedia narrative but also to the construction of a compelling storyworld expanding across media. In this regard, we also present an explanation on why the *Walking Dead* adventure game has received so much critical praise, whereas the first-person shooter is widely regarded as a generic (i.e. failed) adaptation.

Haunted House Rides and M56 – The Videogame

A frequently cited example of media convergence between video games and films is the movie *Doom* (Andrzej Bartkowiak, 2005), an adaptation of *Doom 3* (id Software, 2004), the sequel of the video game classic *Doom* (id Software) from 1993 which marks a milestone in the evolution of the first-person shooter genre. From an aesthetic perspective, the most interesting part of *Doom* is a five-minute sequence shot occurring near the end of the film which uses a subjective camera, whereas all previous scenes are realized with "classical" framing and montage techniques.[1] The subjective camera shows the view of the protagonist, space marine John Grimm, who is fighting hordes of demons and zombies on his

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1   We use the term "classical" at this point and in the following basically in the sense of a *Classical Hollywood Cinema* (Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985). Although (short) point of view shots are part of this visual repertoire, early experiments like *Lady in the Lake* (Robert Montgomery, 1947) or *Dark Passage* (Delmer Daves, 1947) failed to establish (longer) subjective camera sequences as a classical technique.

way through the corridors of a space station. At first glance, this sequence seems quite "faithful" to the visual style of its (gamic) source material: the protagonist's weapon is positioned in the lower third of the picture (yet the head-up display elements of the game are missing) [Figs. 1–2].

However, at second glance, the use of subjective camera turns out to have much more in common with stylistic devices of the (filmic) horror genre (cf. Neale 1984; Clover 1994) – or rather with cheap scares caused by objects (like genre-typical demons and zombies) rapidly moving towards the camera. However, this mainly affective style[2] of the subjective camera becomes quite artificial in a longer sequence. In other words: The first-person sequence in *Doom* might work as an homage to *Doom 3* (or rather to the first-person shooter genre in general), but, ultimately, this five-minute shot sequence is more reminiscent of a haunted house ride at the fair than a first-person shooter experience.

But what is the reason for this problematic status of the subjective camera in *Doom*? The enormous success of the first-person perspective in video games is quite easy to explain: the first-person view is the ideal form of representation for shooting-gameplay mechanics – and, in this respect, it seems only logical (or even "natural") that in most first-person shooters the movement of the weapon is usually (but rather "unnaturally") tied to the view of the avatar. Rune Klevjer speaks aptly of a "camera-gun" (Klevjer 2006). In film, this game-mechanical reason is missing, so the subjective camera, which *can* function as a reference to video games, does not create a sort of filmic video game aesthetics. In most cases, the use of the subjective camera simply means a reduction of the film's stylistic devices, especially montage-techniques. Therefore, it is usually[3] only used as a short spectacular interplay (cf. Moreno 1953; Metz 1973; Mitry 1998).

Doom (the game) is also quite often cited as an example of the influence of films on video game culture, and vice versa. The game is described as an (unofficial)

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2   Using the example of *Strange Days* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1995), Steven Shaviro argues that the subjective camera is "all speed, violence, and nervous tension" (Shaviro 2001, 61). "The subjective camera doesn't just look at a scene. It moves actively through space. It gets jostled, stops and starts, it pans and tilts, it lurches forward and back. It follows the rhythms of the whole body, not just that of the eyes. This is a presubjective, affective and not cognitive, regime of vision" (Shaviro 2001, 62).

3   There are very few examples to prove the opposite – i.e. *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (*Le scaphandre et le papillon*, Julian Schnabel, 2007), a movie which starts with an impressive 45-minute first-person sequence. But because of its rather special protagonist – a completely paralysed man who suffers from the so called locked-in syndrome – the film stays a peculiarity. Further exceptions are "video diaries" like *Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, 1999) or *Cloverfield* (Matt Reeves, 2008), but these films also feature quite unusual scenarios.

adaptation of James Cameron's sci-fi classic *Aliens* (1986), or rather as a strange hybrid of *Aliens* and *The Evil Dead II* (Sam Raimi, 1987) – as David Kushner explains in his production notes *Masters of Doom*: "Everyone at id was a huge fan of this sci-fi movie. They thought it would make a great game. After some research, Jay [Wilbour] found that the rights were available. He thought they could get a deal. But then they decided against it. […] Here was this amazing new technology, so why not have a game about demons versus technology, Carmack said, where the player is using high-tech weapons to defeat beasts from hell? […] They all agreed that was what the game could be like: a cross between *Evil Dead* and *Aliens*, horror and hell, blood and science" (Kushner 2004, 122–123) [Figs. 3–4].

On closer inspection, even the "hybrid theory" seems to be too broad. As Matteo Bittanti (2008) argues, John Carmack and John Romero, the famous co-founders of id Software, were not really interested in a typical adaptation of *Aliens* (the film's story, setting, etc.; cf. Stam 2005), but were rather fascinated by certain audiovisual details, especially Cameron's dramatic staging of weapons: "John Carmack and John Romero's re-writing of *Aliens* is not faithful to its source, as Cameron's movie centres on a female character fighting against hordes of phallic-shaped monsters. *Rather, they adapted the M56 smart gun itself*" (our emphasis, Bittanti 2008).

Convergence Culture?

At first glance, contemporary video game and film cultures seem to be closely intertwined. Game developers promote their works as "filmic games" (Nutt 2008) or "cinematic experience" (Davis 2010), certain sequences are described as "cinematic set pieces" (Graft 2009) or "blockbuster moments" (Graft 2009). The numerous links between these two media systems are also currently highlighted by over a hundred films based on video games,[4] as well as countless game adaptations of blockbuster movies.

But, at second glance, such a "harmonic" media convergence between video games and films (cf. Jenkins 2006, 95–134) seems questionable. On the one hand, in film studies the term "video game aesthetic" is quite often used to describe typical Hollywood summer blockbusters with spectacular effects and generic stories. On the other hand, game studies scholars normally praise a "cinematic experience" of a video game – and then also criticize its generic story (as well as its simplistic gameplay).

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4   Cf. List of Films Based on Video Games: *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_films_based _on_ video_games*. Last accessed 18. 02. 2015.

Video game adaptations of (blockbuster) movies especially enjoy a rather dubious reputation because they are often quickly-produced tie-in games.[5] The developers are under pressure to finish the game in time for the film's release, and therefore these games are usually not very faithful adaptations, but rather mediocre genre clones which only use the movie plot (or certain story fragments, characters and locations) as a narrative background.[6] In this way, the convergence between video game and film cultures presents itself more as a close connection between game and film *industries*, a franchise strategy in multi-media value-added chains (cf. Brookey 2010).

So, what does this mean for an intermedia comparison? Without question, video games have had a huge influence on films, and vice versa (cf. King and Krzywinska 2002; Bittanti 2001). But a term like "video game aesthetics" seems to be highly problematic because it remains extremely vague. Alexander Galloway (2006) argues that most approaches that deal with cinematic games or gamic cinema are far too diffuse. There is no typical cinematic video game and a video game does not become a cinematic experience by integrating filmic (but non-interactive!) cutscenes, e.g. the *Wing Commander* series (Origin Systems, 1990–1996) (cf. Hancock 2002; Klevjer 2002; Lunenfeld 2004). In the same way, a film does not become a gamic experience by taking place in a video game world (e.g. Rich Moore's *Wreck-It Ralph*, 2012).[7]

Of course, one can find similar audiovisual styles in films and video games as Galloway (2006) demonstrates in his revealing comparison between the subjective camera and the first-person (shooter) perspective. Against this background, the subjective camera in *Doom* must be seen as part of a long and complex history of intermedial interactions between photography, cinema, television and gaming. In other words: although the subjective camera *can* function as a reference to first-person video games, its aesthetic qualities are usually much more complex – or much more problematic.

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5   This "tie-in reputation" seems to apply all the more for superhero game franchises, e.g. the "infamous" Marvel-Sega collaboration which resulted in flawed games like *Iron Man* (Secret Level, 2008), *Thor: God of Thunder* (Liquid Entertainment, 2011), and *Captain America: Super Soldier* (Next Level Games, 2011).

6   There is a beat-'em-up (*The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* [Stormfront Studios, 2002]), a real-time strategy (*The Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-Earth* [Electronic Arts, 2004]) and an online-RPG (*The Lord of The Rings Online* [Turbine, 2007]) version of the *Lord of the Rings* movies (Peter Jackson, 2001–2003).

7   Matteo Bittanti speaks aptly of *gamexploitation*: "The logic behind the adaptation strategy is purely economic: In most cases, these films simply try to draw a pre-existing fan base to the cinema rather than expanding the cinematic discourse on video games" (Bittanti 2001, 208).

To argue with Jens Schröter's theory of intermediality: a comparison between a video game and a film (television series, comic, etc.) should not – or at least not predominantly – focus on narrative props, like certain characters, locations, or items. The essential category is rather a *formal or transmedial intermediality*, by which Schröter means: "a concept based on formal structures not 'specific' to one medium but found in different media" (Schröter 2011, 2), like for example fictionality, rhythmicity, immersiveness, or seriality.[8] "These concepts and principles are separated from the material basis of the media, thus, they can be seen as relatively autonomous – and in this sense they are transmedial, although they can only actualize within a media substratum" (Schröter 2011, 2). Or, as Joachim Paech puts it: "there is no intermediality between literature and film; there is one only between media narrating literarily or cinematically" (Paech 1997, 335).

The Walking Dead as an Example of a Transmedial World

Considering the various and sometimes problematic intermedial connections between films and videogames in Paech's sense, it might seem rather unnecessary to put even more methodological variables into the equation. However, another concept comes to mind when those texts are considered as "officially licensed" formats within a fictional narrative universe which is dispersed across different media channels. To make sense of the various levels of production, distribution and reception at play, scholars like Marsha Kinder (1994), Mary Celeste Kearny (2004) or – maybe most prominently – Henry Jenkins (2006) focused on the term *transmediality* instead of intermediality. While Kinder and Kearny offered insights from a sociological perspective and highlighted possible media effects these phenomena might have on children and adolescents, Henry Jenkins gained significant attention from scholars (and business insiders) when he connected the term transmediality to the realm of storytelling. With this emphasis on a *narrative* outcome, he also stressed the aesthetic *pleasures* fans have when engaging in such media franchises. In an updated version, Jenkins (2007) defines transmedia storytelling as "a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and

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8   Cf. Schröter once again: "Although these terms do not function on the same level, they nevertheless share a common ground in that they have already all been used in order to compare artifacts made from different media on a more abstract level" (Schröter 2011, 3).

coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story."

The recognition and influence that Jenkins's idea received is undeniable, but attempts to connect it to already existing theoretical fields have proven to be problematic. In this sense, scholars like David Bordwell or Marie-Laure Ryan argue against the cogency of such a concept mainly because of its delicate impact on the aesthetics of reception (especially concerning framing and sequencing of a narrative across media [cf. Bordwell 2009]) and messy links to narrative theory (e.g. regarding concepts of transfictional storyworlds and authorship [cf. Ryan 2013a]). Quite ironically, the criticism towards the concept of transmedia storytelling has initiated a fruitful discussion between Jenkins and other scholars, which eventually played out across media as well, employing blogs or recorded forum discussions on YouTube.[9] In these appearances, Jenkins highlighted not only a notion of work in progress due to the challenges of a constantly changing media environment (Ryan 2013b) but also emphasized a different perspective on his work (Jenkins 2009). In the already mentioned discussion with David Bordwell, he pointed out that "good transmedia works" were not so much concerned with constructing an ongoing plot or an arc of suspense across different media channels, but would rather embrace two "aesthetic impulses" (Jenkins 2009). These impulses Jenkins called "world building and seriality" (Jenkins 2009).

In this sense, Schröter's concept of "transmedia intermediality" as "formal structures, not specific to one medium but found in different media" (Schröter 2011) can been seen as a (quite literal) approach to the concept of seriality. This might even offer new insights enhancing Jenkins's model: by focusing on the academic discourse of TV-series, one could argue with Jeffrey Sconce (2004) that "U.S. television has devoted increased attention in the past two decades to crafting and maintaining ever more complex narrative universes, a form of 'world building' that has allowed for a wholly new mode of narration and that suggests new forms of audience engagement. Television, it might be said, has discovered that the cultivation of its story worlds (diegesis) is as crucial an element in its success as is storytelling. What television lacks in spectacle and narrative constraints, it makes up for in depth and duration of character relations, diegetic expansion, and audience investment" (Sconce 2006).

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9   See, for example, both Jenkins's and Bordwell's weblog and the recorded and uploaded discussion after Marie-Laure Ryan's keynote speech on the *Rethinking Intermediality Conference* this volume is based on, cf. Ryan 2013.

The idea of world building in TV-series which create "ever more complex narrative universes" due to their use of a vast array of narrative time (what Horace Newcomb [2004] calls "cumulative narrative") sounds compelling. In the context of transmediality however, it still leaves one important question unanswered: how can transmedia extensions contribute to narratives which already function well in a single medium – and, respectively, build a world successfully on their own?

Even if the question of how certain media might deliver an "integral" or "unique" contribution "to the unfolding of a story" in Jenkins's sense (2007) remains very broad, one might still assume that digital games offer a certain level of involvement and agency, which is usually not expected from non-interactive media like literature, film or television shows. Judging from the sheer quantity of licensed games (so-called tie-in games), these possibilities have already been acknowledged by the creative industries a long time ago.[10] However, most of these "adaptations" are mini game compilations (usually for mobile gaming platforms like the iPhone or android devices) or low budget genre-clones (e.g. all twelve [!] game adaptations of CSI are very simple point-and-click adventures) which seem to disappoint fans on a regular basis, because these tend to expect a product of quality comparable to that of the source material (cf. Evans 2011, 107 and Mittell 2012).

One recent, more ambitious exception is the *The Walking Dead*-franchise, in which various media formats seem to encapsulate Jenkins's idea of seriality and world building to construct a compelling overall transmedia universe. While the narrative framework of both the original comic books and the adapted TV-series (which function as core texts with various transmedia extensions independently from each other) is not really original in terms of characters or setting, it is rather the formal aspect of seriality itself which determines its key characteristic. As in the comics and the TV-series, the protagonist Rick Grimes encounters many situations the audience is already familiar with from dozens of films from the same genre. But instead of only ripping off those genre predecessors (which usually stop at about two hours of screen time because all the people are either rescued or killed), *The Walking Dead*'s main character is forced to *continue* with his ongoing struggle to survive on a long-term basis due to the logic of serial narration. This is the reason why Rick Grimes appears to be literally a hero (or

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10   A small selection of tie-in games with very uninspired names: *CSI: Crime City* (Ubisoft, 2010), *Dexter: The Game* (Icarus Studios, 2009), *House M.D.: The Game* (Legacy Games, 2009), *Grey's Anatomy: The Video Game* (Ubisoft, 2009), *24: The Game* (SCE Studio, 2006), *Heroes: The Mobile Game* (Gameloft, 2007), *The Simpsons Game* (Electronic Arts, 2007), *Family Guy Video Game!* (High Voltage Software, 2006), *Battlestar Galactica Online* (Bigpoint, 2011), *Doctor Who: The Adventure Games* (Sumo Digital, 2010–2011).

rather a victim) of cumulative narration in Newcomb's sense: in the first 1088 pages of the comics, Rick does not only lose one of his limbs (his right hand, to be more precise) but also all of his community members, his wife, his newly born daughter and – albeit temporarily – his mind.

When *The Walking Dead* is considered a franchise that expands its storyworld(s) across media, it is interesting to focus on two videogames that take place in the original setting: the self-titled adventure game *The Walking Dead: The Game* (Telltale Games 2012, licensed for the comics) and the first person shooter *The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct* (Terminal Reality 2013, licensed for the TV-series). Arguing from a narrative perspective, both games function as prequels to their individual core text and present new narrative information about the setting and some background information to already known characters from the series and the comic. Thus, they seem to provide a contribution to the storyworld as a whole and therefore appear to fit into Jenkins's aforementioned concept of transmedia storytelling. But, strikingly, the reception of the games could not have been more diverse: while the adventure game was enormously praised by numerous critics and received over 90 (!) "Game of the Year"-awards, the first-person-shooter was described as "painfully dull" (McInnis 2013) and as "the exact sort of lazy, cheap cash-grab that gave licensed games a bad name in the first place" (McElroy 2013). While it is hard to ignore the fact that *The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct* indeed seems to be a pretty bad game mainly due to its repetitive and clumsy gameplay-mechanics [Fig. 5],[11] it is worth mentioning that the adventure game on the other hand decreased most gameplay-mechanics to a minimum. Instead, it made use of many of the implicit features of its core text's storyworld.

Regarding the question of how to trace these implicit features, it is useful to take Lisbeth Klastrup's and Susana Tosca's model of a "transmedial world" (2004) into account. At first glance, both games seem to be consistent with their original core text: taking place in the US-state of Georgia under 'zombie-apocalyptic' circumstances, the setting (which Klastrup and Tosca call *topos* of a transmedial world) and the backstory (which they call the *mythos*) from the comics and TV-show can easily be recognized in the games. But while the shooter mainly reproduces the act of killing zombies in a quite tiresome way, it completely misses the overall emotional tones which are constituted by the character-driven

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11   While some may argue that there is an interesting narrative framework in the game, the overall experience suffers from the actual way it is played: basically, all the player has to do is to drive around until they run out of gas, make a stop to collect some fuel and other goods and to kill some zombies on the way – only to repeat the whole process over and over again.

serialized original. Opposed to this, the adventure game stays rather faithful to a certain "spirit," "emotional core" (Caldwell 2003, 138) or, as Klastrup and Tosca put it, the *ethos* of the original, which they define as "explicit and implicit ethics of the world and (moral) codex of behaviour, which characters in the world are supposed to follow" (Klastrup and Tosca 2004). In contradistinction to the shooter, the adventure game mainly focuses on the slow development of characters in a rather sophisticated dramatic story arc, lasting five successive episodes, which were released within the time period of almost a year. In these installments, the player takes over the role of a former history teacher (and convicted murderer) who stumbles upon a little girl during the first hours of the apocalypse. The girl, who is looking for her parents, quickly becomes the protégé of the player. While looking for a safe place, the player assumes the role of a father figure, with numerous opportunities to care selflessly for the girl and prepare her for the dangers of the savage world outside [Fig. 6] – until he ultimately ends up bitten by a zombie in the second to last episode of the game, facing certain death and having to release the girl from his protection.

While this coming-of-age/father-and-daughter story with a zombie-twist is a rather unusual one for a commercially successful videogame, its melodramatic tone is even enhanced by its gameplay. By confronting the player with certain key situations in which he has to decide on a narrative outcome, the game creates an individual story experience and the illusion of choice. While basic plot points of the game's narrative are predetermined and therefore unchangeable by the player, his virtual in-game-companions constantly keep record of his actions, change their attitude towards him and will remind and sometimes even punish him for his behavior. In this regard, the game creates the impression that the player's actions have an impact on the mind-set of the other non-playable characters. Judging from critical and user reactions towards the game,[12] this aspect is most successfully exploited by the character of the player's protégé, the little girl Clementine. She acts like a moral compass, questioning the player's decisions throughout the whole game from the perspective of an eight-year-old and showing either signs of affection or disappointment.

By combining a rather mature story with an unhappy ending and the possibility to add some personalized shades to the narrative, *The Walking Dead*'s adventure

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12 Regarding the emotional involvement of the game, the micro-blogging platform Tumblr was used as a kind of reservoir for short player impressions of the game. Particularly interesting in context of player-reactions is the so-called Confessions-Tumblr, to which players of the game were invited to contribute: cf. *http://thewalkingdeadgameconfessions.tumblr.com/.* Last accessed 18. 02. 2015.

game stands out as a quite unconventional (and successful) licensed digital game. The first-person-shooter on the other hand may be regarded as an uninspired generic example in the realm of tie-in-merchandise. However, when the two games are tackled as case studies for a set of inter- and transmedial theories, we can clearly recognize the "transmedial blind spot" of Jenkins's first draft in his "transmedia storytelling"-concept. This is most apparent in regard to his former focus on narrative information. This short analysis showed that formal structures – in this case seriality and innovative gameplay mechanics – need to be taken into theoretical account as well (cf. Schröter's theory of "transmedial intermediality"). They seem to be, after all, the reason why an expansion of a transmedial world may be regarded as accepted or rejected by its audience. In the case of the two games, the implicit qualities of the story world, which Klastrup and Tosca called the *ethos* of the transmedial world, are not only kept intact in the adventure game, but are even exceeded in terms of emotional involvement. Opposed to the shooter, which remains basically a stimulus-response-test with zombies, the adventure game not only stays faithful to the original source, but, moreover, builds a compelling part of a greater transmedial world.

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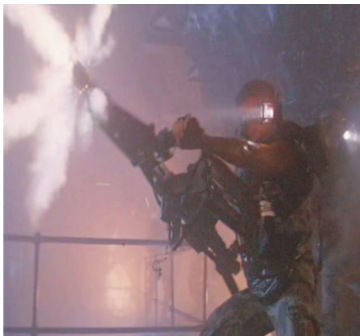
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Moving Picture, Lying Image:
Unreliable Cinematic Narratives[1]

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Abstract. By coining the term "unreliable narrator" Wayne Booth hypothesized another agent in his model besides the author, the implicit author, to explain the double coding of narratives where a distorted view of reality and the exposure of this distortion are presented simultaneously. The article deals with the applicability of the concept in visual narratives. Since unreliability is traditionally considered to be intertwined with first person narratives, it works through subjective mediators. According to scholarly literature on the subject, the narrator has to be strongly characterized, or in other words, anthropomorphized. In the case of film, the main problem is that the narrator is either missing or the narration cannot be attributed entirely to them. There is a medial rupture where the apparatus mediates the story instead of a character's oral or written discourse. The present paper focuses on some important but overlooked questions about the nature of cinematic storytelling through a re-examination of the lying flashback in Alfred Hitchcock's *Stage Fright*. Can a character-narrator control the images the viewer sees? How can the filmic image still be unreliable without having an anthropomorphic narrator? How useful is the term focalization when we are dealing with embedded character-narratives in film?

Keywords: unreliable narrator, cinematic narrative, mediation, focalization, Alfred Hitchcock.

The Lie (the Issue of Unreliability)

Alfred Hitchcock's *Stage Fright* (1950) is a curious film, which utilizes a so called unreliable narrator, a character narrator whose story turns out to be inconsistent with the diegetic truth. The flashback scenes from *Stage Fright* have become the number one case study for illustrating the issues of unreliable cinematic narration.

But more importantly, it raises some basic questions about cinematic storytelling and the nature of character narrators.[2] In this movie, Johnny, a character narrator is not just distorting the truth, but he is downright telling a lie for his own interest. With the analysis of this lying narrative I hope to shed some light on the concept of narrator and mediation through certain (often misunderstood) features of cinematic storytelling. The problem is quite complex because although one wishes to come up with a universal theory of the narrative, still one cannot ignore the specificities of the medium. That is why it is often hazardous to mechanically utilize models of character narration and unreliability which are mainly deduced from verbal or literary discourses in classical narratology. But another great temptation for scholars when dealing with cases like the present one is to over-concentrate on the differences and ignore some serious similarities between literary and cinematic narration that can be found on a more abstract level. Hence, this paper attempts to focus on the formal, synthetic aspects of the problem. I would like to demonstrate that character narrators can still be considered as narrators and have as much power as any literary narrator over the discourse in spite of the asymmetry of the non-anthropomorphic framing narration and a character's verbal discourse in film.

The movie begins with the scene of a woman and a man (Eve and Johnny) in a car, who are fleeing from the police. Eve asks Johnny to tell her what exactly happened, why he is trying to escape the law. The man starts to tell the story in which he got into trouble because of his lover, the famous actress, Charlotte Ingwood, who asked for his help in a murder. "I was in my kitchen, it was about five o'clock. The doorbell rang and I went downstairs to see who it was" – says Johnny, while images corroborating this verbal narration begin to appear in the movie. Here the viewer witnesses all the indicators of a typical technique of the classical style: this is the subjective flashback. Charlotte, Johnny's mistress is standing in the door in a bloodstained dress and asking him to fetch her a clean one from her apartment, where she killed her violent husband. Complying with Charlotte's request, we see Johnny entering the apartment, discovering the dead husband's body on the floor and trying to disguise the murder as a burglary. The long flashback continues up until the point where the movie began, but later, the sequence turns out to be a lie regarding the central plot element. In the last scene of the movie, Johnny confesses the murder to Eve. It was him, not his mistress

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2   The whole reasoning of the present paper, especially observations concerning the narrator, are inspired by the principles articulated in Richard Walsh's paper *Who is the Narrator?* (1997) and his book *The Rhetoric of Fictionality: Narrative Theory and the Idea of Fiction* (2007).

who killed the husband. This kind of deception was unconventional at the time *Stage Fright* was released, and Hitchcock himself said it was a mistake to trick his audience this way.

Most interpreters tried to properly characterize this phenomenon by using the term "unreliable narration." In its narratological sense, only fictional narration can be unreliable, a documentary or a real person cannot because (as explained by Wayne Booth, who coined the term in 1961) the audience should be able to recognize not only the purpose of the fictional utterance but another rhetorical act as well, an authorial intention behind it. Booth's famous formulation of the concept is the following: "I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not" (Booth 1983, 158–159). Unreliability is the field of two different rhetorical goals: in this case, Johnny's intention to tell a lie and convince Eve of his innocence, and the author's intention to debunk his story as a lie. If the recognition of the latter intention is available only later, we can talk about a deceptive narrative or, in commonly used cinematic terms, a twist ending.

The question on which opinions are most divided is the attribution of this unreliability. Who is responsible for the lie in narratological terms: the character of Johnny or the non-anthropomorphic cinematic narrator? Can a character narrator control the images we see? Where can we localize the source of this unreliability and why is this important? Or simply put, the underlying question is this: who is the narrator of the lying flashback? This issue gained much attention most likely because it raises more fundamental questions about film narration: about the workings of cinematic unreliability, its differences from literary models and theories, and the question whether these differences can be derived from medial features only. Can we attribute unreliability to a non-anthropomorphic and non-characterized narrator? At this point, to clarify my stance on the subject, I cite Emily R. Anderson, who identified cinematic narrators as a complex mechanism, "the combination of cinematography, editing, *mise en scène*, and sound," following Chatman's definition of a film's narrator, who "cannot be made into a persona, and it cannot arise from a character within the diegesis" (Anderson 2010, 83). The present argument intends to challenge this latter part of the quotation and dispute that a character can possess narratorial qualities if the aforementioned combination of elements are understood as *rhetorical* acts.

Who Is in Charge? (The Issue of Narrative Power)

First, it is to be discussed how theorists tried to answer these questions and what presuppositions can be diagnosed in their opinions. Basically, there are two approaches regarding the source of deception. One of these states that Johnny's character is responsible for the lies presented in the film. According to Seymour Chatman, not "the camera narrates the false sequence on its own. Rather, everything that we see and hear follows Johnny's scenario. Thus, even when his voice-over falls silent, he remains the controlling, if unreliable, narrator of the flashback" (Chatman 1990, 131–132). Chatman continues confidently: "at the narrative level, Johnny and Johnny alone '*produces*' the segment in *any narrato-logically meaningful sense* of that word, since every cinematic tool – editing, lighting, commentative music – works to *actualize* his lie. During these scenes, Johnny *prevails* over the cinematic narrator. He is '*responsible*' for the lying images and sounds that we see and hear" (Chatman 1990, 132, my emphasis).

In her 1989 book, *Flashbacks in Film*, Maureen Turim basically states the same: "if this flashback is a lie, – she says – its lie is Johnny's. The flashback is *truthful* to Johnny's narration" (Turim 1989, 166, my emphasis). But there is an important difference here, since the keyword being truthful, and not produces, prevails or responsible. Therefore, she is a bit more nuanced in her opinion and concludes that: "the film, while never itself lying, deceives its audience by *conforming* in its filmic means of expression to the interwoven fabric of Johnny's subjective account, and, in addition, lending it the assumed truth value of the filmic image" (Turim 1989, 167).

Robert Burgoyne builds on the concept of "impersonal narration," borrowed from Marie-Laure Ryan, and says that a narrator without personality "cannot lie about the fictional world, although the narrator can withhold information and cause the spectator to make incorrect inferences" (Ryan 1990, 7). Clearly, this is the case in films like *The Beautiful Mind* (Ron Howard 2001) or *The Sixth Sense* (M. Night Shyamalan 1999), where the narration does not misreport events but simply underreports them. The implication for him is that "lying narration in film can only be engendered by the discourse of a personal, character narrator" (Ryan 1990, 7). Burgoyne argues that the wide range of cinematic resources are not reserved exclusively for the impersonal narrator. "The unreliable character narrator can *utilize images* as well as words, as seen in *Stage Fright*" (Burgoyne 1990, 7) – he claims.

On the other end of the theoretical spectrum, researchers tend to think that cinematic narration has a greater role in deception. David Bordwell states about

Hitchcock's film that: "it is not just the character's yarn that is unreliable. The film's narration shows itself to be *duplicitous* by neglecting to suggest any inadequacies in Johnnie's account and by appearing to be highly communicative – *not just reporting* what the liar said but *showing* it as if it were indeed objectively true" (Bordwell 1985, 61, my emphasis). Hence the narrative is not mysterious, but deceptive. Bordwell undoubtedly touched upon something important here: even Chatman agrees that "the camera collaborates with, *subserves* the narrator by misrepresenting, 'mis-showing,' the facts of the case" (Chatman 1985, 131, my emphasis) or as it were, it *duplicates the rhetorical act* of the diegetic narrator in the axis of communication between the film and its audience. But Bordwell goes on: "as Edward Branigan has demonstrated, such personified narrators are invariably swallowed up in the overall narratorial process of the film, which *they do not produce*" (Branigan 1985, 61).

Gregory Currie goes even further in his argument against Chatman's view: "Johnny, like the other characters, exists within the story, and it is *no part of that story* that he *produced* and *edited cinematic images* in order *to convince* his *fictional fellows* (*and us*?) of his innocence –anyway a transparently self-defeating enterprise" (Currie 1995, 27, my emphasis). In accordance with Currie, Anderson claims in her article that "a viewer might understand a flashback as arising from a character's point of view, but would never assume that the *character* had *actually put the clip together*." And she argues that it is "the narrator, who alone can *present* events to the viewer" (Anderson 2010, 85), and characters cannot be cinematic narrators because "theirs may be the points of view to which we are privy, but they *cannot communicate to us*. They may see, but it is the cinematic narrator who speaks, as it were, who presents" (Anderson 2010, 88).

Aspects of Mediation (the Issue of Technicality)

In my view, fictional narratives do not simply represent communicative acts, but they realize them as well. They are not "pretended assertions" as Searle calls them in a revision of speech-act theory (Searle 1975, 324), but they create a communicational situation between author and audience. My main focus is on the elements indispensable for the *act of mediation* due to their certain qualities. I want to draw a basically dual conceptual distinction based on the italicized expression and examine the ideas this expression refers to.

Because theorists failed to differentiate between the rhetorical and the technical aspects of mediation (which is one of the most important functions in narration),

they are struggling with inappropriate questions like how a character can edit a sequence. The discrimination sketched in the following is a line between the abstract activities of semiotic articulation (rhetorical level) and the tools of conceptual and physical realization (technical level).

Many of the expressions used to describe the activities of the narration (like: produce, actualize, show, edit, put the clip together) are inappropriate terms in their context for analyzing the operation of the *agents* of mediation. They only make sense when they are referring to the physical activities of real-world entities or processes, like the actions of the makers or the performance of technological equipment. They can be used in narratological analysis, but only with increased awareness, often metaphorically. The coding and materiality of the narrative has nothing to do with the diegesis, nor with the communication between author and recipient, which process still belongs to the rhetorical level.[3] In literary fiction, the nexus between these two levels is often completely transparent and continuous: the narrators of Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) or Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850) are writing their own life stories and the form of the literary representation of their discourse is substantially identical with their diegetic product. They are the narrators of their stories and authors of their books: we can read exactly the same sentences they wrote down in the fictional world. The real authors remain silent and, so to speak, quote them. The difference lies in the code of fictionality: the protagonists wrote autobiographies and the recipients read novels. Even if the speaker in a literary diegesis (the character narrator) produces a verbal discourse (like in Albert Camus's *The Fall*), what we perceive in the representation as a textual form seems just slightly different and easily reconvertible in our minds. The technique is conventionalized to a degree that the shift is inconspicuous and seldom detected because the readers are much accustomed to it.

In films, this distance between the rhetorical and technical aspects is more obvious, more evident, the technical side being more dominant. At least in fictional narratives, there is always (to use Monika Fludernik's terminology) a duality between the "mediating function of consciousness" (Fludernik 1996, 36) and material mediation. When one speaks about the activities of the cinematic narrator, one still thinks of an abstract entity, an organizing *principle* which can do the editing and the adding of a soundtrack not because of the physical apparatus available to him, but because it performs symbolic acts, it is primarily

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3   According to Bordwell, not all narration is communicative (Bordwell 1985, 64), but I think all fictional (literary) narratives are.

sense-making, cognitive construction, and not the bricolage of an artefact. Even if the character cannot "*actually put the clip together*," this does not make them less capable on the rhetorical level to be a narrator in a story; so these are bad arguments against the narratorial qualities of character narrators because they conflate these two sides. The medium-specific problem with narrative films is that, because of some evident mimetic traditions of the genre, the characters do not have the ability to literally mediate audiovisuals, only the cinematic narrator is capable of performing this. But even when one tries to describe the activity of this agent, one shouldn't confuse its abstract function with the actual, physical realization of the work.

Even if a film has multiple narrative levels, and some (or all) of these levels have a character narrator, I consider the agent making each level "cinematic" (instead of separate cinematic narrators) more like the same authorial force, supplementing the characters' narrations. What makes these narratives "cinematic" are the tools the author uses as rhetorical resources to present someone's story directly or indirectly.

The filmic devices of the lying flashback obviously overwrite the character's narration, who (both as teller and protagonist of the story) is incapable of communicating with images. The framing (cinematic) narration quotes the character narrator directly only in the transition from one narrative level to another (the simultaneous application of verbal and visual narration is the marker of this transition), then represents his utterance by means of its own medial resources. The author had the opportunity to show the act of lying mimetically, without images, hence it is a rhetorical choice in itself to reduplicate the character's own rhetorical act: lying. It means that the lie (with the aim of deceiving the communication partner about the truthfulness of certain events) functions in two different levels at the same time. In the diegesis, the object of the persuasion is another character, Eve, who only hears the story and is fooled because of her poor judgement of Johnny's personality. At the level of discourse, it is the film's audience who believe the lie for substantially different reasons.

In the case of the flashback, one must differentiate not just between Johnny, the narrator character in the diegesis and the agency of film narration, but take a third element into consideration. Of course, the film itself was assembled by an extrafictional agent (what I would call its author) who, in a manner of speaking, can *rhetorically put the clip together* (notice that we are still at a metaphorical level here) but not without the tools needed for the realization of the artwork. It would be a mistake to forget that this is another sense of the word *mediation*, associated with

the materials that cater this function and closely related to the medium. Even though it is only connected to narrative consciousness or agency as raw material, technical mediation is frequently blurred with rhetorical devices in narrative analysis.

The Code (the Issue of Materiality)

Let us turn our attention to this element often transparent in literature, but quite perceptible in film due to its technical equipment (apparatus). Here, our first concern is a very fundamental one. The material dimension which provides the instruments for narrative communication is often confused with an element which is only partly material: an essential aspect of mediation called code by Roman Jakobson and W. J. T. Mitchell. The latter wrote about the origins of the concept supposedly already present in Aristotle's *Poetics*: "Aristotle says that representations differ from one another in three ways: in object, manner, and means. The 'object' is that which is represented; the 'manner' is the way in which it is represented; the 'means' is the material that is used. What I am calling 'codes' here are basically the same thing as Aristotle's 'means' – that is, language, musical forms, paint" (Mitchell 1995, 13). But Mitchell is not very precise when he makes an equation between these two terms. Code has a more subtle meaning; to use the Saussurian terminology: it signifies the form, not the substance. Therefore, it is slightly misleading to use the two concepts as synonyms because code is a lot more abstract than the material that is used for creating a representation. It is not a physical-material object but a conceptual entity which is called the sign vehicle by Saussure. It is an abstract system rather than a sensual, palpable, visible or audible material manifestation. Nonetheless, the artefacts constructed out of these systems must take on a material form, that is, they must gain some sort of physical presence as they become artistic or simply communicational utterances.

The two aspects of mediation that has been distinguished previously could be understood as answers to the questions: "who mediates?" and "what mediates?" Narrative representation consists of the co-operation of these two, practically inseparable sides: on the one hand the activity of abstract agents linked to the rhetorical side (character narrator, cinematic narrator), on the other hand the conceptual tools (the code of the medium) and their material realization (the artefact) are both essential for the narrative to be established.

Two remarks can be made regarding the function of the classic narrator figure. It would be pointless either to assign him as a sense-making agent to the mediating capacities of the code or to equate the narrator with this aspect of the code. The

narrator is not even the agent who facilitates the tangible realization of the code because it is a discursive concept, not an actor of the real world. This is the reason why it would be wrong to hold a character narrator in a movie accountable for this process (the material realization) saying that he "alone 'produces' the segment in any narrato-logically meaningful sense of that word, since every cinematic tool – editing, lighting, commentative music – works to actualize his lie" (Chatman 1990, 132). When Currie argues that Johnny could not be the real narrator of the lying sequence because he, "like the other characters, exists within the story, and it is no part of that story that he produced and edited cinematic images in order to convince his fictional fellows (and us?) of his innocence," he confuses the narrator's role either with that of an extrafictional agent's, who is responsible for the physical realization of the flashback, or with the author's, whose decisions define the representational mode of the work.

Two Assumptions about Cinematic Character Narrators

Johnny is a character narrator whose natural discourse is presented to the viewer indirectly, through artificial (conventional), filmic means. Both Johnny and the cinematic narrator are important for the complexity of the sequence and the filmic layer – as I argued before –; they are not just a technical necessity.

I have two assumptions regarding the flashback: (1) the character is a full-value narrator (despite the fact that his discourse is mediated through film) and at the same time (2) the cinematic narration has a significant rhetorical impact on the discourse. It is possible for the film to represent Johnny's narration and supplement it with additional meaning because of the medial difference between the two narrations, and the capacity of cinema to simultaneously utilize multiple channels of communication to construct its narrative.

Proving the First Assumption

One could argue that characters cannot be considered as real narrators in a film because they cannot utilize audiovisuality in the way cinematic narration does. Is Johnny really a narrator in this movie, even if cinematic codes were superimposed over his verbal narration? Can we regard the flashback as Johnny's account of the events? Despite the medial difference, I think we can, because every fictional narration is a representation and every embedded narration is also a representation of narration. Two different kinds of codes operate, and the discursive textual one

superimposes on the thematic, verbal one. One should not forget that narrators are able to mediate their stories not because they are literally in possession of the tools that can produce the perceivable material codes or physical form of a representation, but because of a rhetorical act from the (implicit) author.

Johnny is an embedded narrator, situated inside the diegesis, and that is why he cannot communicate with the film's (implied) audience, not because he is "only a character," ontologically inferior to the cinematic discourse and thus not capable of editing, showing images or producing sound. The problem is not with his potentials as a storyteller but with his position. That is why I hypothesize a model where narrators like him cannot accost us directly; hence their lie would remain only a diegetic one, while the framing cinematic narration is transforming it (by performing a rhetorical act) to sound and images. And as a rhetorical act, the narration of the primary visual diegesis could still do this transformation if there were a personified character narrator. There are movies where a fictional character is directly addressing his extradiegetic narratee (who is the closest thing to the real audience a fictional narrator can address; moreover, the recognition of this similarity is exactly the point of the rhetorical act behind the narrator's action) and could create a more absurd scenario like in *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999) or *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 1999). The important difference that makes the character narrators' apostrophés credible is that they occupy a similar position as the viewer. Think of the voice of the deceased Lester Burnham's character (played by Kevin Spacey) in the opening scene of *American Beauty* describing the images of an American suburb the viewer sees onscreen. Or consider Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt) in *Fight Club*, who points to the flashing "cigarette burn mark" in the upper right corner of the screen while the unnamed narrator played by Edward Norton is explaining the process of changing reels in a movie projector. Even if they are fictional, and the real recipients are aware of their narratorial status via *voice*-overs, they are aware of a(n implicit) *viewer's* presence not only a *listener's*, therefore rhetorically they are capable of communicating through images, as it were: manipulating them from a visually not presented narrative frame (like Lester's narration) or documentary-like intrusion into (or recreation of) the diegesis (like *Fight Club*'s narrator character). The embedded character narration necessarily remains verbal in the diegesis, and it is the film's narration that supports, completes or distorts it with extra dimensions. Which is why it is possible for cinematic narration not only to (as some say) "illustrate" their verbal account, but to extend it with additional meaning while still considering the characters as full value narrators, just as their literary counterparts.

Proving the Second Assumption

It is best to focus on the above mentioned two assumptions, that both the character and the cinematic narration have their own rhetorical function, on the rhetorical level, and briefly examine the film from this aspect. I argued that character narrated sequences like my main example, with a strange surplus (in the rhetorical level) that cannot be attributed to the narrating character as an anthropomorphic entity inside the diegesis, should still be considered as an utterance of the character, but presented by a different medium, which is not a natural way of communication even for a fictional human being. By strange surplus I am mostly referring to the audiovisual dimension, whose presence and appearance as a flashback is an extrinsic rhetorical choice in itself. Characters like Johnny should still be regarded as narrators even if the film represents their narratorial activity in its own cinematic means. As it has been registered earlier, the cinematic narration duplicates the character's gesture of deception, therefore even if they are not aware of the audience and cannot manipulate the visuals, the audio or the editing, the film can be "truthful" to their intent. Theoretically, it is not impossible to assume a film where we can link almost every *rhetorically meaningful* element to the character narrator, even if it is certainly not the case with our lying character narrator. I should remark that Hitchcock's film is not the best example to illustrate the possible hierarchies between human and non anthropomorphic cinematic narrators because of its complex narrative situation: what most critics tend to neglect is that we are talking about an embedded narration and more than one diegetic level. For this reason, it is indeed necessary to pay attention to elements with a different rhetorical purpose from that of the character narrator. Chatman misunderstood the situation when he stated that there were two *equal* narrative instances in *Stage Fright*, Johnny and the cinematic narrator, and also when he used the movie to demonstrate that "it is the implied author who juxtaposes the two narrations of the story and 'allows' us to decide which is true" (Chatman 1990, 132). Chatman treats the scope and function of implied authors differently than the present paper. In *Stage Fright*, the cinematic narration inevitably frames the character's account, whose narration is always embedded as long as one postulates a non-anthropomorphic agency controlling the discourse of the film. There is no benefit of differentiating between this narrator's and the implied author's scope, function or power. Cinematic narration in the widest sense (the combined application of cinematic resources: as the apparatus, the choice of actors, the mise en scène, etc. which of course are not

purely narrative but they are in the service of storytelling) is considered to be equivalent with the implied author's rhetorical activity.

Turim, in her book *Flashbacks in Film* (1989), explores the characteristics of the lying flashback to show how the movie tries to authenticate it in order to deceive the viewer. Although she does not say it explicitly, some of her arguments highlight the role of cinematic narration in the lie and it helps to prove its function in the understanding of the film.

The movie greatly relies on the mimetically motivated tradition that characters can lie verbally, but the images we see are objective and represent the truth. This tradition is confirmed by other flashbacks in the film, indeed, working this way. In other words, the big twist was based on the subversion of a cinematic code, which Johnny was certainly unaware of. In Turim's view, the function of the fantasy scene in the flashback when Johnny imagines the process carried out by the police, which actually turns out to be true, is to lay stress on the reliability of the thoughts and personality (in psychological, not ethical terms) of the character, so the more the viewers know what he really experienced, the less they will doubt the accuracy of his evocation of events. The joke in this narration is that the fantasy sequence inside the flashback could be more real and accurate than the flashback itself, although it clearly signals the difference of the ontological status between the two. The juxtaposition of imagination and memory with realistic visuals opposed to a kind of palimpsest images is undeniably an important factor that is outside Johnny's control.

According to Turim, because Johnny evokes events that took place in the theatre (the last scene of the flashback), where Eve, his listener had been already present, "his version is authenticated by her acceptance of the retelling" (Turim 1989, 167). This argument should be reconsidered. She states that the theatre scene is supposed to convince Eve about earlier events, to "paint the full picture" for her, but it is not a satisfying answer in every aspect. Johnny is telling a sequence of events to her of which she has already been a witness. Thus, the scene is highly redundant, mimetically flawed in the context of the communicative situation between the two characters. Although it is perfectly sensible and functional in terms of communication between the film and its audience because it reveals a key element in the plot, namely, how Johnny escaped from the immediate danger. It is a brief but meaningful digression showing us a rhetorical gesture in which the story of the character narrator is not supplemented by additional details but it exists for higher communicational purposes.

Focalization

Anderson states that "in films that lie to or mislead the viewer, one character is almost always the *explicit focalizer*. If we take Johnny Cooper as an example, we would say that he relates his version of events to Eve Gill, while the cinematic narrator *focalizes through him*, presenting to the viewer what Johnny describes to Eve" (Anderson 2010, 89). Mentioning the term focalization is not a new development in this case, Turim has already used it in her book, saying "this 'lie' is not one told by the film directly [...] for the lying images are not claimed by an omniscient narration, but rather by a single character. The audience is led to ignore this difference, however, and in that sense the film plays a 'trick' on its spectators. This sleight of hand on the part of the film makes it an example of how focalization can be used as a crucial element of narrative" (Turim 1989, 165). Turim basically states that there is deceptive internal focalization where the subjective nature of the story is hidden by the objectively looking cinematic narration which focalizes the main character. Once the truth is spilled out, the viewer reinterprets the flashback as controlled by Johnny's character.

In my interpretation, just the opposite is true: the seemingly *internally focalized* sequence turns out to be in no correlation with the diegetic truth, and because of this, I want to challenge the application of this narratological term elaborated by Gérard Genette for the relationship between a narrator and a character, and not for that between two narrating instances or embedment. Genette introduces the term in order to avoid "a confusion between the question *who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective?* and the very different question *who is the narrator* – or, more simply, the question *who sees?* and the question *who speaks?*" (Genette 1980, 186). But in film, it is not that easy to differentiate between *sight* (perception) and *speech* (the utterance of the narrator), as cinema basically *tells* through *showing*.[4]

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4   As long as showing is a prerequisite of narration in cinema. The presentation of the filmic image is a primal stage of filmic articulation, which the so-called montage or editing is based on. My argument is entirely compatible with André Gaudreault's famous distinction between monstration and narration. In his essay, *Narration and Monstration in Film* he describes cinema as a medium utilizing two representational devices. The activity of monstration can be understood as the production of a micro-narrative within a single shot, the semiotic articulation between the frames that is always in a state of *here* and *now*, it is the illusion of presence and the present. On the other hand, the activity of narration as a second level of filmic articulation happens between shots and overwrites this illusion with the fragmentation of space-time. Nevertheless, it cannot function independently of monstration because "there is no possibility of opening a temporal gap, a breach within which the narrating instance could allow itself to 'reflect' upon the world it narrates" (Gaudreault 1987, 31–32).

It can be acknowledged that because of the conventions of film there are multiple modes of representing subjectivity with different amounts of information: think about the difference of subjective camera ("point-of-view shot") and "over the shoulder shot," which is more like the vision of a third person. This visual difference in Johnny's flashback creates an ambiguous situation, in which we get a subjective account of events: we follow Johnny and *functionally* know as much as his character in the second degree narrative, while the objective camera establishes a certain sense of reliability, implying we are outside Johnny's subjective perception. The question is whether it is rhetorically meaningful if the viewer literally sees more or different things than Johnny? In *Stage Fright*, the relevant tool is not the difference between Johnny's and the audience's vision, but a more fundamental one: the choice of showing Johnny's lie in audiovisual terms.

It is the view of the present essay that in movies like *Stage Fright* or *The Usual Suspects* (Bryan Singer, 1995) (with another embedded lying narrator) cinematic narration is not focalizing the character narrator because it turns out that the presented scenes are not simply the character's viewpoint, subjective perception of the world, or experiences of the past. At one point, the viewer realizes that she saw something that never really happened in the fictional world, hence the sequence cannot be considered as a distortion or restriction of information (Genette 1980, 189) in the Genettian sense, but an extension of the diegesis: as another narrative level. That focalization in film can be an abstract concept not only based on the flow of sensual data but strongly determined by the narrative context is important because those who interpret Johnny as a focalized object (in Bal's terms[5]) may miss to see him as a narrator himself. Focalization in Hitchcock's lying flashback seems to make sense only if applied to the relation between the character narrator (situated in the embedding level) and himself as the embedded character.[6] Regarding the lying Johnny, the cinematic narration of *Stage Fright* does not utilize him only as a character but as another narratorial instance. That his voice is literally muted and

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5   Bal sees focalization as a dichotomic, subject–object relationship. There is always an agent, who is the focalizor, and a focalized object. The narration represents the object (it can be a story, a description, a characterization, basically every element of a text) as the focalizing subject perceives it (cf. Bal 2009, 107–119).

6   One could see the concept of focalization as a redundancy when used for narrators in any kind of autodiegesis. According to Genette, this type of narration should be called "prefocalized" because the character narrator (as a character of the discourse) is obliged to justify how he gained the presented information; therefore, focalization is not a choice but a requirement because it "submits a priori to a modal restriction, one that can be sidestepped only by an infraction, or a perceptible distortion" (Genette 1988, 78).

his story is represented in other ways may be an unusual technique, but it should not confuse our critical acumen.

What is revealed in the sequence is not directly connected to his selfhood, personality, knowledge or memory but his agency as a mediator, his skills of intrigue. The cinematic narration does not represent or explore his perspective of the diegetic world he is living in but duplicating his rhetorical act, his intent of deception. Moreover, it is worth observing that most of the time the movie follows Eve's character: her knowledge is much closer to the viewer's knowledge than Johnny's. It is even possible to interpret the images of the flashback as Eve's vision of the story, thereby the viewer gets access to her imagination instead of Johnny's memories.

I did not talk about extreme cases of explicit contradictions in the story between the verbal and the visual channels (partly because there is no voice-over during most of the flashback) for I wanted to demonstrate more sophisticated ways of interactions that utilize the medial differences of linguistic and cinematic signs. Here, the character narration and the activity of an outside agent did not become incompatible, instead showed us the complexity a narrative film can accomplish.

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How Long and When:
Open Time Interval and Dignified Living Creatures in *The Turin Horse*

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Abstract. László Krasznahorkai wrote two different texts (the second being the script of Béla Tarr's film) from two different perspectives starting from the well-known scene in Turin, Italy, where Friedrich Nietzsche embraced a horse beaten severely by the carter. Why does the interpretation of the Nietzsche-scene change? What kind of temporal, historical or ethical relationship does the differentiation between the two texts depend on? How can the beauty of the crumbs of life be perceivable? This article argues that in these works – in contrast with the commonly assumed precognitions about apocalyptic art – life and humble living creatures are celebrated.

Keywords: compassion, László Krasznahorkai, Friedrich Nietzsche, open circle, Béla Tarr.

Why Embracing the Beaten Horse?

László Krasznahorkai's essay, *At the Latest in Turin* (2013), was written in 1979, but firstly appeared only right after the regime change in Hungary, in the January 1990 issue of the *Alföld* journal. There he muses on the inherent contradiction of the well-known Nietzsche-scene in Turin: why did the philosopher, who considered all human compassion a weakness, embrace the horse and not the carter flogging it? Then Krasznahorkai concludes that compassion is what expresses our craving for existence, connects us with some kind of a (very cautiously said) "larger whole" and that this compassion, sometime, "tomorrow… or in ten… or thirty years" has to come into being, "at the latest in Turin," he adds (Krasznahorkai 2013, 26).

Some thirty years later, Béla Tarr made the film *The Turin Horse* (*A torinói ló*, 2011), having its script co-written with the novelist László Krasznahorkai. (They

had been working together for a long time; Krasznahorkai's novels constituted the sources of such films as *Satantango* [*Sátántangó*, 1994] and *Werckmeister Harmonies* [*Werckmeister harmóniák*, 2001].) Krasznahorkai published the script of *The Turin Horse* on his personal website, and added the following remark to the list of his works he used for the script: "created with Béla Tarr's thoughts and ideas, for his spiritual recovery" (Krasznahorkai 2004).

The script starts with the text published in 1990 (but written about thirty years earlier), yet continues elsewhere. "What happened to the horse, we don't know"– the script, marking the year 2004 as the date of its creation, leaves the former prose behind with this sentence.

Why does the interpretation of the Nietzsche-scene change? What kind of temporal, historical or conceptual relationship does the differentiation between the two texts depend on? How does Krasznahorkai make time perceivable in his two works? And how does Béla Tarr make time perceivable in *The Turin Horse*?

The difference that strikes at *first* glance: while the merely three pages long prose of the *At the Latest in Turin* talks about the endgame of our spirit – with some allusions to great European thinkers, the script, besides the prologue about the collapse of Nietzsche's mind, does not mention anything related to spirit, reason, rationality or even irrationality. More specifically, the essay – besides speaking about Friedrich Nietzsche, who reactualized the ancient Greek world in the 19th century, who considered Christianity the manifestation of envious resentment (*ressentiment*), who sketched the myth of the eternal recurrence, who represented truth as an unattainable woman, who announced the death of God – mentions three further personalities. There is doctor Paul Julius Möbius, one of Nietzsche's doctors (in whom, by the way, we can honor the author of the tractate *Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes* [1977], printed in nine editions during his lifetime), then there is Thomas Mann, whose attitude towards Nietzsche's mistake is being recalled in this work, and Immanuel Kant appears as well, whose work secured the coming of age of human mind. On the contrary, the script presents day-to-day living as concretely as possible: getting dressed, eating potato, sitting in front of the window, housework, tending animals. Krasznahorkai's famous long sentences, with their specific rhythm and repetitions, here, deprived of all poetry, give us only the mere rhythm and repetition itself. If they are still beautiful, it is not because of the composition but because of the feeling that the repetitiveness of bare material existence is still beautiful.

It is beautiful compared to the pervasive darkness.

Secondly, in his prose Krasznahorkai calls Nietzsche's sobbing while embracing the beaten horse "the dramatic model of the intellect" (Krasznahorkai 2013, 24). He revealed that in less than thirty years people would relate to each other with compassion. These thirty years have long expired since 1979. If that was the prophecy (and if it was a prophecy at all), it turned out to be more than false. If it was not a prophecy but an apocalyptic vision in the original sense of the word (Αποκάλυψη: the discovery, exposure, exploration of the truth), then it did not concern the future at all, but rather all times (καιρός), and can be false or true from moment to moment. Krasznahorkai, then, expressed a vision about words or questions concerning some kind of a "larger whole," a "higher law," moreover "the meaning of a higher law," even if gloom, as he wrote, absorbs them. In an interview made between the August and October of 1989, Krasznahorkai spoke ironically about these candid wishes: "I wrote a short reflection a few years ago related to Friedrich Nietzsche, approximately with the gentle call 'be good, otherwise you will regret it.' Of course, we could talk about the other side of the issue as well, namely that 'you will regret it even if you are good;' yet approaching now the question from the other direction, I am the follower of that undeniably aristocratic spirited agreement under which we wouldn't really insist – at least here in Hungary, for a while – on the question of how big the distance between Kant's moral law and this law's mandatory constraint actually is" (Keresztury, 124–125).

The so to speak bright, optimistic, meaning- and value-searching presentation of the Nietzsche-scene is given from a larger, post-Kantian perspective, from which goodness or honesty is not necessarily the human subject's inner reality. However, *At the Latest in Turin* talks only about the exceptional, in the illustrious company of Thomas Mann and Immanuel Kant. The interview makes it clear that the author gave a privileged direction to his text because he took into account a narrower space-and-time system, the soft-dictatorial Hungary before the 1989 turn. Those times were characterized by scams and sacks, people sank from poverty to deeper poverty, the Irimiás of the *Satantango*, the Prince of *The Melancholy of Resistance* were tiny but dangerous figures with their apparatuses built around them. Somehow these figures always manage to have enough power to persuade the poor, hopeless and silly people to contribute to their own and everything else's devastation.

After the 1989 turn, when Eastern Europeans could not anymore hide from themselves that poverty was a global characteristic of a great part of human beings, László Krasznahorkai, in a fictitious lecture, evoked a scene from Berlin: in August 1992, at the Zoologischer Garten metro station an old, shaky homeless

man was urinating on the forbidden stretch separated from the rails with a cordon (Krasznahorkai 1993, 34–51). He was observed by two policemen standing on the other side, and even though they were separated only by ten metres, those had to climb the stairs to catch him as the ten metres were impossible to be crossed directly because of the rails. Krasznahorkai interpreted those ten metres as the presence of evil and good, stating that unfortunately, there is no traffic between the two, and that similarly unfortunately, one decisive detail of the world is enough to make *the whole world* unbearable.

The text written in 1979, naming the scene of Nietzsche and the horse the tragedy of the intellect, does not make perceptible this idea concerning "the whole world," yet the ten metres distance between everything and everything cannot be felt, and the twenty-three-year-old Krasznahorkai talks only about the sad freedom of the violation of the Kantian moral law (and not about the uncanny lack of it).

"Nothing terrifies me more than this starred nothing above us and this hungry stomach inside us" (Krasznahorkai 1992, 47). Krasznahorkai's later crystallized version on Immanuel Kant's captivating sentence from the *Critique of Practical Reason* accurately indicates the direction in which the scene with Nietzsche and the horse from the script will be elaborated. Nietzsche becomes a quotation deriving from the former text, and all the sentences begin to refer to the strict necessities of material existence during the six days through which the essential condition of life is gradually disappearing.

"The first pieces are very hot, Ohlsdorfer throws them in the air with his left hand to cool them, and the girl throws them from one hand to the other, and they both blow them until they manage to peel them. They chew munching, puffing, breathing; they swallow the potatoes, one after the other. They chew, swallow, peel and salt until the last piece is stuffed down their throats. Then the girl stands up from the table, and she throws the collected potato peels in the corner near the stove" (Krasznahorkai 2004). The text is identically repeated four times: on each day of the six, except the third, when the gypsies arrive, and the sixth day, when they eat bread and bacon (raw potatoes in the film) because even the fire has gone out.

It is not only the identical repetition, the daily routine that makes the situation perfectly pointless, utterly desolate, but the barrenness of eating, too. Potato and salt, chewing and swallowing: the great temptation of material existence, the sensuousness, the pleasure of the flavours are nowhere, father and daughter eat as executing a duty. In the film, this is pronounced drily, banally, heard a thousand times: on the sixth day, when the girl does not touch her potato anymore, the father roughly says to her: "Eat. One has to eat."

In the context of art history, this dreary eating recalls a turning point in visual arts from the 19th century, Van Gogh's *The Potato Eaters* (1885). The painting scandalized people in its time as it did not fit the pathos-convention required in the portrayal of peasants. In Béla Tarr's approach, the images of potato-eating move on from Van Gogh's realism towards simple, geometric forms. Tarr's images do not target the new, they target the eternally comfortless.

Let us consider, for example, the barely levelled table without a cloth on it and with a platter in its center shown in the film for seconds. Or let us try to interpret the complicated, detailed poverty of the art of cinema discovered by Béla Tarr watching the repetitive potato-eating over the four days, shown each day from a different angle. We will discover new features, different lines and gestures, various forms of greed and satisfaction, of vulnerability and routine. We can see the infinity, not some definitive closure; as Jacques Rancière put it, the closed circle is always open in Béla Tarr's films (Rancière 2011).

Thirdly, the fact that the film relates itself to a Van Gogh painting opens to us another connection to the early Krasznahorkai-text, the *At the Latest in Turin*: Kant's beautiful sentence about starry heaven and moral law engraved on the philosopher's gravestone ("Two things fill the mind with ever-increasing wonder and awe, the more often and the more intensely the mind of thought is drawn to them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me") can be interpreted in the context of Van Gogh's last – and also infinity-related – sentence uttered on his death-bed: "The sadness will last forever."

The time when the painting was created, 1885, is close to the day when Nietzsche met the horse, cried, and spent his remaining time in silent mental illness. Mental breakdown connects Nietzsche and Van Gogh (especially if we take into account one of its possible reasons, the syphilis infection discovered in both cases), and separates them at the same time: Van Gogh painted until the end of his life, anywhere, in any mental condition, while Nietzsche spent his days in his parents' house, sitting in front of the window all day long, for the rest of his life.

In *The Turin Horse*, the sitting-in-front-of-the-window is a day-by-day performed situation taken in turn by the father and the girl. Gaze and image, philosophy and art go through the most basic democratization in Béla Tarr's works: he entrusts fallen, struggling, trembling-voiced people with both processes.

What is not visible in the film but is clear in the script and the cast: two writers, Thomas Bernhard and Heinrich von Kleist are also invoked in *The Turin Horse* in a similarly democratizing way, making the exceptional approachable and common. The name of the father is Ohlsodorfer, and Ohlsdorf is the name of the

Austrian village where Thomas Bernhard lived for years, where nowadays the Bernhard memorial museum can be found and visited.

The script and the cast contain only two proper names, one is the mentioned Ohlsdorfer and the other one is Bernhard. The latter is the name of the man who visits the Ohlsdorfers to purchase brandy from them. (His profession will send us to Heinrich von Kleist, but let us stick to Thomas Bernhard for now.)

The Bernhardian rhythm of the sentences, the musicality created by repetitions, interpositions, escalations and accumulations can be perceived in Krasznahorkai's script (actually in all of his scripts). Think of the potato-eating described four times, the enumeration of verbs, the details and the interpolation. The never-ending tirade about the end of times pronounced by the neighbour called Bernhard is even more Bernhardian. We can see here another process of democratization: Thomas Bernhard's musicality – traversing through the short story *Isaiah has come* by Krasznahorkai (1998), where the drunken local historian, György Korim declaims the general ruination of the world in a non-stop snack bar of a bus station – becomes the neighbour's words.

The logic of resentment would indicate that Krasznahorkai, in an infinite self-centeredness, quotes only himself, but from the perspective of the ability to feel the joy of life, this is the process of democratization of the text: if the drunken local historian or the neighbour is capable of this musicality of the words, then everybody is. And the fact that the name of this orator neighbour endowed with Bernhardian musicality is, after all, Bernhard, is a hidden reference that might not have been known even to the Mann- and Kant-quoting early Krasznahorkai back in 1979. (Namely, a reference to the fact that respect has nothing to do with cult.)

Now let us pass to the second hidden tribute to another literary predecessor. The neighbour, by profession, is a *horse dealer*, according to the script.

Kant, Kleist, Nietzsche and the End of the 19th Century

Horse dealer as the neighbour's occupation in itself cannot be taken as a strong argument for *Michael Kohlhaas's* being in our playground, but there is more: the writer of the story, Heinrich von Kleist went through a cognitive-psychic period, which he named "Kant-crisis," and after which he decided to drop scientific research. So, the naïve Kant-reference from the early prose of the *At the Latest in Turin* turned into a preachy horse dealer neighbour in *The Turin Horse*.

László F. Földényi's insight helps avoiding this Kant-absence to be turned into a disappointed withdrawal (Földényi 1999). Földényi demythicizes the Kant-

crisis itself, which in his opinion is nothing else than the monotone illusion of Kleist-interpreters by which they seek a rational explanation for his unutterable gift, reducing the source of Kleist's creative power, the art of expressing the *sudden* revelation of irreconcilability to a feeling of despair. Földényi argues that the term "Kant-crisis" appearing in Kleist's letter is a post-formulation for Kleist's personal experiences, namely that virtue "cannot be objectivized," and if the one I loved more than anything leaves me, I will become empty again.

"And in that moment, outside the lights *suddenly* go out" (Krasznahorkai 2004). Krasznahorkai informs us in this sentence that permanent darkness has come. In the SUDDENLY entry of his Kleist-dictionary, Földényi connects this concept to an absolute present tense, which breaks away from the past but does not connect with the future either.

According to the script, this *final* darkening occurs on the fifth day.

The fifth day of what?

The prologue indicates the time of the scene with perfect precision: 3 January 1889. But henceforward, in the film itself, besides the horse, *a* horse, there is no other connection to the Nietzsche-scene. The film is precise in expressing *how long* it lasts, but it does not say exactly *when* it happens. Through six days, things disappear one by one from life: on the first day the scratchy sound of the wood-beetles dies away, on the second day the horse will not get going, on the third day the horse does not eat anymore, on the fourth day the well runs dry, on the fifth day the fire goes out, the wind stops blowing, the light disappears, on the sixth day the girl does not eat anymore.

The five-day-windstorm is a natural phenomenon, it has nothing to do with the time structured by human beings. The way of life of the characters is not culturally organized either, it adjusts only to nature: to the sunrise, to hunger, to pain, to darkening.

Beyond a certain level of poverty, people are excluded from the culturally organized time. Exclusion can reach a scale where social relations are replaced by cosmic relations. This is why Krasznahorkai's and Béla Tarr's characters, no matter how humiliated and distressed, do not appear as claiming our compassion. The environment researcher Angela Last writes on her blog that *The Turin Horse* could be described as "*Melancholy* for the 99%" (cf. Last 2012).

The characters of Krasznahorkai and Tarr, except for the neighbour Bernhard, barely speak more than the horse. Talking does not lack from these scenes. Even more, there is something violent, not fitting in every word they use, and not only because most of their words are obscenities, but rather because there

is nothing to talk about here. One of the strongest symptoms of this absence is the addressing form without names, the "Hey, you!" characterizing the father–daughter relationship. At some point, before the script and the six days of the film, the girl's name disappeared, and what is left is mutual exposedness to each other, coordinated, pragmatic movements deprived of any tenderness, automatic consideration for each other's territory.

These characters do not demand our compassion or envy, Krasznahorkai and Béla Tarr do not fulfill the actual expectations of pity or desire fulfillment. They talk about people as respectful beings, regardless of the circumstances they find themselves in. They do not offer to their public the self-sufficient pleasure of the exoticism of depravity and of being privileged. They have no wish to feed such low and illusory desires. Or as Béla Tarr says in an interview: they consider the audience their partner (Valuska 2008).

In political culture, this is called participatory democracy. It is not accidental that one of the contemporary philosophers of emancipatory politics and aesthetics, Jacques Rancière wrote a book about Béla Tarr's films (Rancière 2011). These films visualize everything he writes on the extension of the sensible, give voice to the "silent witnesses." Here we have everyday items considered insignificant before, but in fact symptoms of social issues, which can be perceived sooner in literature (and arts) than in history.

The suddenness of darkening, the horse dealer and the turn called Kant-crisis make the hidden reference to Kleist's world perceptible in *The Turin Horse*. According to Földényi's SUDDENLY entry in his Kleist-dictionary (Földényi 1999), the accentuation of the moment, of the "sudden" in Kleist's works gives the impression that the author emancipates the "nothing" itself. Not only time has cracked, conversation is pointless too.

The six-day-long gradual darkening with a sudden end could happen almost anytime, even now. The only concrete indication of the era is the telegraph in the script and a photograph of the mother in the film.

According to the script, the horse dealer neighbour, postmaster for a while, when coming for brandy for the second time on the fifth day, eulogizes the news that darkness has fallen on every continent, and darkness has fallen forever, and he knows this because as a former postmaster he owns a telegraph, by which he can learn anything that happens in the world, even in a remote place as theirs.

The telegraph was invented in 1837 by Samuel Finley Breese Morse, and it quickly spread worldwide. We would suppose, the long-distance information exchange made possible by internet connection and mobile phones displaced it

long before our days. It is not quite so: the last telegraph business in India closed down on 14 July 2013, actually a few years after *The Turin Horse* appeared.

The invention of photography was declared on 7 January 1839, in front of the French Academy, by the astronomer François Arago, protector of the inventor Louis Daguerre, and from the August of the same year it spread unbelievably quickly. It seems that also photograph is disappearing in the era of computers, smart phones, projectors and tablets. Both technical devices indicate the 19th century as the time of *The Turin Horse.* Presently, they are being replaced by other platforms using up energy even when not working. It is not so hard to imagine a situation when the dependence of energy of these means would result in a return to those old things from the 19th century. Then the time structure of *The Turin Horse* would open from the right, but for now, the possible time of the events is an interval closed from the left, while the happening itself, the process of darkening is closed from the end, from the right. If we homogenize the two types of time, the historical and the artistic, we obtain a closed time interval. In other words, for the time frame to be limited, closed (necessarily at a good distance from us), we have to commit an unforgivable logical fault: we have to project the time parameters of the two different systems on one, arbitrarily selected line.

Friedrich Nietzsche wrote in his *Use and Abuse of History for Life*: "For art runs away, when you instantly throw over your actions the roof of the historical marquee. The person who wants to understand, calculate and grasp in an instant, where he should in an enduring shock hang onto the unknowable as something sublime, may be called intelligent, but only in the sense in which Schiller speaks of the understanding of the intelligent person: he does not see some things which even the child sees; he does not hear some things which even the child hears; these 'things' are precisely the most important thing. Because he does not understand this, his understanding is more childish than the child's and more simplistic than simple mindedness, in spite of the many shrewd wrinkles on his parchment-like features and the virtuoso practice of his fingers unraveling complexities." (Nietzsche 2013.)

If we do not choose the arbitrary, calculated simplicity, we can conclude that the darkening process beginning in the 19th century ended only according to the script and the film but in reality, where telegraph, photography, Nietzsche and perhaps the horse originate from, in reality it has not ended.

Let us return again to the collapse of Nietzsche's mind as it was written by Krasznahorkai in 1979: the diabolical star of the philosophy of life, the dazzling opponent of the so called "universal human truths," the inimitable champion

saying no almost until out of breath to compassion, forgiveness and goodness admits his tragic mistake. "Nietzsche's personality said no to Nietzsche's thoughts so hellish in their consequences" (Krasznahorkai 2013, 24). Does the reality, the unattainable, the Kantian *Ding an Sich*, gathering its last strength, in the guise of a beaten horse break the beautiful, courageous fiction?

But let us consider it longer: could Nietzsche have been indeed shaken by the exotic, distant, self-existent, not-concerning reality? Or, from another point of view, is it beneficial to reduce a doubtful episode to a conflict between reality and art, intellect and subject, from which then we can beautifully deduce the madness of the artist? I cannot stave off the idea that the philosopher, who vehemently rejects compassion as a coward form of self-defence, has caught a glimpse of himself in the trapped horse, hasn't he? (At least, this would be a chance to avoid interpreting the anecdote in a pathetic way, to avoid feeling pity for our fellow-being, Nietzsche, in the false sense of our primacy.)

In a well-known studio photograph made in 1882, obviously destined to be funny, Nietzsche and Paul Rée pose as they were horses fixed to a sort of carriage, and their mutual love, Lou Andreas-Salomé is looking at the camera with a whip held up in her hand. In conformity with the habits of those times, the background of the photograph made with innocent falsity is a painting of an Alpine landscape, while the persons appearing in the image pose in light, elegant, heavily buttoned urban clothes. It is a perfect copy of artificiality, scandalous and sublimating at the same time: the woman with a whip in her hand takes on the gesture of audacity, but her moves, her posture, the Brechtian *Haltung* cannot yet follow this audacity with the corporal articulation of the feelings. And the men stand rigidly in their formal attire in front of the camera as they were standing in the world's most natural posture, say in a café's billiard room reserved for men. Rée is posing elegantly, barely touching the carriage rod with two fingers, Nietzsche is looking somewhere (surely, in the nothing emancipated by Kleist), while behind their back there lie the picturesque Alps. However, there is still some inexpressible reality lurking in the picture, the Turin reality.

Since then, people have experimented with lots of authentic situations corresponding to their feelings. The solution to the Nietzsche-scene in Krasznahorkai's script and Béla Tarr's film depends on the simultaneous cooperation between two, respectively three things. The first one could be called "the representation of the woman."

On the wall, near the girl's bed, there is a photograph of the missing mother, which we could not see from close until the girl started to pack up. As I have

indicated before, the photograph of the mother in the movie does not appear in the script. Moreover, there is nothing in the script that hints at the mother or her absence. The mother's image appears in a close-up only during the break out attempt in Béla Tarr's film (and it is time to write down the name of his co-director, Ágnes Hraniczky), which timing makes the missing woman perceptible as an absent, dignified human being. The accurate circumscription of the missing mother's place is the portrayal of a woman without any simplification, the portrayal of the woman in her hidden but possible complexity. Additionally, it reveals a 19th-century convention which saw either a saint or a prostitute in a woman (rather the latter in the prologue and background of our story).

The second feature contributing to authenticity is the slow-motion, six-day-long process of the termination of life conditions. The third one is *the manner* of the useless break-out attempt after the well has dried up; the only explanation added to it being: "we can't stay here any longer, pack up" – so when they do not have water either, and the father feels that they have to go away somewhere, they put all their things on a cart and while the father leads the horse unable to move from its bridle, *the girl's job is to pull the terribly heavy cart.*

She is moving slowly with the cart, we have time to observe the struggling body under the weights not designed for it to bear. Speaking would only cover what this scene can show. In accordance with Bertolt Brecht's usage of the notion of posture or gesture, here as well, the body can reveal the interpersonal and social relationships so that the viewer (because in Brecht's approach the viewer is in the centre) recognizes the conventions which motivate the actions of individuals (cf. Brecht 1964).

Béla Tarr does not sublimate: in his Nietzsche-scene, humans, existing together with animals, 99% of the population of the Earth can share the recognition that it is him- or herself pulling – totally unnecessarily – the overloaded cart.

"You Are Nowhere. The World Is but Thin Air." (János Pilinszky: *Apokripha*, 1954)

Three horses appear in Béla Tarr's film, the horse of the Ohlsdorfers and the two horses of the gypsies. The three horses have no special meaning, four would have, for sure. But the horse of the Ohlsdorfers pulls a carriage built for two horses, it is hooked in on the left side while its partner on the right side is absent, which makes the first seven minutes of the film even more difficult with the seemingly endless journey of the horse and its carter in the wind attacking them from every side.

The girl pulls the cart from the left side as well when they are trying to escape, so the two situations are not transposable, not even if we remove the temporal discrepancy in the hope of some sort of an eternal simultaneity, some *kairos*; not even if we could imagine that they can help each other in the name of equality between living beings. They cannot help each other because that is not how they are positioned. They are both hooked up in such a way that their partner would be absent from their side.

The gypsies and the two horses appear with a Kleistian *suddenness* on the third day; Krasznahorkai actually uses this expression in the script: "Then suddenly a wagon appears from the left in a mad gallop, with lots of gypsies in it" (Krasznahorkai 2004). They leave just as suddenly to the right, towards west, after giving a book to the girl. The appearance of the gypsies, after the visit of the horse dealer Bernhard, is the second event that occurs in the everyday life of the Ohlsdorfers. (In the script, Krasznahorkai creates two visits of Bernhard, the second happening after dark, but in the film Bernhard comes only once.)

These two events breaking into the world of the Ohlsdorfers could be considered as the two focal points of an ellipse, just as in the case of Kleist's short story, *Michael Kohlhaas*, where the episode about the horse dealer's efforts to recuperate his horses is followed by the enigmatic story of a gypsy woman. The film searched for a stronger link with the Kleistian short story about the horse dealer. In this, besides the political level, an incomprehensible, otherworldly tale starts about a gypsy woman having a birthmark in the same place as Lisbeth, Kohlhaas's wife, who died during her search for political fairness. Looking at the two visits in the film from this point of view, the neighbour Bernhard offers the political interpretation of the events while the gypsies are the mediators of a different, incomprehensible knowledge. They, similarly to the dual being of Kleist's gypsy woman/Lisbeth, know something unreachable for the others: they move freely in the wind-storm, they give away a book which evokes and withdraws holiness in a state of swoon, ignorance and audacity. (In Kleist's story, the gypsy woman gives Kohlhaas a leaden case containing a prophecy, and the corrupt prince, who the prophecy refers to, faints when he sees the case hanging in Kohlhaas's neck.)

The girl reads the book falteringly, and opposed to the similar scene in Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979), reading is not glorified here, the book and the reading girl are not angelic mediators at all. The girl, although a grown up (drinks her glass of brandy every morning with her father), reads poorly and there is no sign of understanding on her face. The stumbling, stuttering reading leaves her and the spectator in the most complete intellectual darkness. Moreover, if we look up

the script, we learn that the book itself is preaching about the incapability of both humans and God. The prayers in this book are reversed prayers: "Do not pray! For our minds are not filled with truth, and we are not glorified before the Lord. And do not accept, Lord, the gifts of your bitter congregation because in this sanctified house your people did not achieve eternal salvation through the holy secrets." It uses Christian language but only to annihilate it. It negates the addressed God's power to save the person turning away from Him, which, according to the Christian teachings, is equal to denying Grace. There is nothing in this book but man's sinfulness and confusion; and what the so-called Ordinary preaches to the congregation is the greatest sacrilege: "The Lord was with you!" – by which, after depriving God of His omnipotence, deprives Him of His eternity as well.

In the film, the meaninglessness of the sacrilegious holy text is expressed by the syllabic, dull, monotonous reading process that lacks any meaning and interpretation. In the only medium available for the script, this senselessness, this loss of meaning is made doubtless by making the text chaotic: the girl reads twenty-six paragraphs, but the twenty-third appears twice and the twenty-fifth is missing; it is also chaotic that the articles randomly include laws, mere invocations, descriptions, or some out-of-context formulas. The seventh paragraph is especially ridiculous regardless if we try to read it as a holy teaching or as part of a ritual: "The congregation remain silent."

According to this ceremonial book detailing the liquidation of the church, there is neither God, nor congregation anymore. There is no one left to swindle people, as Irimiás did in *Satantango*, and there are no swindled, deluded people anymore. There is only a girl articulating the words with difficulty, without understanding them, in a house where nothing suggests (except for the photograph of the missing mother in the film) that it has ever been somebody's home. And outside, the storm rages on.

Béla Tarr creates the negation of continuous eternity with two allusions to paintings: firstly he films the father lying on the bed in order to hint at Hans Holbein's *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* (1520–1522), secondly he shows him in a way that reminds of Andrea Mantegna's *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (1480). Hinting at Holbein's painting, the film not only creates an analogy between Ohlsdorfer and the dead Christ, but it also includes in the context the loss of the relationship between belief, congregation and God. One of the strongest interpretations of Holbein's painting can be found in Dostoyevsky's novel, *The Idiot*, in the famous scene where Prince Mishkin, seeing this painting on Rogozhin's wall, says that this painting can make a person lose their belief. The

title of the novel and its main character can reveal further connections: Mishkin's figure, the idiot, according to the writer's intention, is meant to embody the figure of Jesus; his age (twenty-six) corresponds with the number of the commandments – or whatever they might be – of the chaotic holy book in the script; and the candid soul claims that beauty will save the world.

If anything, then yes, beauty. Julia Kristeva says something similar in her essay, *Holbein's Dead Christ*: "the *form* (of art) alone gives back serenity to the waning of forgiveness, while love and salvation take refuge in the execution of the work. Redemption would simply be the discipline of a rigorous technique." (Kristeva 1989, 135.)

The Turin Horse is even more rigorous in its technique than the earlier works of Tarr. This film contains the longest cuts, only thirty in the 147-minute-long film. The number thirty can be familiar from Krasznahorkai's prose, remember: even if there is no compassion in us yet, tomorrow, or in ten or thirty years there will be. This human disposition was problematic not only in connection with the Nietzsche-scene, as I argued above, but also Krasznahorkai abandoned any further proceeding in this direction. He chose to describe the struggles of the elementary material existence, to create forms for representing wretchedness where no apparatus of power can be considered responsible for the condition of the abject. The beauty of the repetitions surrounding the hidden focus points of the mere material existence is what is able to create an open structure. The openness of this structure can be sensed strongly due to a pair of opposite and very slow images: the vertigo of the dried up well that seems to drag one into itself set against the image of the table with only a salt-cellar and a book on it suggesting a dynamic structure of equality.

Béla Tarr's very slow images are silent acts of resistance to speed. Arthur Danto mentions in Marina Abramovic's documentary about the exhibition in MoMa, *The Artist is Present* (2010), that visitors spend thirty seconds on average in front of a painting. *Mona Lisa*, thirty seconds, he adds ironically. Béla Tarr proposes a much longer immersion in the film than these thirty seconds.

In *The Turin Horse*, the death of film is part of a precise composition which suspends the judging aspect of its own declaration, similarly to what Gilles Deleuze writes in his book on film about suspending judgement based on Nietzsche's criticism of truth: "the true world implies a 'truthful man', a man who wants the truth, but such a man has strange motives, as he were hiding another man in him, a revenge: Othello wants the truth, but out of jealousy, or, worse, out of revenge for being black […] The truthful man in the end wants nothing other than to judge

life; he holds up a superior value, the good, in the name of which he will be able to judge, he is craving to judge, he sees in life an evil, a fault which is to be atoned for: the moral origin of the notion of truth. In the Nitzschean fashion, Welles has constantly battled against the system of judgment: there is no value superior to life, life is not to be judged or justified, it is innocent, it has 'the innocence of becoming' […]" (Deleuze 2005, 133).

Around the middle of the film, when Ohlsdorfer's daughter hangs out the washed clothes in the house to protect them from the wind, the camera goes closer and closer to a piece of white clothing, and that is what we see for several seconds, the crumpled canvas with the traces of movement – this slow image pervades the final darkening of the film. This is the movie screen, with traces of life. From the most repeated situation of the film, the "sitting in front of the window," a cinema-metaphor – even if there is silence and darkness in the end – we can also sense that Tarr's films have taught us to see, to observe everywhere the film forming from connections, gestures, wind-blown leaves.

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Look Behind the (Animated) Pictures. Notes on the Role of the Aesopic Language in Hungarian Animated Film[1]

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Abstract. The essay explores a certain tendency of Hungarian animated film related to a strategy of constructing meaning. The so-called Aesopic language, which can be found in Hungarian animated film, is interested in creating ambiguity, hidden meanings, especially against oppressive political systems. The paper approaches the development of the Aesopic language in Hungarian animated film based on two factors. The first one examines the characteristics of the animated film in general, focusing on the *double sense* of the animated image. The second one is a historical approach, considering how the Communist regime affected artistic freedom, and how the Aesopic language became general in Central and Eastern Europe during the decades of Communism. After delineating the concept, the essay continues with interpretations of Hungarian animated films produced by the famous Pannonia Film Studio as examples of the Aesopic language. The paper distinguishes between a less and a more direct variant of creating ambiguity, depending on whether the animated films lack or contain explicit references to the Communist system. The group of the less direct variant includes *Rondino*, *Changing Times* and *The Fly*; among the examples of the more direct variant we can find *Story about N*, *Our Holidays* and *Mind the Steps!*.

Keywords: Hungarian animated film, Central and Eastern European cinema, ambiguity, symbolism, censorship.

Once upon a time, there was a studio in Central Europe making animated films, and it became world famous for a few decades. This studio was situated in Hungary, and it was called Pannonia Film Studio (Pannónia Filmstúdió). As film historian Zsolt Pápai points out, "some of the most glorious chapters of the

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Hungarian film history were written by animated film directors. The animated film had been one of the country's most important cultural exports since the 1960s; due to the feature-length animated film production, which started in 1973, Hungary became a world power, and for a while, Pannonia was listed among the five most important film studios producing animated films in the world" (Pápai 2007, 43).

Several short films were highly acclaimed; including Gyula Macskássy's *Duel* (*Párbaj*, 1960) – it won the Jury Prize in Cannes –, Marcell Jankovics's *Sisyphus* (1974) and *Fight* (*Küzdők*, 1977) – the former one was an Academy Award nominee, the latter won Palme d'Or in Cannes –, Ferenc Rofusz's *The Fly* (*A légy*, 1980), which won Hungary's first Academy Award, while Béla Vajda's *Moto perpetuo* (1980) was honoured with Palme d'Or. Some of the animated series had impressive success as well; the comedy series *Gustavus* (*Gusztáv*, several directors, 1964–68, 1975–77) was sold to over 70 countries, the folkloristic *Hungarian Folk Tales* (*Magyar népmesék*, several directors, 1977–2011) were bought by more than 40 countries. Among the feature-length animated films, we can find some of the most successful Hungarian films ever: Attila Dargay's tales such as *Mattie the Gooseboy* (*Lúdas Matyi*, 1976) and *Vuk* (1981) were both seen by more than two million viewers only in Hungary.[2] Jankovics's extraordinary *The Son of the White Mare* (*Fehérlófia*, 1981) was voted one of the 50 best animated films of all time in the Los Angeles Animation Olympiad in 1984 (it is worth mentioning that beside *The Son of the White Mare* only five feature-length animated films can be found on the list).[3]

Although this series of success stopped after the end of Communism and especially after the end of the state-supported animated film industry,[4] and contemporary Hungarian animation has to face serious difficulties and challenges (both financially and artistically), the golden years of this kind of film making is still and will be considered as a highly important segment of Hungarian film history in general. However, despite its great achievements, Hungarian animated film has not been discovered in depth by film studies yet. There are only a few texts available that deal with Hungarian animation, including Mari Kuttna's short introduction to the profile of Pannonia Film Studio (Kuttna ca. 1970) and the chapters focusing on Hungary in Giannalberto Bendazzi's book (Bendazzi 1994,

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2   Regarding the fact that Hungary's population is estimated to be around 10 million, these numbers of viewers definitely indicate exceptional success.

3   The list can be found here: *http://www.awn.com/mag/issue1.4/articles/deneroffini 1.4.html*. Last accessed 23. 02. 2015.

4   During the decades of Communism, film industry – including animated film making – was financially supported by the state.

175, 347–352), and in *Animation Art* edited by Jerry Beck (Beck 2004, 50–51, 230–231, 288–289). More detailed inquiries are yet to come; however, we can surely distinguish some basic tendencies of Hungarian animation without those as well.

First of all, one of the most specific attribute of Hungarian animation is an exceptional diversity of films. Those who know Hungarian animation tend to agree (cf. Dizseri 1999, 67) that we cannot speak about a so-called Hungarian school of animation or a distinctive national style of our animated films. Instead of that, Hungarian animation is a very viable mixture of myriads of themes, approaches and animated forms; it ranges from Ferenc Varsányi's slapstick-like pixilations (e.g. *Schooltime Blues* [*Suli-buli*, 1982]) through Ottó Foky's mildly surrealistic object animations (e.g. *Scenes with Beans* [*Babfilm*, 1975]) to the grotesque cartoons of József Nepp (e.g. *The Corrupt Cats* [*Megalkuvó macskák*, 1979]), and so on. Despite this undeniable diversity, some basic tendencies can be discovered as well. The characteristics of these tendencies appear in every basic production type of the animation, i.e. in individual short films, series and feature-length films. I distinguish four basic tendencies of Hungarian animation: (1) tales (from Gyula Macskássy's groundbreaking *The Little Rooster and His Diamond Halfpenny* [*A kiskakas gyémánt félkrajcárja*, 1951] to *Berry and Dolly* [*Bogyó és Babóca*, M. Tóth Géza, 2010], a contemporary animation made for small children); (2) satirical comedies (from József Nepp's *Passion* [*Szenvedély*, 1961] to Béla Ternovszky's cultic *Cat City* [*Macskafogó*, 1986]); (3) animated films based on different aspects of Hungary's past, such as folklore, literature and history (from Zsolt Richly's folklore-inspired shorts [including *Molnár Anna,* 1972] to Marcell Jankovics's monumental adaptation of Imre Madách's *The Tragedy of Man* [*Az ember tragédiája*, 1988–2011]); (4) animated films with sociographical interests and documentarist ambitions (from György Kovásznai's shorts including *Vernation No. 3369* [*Rügyfakadás No. 3369*, 1971] and *The Boulevard by Night* [*Körúti esték*, 1972] to a contemporary success, Áron Gauder's *District* [*Nyócker!*, 2004]).

In the following essay I am about to delineate another tendency in Hungarian animation. This tendency does not rely on basic sources, thematic elements or generic conventions; it can be considered rather as *a manner of constructing meaning*. My aim is to demonstrate the characteristics of a so-called Aesopic language of Hungarian animated film. First, I am going to describe what I call Aesopic language, and I propose two approaches to explain it. Then I will discuss its characteristics by analysing a few Hungarian animated films obviously connected to the Aesopic language.

Explaining the Concept of Aesopic Language

Before delineating the concept, it is worth recalling an anecdote which definitely helps to highlight what the Aesopic language is supposed to mean. In 2005, a Hungarian CGI animated film directed by Géza M. Tóth, entitled *Maestro*, had a world-wide success; it was even an Academy Award nominee. The film depicts how a bird, that the viewer thinks is an opera singer, rehearses before his performance. When the time comes to appear on stage, the mechanical arm, which until then helped him, grabs the bird and pushes him out of the supposed dressing room, and the bird starts repeating "cuckoo." In the end, it can be realized that the whole plot takes place inside a cuckoo clock. The director mentioned (Zalán 2010, 32) how the film was commented by an American professor who knew Eastern European film art very well. It was said that if *Maestro* had been presented in the 1980s, it would have been interpreted as a quite brave metaphor of an attempt to escape from darkness and imprisonment.

As the anecdote suggests, the topic of Aesopic language is connected to the meaning(s) of works of art, especially those interpretations that are centred on possible hidden meanings. The term I borrowed from Marek Hendrykowski (Hendrykowski 1996, 633) unquestionably reveals these concerns and even proves that this topic can be traced back to antiquity (or even much further in the past). Aesop's fables should be seen as the pattern of duplication (or multiplication) of possible meanings and interpretations: the text leads to different readings on different levels; the interpretation based on the so-called surface can be modified from another point of view. This phenomenon inevitably raises too many unresolved questions. At this point, my argument could be continued with summarizing countless proposals written about topics such as how texts (including audiovisual constructions, e.g. animated films) produce meanings; what the valid interpretations of a single text are, and what are not; what the role of the author's intentions is; how we can handle the limitedness, or on the contrary, the supposed unlimitedness of possible interpretations; and so on. Different approaches, such as post-structuralist, deconstructivist and hermeneutical, to name but a few, emphasize many different aspects and elements of these questions, but it is not my aim to explore their labyrinth.

Now, I will rely on a perhaps simplifying delineation of the phenomenon: I will try to capture it as an achievement of specific conditions. We can regard the Aesopic language as a kind of strategy to construct ambiguity that permits two or more alternative interpretations of the same text. However, it is useful to see

the Aesopic language not as the case of any kind of ambiguity, but as a way of interpretation that is against existing, operating and mainly oppressive political systems. This is a key element of the Aesopic language in Hungarian animated film as well. Regarding these characteristics, I will explain the development of Aesopic language based on two factors: (1) the "nature" of the animated film in general; and (2) the historical context of the examined films.

Animation and *Double Sense*

Animated film has always been considered as a unique field of moving-image culture. Although there are debates about what the definition of animated film could be (cf. Dobson 2010, xlii–xliv), basically, we can approach the animation following Charles Solomon's suggestions, who "discusses a variety of techniques that he says can be called 'animation'. He finds that 'two factors link these diverse media and their variations, and serve as the basis for a workable definition of animation: (1) the imagery is recorded frame-by-frame and (2) the illusion of motion is created rather than recorded'" (Furniss 1998, 5). Simplifying this proposal, we can also say that "most people think of animation in a more general way, by identifying a variety of techniques such as cel animation, clay animation, puppets and so forth" (Furniss 1998, 5).

The specific animated imageries and the constructed movements both develop a more or less significant distance from the photographical imagery of live-action film.[5] That is why it is reasonable to assume that animated film has some inherent characteristics which can be found in all types of animation. As I argued earlier (Varga 2011), these characteristics are *creationism* and *artificiality*; the former refers to the fact that the artist may have a maximal control over the *mise-en-scene*, while the latter means that the animated images have a very strong tendency to emphasize their own artificial constructedness instead of hiding them. Due to these characteristics, those animated films which are the least influenced by narrative, stylistic and generic conventions established by the mainstream live-action cinema have elaborated a specific vocabulary of their own way of expression. Even if it is debatable whether "animation as a film language and film art is a more sophisticated and flexible medium than live-action film" (cf. Wells 1998, 6), it is

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5   The distance depends on the animated forms and is manipulated by several factors (above all, by stylistic devices). Some of the animated forms are relatively close to live-action cinematography, especially the forms of stop motion animation, such as puppet and clay animation. On the other hand, those animated films that consist of drawn or painted pictures usually have much more significant distances from live-action imagery.

undeniable that the most authentic animated films[6] show a remarkable tendency of using devices which are *very close to the language of poetry*.

This kind of "language" partly comes from the phenomenon described by María Lorenzo Hernández as "the *double sense* of animated images" (Hernández 2007), which can be regarded as an aspect of the aforementioned artificiality. As Hernández remarks: "The double sense of animated images is a conceptual movement that calls attention to the surface of representation, instead of its actual contents. From the earliest age of cartoons, their high degree of self-reflexivity has reinforced the status of animation as an invented environment, building what has been labelled as the *language* of animation" (Hernández 2007, 36). In this sense, animated film has a *visual ambiguity* which meets – or continues in – a way of expression created by certain methods that produce ambiguity. These animated films tend to rely on symbolic or metaphorical images or events, and especially narrative constructions which offer more than one possible interpretation (due to lacking conventional causal motivations, clear time and space relations, stable character identities, and so forth). This strong attachment to ambiguity is the basis of the Aesopic language.

However, it is important to note that not every ambiguous animated film should be considered automatically as an example of the Aesopic language only because it has the potential of a certain political interpretation as well. Obviously, not every ambiguous animated film has this potentiality. If we consider Ottó Foky's *A School for Clowns* (*Bohóciskola*, 1965), for instance, the difference is quite clear. In Foky's puppet animation, the main character, a little rascal called Holzinger is daydreaming about himself being a clown; but when he has the opportunity to join a circus, he experiences that even clowns have to learn a lot. The fantasy sequence of Holzinger's daydreaming shows him in an almost abstract space, where he is floating, moreover, even a rocket ship appears – and these clues assure us viewers that it is not real what we see in the diegesis, but imagination. However, the scenes taking place in the circus are more ambiguous. The lessons for clown students contain definitely irrational elements – e.g. when Holzinger plays the violin, the notes literally appear as they fall onto the ground –, and these elements are contrasted with a relatively realistic and coherent *mise-en-scene*. The result is a paradoxical situation, and we cannot be sure of what is real and what is imaginary. Thus, it is appropriate to regard *A School for Clowns* as an

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6   When I say the "most authentic animated films," I mean those animations which deliberately do not follow the patterns crystallized by mainstream live-action cinema. Thus, these animations are mainly short films.

example of ambiguity. However, this ambiguity does not relate to political issues. If the Aesopic language can be referred to as ambiguity which specifically focuses on political questions, the emergence of animations related to it can be explained from another point of view, apart from the aesthetical one.

"Censorship Is the Mother of Metaphor"[7]

As it is well-known, during the decades of Communism (from the late 1940s to the end of the 1980s), in Central and Eastern Europe, any kind of artistic activity was strictly controlled by the party state. The artists in the "satellite countries" of the USSR were not allowed to express their thoughts and feelings in a free way; in particular, topics related to criticizing the dictatorship were strongly restricted. Basically, the Communist regime expected the artists to show the system in a positive way, forcing the doctrine of the so-called "Socialist Realism."

However, the artists, including film directors, did not give up their ambitions to speak and think about their world, especially about the shadows and contradictions of the Communist regime. "Political circumstances, and film-makers' responses to them, led East Central European cinemas in the post-war period to adopt a number of strategies," as Marek Hendrykowski wrote (Hendrykowski 1996, 632), which he calls "elusive strategies." These "elusive strategies" – besides historicism and literary affinities, for instance – contain the "Aesopic language," which "stems from the harsh rigours of censorship imposed on art and cinematography in the eastern bloc countries. For several decades a subtle use of metaphors, symbols, allusions, subtexts, and understatements effectively enabled film-makers to communicate with their public above the head of the censor [...]. Faced with the impossibility of depicting anything directly, film-makers perfected this method of communication, resorting in the process to a rich variety of semantic tropes and stylistic devices whenever they needed to circumvent the censor's taboos" (Hendrykowski 1996, 633).

Although the films based on the Aesopic language mentioned by Hendrykowski are live-action films (including Andrzej Wajda's and Miklós Jancsó's works), it has to be emphasized that animated film is no exception either because this too elaborated its own Aesopic language. Definitely, the most obvious proof is Jiří Trnka's puppet animation masterpiece *The Hand* (*Ruka*, 1965) made in Czechoslovakia, which is widely known as a protestation against every form

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7   The words of Jorge Luis Borges are quoted by Paul Wells introducing a passage in which he discusses Jiří Trnka's *The Hand* (Wells 1998, 84).

of dictatorship in general, and Stalinism in particular, "through the conceptual allegory of a giant (live-action) Hand that tries to force a puppet potter to make only images of Hands instead of flower pots" (Moritz 1998, 552). Similar ambiguous animations can be found in Hungarian film as well.

In Hungary, the cultural politics established by the Soviets and centred on supporting and banning was strongly intertwined with one certain politician. György Aczél was the chief figure of Communist censorship, or more precisely, the Communist cultural politics, which relied on the system of the so-called "TTT."[8] Basically, this system was a method of classification for the products of literature, fine arts, film art and so on; the works could be supported, tolerated, or banned.

In this system, the animated film played an intriguing role. As Sándor Reisenbüchler, director of the highly acclaimed *The Kidnapping of the Sun and the Moon* (*A Nap és a Hold elrablása*, 1968) remembered: "One of the paradoxes of the Communist regime was that meanwhile it generously supported the culture financially on the one hand, its bureaucracy harassed the artists on the other hand. For its money, the regime wanted films praising the system, and it did not tolerate criticism easily, especially not in the beginning. This changed later during the soft dictatorship. With a clever twist, Aczél used criticism as a form of praising the system, thus the West could see that the Communists permit the critical voices as well" (Dizseri 1999, 142). This controversial situation was one of the key factors why the Aesopic language could be so prevalent in the animated film.

However, this did not mean that directors could do everything they planned; on the contrary, they still had to be very careful regarding the contents of their films, and they had their conflicts with the censors. Despite the fact that until the end of Communism only one film made in Pannonia was banned,[9] several problems were found in certain films. For instance, Péter Szoboszlay mentioned (Lőcsei 2010) that a member of the bureaucracy did not approve number 56[10] to appear on a streetcar in György Csonka's *Lullaby* (*Altató*, 1974); when Ottó Foky was working on *Scenes with Beans*, questions were raised about the colours of some beans (Lendvai, 2007); and similarly, Ferenc Rofusz was not allowed to make *Gravity* (*Gravitáció*, 1984) unless he was willing to change the naturally red

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8   The abbreviation consists of the initials of the Hungarian words for "supporting," "tolerating" and "banning."

9   This film was *Young Man Playing the Guitar at the Old Master's Gallery* (*Gitáros fiú a régi képtárban*, György Kovásznai, 1964). The reason of its banning is unclear (cf. Iványi-Bitter 2010, 75–76).

10   Number 56 inevitably recalls the year (1956) of the Hungarian Revolution against Soviet oppression.

colours of the apples to something else – in the final version, the apples are blue (Mészáros 2014, 14).

As we can see now, the emergence of the Aesopic language in Hungarian animated film is the result of the delineated set of aesthetic characteristics and historical circumstances, or, to be more precise, the temporary overlapping of these, as they mutually enhanced the use of the Aesopic language.

In the next chapters, I will discuss a few animated films as examples of this tendency. Regarding the manners of depicting the dictatorship, it could be useful to distinguish between different variants: *a less direct* and a *more direct approach* of the Aesopic language. In the case of the *less direct approach,* films do not contain elements referring to the Communist system in an explicit manner; however, these films undeniably offer the possibility of a coherent secondary interpretation, which can be connected to the questions of the dictatorship. Meanwhile, the case of the *more direct approach* does not mean that films directly criticize the Communist dictatorship, but certain of their elements are clearly connected to the Communist system, and these are easily recognizable. These elements may refer to historical events, persons, institutions, symbols and ideological issues. First, I will discuss the films that belong to the less direct approach, and then I will continue with the group of the more direct approach.

Variations on Execution

Comparing Csaba Szórády's *Rondino* and István Kovács's *Changing Times* (both made in 1977), we can discover a very sharp contrast, although they both deal with scenarios of executions. *Rondino* contains such extreme violence that would easily be unbearable to see in a live-action film (indeed it is very similar to the disturbing cruelties depicted in *Saw* [James Wan, 2004] and mainly in its sequels). Regarding the plot and the characters, *Rondino* is about some kind of an inquisition; however, the situation rather builds on the aftermath of an interrogation, as in this two-minute-long voiceless film we see the process of how inquisitors destroy their victim. The range of cruelties is surprisingly wide, including tearing apart and even cannibalism(!). As the inquisitors are built up of spots, while the victim is formed only by lines, we eventually see in a self-reflexive way, relying heavily on the double sense of the animated image, how lines are erased by spots, and this is the explanation of how this cartoon can be bearable at all [Fig. 1]. However, *Rondino* is not just a self-reflexive cartoon. Due to the lack of any accurate historical context – and even the lack of any trace of

coherent space constructions –, the viewer (especially the Hungarian viewer) is allowed to see *Rondino* as a shocking, visceral depiction of the horrors, tortures, cruelties and humiliations committed by the most notorious organization of the Communist regime, called State Security,[11] in the late 1940s and during the 1950s.

In *Changing Times*, the situation is entirely different. The execution taking place on a plain cannot be finished because a car appears repeatedly and the driver delivers to the commander continuously changing orders about what to do with the convict and what the commander or the soldiers have to do. Seven letters are delivered in this three-minute-long cartoon; every order not only reconfigures the characters, but in a certain way also restarts the whole situation, which results in a mixture of linearity and circulation, and it ends in a cliffhanger (we do not know what the last letter contains). The constant changing of roles and the instability of the hierarchy of the characters make the events satirical, on the one hand. On the other hand, the plot also offers more intriguing interpretations. The use of open space, the music playing march, and the choreography of the figures resemble the artistic devices associated with the live-action films of Miklós Jancsó (e.g. *The Red and the White* [Csillagosok, katonák, 1967], *Agnus Dei* [*Égi bárány*, 1971], or *Red Psalm* [*Még kér a nép*, 1972]), and even the deeper concerns are similar: just like Jancsó's films, *Changing Times* also examines the unbalanced and uncontrollable mechanisms of power. Furthermore, Kovács's cartoon permits a more specific historical interpretation; it might remind the Hungarian viewer of the internal struggles in the leadership of the Communists during the 1950s, strongly related to the decisions made by the leaders in Moscow.

In entirely different ways, the topic of execution also appears in Ferenc Rofusz's two black-and-white drawn animated films. *The Fly* apparently follows the fatal journey of an ordinary fly through the title character's point-of-view. After the fly leaves the forest and enters into a house, it becomes trapped, and finally ends up in a collection of insects made by the owner of the house [Fig. 2]. While on a superficial level *The Fly* is a painfully accurate chronicle of the last minutes of an insect (emphasized by the *real time* of the plot), according to the logic of the Aesopic language the film also establishes a stark contrast between freedom and oppression, and the theme of persecution gets a central role. In this sense, *The Fly* explores the trauma of losing freedom, and the anxiety of being threatened by lethal and unseen forces, regarding the fact that the human who chases the fly is never shown. Thus, in the broadest sense, *The Fly* expresses in a metaphorical way what the Hungarian nation and other nations had to suffer

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11   In Hungarian: Államvédelmi Hatóság (ÁVH).

and endure because of the Soviet expansion. As far as executions are concerned, Rofusz's next film is a logical step from *The Fly*, and it can be connected closely to *Rondino* and *Changing Times* as well. The extremely bleak *Deadlock* (*Holtpont*, 1982) puts the viewer in the position of a convict waiting for his own execution. At this time, the point-of-view photography is linked to a human character and his last minutes can be seen in real time. Maybe *Deadlock* is less ambiguous and less complex than *The Fly*, but it deals, in a rather disturbing way, with the delicate issue of the executions committed by the party state.

Look Behind the Pictures

If we consider those films that use the more direct approach of the Aesopic language, one of the most daring pieces would be Péter Szoboszlay's *Story about N* (*Történet N-ről*, 1978). Some of Péter Szoboszlay's earlier films can be interpreted as the examples of the less direct approach of the Aesopic language. His other works, including *Salt Soup* (*Sós lötty*, 1968), *Order in the House* (*Rend a házban*, 1970), *Dance School* (*Össztánc*, 1972) and *Hey You!* (*Hé, Te!*, 1976) deal with the characteristics of dictatorship through depicting evil and obsessive authoritarian figures in everyday life, who tend to harm the lives of everyone else (cf. Varga 2008).

Story about N reflects the main events of Hungarian history during the 20th century in an easily recognizable way. We see the events approximately from the 1930s to the 1970s; this seven-minute-long cartoon summarizes the historical issues through emblematic and symbolic images. *Story about N* elaborates a double vision: firstly, it is about the life of an anonymous Hungarian person, followed from his childhood to his manhood; secondly, the film is an exploration of how the historical turning points, events and traumas affect the life of the main character. It becomes clear that the identity (both personal and national identity) of the main character is continuously formed by and interfered with symbols and representations related to authorities, so the private sphere of the main character is sieged not only by historical events, but the representations of the authorities as well.

If we consider the events after the end of the 1940s depicted in *Story about N*, the film strongly emphasizes how Communist ideology offended not only individual integrity, but national identity as well when it forced Stakhanovism and the personality cult of Mátyás Rákosi, leader of the Communists [Fig. 3]. To depict the years of Stalinism in the 1950s in such a recognizable way was a rarity (for two decades, this period was a taboo), or to be more precise, it had just begun in live-

action films in the late 1970s (e.g. András Kovács's *The Stud Farm* [*A ménesgazda*, 1978], Pál Gábor's *Angi Vera* [1979]). *Story about N* shows Mátyás Rákosi, also known as "the most excellent pupil of Stalin in Hungary," and Stakhanovists in a slightly satirical way, instead of providing a heroic representation of them.

In the last unit of the plot, the film even dares to depict the process of how Communism made the country "the happiest barrack in the socialist camp," as it was known in the era of János Kádár, during the decades of the so-called "soft dictatorship," from the 1960s to the 1980s. During this period, people were relatively freer than in previous years and compared to the people in other countries occupied by the Soviets, but the system was a dictatorship, undoubtedly. The last unit of *Story about N* is significantly different from the previous ones regarding its visual style: it shows every event from a fixed point-of-view, while until this point the film used plenty of movements, including imitations of camera movements. This change in the style eventually expresses the new nature of the dictatorship [Fig. 4]. As Gábor Csaba Dávid emphasizes, this film has a groundbreaking role in Hungarian animated film because it was the first one that dared show how the historical events in the 20th century affected individual integrity (Dávid 1984, 205).

A very different question is at the core of another important animation, Kati Macskássy's *Our Holidays* (*Ünnepeink*, 1982). Kati Macskássy's animated films elaborated a special stylistic device: the director used original drawings made by children, and the soundtrack of her films contained children's speeches. *Our Holidays* is built up by the same characteristics; at this time, the topic related to the Communist regime is a very delicate issue, particularly in terms of self-representation, symbols and ideology. It is about the concept of holidays: the children's drawings show images of them, while their speeches try to explain what the holidays mean to them.

Apparently, *Our Holidays* is a quite funny account of misunderstandings about what the different holidays are supposed to mean. The speeches are full of errors, especially of historical ones: the children constantly mix up who did what, where and when, and what the consequences were. However, according to the interpretation based on the Aesopic language, this coin has another side as well, regarding the fact that one of the most important and outrageous offence against the national identity committed by the Communist regime was the reshaping of the holidays: renaming some of them, restricting their national content and above all, eliminating the religious content. The Communists not only reshaped holidays, but they also added Communist holidays, including the celebration of the Socialist

Revolution. In this regard, what we experience in Kati Macskássy's film can be interpreted as a "distorting mirror" reflecting the confusion related to the possible meanings of the holidays. The meanings can be altered and mixed by authorities and children as well, however, the motivations and the results are extremely different in the two cases. It is not surprising that *Our Holidays* was banned for a short time and then the director had to cut out certain parts (M Tóth 2004, 80).

Maybe, the Aesopic language found its most adequate way of expression in the style of István Orosz's *Mind the Steps!* (*Vigyázat, lépcső!*, 1989). As István Orosz is originally a graphic artist, his animated works have a very strong connection to graphical arts. Orosz is highly interested in visual paradoxes and illusionism, thus he frequently uses images similar to the pictures made by M. C. Escher, and one of the trademarks of his style is black-and-white photography. *Mind the Steps!* is not an exception; moreover, this film can be considered as the greatest achievement in the use of the Aesopic language because the hidden meanings meet the Escher-like visual paradoxes, or, more accurately, visual ambiguities. As Orosz noticed, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, certain phrases were very popular, such as "Read between the lines," and "Look behind the pictures" (M Tóth 2004, 71). It is not a coincidence that these phrases basically summarize the essence of the Aesopic language.

Mind the Steps! depicts a very usual milieu in a very unusual way. Furthermore, the setting is not only usual, but also very typical of, even emblematic for the Communist era, for the Central European scenery: the images take place in a shabby stairway [Fig. 5]. The film has no plot in the usual sense; it features a set of typical characters, and events reappear during the film, for example a boy is playing with a ball, and two men are carrying a wardrobe. However, the most important elements are not the human characters. It can be said that "the main characters" in *Mind the Steps!* are the *spatial directions*, which are continuously mixing and changing, the ups and downs are "embracing" each other. All these happen in a rather disorientating way, confusing the space constructions established in the film [Fig. 6].

The film is known as a summary of the decades of Communism, partly due to the appearance of very recognizable motifs and images. For instance, we can see the symbol of the red pentangle on the wall – however, the star is more like a shadow than the actual symbol of the Communist regime –; a notice on the wall saying "long live Socialism" – this is a highly ironic gesture regarding the fact that the late '80s was the period of the dusk of Communism –; the doorbell, which is metonymically related to the State Security: it reminds of the so-called

"fright of doorbell" – this was a well-known phrase during those decades and it referred to the fear of the appearance of the members of State Security, especially in the middle of the night.

The presence of a tank is highly important because it is shown in several ambiguous ways. Once it appears as the private part of a perverted man, while in another scene it keeps going around as if it was a ticking clock [Fig. 7]. Thus, the tank can be interpreted in different ways: mainly it is the symbol of violence against the country and the metonymy of the Soviet army, which still had groups in Hungary during the very early 1990s. As far as the Soviet military is concerned, it is worth emphasizing that not much after the release of *Mind the Steps!*, a contract about the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Hungary was signed. From this point of view, *Mind the Steps!* includes not only a Kafkaesque, labyrinth-like vision of everyday life during the Communist dictatorship, but it is related to current political turning points as well.

In addition to the political interpretation of *Mind the Steps!*, it has to be mentioned that István Orosz also made a famous poster – with the wording "Tovariscsi, konyec!" (Comrades: The End!) on it –, which is directly related to the end of Communism in Hungary, and it became the visual emblem of the event. His poster was known by more people than his film, but the two works match perfectly.

While the animated film relies on the Aesopic language, the poster signs a new period where the double or hidden meanings can be replaced by more direct meanings and interpretations. This new period inevitably changed the animated film in Hungary – but its exploration would be the aim of another paper.

Conclusion

As I noted earlier, the questions of meaning, ambiguity and interpretation – not necessarily just regarding works of arts, but especially concerning them – can be approached from many theoretical perspectives, even from the most different ones; their methods, suppositions and statements show a variety of proposals. In my paper, I was interested in delineating the concept of a specific case of ambiguity related to works of art, to be more precise, in showing how Hungarian animated film – not unlike the animations of other Eastern European countries – elaborated a certain way of expression. Thus, I focused on a specific kind of ambiguity which I called Aesopic language and I considered it as a way of constructing meaning, or more precisely, meanings which are deliberately against

oppressive political regimes. I argued that a set of circumstances tended to create this so-called Aesopic language.

I centred on two main factors. In the case of animated film the *double sense* of its imagery is one of the main factors. This aspect indicates a wider perspective regarding the question of the roots of ambiguity or multiple meanings: it shows that the explanation of these is partly related to how the works of art are built up (i.e. their elements, structures, stylistic devices and other characteristics tend to permit different readings, interpretations). However, the second factor proves that alternative meanings can depend on the historical, political and sociocultural contexts of the works of art. From this point of view, it was emphasized that oppressive political systems (in this case the Communist regime) and the censorship inevitably force artists to find a way of creating hidden meanings. The first factor can be considered as an internal factor, while the other one as external, while the result of these two is the rise of the Aesopic language.

I also emphasized that the usage of the Aesopic language does not lead to a homogeneous way of expression, therefore I distinguished between different variants of it. The *less direct approach* of the Aesopic language lacks the recognizable motifs of the criticized system, while its *more direct approach* dares use elements which are connected to the oppressive system in a recognizable way. Both tend to say what is not permitted to say, try to show what is forbidden to show, and depict more authentic visions of reality than the ones prefered by authorities. These tendencies provide very strong connections between a set of Hungarian animated short films made during the Communist decades (*Rondino*, *Changing Times*, *The Fly*, *Deadlock*, *Story about N*, *Our Holidays*, *Mind the Steps!*). Their exploration led to intriguing questions about artistic devices and personal resistance, and especially about the way these were connected – which can be considered as the core of the Aesopic language.

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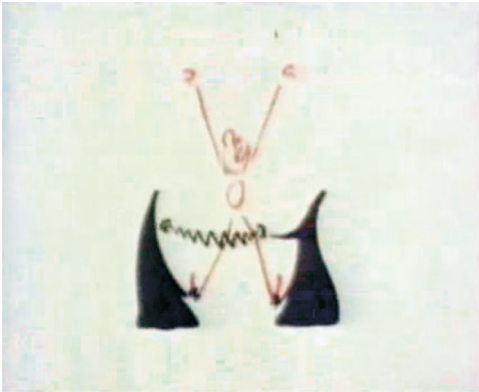
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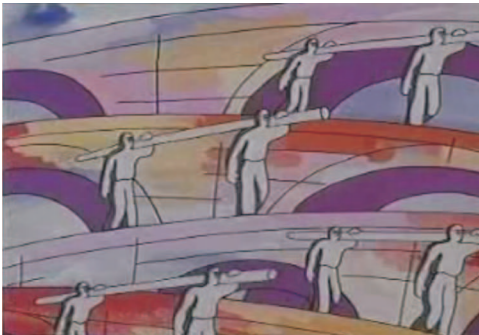
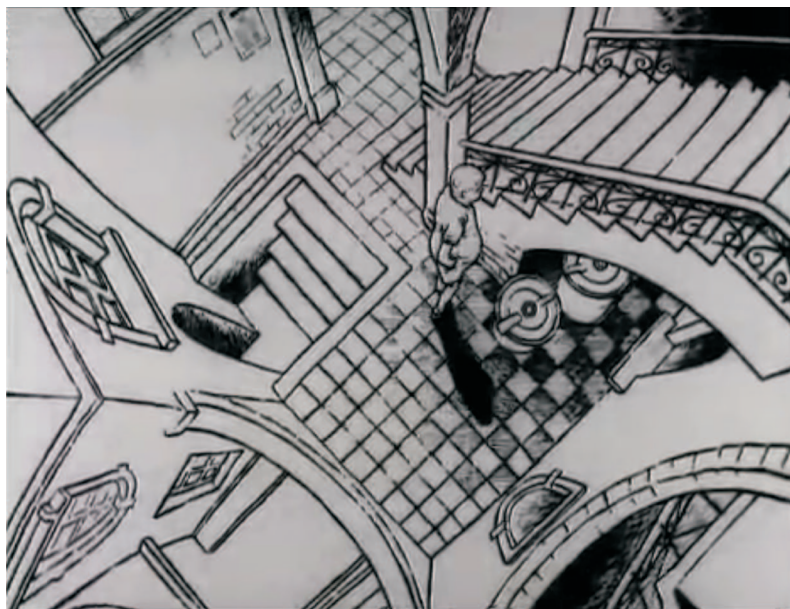**Figure 5.** *Mind the Steps!*: a usual setting depicted in an unusual way.

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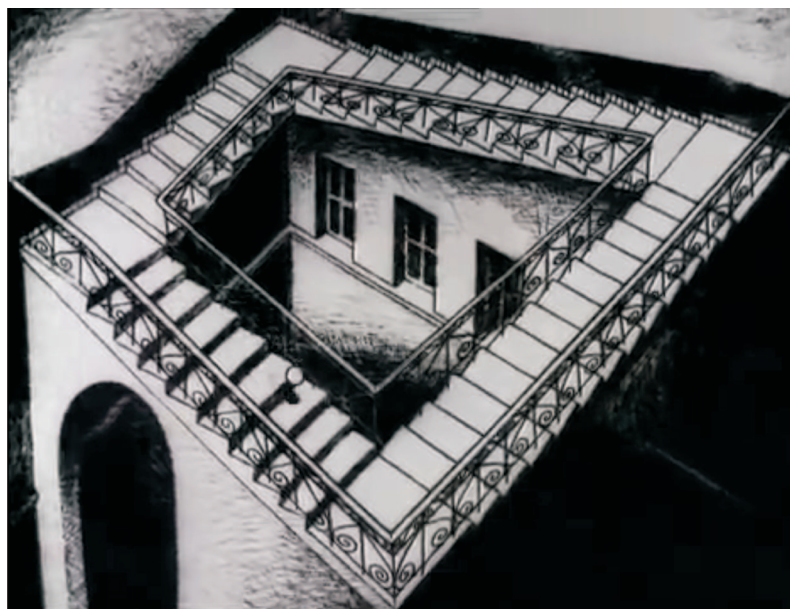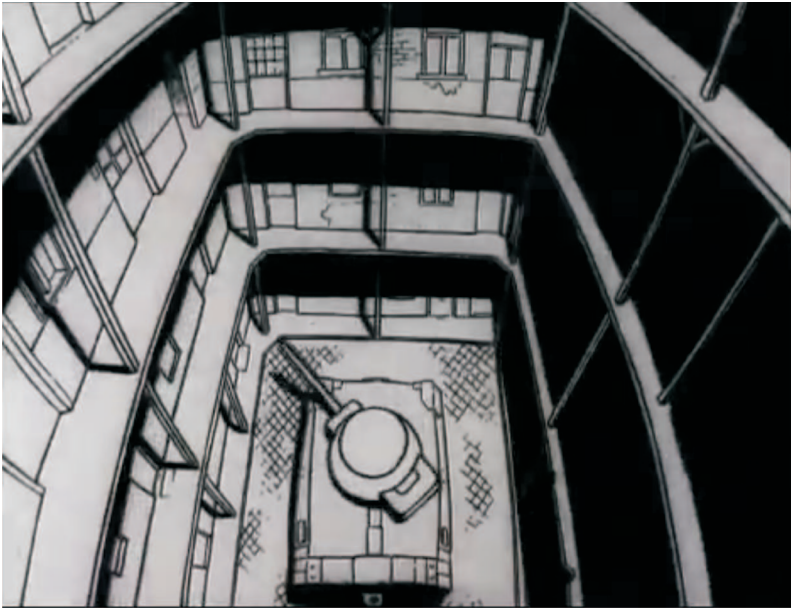
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Adapting the Medium:
Dynamics of Intermedial Adaptation in Contemporary Japanese Popular Visual Culture

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Abstract. With respect to adaptation studies, contemporary Japanese popular culture signifies a unique case, as different types of media (be those textual, auditive, visual or audio-visual) are tightly intertwined through the "recycling" of successful characters and stories. As a result, a neatly woven net of intermedial adaptations has been formed – the core of this complex system being the *manga–anime–live-action film* "adaptational triangle." On the one hand, the paper addresses the interplay of the various factors by which the very existence of this network is made possible, such as the distinctive cultural attitude to "originality," the structure of the comics, animation and film industries, and finally, the role of fictitious genealogies of both traditional and contemporary media in the negotiation of national identity. On the other hand, the essay also considers some of the most significant thematic, narrative, and stylistic effects this close interconnectedness has on the individual medium. Special attention is being paid to the nascent trend of merging the adaptive medium with that of the original story (viewing adaptation as integration), apparent in contemporary manga-based live-action comedies, as the extreme case of intermedial adaptation. That is, when the aim of the adaptational process is no longer the transposition of the story but the *adaptation* (i.e. the incorporation) *of the medium itself* – elevating certain *medium-specific devices into transmedial phenomena*.

Keywords: Japanese animation, intermediality, manga–anime–live-action film adaptational triangle, national identity.

"We will become an animation that *transcends* animation. […] By showing mannequins while talking for thirty minutes, we will present you with a truly surreal world of animation." In a five-minute-long "pseudo-live-action" adaptation of the *Silver Soul* comics (*Gintama*, Hideaki Sorachi, 2003–) presented at the beginning of episode 165 of the eponymous animation series (*Gintama*, Yōichi

Fujita–Shinji Takamatsu, 2006–2010), the creators are trying to negotiate the boundaries of the animated medium [Figs. 1–2]. Designating their project as a live-action adaptation and applying photographic depiction to an objectively existing space, on the one hand, they build a bridge between animated and live-action film. On the other hand, the series of still photographs inserted into the equally static, yet actual motion picture footage evoke the static and timeless nature of the panels found in a comic book. Thus, the film reflects on the widespread notion that *anime* (the Japanese cartoon) is nothing more than "a *manga* (comic book) set into motion."[1] Furthermore, the replacement of flesh-and-blood actors and actresses with mannequins (that is to say, life-sized humanoid puppets) draws on another kind of animation technique besides the traditional cel animated cartoon – that of puppet animation, or stop-motion animation in general. Although the film *does* resemble all three of the earlier mentioned media (live-action film, comics and animation), it belongs to none of those. While photographic depiction may be a necessary condition for a live-action film, it does not appear to be a sufficient one. Nevertheless, the fact that the film does not aim for an illusion of continuous character and/or camera movement, questions whether it can actually qualify as an *animated* piece of work. Not exactly "live-acted," but not "decently animated" either, this short segment of *Silver Soul* contemplates the ontological-technological question of how and at what point does a sequence of still pictures become a full-fledged animated sequence (or motion picture in general). Correspondingly, it comments upon and takes to the extreme a current phenomenon in contemporary popular culture in Japan, that of the powerful *synergy* among the various media platforms, be those textual, auditive, visual or audio-visual, analogue or digital, narrative or non-narrative.

The present essay aims to delineate some of the most significant characteristics of this tightly woven intermedial network of adaptations, starting with its fundamental cultural and industrial prerequisites, and subsequently to discuss the effects this close interconnectedness has had on the aesthetics of the individual medium. I will focus on the core of this complex system, the *manga–anime–live-action film* "adaptational triangle" as the most frequent combination and order of popular visual media, and as steps of an intermedial adaptational

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1   The accounts of Craig Norris (Norris 2009) and Robin E. Brenner (Brenner 2007) of the history of the manga and anime media, and the ordering of the chapters from the history of manga to the development of anime in the volume *Japanese Visual Culture* (MacWilliams 2008), all allude to the perception of the two media having been closely intertwined throughout their histories, with manga acknowledged as "the origin" (Norris 2009, 236), one of the many predecessors of anime.

process. These particular media are linked together in both creative and business thinking. Most television and video anime series are adapted from manga or video games, a tendency founded by Osamu Tezuka, one of the most prominent pioneers of "terebi-anime" (television cartoon), and his 1963 show, *Astro Boy* (*Tetsuwan Atom*). Then again, in each and every anime (and manga), there lies the promise of a potential live-action version. For instance, the stories and characters of *Paradise Kiss* (Ai Yazawa, 1999–2003), *Gokusen* (Kozueko Morimoto, 2000–2007), *Ouran High School Host Club* (Bisco Hatori, 2003–2010) and *Death Note* (Tsugumi Ōba–Takeshi Obata, 2003–2006) comics have all went down the path of turning first into an anime, then a live-action film or series. Conversely, the success of a manga-turned-live-action film (series) has the power to urge the production of an anime adaptation, as in the cases of *Mischievous Kiss* (*Itazura na Kiss* anime: Osamu Yamasaki, 2008) and *Lovely Complex* (anime: Kōnosuke Uda, 2007). Other media, such as video/DVD releases, *drama-CD*'s, video/PC games, literature (*light novel*s especially), merchandising (figurines, wallpapers and original art albums) and fan events – like the manga/anime conventions and costume plays ("con" and "cosplay," for short) – are always welcome to enter into this intermedial playground and mingle with the manga–anime–live-action group. The interplay and interdependence of so many medial agents presupposes a unique industrial structure and specific cultural practices.

Firstly, the large sizes of the comic (Sugimoto 2010),[2] animation (Norris 2009)[3] and film industries (Kakeo 2010; MPAA 2012),[4] and the consequent absence of a singular dominant visual medium on the market clearly motivates creative inter-media cooperation and competition. Also, the fan basis of each medium is broad enough to be of interest to the other two, providing them with "raw material." This holds true for the manga industry in particular. For most popular stories set out on their intermedial journeys as comics, the industry bears the power to determine

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2   "In 2007, *manga* books and magazines comprised some 14 percent of all published titles in Japan. *Manga* publications' total circulation exceeds five hundred million, 69 percent of the total distribution of all publications combined" (Sugimoto 2010, 254). As an indication of the rapid growth of the manga industry during the 1990s and 2000s, it should be noted that a 2000 survey estimated manga's share of all publications in Japan to be around 40 percent (Sugimoto 2002, 249).

3   Norris designates the following statement as the single most important point in his summary of a 2005 survey, conducted by JETRO: "Japan is the largest provider of animation worldwide, with approximately 60 per cent of animation shown around the world made in Japan" (Norris 2009, 254).

4   In 2009, Kakeo estimates Japan's film industry to be the largest film industry in the world; while in 2012, the Motion Picture Association of America places Japan as number three (cf. *The Guide to Japanese Film Industry & Co-Production 2010*).

the current trends in visual media business as a whole. What makes manga so attractive in the eyes of its two allied media, apart from the endless supplies, is the generic and thematic diversity of products – as opposed to their American and most European counterparts, Japanese comics are targeting readers from all age groups, males and females alike; consequently, an age/gender based typology is usually preferred to the "Western-style" generic typology to categorize manga (magazines) and anime. In Japan, such popular mythologies or – in an intermedial-industrial sense – complex multimedia "supersystem[s] of entertainment" (Iwabuchi 2004, 63, cites Marsha Kinder) are not exlusively centered around action and adventure heroes, but the often mundane lives of average men and women also get their fair share; the imitation of which – as Frédéric Boilet aptly proposes in his *Nouvelle Manga Manifesto* (Boilet 2001) – could revolutionize and highten the volume of the comic industries of the Western world.

Secondly, the traditionally self-organized and self-sufficient structure of the Japanese film and animation industries is another key factor in the production of intermedial adaptations. The system centres around the so-called *production committees* (*seisaku-iinkai*), temporary and project-based formations of companies from different fields, with the production company at the heart. This production committee system can be considered a variation of the producer system, with the difference that the individual producer is rather a mere go-between, a mediator between the sponsors sitting in the committee and the creative team (or the Japanese and the overseas partner, in case of an international co-production), than an active angent as the leader of the committee – given that all major decisions require unanimous approval from all representatives of the committee (Kakeo 2010, 47). All the companies that provide the film/animation (series) any support in any of the stages of pre-production, production, post-production, or distribution, automatically become members of the committee. For example, if the production company is joined by a television station, a software development company and a magazine, then the advertizing in two media, the television broadcast and the production of a video game and other merchandise are guaranteed (Kakeo 2010, 46). Since the establishment of a committee is the prerequisite for starting the preparations for a film, gaining the help of potential sponsors is one of the creators' top priorities. As sponsors usually consider already successful stories as more secure, thus better investments than original screenplays, the practice of adapting popular manga persists (Cavallaro 2007, 7). This holds true especially in the case of straight-to-television productions (which means the majority of anime projects), where state funding is even less significant.

Thirdly, the sense and value accorded to the idea of "originality" in the aesthetics of traditional arts and crafts in Japan is different from our contemporary "Western" concept. Perhaps, the difference lies in the fact that the practice of learning through imitation in a master – apprentice relationship has indured much longer in "the East." In such traditional occupations as *kabuki* and *nō* acting, tea ceremony (*sadō*), pottery or flower arrangement (*kadō/ikebana*), mastering the right skills and techniques of one's profession and executing them at the highest level possible is of higher value than individual innovation and the ambition of self-expression. Therefore, the adaptation or the remake is by no means perceived as simply a derivative of its original, but holds an equal artistic status.

Finally, intermediality plays a crucial part in the permanent *negotiation of national identity*, alongside the dichotomies of "East and West," "tradition versus modernity."[5] On the one hand, the deliberate fusion of media serves as a means of legitimization through indigenization. Associating a new medium with traditional art forms has long been a strategy to transform things "foreign" into something essentially, that is historically Japanese. Let us observe some of the oldest names associated with the Japanese cartoon: *senga-eiga* ("line-drawing film") connects anime to the medieval art of picture scroll painting (*e-makimono*) and to woodblock-printing (*ukiyo-e*), popular throughout the premodern times. *Manga-eiga* ("comics-film") – or simply *manga* – links anime to manga, which in turn, gains its legitimacy from having been named after Hokusai Katsushika's famous woodblock-print collection *Hokusai Manga* (Hu 2010, 101–102). Theorists, creators and businesspeople alike participate in the drawing up of such fictitious "genealogies" of media, in which the traditional legitimizes the modern, providing the viewer with a sense of historical continuity. Moreover, the legitimizing power proves to be contagious: just as manga (itself made legitim by the prestige of emakimono and ukiyo-e) is capable of legitimizing anime, anime can retroactively bestow the status of a legitimate art form upon *utsushi-e* ("reflected/projected pictures"), the Japanese version of *laterna magica* discovered at the millennium, by simply nicknaming it "Edo-anime." As for gestures of intermedial merging on the part of auteur filmmakers, one must mention Satoshi Kon's homage to woodblock-printing in his 2001 *Millennium Actress* (*Sen'nen joyū*), Takashi Murakami's more political *Superflat* movement (Lamarre 2006), the parades of shapeshifting raccoons – reminiscent of the procession of demons

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5   Dani Cavallaro designates the modern Japanese state of mind of being torn between the bipolar opposites of East/tradition and West/progress as a kind of "cultural schizoidism" (Cavallaro 2013, 11).

as depicted on many *e-maki* scrolls – in Isao Takahata's 1994 Studio Ghibli feature, *Pom poko* (*Heisei tanuki gassen ponpoko*), and Osamu Tezuka's 1970 masterpiece, *Cleopatra*, where the death scene of Caesar evokes both the *kabuki* theatre and the "superflat" aesthetics of woodblock-printing – again linking the present to the much idealized Edo era [Figs. 3–4]. In the popular sphere, one could take for example the recent television series *Mononoke* (Kenji Nakamura, 2007), *Cool-Headed Hoozuki* (*Hōzuki no reitetsu*, Hiro Kaburaki, 2014), *Yami Shibai: Japanese Ghost Stories* (*Yamishibai*, Tomoya Takashima, 2013), *Chōyaku hyakunin isshu: Uta koi* (Ken'ichi Kasai, 2012), and the elaborate and highly stimulating visuals of *Dusk Maiden of Amnesia* (*Tasogare otome x Amnesia*, Shin Ōnuma – Takashi Sakamoto, 2012). Although not systematically, such series as *Natsume's Book of Friends* (*Natsume yūjinchō*, Takahiro Ōmori 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012) and *Kamisama Kiss* (*Kami-sama hajimemashita*, Daichi Akitarō, 2012) occasionally revisit the style of traditional Japanese paintings.

The indigenous and the traditional, however, do not exist solely in opposition to the foreign and the modern, but might as well join them in the idea of the hybrid. Hybridity as a quality legitimizes its object as Japanese, traditional and nostalgic, while declaring it exotic, modern and fashionable at the same time – which makes it appealing to an even wider range of target audience. For instance, the name *anime* – the most widely used denomination of Japanese cartoon – is an abbreviated form of *animeeshon* ("animation"), a word borrowed from English. Even smarter is the naming of the avantgarde animation project launched in 2006 by the longest-standing modern animation studio in Japan, Tōei Animation Studio, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the studio's founding. The name *Ga-nime* is a wordplay on "man*ga* + a*nime*," drawing on the historical prestige of two visual media already; next to which the project's slogan – "a modern-day version of a kami-shibai" (Tsukui 2006) – introduces a third one, namely, paper-theatre (*kamishibai*), a contemporary to anime (and precursor of the serially formatted terebi-anime) that has its roots in the Edo-period storytelling sessions of Buddhist monks. Accordingly, the notions of the traditional and the hybrid make a viable *marketing strategy*.

Turning to the question of the *aesthetic consequences of intermediality*, while bearing hybridity in mind, I would argue that a new (or renewed) approach towards the adaptational process has appeared in contemporary Japanese popular media. In spite of attempting to "translate" the aesthetic devices of the source medium to the "language" of the recieving medium, this new trend of animated and especially live-action manga adaptations endeavour either to *integrate* or

to *imitate* certain stylistic features characteristic to the source medium. In the case of a live-action adaptation, the integration of the source medium means the incorporation of drawn and/or animated elements into the "live" composition (such as the sketch-like backgrounds and atmospheric sound effects inserted in a text format seen in *Switch Girl!!* [Hiroki Hayama, 2011–2012] [Figs. 5–6]); while imitation would mean the "translation" of the graphic elements into their photographic equivalents. Nonetheless, sometimes there is a very fine dividing line between the two categories, which is primarily apparent in the dialogue between two graphic (e.g. comics and cartoon) or two photographic (e.g. photography and live-action film) media. These alternative approaches have brought about the transformation of certain medium-specific thematic, stylistic and structural devices into *transmedial* phenomena – ready at the disposal of virtually any of the media participating in the intermedial network. The circulation of these transmedial motives has foregrounded the problem of the adaptability of the medium as such. Adaptations are now preoccupied with adapting the medium – along with, or even *over* the story, indicating a shift in the adaptational attitude from "adapting the story" to "adapting the medium."

When imitating the medium, the adaptation may either copy some of the stylistic instruments peculiar to its original, or apply to itself the formal-structural attributes of the source medium. Let us take the *Paradise Kiss* adaptational triangle as an example. The manga, the anime and the live-action feature versions alike, frequently deploy the manga-technique of inserting – often multiple – *"external" establishing shots* between two scenes [Figs. 7–16] (Pusztai 2012). These shots are external in a double sense: firstly, as opposed to the classic Hollywood establishing shot, they do not construct the space of action (that is, the spatial relations of the characters), but remain on the outside, building up the very environment in which the action takes place. Secondly, they usually feature the exterior of a building. What is more, they do not show us *a* school or *a* café, but *any* school or *any* café –the more schematic, the easier to recognize, the better. In our example, neither in the close-up of the heroine nor in the medium long shot of her sitting at her desk does the background indicate that the scene is set at a school. Thus, it is up to the two detailed external establishing shots at the beginning of the scene to draw up the setting. This convention of space-building serves to counteract the inability of the so-called negative spaces (the homogenous, monochrome, usually white backgrounds) of the comic panel to efficiently orient the reader in space. Consequently, in the cases of the anime and live-action adaptations, the deployment of the very same device seems

odd, unnatural even. Although a graphic medium, it is a standard practice in mainstream cel animation to fill in the elements of the background – rendering the external establishing shots of the manga unnecessary. In live-action film, these manga-inspired shots stand in an even starker contrast with the potentials of photographic depiction. The same could be said – to different degrees – about the application of constant voiceover narration channelling the "inner voices" of the heroes; the use of non- or semi-diegetic backgrounds reflecting the minute emotional states and swings of the characters and their relationships; the often theatrical execution of compositions and actor movement; and the frequent leaps back and forward between the various levels of the diegesis.

As for the imitation of the source medium's outward presentation, the narrative fragmentation of feature-length live-action manga/anime adaptations is a salient fashion in contemporary youth comedies (e.g. *Thermae Romae* [Hideki Takeuchi, 2012], *Cromartie High School* [*Sakigake! Cromartie Kōkō*, Yūdai Yamaguchi, 2005], *Nodame Cantabile: Saishū gakushō zenpen* [Hideki Takeuchi, 2009] and *High School Debut* [*Kōkō Debut*, Tsutomu Hanabusa, 2011]). Here, fragmented narration emerges as a result of the live-action adaptation taking upon itself the medium-specific structure of the comic book devided into chapters – often with the help of typical manga-like devices, such as the external establishing shots serving as "cover pages" for each new "chapter." Levels of narrative fragmentation range from "manga-ish," through cinematic and filmic, to self-reflective fragmentation (Pusztai 2013).

All the motives mentioned earlier can be traced back to the comic narration's essentially static and graphic nature, its lack of ability to construct an uninterrupted illusion of a coherent structure of space and of a realistic sensation of the flow of time (and thus, of movement). I would go on to argue that these aesthetic devices have been developed specifically in order to compensate for this lack of realism in comic depiction – the same kind of realism inherent in the cinematic, and fairly achievable in the animetic media. It is precisely this paradox of animated and especially live-action manga-adaptations using such redundant and unmotivated, thus emphatically artificial, "manga-flavoured" techniques – and the concurrent overshadowing of their own medium-specific features in favour of the now transmedial manga-devices – which makes the approach of adapting the medium bizarre by nature. Nonetheless, especially since the turn of the century, adaptations tend to make use of those either consciously (see the live-acted *Lovely Complex*) or unconsciously (see the live-acted *Gokusen: The Movie*).

It is the tendency and the possible outcomes of the intentional merging of the various media platforms at the aesthetic level that the sequence from *Silver Soul*, addressed at the beginning of the paper, reflects upon – be it a disruptive force or a creative potential, complementing animation and live-action film's innate cinematism with the constructed "pseudo-cinematism" of the comic art. Having taken a closer look at the present state of affairs in the field of animated and live-action manga-adaptations, the idea of comics and live-action film joining forces in order to give birth to the ultimate form of "animation that *transcends* animation" does not seem so far-fetched anymore.

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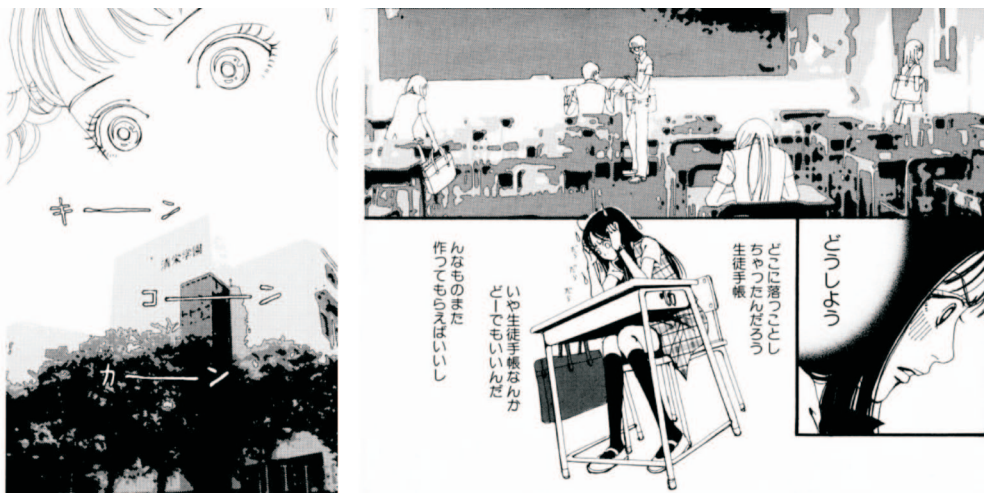
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Figures 5–6. Adapting the medium 1: integration (*Switch Girl!!*).

Figures 7–16. Adapting the medium 2: imitation of multiple external establishing shots (*Paradise Kiss*).

Travel Writing on the Edge: An Intermedial Approach to Travel Books and Travel Blogs

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Abstract. After discussing the limits and potentialities of the definitions of travel writing proposed by Paul Fussell (1980), Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan (1998) and Jan Borm (2004), the article presents a characterization of travel writing both as a genre with a precise *rhetorical status*, as well as a *praxis of knowledge*, which derives from the interplay between travelling and writing. Building on this, a comparison between two Italian travel books and two Italian travel blogs about China is proposed. Specifically, by considering these texts as "intermedial transpositions" (Wolf 2008) that realize the same generic and epistemological matrix (i.e. travel writing), a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) is conducted in order to assess: 1) how the book and the blog, as different medial formats, interpret the rhetorical features of the travel writing genre; and 2) to what extent the gnoseological and cross-cultural potentials of travel writing, as a praxis of knowledge, is affected by the process of transposition.

Keywords: travel writing, blogs, intermediality, genre, epistemology.

In this paper we make a comparison between two Italian travel books and two Italian travel blogs about China. The two selected books are: *La Cina in Vespa* (*Around China on a Vespa*), by Giorgio Bettinelli (2008) and *La birra di Shaoshan*, (*A Beer in Shaoshan*), by Sergio Ramazzotti (2002); as for the blogs, those chosen are: *Cina: terra di grandi contrasti*, (*China: Land of Big Contrasts*), by blogger Millycat (2012; hosted on *turistipercaso.it*) and *Conoscere Pechino tra dinastie e imperatori*, (*Getting to Know Beijing between Dynasties and Emperors*), by blogger Flavia (2013; hosted on "blogdiviaggi.it"). The aim is to investigate how the landing of travel narratives on different medial formats (i.e. the book and the blog) affects the "rhetorical" and "epistemological" status of these texts (these two terms will be discussed shortly).

Travel Books and Travel Blogs as "Intermedial Transpositions"

Travel books and travel blogs are considered here as two "intermedial transpositions" (Wolf 2008) that realize a common generic and epistemological matrix: travel writing. To be sure, "intermedial transposition" is a term whose conceptual validity must be assessed in relation to two other notions: namely, "transmediality" and "remediation." The former, coined by Henry Jenkins (2006, 2), acknowledges "the flow of content through multiple media platforms;" in other words, transmediality accounts for the re-distribution of texts (broadly defined) in various media. The latter, instead, has been introduced by David J. Bolter and Richard Grusin (1999) in order to define how a given message is affected when passing from one medium to another. While Jenkins largely considers transmediality as one consequence of the hybridization among media, and sees the web as the medium that promotes such a convergence the most, Bolter and Grusin focus more on the effects that the process of transposition has on a given text, passing from a rendition of "immediacy," when the re-mediated text is as faithful as possible to the original, to "hypermediacy," when the text is deeply modified, according to the affordances of the new medium. Here, the departing point is slightly different, insofar as it concentrates on the various realizations that a whole genre – travel writing – can take. So, the notion of "intermedial transposition" is best suited as it fosters the idea of different occurrences in different media that refer to a common matrix.

The Problematic Definition of Travel Writing

Clearly, in order for the comparison to be productive, travel books and blogs have to share a certain degree of similarity. This leads directly into the perilous task of providing a definition of travel writing, since it represents the benchmark against which travel books and travel blogs are compared. Despite the increasing interdisciplinary attention to travel writing within academia (for an overview cf. Hooper and Youngs 2004), the attempt to elaborate a commonly accepted definition of travel writing leaves scholars quite far from agreement. According to Paul Fussell's seminal definition, travel books are "a subspecies of memoirs in which autobiographical narratives arise from the speaker's encounter with distant or unfamiliar data and in which the narrative – unlike that in a novel or romance – claims literal validity by constant reference to actuality" (Fussell 1980, 203).

Such a definition has been repeatedly criticized as it poses at least two problems. First of all, we attest to the hierarchization of "memoir" and "biography;" a hierarchization which is left, in fact, unexplained. Secondly, Fussell conflates the notion of travel writing as a genre with that of the travel book as a medial format. In this latter respect, Carl Thompson writes that "difficulties arise with any suggestion that we can equate travel writing in its entirety with the form Fussell calls the travel book" (Thompson 2011, 19). As a consequence, the intermedial comparison proposed here is particularly fruitful insofar as the travel writing genre seems refractory to any definition that does not also take into account the medium which conveys the text (and the labels "travel+book," "travel+blog;" "libro di viaggio" and "blog di viaggio" attest to this). As a matter of fact, against a well-established trend within socio-linguistics according to which the medium is not relevant for the definition of the genre (e.g. Yates, Orlikowski and Okamura 1999), it is assumed here that the medium that carries the text not only plays a role in the shaping of the genre, but it is consubstantial to it.

Concerning the formal aspect of travel writing, Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan (1998, 14) overcome Fussell's hierarchization between autobiography and memoir by arguing that travel writing is a mix of the two: "like other autobiographies," they write, "travel writing seeks to make retrospective sense of discrete experiences;" however, differently from autobiographies, "travel narratives are less concerned with recuperating, or reinventing, a single self, than with following the trajectory of a series of selves in transit. […] In this sense, travel writing is more closely affiliated with memoir." On this same issue, Jonathan Raban is much more inclusive when he claims that "as a literary form, travel writing is a notoriously raffish open house where different genres are likely to end up in the same bed. It freely mixes narrative and discursive writing" (Raban 1988, 253–4). Finally, pushing this reasoning to the extreme, the most radical position is undoubtedly that of Jan Borm, according to whom "the point to determine is whether travel writing is really a genre at all. I shall argue here that it is not a genre, but a collective term for a variety of texts both predominantly fictional and non-fictional, whose main theme is travel" (Borm 2004, 13).

The point, in fact, is not so much to broaden or restrict the field that travel writing encompasses, but to look at it from a different perspective. More specifically, the attested difficulty of finding a commonly accepted definition of travel writing can be disentangled by recalling Carolyn Miller's words: "an understanding of genre can help us account for the way we encounter, interpret, react to, and create particular texts" (Miller 1984, 151). Put differently, the notion

of "genre" can (and should) tell us something about *how* texts work. From here, it is contended that travel writing is not (only) a genre, but more specifically a *rhetorical praxis of knowledge.*

The Rhetorical and Epistemological Status of Travel Writing

The adjective "rhetorical" encompasses, in Miller's spirit, the ensemble of semantic, formal and pragmatic features related to travel writing. "Semantic" is here synonymous with content: in particular, travel accounts have to keep at their core the unfolding of a travel experience. By saying "unfolding," and not merely "the theme of travel" (as suggested by Borm), it is stressed that travel writing must be eminently narrative, as Fussell himself suggests. In this sense, travel guides or other predominantly informative texts that focus on travel, but shape it in a non-narrative way, are not considered proper travel writings.

At the same time, in order to overcome the dualistic position about autobiography and memoir, travel writing is regarded more generally as a subjective narrative; that is, a narrative in which the narrator is part of the story (either as an I, or a we). In this sense, the definition provided elaborates on Gerald Prince's characterization of the narrative as the "recounting of one or more real or fictitious events communicated by one or several narrators (more or less overt) to one or several narratees" (Prince 1987, 58). In fact, the term "subjective stance" refers precisely to the overt manifestation of the narrator to which Prince points. To be sure, such a formal feature, far from being congenital to travel writing, has mainly evolved in modern and contemporary travel accounts. Indeed, as Thompson (2011, 79–81) inversely remarks with respect to 17th- and 18th-century English travel writing, "the protocols of epistemological decorum established by the Royal Society influenced not only *how* [sic] one recorded one's observations and presented them to the public, but also *what* [sic] one observed and recorded. Abstract or metaphysical speculations were to be kept to a minimum, as were subjective impressions, and personal thoughts and feelings." Hence, the overt subjectivity of travel writing is a formal aspect that has emerged over time, namely in concomitance with the consolidation of travelling as a widespread practice (at least in the West).

One more issue concerning the form of travel writing has to do with the discursive distinction between factual and fictional modes of narration. Holland and Huggan advance a valid argument when they state that any neat separation between these two modes is theoretically preposterous, since all accounts are, to a

degree, fictitious. As a consequence, they come to define travel writings as "fictions of factual representation" (Holland and Huggan 1998, 10). Although this position is certainly wise, it nonetheless misses properly discussing the relation to truth that travel accounts (pretend) to construct. In this sense, it seems appropriate to suggest, in order to exclude from the realm of travel writing fantastic or science-fiction texts, that travel accounts, independently from their degree of fictionality, have to be plausible. This means, in other words, that travel writings have to describe experiences that really happened, or are likely to have happened.

The last point that remains to be addressed is the extent to which travel writing can be considered a pragmatic genre. With respect to that, it is useful to recall Casey Blanton's definition of travel writings, as texts "whose main purpose is to introduce us to the other, and that typically they dramatized an engagement between self and world" (Blanton 2002, xi). If we couple this characterization with that by Michel, according to whom "to travel, or at least to travel in a certain way, is to write and to write is to travel" (Butor 2001, 71), then both statements can tell us something specific about travelling *and* writing: namely, that these acts can be regarded as two *specular acts of knowledge*. On the one hand, a journey, far from being a mere displacement in space, fuels (and is triggered by) what Pierre Bourdieu defines as the desire of "escaping one's inattentive familiarity" (Bourdieu 1990, 35). Such a desire leads, in turn, to encountering otherness, insofar as "all journeys are, in a way, a confrontation or, more optimistically, a negotiation between self and other" (Thompson 2011, 4). Put differently, travelling kindles an attentive (pre)disposition towards the encounter with (and knowledge of) otherness. On the other hand, writing is an act of unavoidable inscription in the text of the writer's self. More precisely, writing is a "differed" and "deferred" act (Derrida 1976) that reveals the presence of the self to itself, by marking a spatial (on the page) and temporal (in the act of writing) distance from it. It is, then, possible to contend that writing entails a form of mirroring (and representation) of the self onto the page. More generally, we could say that travel writing bears a cross-cultural (towards the other) and gnoseological (towards the self) potential for knowledge. Hence, it emerges more clearly in what terms travel writing is a praxis of knowledge: not only (as a genre) is it historically determined, in that it "changes, evolves, and decays" (Miller 1984, 13); but, as a praxis, it is synchronically shaped by the dynamic interplay between travelling and writing as acts of knowledge. In this respect, the focus of the chosen Italian texts is on China because the cultural "distance" between self and other helps make the cross-cultural and gnoseological potentials more evident.

Intermediality and Multimodality: a Discursive Approach

From these premises, the aim of the analysis is two-fold. On the one hand, it assesses how the book and the blog realize the rhetorical features of the travel writing genre; on the other, it investigates how the cross-cultural and gnoseological potentials of the texts, as praxes of knowledge, are affected by the process of transposition. Finally, the analysis seeks to acknowledge the extent to which travel blogs can represent a fruitful source of information for introducing a contemporary and more updated image of China to online readers.

In order to address these points, a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) of the selected texts is conducted. MCDA is a methodology that seeks to unveil the opaque relations of power (between self and other; author and reader) as manifested in language and in more broadly semiotic details (Aiello 2012). In particular, the analysis looks at: 1) personal impressions and more factual notations about people and places; 2) the presence/absence of images and what they portray.

La Cina in Vespa

Giorgio Bettinelli (1955–2008) was a notorious Italian travel writer, whose peculiarity was to travel to the remotest regions on earth riding his Vespa. In *La Cina in Vespa* (*Around China on a Vespa*, 2008) he recounts his journey around the Middle Kingdom, which became his country of residence after having met his Vietnamese partner Ya Pei. Although this book can be rightly defined as a travelogue, it is nonetheless true that Bettinelli pours into it all sorts of reflections, thus steering the narration very much in the direction of the confessional diary, whose diegetic boundaries soon transcend the travel *per se*. Indeed, the recounting of the travel experience is only one aspect of a broader narration that encompasses, in fact, the author's whole life. For instance, the departure only occurs at page 60, and is anticipated by a series of events (such as the death of Bettinelli's father), whose function is to create the preconditions for the journey: "On Sunday 2nd of November," Bettinelli remembers at the beginning, "his voice [that of his father N/A] is hoarse, almost imperceptible; it already sounds like death. […] I did not get the chance to meet him alive again. […] Away from Italy, now! Getting off everything, leaving all behind, running away! Away! Taiwan first, for a couple of months. Then China, with a house on the Mekong River and a journey all around." (Bettinelli 2008, 19; author's translation.)

Furthermore, it is quite common for Bettinelli to recollect throughout the book either all his journeys around the world, or the other travelogues he has written, so that *La Cina in Vespa* comes to represent "only" the last of a long series of achievements as a travel writer: "needless to say, having decided to live in China for the next one or two years, while completing the travelogue about the 144,000 kilometres driven between 1997 and 2001, traversing 90 countries, from Ushuaia to Hobart, the idea that I cannot ride a Vespa in my 'elected country' is much more annoying than a stone in my shoe" (Bettinelli 2008, 39; author's translation). More generally, it is possible to contend that the book is overtly focused on Bettinelli's persona as a traveller and a writer. Hence, it manifests a strong gnoseological potential insofar as through its pages the reader comes to know various aspects of the author's life on and off the road.

On the contrary, the cross-cultural potential is often marginalized, despite the fact that during a great part of the journey Bettinelli is accompanied either by Ya Pei, or by his Chinese lover Manuelle, two locals who could easily negotiate between Bettinelli and the Chinese. The erasure of the other is particularly evident when looking at the images inserted in the middle of the book. There are 16 photos in total and in 12 of them the author is photographed alone, staring at the camera. While disclosing very little of the people met by Bettinelli, these images bear an eminently documentary function, as if the author is willing to tell the reader: "Look where I have been!" In fact, in only two pictures a woman (very likely Ya Pei) appears, but the captions, which simply mention the place or the date – "Kashgar, old town;" "Yunnan, south of China, 2008" – are not helpful in clarifying who she is, thus requiring the reader to collate the text and the images in order to disentangle the dilemma. After all, the egocentric connotation of the experience should not come as a surprise when considering that Bettinelli's goal, rather than delving into the Chinese culture, is precisely "to realize a trip on a Vespa that touches all the 33 geographic areas [of China]" (Bettinelli 2008, 48; author's translation).

La birra di Shaoshan

La birra di Shaoshan (*A Beer in Shaoshan*, 2002) is a travelogue written by Italian freelance journalist Sergio Ramazzotti. The book narrates the author's ten-day travel experience to the city of Shaoshan, Mao Zedong's birthplace. The intention of Ramazzotti is to understand something more about China and to introduce the country to Italian readers. The following dialogue between the author and

Celia, his interpreter, frames well Ramazzotti's purposes: "'Actually, I'm here also to work,' I said. She stared at me in bewilderment. 'What kind of job?' 'I tell stories. At least, I try.' 'For whom?' 'For the people in my country.' 'And do they listen to them?' 'Somebody does. Somebody.' 'What's the difference? Even a tourist tells stories, right?'" (Ramazzotti 2002, 20; author's translation). Leaving aside the contested representation of Ramazzotti as a traveller/tourist, on this occasion the cross-cultural potential of the text is very evident. At the same time, however, the representation of China and the Chinese, being conceived for a Western readership, largely responds to a rigid set of cultural concepts, the effect of which is to re-produce a stereotypical clash between West and East. The following description of Celia made by the author is an emblematic case in point: "A pair of jeans was enough to make you become detestable because it revealed your desire, maybe concealed even to yourself, to be part of that world you condemned with words. I preferred when you wore a long skirt: that length, so silly, so *Chinese* [sic]" (Ramazzotti 2002, 50–51; author's translation).

More generally, what this and other similar passages do is to re-enact a power gaze that eventually reasserts, in Grzegorz Moroz and Jolanta Sztachelska's (2010, ix) words, "travel writers' (often unconscious) complex involvement and implication in the projects of Orientalism, colonialism, imperialism and post-colonialism." Such a biased representation also emerges in the unbalanced way in which dialogues between Ramazzotti and Celia are reported. Indeed, it often happens that the author's turns are very long in comparison to his guide's replies, as if he is willing to assume a demiurgic position over her and before the eyes of the readers. Here is an example: "[Celia]: 'You have been to Shanghai. You have seen the skyscrapers.' [Ramazzotti]: 'Celia, I slept in the Jin Mao. The hotel begins on the 54th floor, the previous 53 are all empty.' [Celia]: 'The television didn't mention that.' [Ramazzotti]: 'No, but that's the truth. It is an empty crystal tower only good to shout to the world: Guys, look at us, we too are able to build skyscrapers. Why don't you invest money in our country? And it also says to the Chinese: See? We were right. In Tiananmen square, when we shot at your sons, we defended communism, and these are the results.' [Celia]: 'But...' she tried to reply" (Ramazzotti 2002, 170; author's translation).

While the (biased) representation of China and the Chinese imbues the whole book, to be fully suppressed from the text is its gnoseological potential. More precisely, Ramazzotti avoids inserting personal anecdotes or autobiographic information, as if too many details of this kind could weaken the reliability of his reporting. In this respect, the absence of images is notable; an absence which is

even more striking considering that Ramazzotti is not only a freelance journalist, but also a professional photographer. The point is that, although images can certainly be regarded as documentary proofs about the accomplishment of the journey (as in Bettinelli's case), they can also represent "a real menace to the ontological specificity of fiction" (Baetens 2007, 237). In this sense, images are less subject to the control of the author insofar as "in a single blow, that which is presented to us is so immediate, so non-mediated, that within the shock itself there is a *loss of mastery* [emphasis added]" (Van Lier 2007, 29). Ramazzotti himself is well-aware of this risk, as he confesses his uneasiness in finding a compromise between photography and fiction: "I do believe that words and images are complementary expressive forms; however, in some circumstances – such as in the case of a narrative account – words are by far more striking than images. I like to think that readers imagine together with me the diegetic world I am building" (Ramazzotti, private communication). Hence, by avoiding inserting pictures in the book, Ramazzotti manages to filter all information through his discretion, so that his control over the representation of himself and of China is eventually much stronger.

Cina: terra di grandi contrasti

Cina: terra di grandi contrasti (*China: Land of Big Contrasts*, 2012) is an Italian travel blog found on the blog platform *turistipercaso.it* (tourist by chance) and written by blogger Millycat. Even before reading the blog, the name of the platform frames the blogger's persona and her account within a clear-cut tourist representation. Moreover, the way in which the platform is conceived is also responsible for shaping the style and content of Millycat's blog. Indeed, as Kirsten Uszkalo and Darren Harkness (2012, 18) argue, "the infrastructure behind the interface is never directly seen by the blogger, but it drives the interface's development, defines its boundaries, enables a web page form to become a post and that post to be offered to readers." In this respect, the platform of *turistipercaso.it* unfolds a rigid set of policies of use. For instance, it is not possible for Millycat to add pictures within each post of her blog. On the contrary, images are uploaded separately, together with those of all the other members of the community, a feature that tends to de-personalize each account in favour of a communitarian approach to the writing experience.

Besides, each post of Millycat's blog hosts a variety of advertisements, whose intromission, which depends upon Master Advertisement, the agency

that manages the platform's marketing strategy, enriches the page with extra-diegetic elements [Fig. 1]. As a consequence, Millycat's and all the other blogs on *turistipercaso.it* get closer to multi-purpose portals than to simple travel accounts. In other words, the blogs acquire a commercial potential to the detriment of their diegetic development.

Concerning Millycat's specific writing, it is possible to remark that she tends to fill the posts with travel recommendations that approach the blog to the style of the guide: "the Forbidden City, or Imperial Palace, also called Winter Palace, is one of the most important buildings of the whole country as it represents a symbol of traditional China and one of the best preserved buildings of the classical age" (post 5; author's translation). This is only one example from the blog which suggests that Millycat is rather inclined to offer information about what she sees by adopting an objective stance. But in so doing, she inevitably erases her own subjectivity from the text, so that its gnoseological potential is marginalized and the blog acquires an eminently documentary function. The erasure of the self emerges most emblematically from Millycat's personal page, in which the blogger simply states her age, without providing other information or uploading any photo of herself. Moreover, the blogger opts for using an alias, the effect of which is double-sided: while further concealing her real identity, it also generates a ludicization of authoriality, which can be intended as a form of softening of the blogger's authority in relation to the informative pretentiousness of the blog.

The objectification of the blog's content has consequences also on the (non) representation of the other. Specifically, since the blog is filled with travel tips (e.g. costs, flights, accommodation, etc.) that are largely to be enjoyed by other tourists, it lacks any in-depth representation of China or the Chinese. Here is another example: "It is necessary to provide [the Chinese Immigration Office] with the whole itinerary of the journey, otherwise no visa is granted; for a couple of legs of the journey I have directly contacted the hostel via email, instead of booking via standard sites such as 'booking.com or Agora'" (post 1; author's translation). What readers derive from Millycat's blog about China is, above all, information related to the practicality of the journey, which, however, does not offer any cross-cultural bridge. In this respect, Millycat seems more concerned with "the fact of knowing, with having, with knowledge as a possession" (Adorno 1991, 84), rather than with the delivery of a subjective impression of the country.

Conoscere Pechino tra dinastie e imperatori

Conoscere Pechino tra dinastie e imperatori (*Getting to Know Beijing between Dynasties and Emperors*, 2013) is the title of the first post dedicated to China by Italian blogger Flavia and published on the platform *blogdiviaggi.com* (travel blogs). The blogger has written a total of five posts on China and, according to the date of the first and last post, she has spent roughly one and a half months in the Middle Kingdom, from the 21st of September to the 5th of November 2013. Again, it is possible to remark that the policies of use of the platform play a key role in dictating how the travel blog can be written and read. Blog di viaggi stresses the individuality of each blogger, urging them to provide a photo of themselves and a biographical note on their profile page: "the beauty of this platform is that it is not a classical site or a travel guide," is stated on the About page, "but it is OUR blog. […] It is made by travellers for travellers" (author's translation). To support this, the platform offers two complementary reading paths: on the one hand, on the homepage it is possible to browse a world map and read all the posts about any given country. On the other hand, we find on the About page the profiles of all the bloggers and a link to their travel experiences. Therefore, the platform puts an equal emphasis on the gnoseological and cross-cultural potentials of the travel blogs. This, however, holds true only insofar as we remain at the level of the platform as a whole. Indeed, once we delve into reading the blogs, the situation changes. Similarly to Millycat, Flavia tends to provide tourist information very much in the spirit of those portals from which the platform pretends to distance itself: "The capital is home to 20 million people and 5 million cars," it is read in the post dedicated to Beijing, "our first visit is to Tiananmen square, which, with its 44 hectares, is the largest in the world. In the middle, there is a war memorial and the flag of the CPR" (post 1; author's translation). Again, the blog is largely composed of a series of objective notations, the consequences of which are: 1) to conceal the subjective position of the blogger with respect to the experience; 2) to rarefy the narration; 3) to offer a matter-of-fact description of the country and the people. In this case, however, it is visible that the posts unfold at best their purely documentary function. Indeed, almost all the images uploaded in the blog show touristic landmarks, and on the rare occasions on which they portray people, these are, so to speak, massified, that is, represented indistinctively as a whole [Fig. 2]. Hence, not only is Flavia's account conceived from the outset for a restricted class of readers (i.e. tourists or other travel bloggers, as the platform suggests),

but her whole journey and the account derived from it turn out to be very similar to Millycat's.

Finally, in Flavia's blog the objectification of the experience is also evident in the few comments that accompany some of the posts, as the following exchange between her and blogger Eletrotter suggests: "[Eletrotter]: 'Wonderful temples! Maybe one day I'll go to China too.' [Flavia]: 'You have to! If you decide to go, I'll be happy to provide you with tips, so that you can enjoy the best places and avoid the most commercial ones." (Comments to post 3; author's translation.) These comments kindle two reflections: on the one hand, the travel blog largely functions as a carrier of tourist information, keeping its enjoyment self-enclosed within the travel bloggers' community; on the other hand, it responds primarily to Flavia's willingness to testify her journey, without, however, her being concerned with providing a well-rounded representation of the experience. In this respect, both travel blogs confirm the findings about the practice of blogging being a single-authored activity with a highly self-referential connotation (Papacharissi 2004).

Conclusion

The analysis showed that travel books and travel blogs, considered as two intermedial transpositions of the travel writing genre, realize its rhetorical and epistemological features very differently. More specifically, the two travelogues *La Cina in Vespa* and *La Birra di Shaoshan* present the readers with the unfolding of a proper narrative, which depends upon the "I" of the travel writer. However, while in Bettinelli's book the narration takes the form of a life-diary, thus strengthening the gnoseological potential of travel writing (i.e. the self-representation of the author), Ramazzotti's work is overtly conceived as a reportage, so that the cross-cultural potential of the genre is stressed (i.e. the representation of China and the Chinese).

Travel blogs, on the contrary, are largely constituted by objective notations and/or by tourist advice which bring these texts close to the travel guide. This tendency is so prominent in both *Cina: terra di grandi contrasti* and *Conoscere Pechino tra dinastie e imperatori* that the narrative almost disappears in favour of a mere juxtaposition of documentary information. As a consequence, the two blogs manifest an erasure of both the subjectivity of the travel blogger, as well as of China and Chinese people. In fact, such an erasure occurs either verbally (i.e. self-referentiality of the comments), or visually (i.e. pictures that privilege places over people). At the same time, if travel blogs appear much more documentary-

like than travel books, it is also due to the infrastructure of the blog platforms, whose policies of use constrain what bloggers and readers can do much more radically than publishers do in books. Further research would require extending the analysis to travel blogs that are not hosted on platforms, but are independently managed by the bloggers.

On a general level, the two travel blogs appear as rhetorically more homogeneous than the travel books. In this respect, it is possible to suggest that (these) travel blogs cannot effectively represent an alternative to travel books, nor constitute an effective source of information for knowing China and the Chinese; rather, they are texts which reinforce the representation of the country as a tourist destination.

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Figure 1. A screenshot of Millycat's blog (*http://turistipercaso.it/cina/68394/cina-terra-di-grandi-contrasti.html*, last accessed 05. 05. 2015) which attests to the intrusion of extra-diegetic elements in the page.

Figure 2. Part of Flavia's blog on China (*http://blogdiviaggi.com/ blog/2013/09/21/viaggio-a-pechino-cosa-vedere/*, last accessed 05. 05. 2015). The images all represent tourist landmarks; Chinese people are massified.

La Città Proibita è definita tale in quanto risultava la *sede politica dell'imperatore e dei suoi prescelti*, che però a sera dovevano lasciare tutti i palazzi e le residenze. Le uniche alle quali era consentito rimanere erano le 3.000 concubine tra le quali l'imperatore ogni sera doveva effettuare una scelta per trascorrere la notte. Dopo una selezione per età, ne venivano scelte 7 alle quali erano destinate differenti stanze, arredate e posizionate in modo diverso a seconda di quelle che erano, più o meno, preferite dall'imperatore. All'ingresso della città esiste il *Palazzo della Longevità*, e a seguire quello dell'*Armonia*, due strutture all'interno delle quali è possibile *ammirare il trono dell'imperatore* posto al centro e vari trespoli con dei vasi di bronzo.

Poetry in Transmedial Perspective: Rethinking Intermedial Literary Studies in the Digital Age

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Abstract. In the digital age, literary practice proliferates across different media platforms. Contemporary literary texts are written, circulated and read in a variety of media, ranging from traditional print formats to online environments. This essay explores the implications that the transmedial dispersal of literary culture has for intermedial literary studies. If literature no longer functions as a unified single medium (if it ever did) but unfolds in a multiplicity of media, concepts central to intermediality studies, such as media specificity, media boundaries and media change, have to be reconsidered. Taking as its test case the adaptation of E. E. Cummings's experimental poetry in Alison Clifford's new media artwork *The Sweet Old Etcetera* as well as in YouTube clips, the essay argues for a reconceptualization of contemporary literature as a transmedial configuration or network. Rather than think of literature as a single self-contained medium that engages in intermedial exchange and competition with other media, such as film or music, we can better understand how literature operates and develops in the digital age if we recognize the medial heterogeneity and transmedial distribution of literary practice.

Keywords: intermedial literary studies, transmedia culture, digital poetry, YouTube, E. E. Cummings, adaptation.

To begin with the obvious: digital technologies have altered our practices of communication and representation. They have modified our aesthetic expectations and changed the ways in which literary texts are composed, distributed and read today. Since the emergence of digital media has transformed literary culture, the premises and practice of intermedial literary studies have also started to change. Literary scholars have begun to consider the interactions between literature and new media, examining the new types of texts and the new

forms of representation, publication and reception that digital culture spawns. To expand literary studies in order to include new genres, such as hypertexts, blogs or digital poetry, is a promising first step. Yet it seems to me that we need to go further if we want to comprehend how digital culture is reconfiguring literary culture. It is my contention that we need to develop a new understanding of literature as a medium, or, to put it another way, of the mediality of literature.

I would like to propose the following shift in critical perspective: first, it seems to me that we have a better chance at understanding how literature participates in contemporary media culture if we stop thinking of literature as a single, clearly bounded medium and, instead, focus our analysis on the different medial constellations in which literature is created and experienced today. In other words, instead of discussing intermediality solely with regard to the interactions between literature and other media, such as painting or photography, we could also comprehend it as a constitutive element within the literary field itself. Since transmedial exchange and distribution are a generative force within and a prime characteristic of contemporary literary culture, our intermedial inquiry should include the study of *the media of literature*. Second, if we think of literature as making use of, materializing in, or extending across different media, we need a concept that helps us conceive of the nexus that the different media of literature form. The network model provides such a concept.

This paper will focus on the first of these claims and seek to demonstrate the advantage of conceptualizing contemporary literature as a transmedial practice and configuration by offering an exemplary reading of a printed poem and its digital adaptations – namely, E. E. Cummings's poem *l(a*, which was originally published in his 1958 collection *95 Poems*, and its remediation in Alison Clifford's online artwork *The Sweet Old Etcetera* (2006) as well as in YouTube videos.

The Printed Text: Linguistic and Visual Systems of Signification in E. E. Cummings's Poetry

I begin with a short analysis of *l(a*, one of the five poems by Cummings that Clifford reworks in her digital project.

l(a

le
af

fa

ll

s)
one
l

iness

The poem signifies primarily through the typographical arrangement of letters, words and punctuation marks on the page. It is clearly a visually rather than sound oriented text. If we listened to a reading of the poem without contemplating its visual design, we would lose a significant dimension of its meaning (cf. Kidder 1979, 282). The poem's layout is unconventional and calls on the reader to actively engage with it. Coming across the poem for the first time, we may not know, for instance, how to make sense of the letters that make up its first line. Does the first letter function as a letter or as a numeral, is this an l or a I? The ambiguity of the poem's very first mark initiates a play with signifiers that continues throughout the poem. The next lines confront the reader with groups of one to five letters that are arranged vertically on the page. None of the clusters makes sense semantically except for the word one in the third to last line. The reader is prompted to play with the letters. Reading the poem becomes an exercise in reshuffling the signs into a meaningful order.

A reading strategy that proves helpful in this situation is to reverse the direction of the typographical layout. By rearranging the lines horizontally, we get the line:

l(a le af f all s) one l iness.

This way, the combination of several letters into words suggests itself more easily:

l(a leaf falls) one l iness.

If we take out the parenthetical expression, we receive:

(a leaf falls) l one l iness.

In this construction, the poem's initial sign turns out to be the letter l rather than the roman numeral one, I. We can contract the remaining separate letter clusters into one word:

(a leaf falls) loneliness.

This way, we are presented with an image and a sentiment. The connection between the metaphor's vehicle and tenor has to be forged by the reader through

association. The interpretation depends on an imaginative jump, reminiscent of the sudden conceptual twist characteristic of haikus. The poem represents the feeling of being alone and isolated. The single falling leaf – and by extension the autumnal landscape, the drawing back of the life force of the plants into their roots – symbolizes a sense of diminishment, of things and perhaps even of life coming to an end, of retreat, solitude and loneliness.

Both the theme and the metaphor of the poem are fairly conventional. Numerous other poems have used the image of falling leaves to express sadness about being alone, about aging and dying. Rainer Maria Rilke's poem *Autumn Day* (1902) is a well-known case in point. It concludes with the lines: "Whoever is alone now will remain so for a long time, / will stay up, read, write long letters, / and wander the avenues, up and down, / restlessly, while the leaves are blowing." If we place Cummings's work in this poetic tradition, the most innovative element of his poem is its form. The fragmentation of the words through line breaks, the insertion of a parenthetical phrase into a word, the layout of the poem on the page – all these formal aspects of the poem strain against the conventions of English grammar and seek to break out of the mold of literary tradition. The visual arrangement of the letters on the page is semantically motivated, however: it does not serve to dissolve but to "modify and enhance" the meaning of the words (Heusser 1995, 19).

Unlike a concrete poem, pattern poem or calligram (Bray 2012, 298–302), the poem's overall shape does not form a clearly defined visual image.[1] The poem does not function as an icon. Nevertheless, its visual form serves to reinforce the poem's coherence and enriches its processes of signification. The fragmentation of the words through line breaks creates an unusual vertical orientation that allows the shape of the poem to visually suggest the downward movement of the leaf. The extremely short lines of the poem force the reader's gaze into a steep vertical plunge – creating an analogy to the ways our eyes would track the falling of a leaf. The effect is reinforced by the use of parenthesis (Landles 2001, 39). The slightly curved shape of the bracket resembles a leaf, and the change from open to closed parenthesis in the course of the poem suggests the spiralling downward motion of the leaf, its turning over in the air. The sequence of the segmented letter pairs also suggests this spinning movement: the "af" in the third line becomes "fa" in the fourth. The leaf has flipped over (Landles 2001, 39). At the same time,

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1   As several critics have pointed out, the poem's unusual, elongated and slender shape does recall the letter l though, which is the initial letter of both leaf and loneliness, the two words that the poem correlates.

the poem's fragmentation of meaningful semantic units also conveys a severing of union and offers a typographical analogy for the disintegration of association or community that may create the sense of separation and isolation that transforms solitude or oneness into loneliness (DiYanni 2003, 584). Making the most of his material – language and print – Cummings creates a complex representation of the topic – loneliness – in just four words. He combines linguistic and visual systems of signification to expand the possibilities of poetic expression.

The Digital Artwork: Alison Clifford's Adaptation of Cummings's "Poempictures"

In her online artwork *The Sweet Old Etcetera* (2006), Alison Clifford adapts Cummings's poetry. My analysis of her remediation will pursue these questions: how does the balance between linguistic and visual systems of signification, between text and image shift as the text is adapted to the new medium of digital art? What new strategies of representation does the digital environment enable? What ways of reading does it require? How does this change the reader's engagement with the poem and alter the relation between author, text and reader?

Clifford's web art project *The Sweet Old Etcetera* presents several of Cummings's poems in the form of an interactive digital environment. It combines text, image, and sound. The most striking feature is the flash animation of letters and words that the reader activates through mouse movements and by clicking on links. The moving letters coalesce into visual shapes and eventually build up into the image of a landscape composed of words [Fig. 1].

There are several ways to conceive of the relation between Clifford's artwork and Cummings's poem. For one, it is an adaptation. It remakes the original and gives us a new version of it. To ensure that the readers will be aware of this intertextual aspect of the work, the title explicitly quotes one of Cummings's poems – *The Sweet Old Etcetera*. By alerting the readers to the fact that they are reading an adaptation, the title encourages them to compare the two works, to read the adaptation in relation to the original and vice versa. Secondly, because Clifford's work transfers the content of one medium to another, it also constitutes an intermedial transposition (cf. Rajewsky 2005, 51). The classic example for an intermedial transposition would be a film version of a novel. The media change in Clifford's case occurs from literature to visual art, or to be more specific, from printed poem to digital artwork. And thirdly, Clifford's work presents a remediation of a printed text, in the sense of Jay Bolter's and Richard Grusin's

study of digital culture, *Remediation* (1999). The new digital medium reworks the older analog medium of print. One medium represents another. All three terms can be applied to Clifford's work: adaptation, intermedial transposition, remediation. Each categorization brings a different aspect of the relation between Cummings's and Clifford's work into focus. The term adaptation highlights the fact that an original text is reissued in a different version. The term intermedial transposition stresses that a media change is involved in this adaptation. The term remediation emphasizes the refashioning of one medium in the terms of another.

In the context of intermedial literary studies, the last two terms are of particular interest since they foreground questions of mediality and media interaction. Despite their difference in perspective, the two terms imply a shared premise: both intermedial transposition and remediation suggest that we are dealing with an interaction between two distinct, self-contained media. In this view, literature constitutes a single medium – the realm to which Cummings's poetry belongs. And digital art constitutes another medium – the realm to which Clifford's work belongs. The two media do not blend but content is transferred from one medium to another. And indeed, we could say that Clifford's adaptation of Cummings's poetry entails a change in medium because it involves a shift in technological means, systems of signification and processes of communication. In terms of technology, the poems now are encoded, distributed and read on computers (cf. Funkhouser 2008). The means of transmission has changed. We access the online text through the computer's interface. The digital environment transforms both the material properties and semiotic systems of the text. We encounter the poem not in print on the page but in form of a flash website that combines language, sound, and image. The digital form also affects the communicative process because it introduces an interactive dimension into the reading process.

To highlight the media change involved in Clifford's adaptation and to posit the existence of distinct, self-contained media has the heuristic advantage that it allows us to discuss the media-specific aspects of Cummings's and Clifford's works. The comparative perspective brings into focus how each medial configuration functions and what effect it generates. Let me bear out his point by comparing the relation between text and image in the two versions and the mode of response they invite. Both works combine linguistic and visual signification to invest the text with a kinetic quality. Cummings uses typography and page design to instill the static print on the page with a "figurative equivalent" of motion (Friedman 1960, 123). He suggests the twirling, descending movement of the leaf through line breaks and the spatial arrangement of the letters and lines on the page. Cummings called his

poems "poempictures," explaining to his editor that his "poems are essentially pictures" (quoted in Heusser 1995, 16). Yet the intermedial term is slightly misleading because the visual quality of the poem is an effect of typography, a device specific to the medium of print. Although Cummings was a painter, he never included drawings, illustrations, or pictorial elements in his poems (Heusser 1995, 17). Also, his poems rarely form patterns or shapes that would represent objects in an iconic way. Instead, Cummings employs words simultaneously as words and as images (Mahler 2010, 114). He uses them at the same time as symbolic signs that have only an arbitrary connection to their real world referent, and as graphs that may suggest a figurative analogy to an observable phenomenon (as in this case, a leaf's spiralling downward movement; Mahler 2010, 114).

Like Cummings, Clifford does not use any extraneous graphic elements in the presentation of the individual poems. In her piece, however, the letters coalesce into the shape of recognizable objects. They form a tree, hills, clouds, an entire landscape made of words. The greatest visual difference, of course, is that Clifford uses flash to animate the text. In her work, the letters literally move. Sometimes they are programmed to move automatically, sometimes they require the reader's interaction to be set in motion. The striking second half of the animation especially involves the readers in the poem's resolution. As the letters dissolve under their mouse movements and clicks and vanish from the screen, the readers may experience the anguish of a frustrated attempt at connection. This creates an experiential parallel to the sense of diminishment and loneliness that the poem expresses.[2] Yet regardless of the reader's technical interaction with and emotional involvement in the poem, the sequence of the animation and the paths of the letters' movement are pre-set. The readers cannot influence, for instance, in what direction and at what speed the letters move. This delimits the readers' control over the unfolding and structure of the text. Despite the work's interactive quality, the reader never becomes a co-creator of the text, as early hypertext theory tended to claim (Morris 2006, 13).

The interactive quality of the digital text brings out the playfulness of Cummings's poetics (Clifford 2012) and this, together with a shift from the pole of the symbolic towards the iconic, makes the text more easily accessible for readers. The ludic, interactive and iconic quality of the digital text may reduce the readers' resistance to a poem that cannot be understood quickly but that requires time and effort to

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2   It also demonstrates the symbolic implications of using flash software to set the poem in motion. The flash animation introduces a strong temporal quality into the text, enabling the artist to address "concepts of permanence, transience, and transition in the presentation" of the poem (Howard n.d.).

decipher and comprehend. By breaking with the rules of grammar and by pushing poetic conventions like enjambment to an extreme, Cummings's poem confounds us. It slows down our reading process and prompts us to puzzle over and mentally reassemble its segments. In the process, it makes us take note of the material poetry is built of: typographical marks on a white page, letter, words, lines, stanzas. As Cummings proposed, "the day of the spoken lyric is past. […] The poem which has at last taken its place does not sing itself; it builds itself, three dimensionally, gradually, subtly, in the consciousness of the experiencer" (Kennedy 1980, 128).

Clifford's work dramatizes the processuality and performativity of both text and interpretation that Cummings's comment points to. It externalizes and thus makes visible the processes of both composition and reception. As is typical for digital poetry, the sequential display of the poem defines "the stage of relationships among words and even within one single word" (Strehovec 2010, 214). Because the sequence and pacing of the animation reveal the poem's grammatical and logical structure from the beginning, readers engage with the digital text in a different way than with the printed poem. As we watch the animated poem, we first see a pair of brackets floating down the screen like a leaf; next, we observe word fragments appear in meaningful clusters and form the sentence "a leaf falls;" then, we witness the phrase become enveloped by the word loneliness. Because of the successive presentation of the poem in semantically meaningful segments, we never experience linguistic disorientation. We are never at a doubt about the grammatical and semantic correlations between the word fragments we encounter. The sequential presentation of the poem discloses the logic of the text's structure. It puts on display and makes observable the process of writing and reading the poem.

Online Videos: The Adaptation of Cummings's Poem in YouTube Clips

It comes as little surprise that the pleasure of solving the text's riddle is at the core of many of the performances and adaptations of the poem on YouTube.[3] Like Clifford's piece, several clips use animation to portray the successful deciphering

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3   There is a wide variety of YouTube clips that adapt or comment on Cummings's work. People film themselves reciting and interpreting the poem (Gotera; Stevens). They turn the poem into a song or instrumental musical piece that they perform (The Lyrez; Seglias; De Biasi, Lebow and Furlone). They make realistic shorts that illustrate the poem's themes (Conti; Thiery, Griffin and Kanga; Rowell and Clavette) or experimental videos that address the poem more obliquely (Munoz). Or they focus on the poem's typographical layout and present animations of its letters and words (lorianggie; ronjosiah).

of the text. Lorianngie's *e.e.cummings 1(a* (2011) or Vince Gotera's *Deconstructing Cummings* (2009), for instance, begin by presenting the poem in the typographical arrangement of the original print version and then proceed to demonstrate how the fragments can be reassembled to form words and parenthetical expression. The two videos attest to the curiosity that the poem may incite in readers. The adaptations retain the focus on the questions posed by a reading of the printed text: what is this? How does this make sense? Like Clifford's flash work, they produce a new process-oriented question, namely: what will happen next? As in Clifford's web art, the clips' animation of the poem's letters re-enacts Cummings's composition process. Fittingly, both clips represent the semiotic medium he worked with – paper and typeface [Figs. 2–3]. The animations also dramatize and thus make available for observation the reconstructive activity that the reader has to undertake mentally in order to make sense of the poem. In this way, the YouTube adaptations, like Clifford's intermedial transposition, share the medial self-reflexivity of the printed text. They draw the viewers' attention to the materiality, organization and functioning of the poem and they become an occasion for the reader's/viewer's self-reflection.

Notwithstanding these common features, the YouTube videos also differ in crucial respect from Clifford's adaptation. Unlike the readers of Clifford's interactive work, YouTube viewers need not wonder whether they can influence the text. Like traditional film spectators, they cannot manipulate the film while viewing it. Also, the YouTube clips typically offer complete narratives that leave little room for the viewer's imaginative extrapolation. The poem's meaning is explicitly explained or realistically dramatized. Several clips show falling leaves, portray lonesome figures moving through deserted places, or feature portrait shots of sad faces (Conti; lorianngie; Munoz; Rowell and Clavette; Thiery, Griffin and Kanga). Thus, they do not confront the viewers with their interpretative choices in the same degree as the printed text or Clifford's work. Yet because YouTube functions not only as a digital archive but also as a social medium, viewers may interact with the original clips *after* watching the video: they may post a comment, produce a spoof or create an adaptation of their own. Their readings and performances are informed by the dynamics of the collaborative media platform, which also shape the cultural and social function of the texts they produce.

If we compare the different medial configurations in which the poem takes shape – from printed literary text to web-based digital artwork to digital videos embedded in an online archive and social media platform – significant similarities and differences emerge. My analysis aimed to show that the changes

in technology, in transmissive channels, semiotic systems and processes of communication make it productive to conceptualize the interrelations between the poem's different versions in terms of media change. Each version of the poem is realized through media-specific processes of production, signification and reception. Examining the intermedial transpositions and remediations involved in the poem's adaptation enriches our understanding of how the texts generate meaning, how they participate in communicative processes and what cultural work they perform. The study of intermedial relations therefore is highly pertinent for literary studies.

And yet, despite the indisputable significance that media-specific modes of representation and reception and the crossing of media boundaries possess for literary practice, it seems crucial to insist that all versions of a literary text – and the different modes of composing, disseminating and engaging with the text that these entail – are part of literary culture. They belong to the medium of literature, no matter to what other medium they may also belong. This may be readily apparent with regard to Clifford's text. We can classify it as digital poetry and posit a hybrid medium in which literature and art blend.[4] But what about the relation between Clifford's artwork and the YouTube clips? How would we define their common medium and retain a sense of the literary? Rather than construct a variety of hybrid media to account for the diverse ways in which literary texts are written and read in today's media culture, it seems more useful to me to expand our view and to take in the whole variegated media landscape in which literary experience unfolds. As I argued at the beginning of this essay: I think intermedial literary studies will benefit from a change in perspective. Rather than think of intermediality as a relation between distinct media and focus mainly on questions of media change, media borders and media specificity, it would be productive to examine the interrelations between the different medial constellations and practices that built up the literary field. Since literary texts today are written, read, circulated and reworked across a broad variety of media, intermedial literary studies should conceive of literature as a transmedial practice and make it a priority to study *the media of literature*.

To think of literature as a cultural practice that extends across media boundaries allows us to replace the concept of literature as a self-contained medium with an understanding of literature as a transmedial configuration or network. Although

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4   Clifford's *The Sweet Old Etcetera* indeed not only has been shown at digital art, video and film festivals and exhibitions but also has been included in the second volume of the *Electronic Literature Collection* (2011).

it will be the task of another essay to explore the contribution that network theory can make to intermedial literary studies, I would like to point out here that the network offers a model for the conceptualization of reciprocal, recursive and decentralized processes of interaction, exchange and convergence, and of the complex systemic constellations these produce (cf. Schaefer forthcoming). Applied to intermedial literary studies, the network model may help us conceive of media (including literature) as complex structures and dynamic processes that develop through multidirectional, distributed, recursive acts of connection (on the level of technology, signification system, text, communicative process and social framework, for instance).[5] To comprehend literature as a transmedial configuration or network brings into focus the transformations that literary practice is currently undergoing. It enables us to examine and compare the diverse media formats and contexts in which literature is produced, circulated and experienced today, and to develop an understanding of the literary that is adequate to the digital age because it takes into account the multiplicities and convergences of contemporary media culture.

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5   For a poignant application of network theory to the field of adaptation studies, see Regina Schober (2013).

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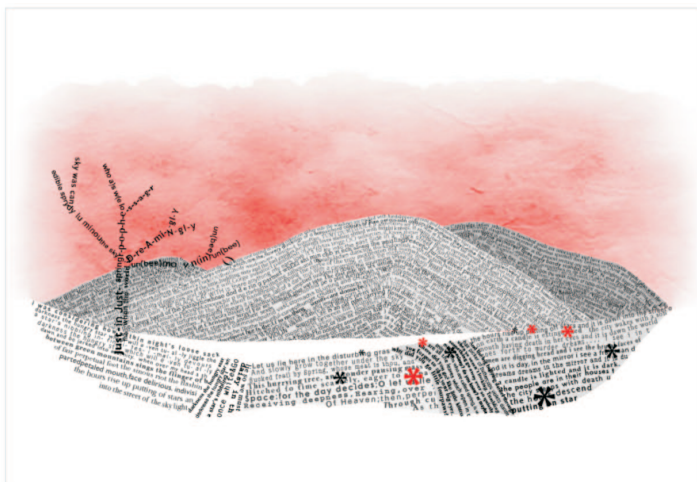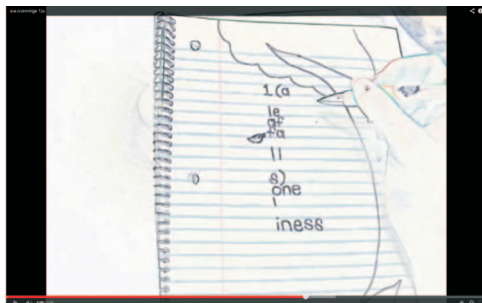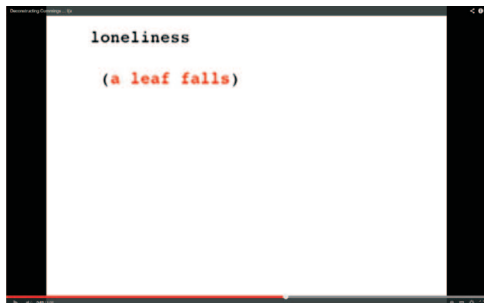Figure 1. Alison Clifford: *The Sweet Old Etcetera* (2006)

Figure 2. Vince Gotera: *Deconstructing Cummings* (2009). **Figure 3.** lorianngie: *e.e.cummings 1(a* (2011).

Digitalization and the Production of Feeling and Emotion: The Case of Words Cut into the Skin[1]

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Abstract. This article investigates one example of how affect is articulated in the self-cutting of words into the skin and how the meaning of this multimodal statement is modified through remediation. According to Tomkins, affects are understood as intensities that are impossible to frame as feelings or emotions. A theoretical framework based on Laclau's and Mouffe's discourse theory and the multimodal categories developed by Kress and van Leeuwen is used. Photographs of self-cutting and statements from people who cut themselves are examined through content analyses. The results show that words that had been cut into the skin often referred to painful experiences, disgust directed against themselves, or social isolation. Further, the study shows that when the cut-in words are remediated through a photograph, digitalized and published online, other meanings appear. Inside internet communities for people who self-injure, the photographs were associated with a communal experience, identification and prescribed activity. The original self-oriented feelings about one's shortcomings and isolation attached to self-cutting could be altered so that those connoted, instead, experiences of solidarity, identity and intimacy.

Keywords: self-cutting, pain, affect theory, discourse theory, multimodality, remediation.

Introduction

The digitalization of post-industrial societies has affected all articulatory practices, from the production of means for living and pleasure to economic and other interpersonal relations. This article will address one aspect of this digitalization:

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1   This article is based on a paper presented at the conference of the International Society for Intermedial Studies, *Rethinking Intermediality in the Digital Age,* 24–26 October 2013, Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania.

how individuals' understanding of so-called inner experiences is constituted in part by remediation to digitalized media,[2] in this case as photographs of words cut into the skin published on the internet.[3]

Photographs of self-inflicted injuries have, during the last few decades, constituted a genre of images with special visual characteristics and practices. They occur frequently on internet sites and forums focusing on self-destructive issues, on blogs and image-hosting sites such as Flickr, Photobucket and Instagram, or on other sites such as Tumblr, Pinterest and Weheartit, where users share text- and image-based material. The production and spreading of self-injury photographs is part of a culture in which almost every aspect of life is "documented" and shared on a worldwide scale (see, e.g. Murray 2008). Meeker (2013) reports that over 500 million photographs were uploaded and shared on a selection of social media every day in 2013.[4] This almost inconceivable production is possible because the means for production has been made available to the majority of the population in post-industrial countries. Through digitalization, sophisticated equipment for media production has become easy to use, cheap and portable. The sharing of these media products has, with the development of Web 2.0, become possible for a wide range of people, including subjected social segments, such as adolescents who are involved in deviant activities as, among others, self-cutting.

In this study, I will focus on the subgenre of photographs of self-inflicted injuries that depict words cut into the skin. With their use of (presumed) physical, visual and verbal modes, they are of special interest for intermedial studies. The purpose of the study is to investigate how pain is articulated through different mediums and how these statements, through digitalization, become part of an alternative discourse that challenges a hegemonic understanding of self-cutting activities. Using a theoretical framework developed in the fields of discourse theory, affect theory and social semiotics, I will address the following questions:
1) How is the meaning of pain articulated through language and a sharp object?
2) Does the remediation through digitalized photographic and distribution means qualitatively alter the meaning of words cut into the skin?
3) In what way does the digitalized mediation of statements of individuals who experienced self-cutting influence a discursive understanding of feelings and emotions that are or become part of the act?

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2   Remediation is, according to Bolter and Grusin, understood as "the representation of one medium in another" (1996, 339).
3   This article is based on my research on photographs of self-inflicted injuries published on the internet: results published in Sternudd 2010; 2011a; 2011b; 2012; 2014a.
4   The selected media were Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Flickr.

Self-cutting is understood here as a practice which is related to self-injury and is predominantly understood as a "direct, deliberate destruction or alteration of one's own body tissue without conscious suicidal intent" (Favazza 1996, 225). This concept is reflected in the fifth version of the influential American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, *DSM-5* (2013, 803–806). Self-cuttings, the photographs and the mediation of these are understood here as discursively based statements or articulatory practices. The kind of self-harmful practice which is addressed in this article is executed with the intention of obtaining relief from negative states of various kinds (2013, 803). This means that self-inflicted injury performed as a cultural and social practice is not discussed here. Self-cutting was the only method for self-injury used in this sample.

Previous Research

There are only a few studies on photographs of self-injury. Apart from my own in the project *The Semiotics of Pain* (2008–2011, see note 2), there are also the studies of Lewis, Heath, Sornberger and Arbuthnott (2012), Baker and Lewis (2013) and Seko (2013). Photos of words cut into the skin have been briefly analysed in my research (Sternudd 2010, 241; 2011b, 86–88) and more thoroughly in Bandalli's psychological study (2011, 116–127). Bandalli understands self-injury as a way of expressing and communicating "inexpressible emotions and issues" (Bandalli 2011, 51). Considering this inexpressibility, he presumes, a bit inconsistently, that words cut into the skin can provide an understanding of "the content which acts of DSH may serve to express or communicate, and the subjects to which they refer" (2011, 117).[5] In his study, Bandalli identifies six main themes (Bandalli 2011, 121–127), among which statements related to emotional states were most frequent. Words such as alone, numb, lost, hurt and trapped were included in this category. Bandalli suggests that the most frequent words and phrases in his data reflect "the key issues which are of most importance or concern to the individuals who inflicted these injuries" (Bandalli 2011, 126). Thus, the "high frequency of the word 'alone'" indicates that the most common issues would be "feelings of isolation and loneliness." One problem with Bandalli's study is that he does not know anything about the producers of the photographs and because of that, as he points out, it is not "possible to interpret the subjective meaning of the words and phrases the perspectives of those individuals who engraved them into their skin" (Bandalli 2011, 118).

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5   Bandalli uses the term deliberate self-harm (DSH) much in the same way as self-injury is used in this article.

Instead of using a theory based on notions of expression and communication, my approach is influenced by affect theory. This means that the perspective is turned around, and cutting words into the skin becomes an articulation that uses meaning systems (discourses) to make (as Bandalli puts it [2011, 51]) the "inexpressible emotions and issues" intelligible.

Theoretical Approach

Having this theoretical approach means that the study is grounded on non-essentialist and constructivist ontology. Its reasoning is founded on the notion that signifying systems make the world meaningful to us and that the world approaches us already interpreted through semiotic systems (Sonesson 1992, 12).

Affect, feelings and emotions have, since 2000, become a rapidly growing research field, to such an extent that this has been called an affective or emotional turn (Öhman, Jönsson and Svensson 2011, 11). The concept of affect, as outlined by Tomkins (1995), is central to the argumentation in this text. Affect is understood as a sensation experienced by the individual; it is *an "amplification of urgency"* (Tomkins 1995, 54), an intense experience craving for action. Shouse (2005) describes affect as an abstract pre-personal intensity that "cannot be fully realized in language." The idea of the unspeakable affect is important for the logic of this paper, and I shall return to it later. Feelings, on the other hand, are affects that have been understood through language and labelled (Shouse 2005). If the subject has previous experience, the process of "feeling-making" becomes easier. In addition, feelings are how it *feels* for a subject, which, at least theoretically, can be separated from emotions, which are defined as "social qualities that we communicate with in social situations" (Öhman, Jönsson and Svensson 2011, 11, translated by the author), for instance sorrow, love, shame, hope and wrath. Emotions explain feelings by contextualizing them and shaping them into a socially understandable discourse.

Using the word language, as in Shouse's article, gives an association to a linguistic system that narrows the understanding of how meaning is constructed. Instead, the concept of discourse is more appropriate here. Discourse theory (DT), as described by Laclau and Mouffe (2001), opens up understanding to a wider range of signifying systems (which includes every social practice). Meaning, according to DT, is something that is *produced* in a contextualized social activity, an ongoing process that makes meaning contingent. Signs achieve meaning by way of their position in a network that consists of other signs through a *chain of*

equivalences (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 110) and oppositions. A sign in a system that has no definite meaning is called an *element.* When an element has obtained meaning it becomes a *moment. Articulation* indicates a temporary halt in the constant shift of meanings. Laclau and Mouffe argue that "every social practice is […] articulatory" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 113). Consequently, cuttings, words and photographs in their analogue or digital appearance are treated as articulatory practices in this text.

Returning to the concept of "unspeakable," understandings of pain often draw on its chaotic and system-threatening character. Pain, in a similar way to affect, has been described as something intense, "something" that is *too much*, "an excess of sensory input, such as for example excess of cold or sound or light" (Kalman quoted in Sternudd 2011b, 15–16). In this way, pain is, at least theoretically, connected to affect. This connection is observed by Tomkins, who writes: "The affect mechanism is like the pain mechanism in this respect […]. If we cut our hand, saw it bleeding, but had no innate pain receptors, we would know we had done something which needed repair, but there would be no urgency to it" (Tomkins 1995, 88).

Tomkins's example seems reasonable – affect makes feelings "feel" by giving them intensity, but studies on self-cutting experience show that people's "pain mechanism" does not always follow Tomkins's scheme. In many studies of statements by people who cut themselves, the absence of pain is typically reported (e.g. Darche 1990; Favazza 1996; Favazza and Conterio 1989; Walsh and Rosen 1988). Even if pain is often considered an issue for those who cut, it does not have to be nociceptive, nerve-transmitted pain. *Pain-as-chaos* can include nociceptive pain, but not necessarily. I have argued before that feelings can become too much and therefore painful (Sternudd 2011b, 89; 2014b). In the light of affect theory it would be more correct to say that affects (not feelings) can be equated with pain in pain-as-chaos theory.

The insufficiency of language to articulate the inner experience is an often-occurring notion among persons involved in self-injuring activities. For example these activities are described "as a method of expressing emotional pain in a non-verbal manner" (Bandalli 2011, 29). From an affect-theoretical perspective, this method is logical. Shouse uses the example of an infant who is experiencing intensities and whose lack of language and previous experience cannot articulate them as feelings. Therefore the infant can only "express the intensity of the stimulations that impinge upon them" with intense activities (Shouse 2005, section 6) such as screaming. A functionalistic explanation of self-injury could follow a

logic that states that it is the overwhelming intensity of the affect (pain) that triggers people to self-injure. If so, self-cutting can be understood as an attempt to articulate the affect and thereby control and master it. Words cut into the skin could therefore be seen as a complement to the meaning that is constituted through other modes: visual sights of blood and wounds, and nociceptive stimulation.

Method and Material

My study is based on three major sources. The photographs in the study come from an internet archive downloaded in 2007, containing over six thousand self-injury images (2011a; b; 2014a).[6] In this article I will focus on photographs showing words cut into the skin [Figs. 1–4], a category that is included in approximately 15 percent of the images in the study. Apart from the words FAT and DIE, these photos are typical of the photographs in the study, which predominantly show a cut-up limb from a first-person viewpoint. The findings from the analyses will be compared to the statements of people who describe self-injuring experiences. These statements are taken from two sources: the results from a questionnaire about production and reception of self-injury photos carried out in 2008 (see Sternudd 2012) and self-biographical accounts published in *A Collection of Personal Stories* (Wulff 2004; see also Sternudd 2014a, 16 for a presentation of this material).

The analysis is based on Kress and van Leeuwen's theory of multimodality (2001, 1–11),[7] which is adapted to the material described in Fig. 5. The model is structured in the form of three statements. The first is words that are cut into the skin of a person; this is a multimodal statement in which verbal, nociceptive and visual modes are put into action. *Mode* is understood as the type of information that reaches the senses. The *medium* for distribution is text, nerves, wounds and blood, or scars, manifestations primarily perceived by the cutters themselves. The "actual material *production* of the semiotic artefact" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001, 6, my emphasis) is made through the use of the body and a sharp tool. Statement no. 1 uses material qualities; flesh and blood stress the importance and severity of the practice. The production is full of meaning; it signifies a serious business or a norm-breaking, deviant activity. Capital letters, common in internet practice, are read as talking loudly or screaming. As capital letters are probably easier to cut in than lower-case letters, intentional meaning should probably not be stressed

6   To secure anonymity, the name and address of the archive is not revealed.
7   Notably, Kress and van Leeuwen define *articulation* slightly differently from the definition used in this article.

too much. The words were analysed using content analytic method (Bryman 2012, 288–309). Categories emanated partly from the data and partly from the theoretical framework (affect, feeling and emotion). The second statement is the words cut into the photographed skin; the modes are verbal and visual, the medium is text and image, and they are produced with the help of a camera. The photos are presumably taken with a digital camera, as suggested in Fig. 5, or are digitalized later. This makes it possible to reach the third statement, the photograph of words cut into the skin published on the internet. The modes and medium are the same as in the second statement, but here they are produced using a computer or other device that makes online publishing possible. A fourth category comes into play here: *distribution*. All aspects of the statements and the remediation of the statements are potential venues for production of meaning that can contribute to articulations of pain. In what follows, some aspects of this *possible meaning* production will be addressed. I use the expression possible meaning as it is important to note that the interpretation given here does not imply that all people who cut embrace the same view.

The disposition of the analysis follows the order presented in Fig. 5. The analysis of Statement 2 and Statement 3 draws to some extent on previous studies and, because of that, the analysis of Statement 1 becomes disproportionately large; however, this does not indicate that it is more important.

Statement 1: Word Cut into Skin

The archive contains 765 photos of words cut into the skin [Fig. 6].[8] A content analysis showed that the most common (n=233, 37%) were words associated with feelings, followed by words associated with emotions (n=105, 17%) and affects (n=28, 5%). Other categories were names, initials and subjects (n=76, 12%), statements addressed to somebody and words indicating activity (n=37, 6%), leaving 69 words (11%) uncategorized.

The most common feeling, indicated by the words, was disgust (20%), presumably directed to the individual, stated through self-loathing words. FAT is the most frequent word in this category, often written on a thigh. This interpretation is made on the presumption that the word indicates the unwantedness of the

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8   This figure represents approximately 15% of all photos in my study, which is a significantly higher prevalence than in Bandalli's (2011) and Seko's (2013) studies. Without further research on the matter, it is hard to say whether this is due to the fact that the material I studied was produced earlier than that used by Bandalli and Seko or whether the difference can be explained by variations in practices in different places on the internet (Flickr vs. a support and help forum).

apprehended fatness. And in accordance with the views of Bordo (1997) and Nead (1992, 10), being fat is equated with lacking control in a hegemonic Western discourse. A fat body is a body that is out of control. Words such as UGLY, LOSER, WHORE and other words indicating sexual libidinousness were included in this category. The articulations of disgust fit into a discourse in which mental distress is associated with physical or social shortcomings. This relates to notions of social isolation that were reflected by words such as ALONE and LONELY, which were categorized as feelings of sadness (n=72, 13%). Other feelings indicated by words were more outgoing, such as FUCK OFF and FTW, categorized as anger.

Words which appeared related to emotions were HATE (11%) and LOVE (8%). PAIN (5%) was the only affect word mentioned. Other words with a high frequency were DIE and DEATH (~9%). When words appeared in sequence, the statement was often directed to someone, such as in KILL ME or I HATE U/ME.[9]

Presumably, the verbal mode produces additional meaning compared to the visual and occasionally nociceptive mode of the cut. Words "can tell more than slices alone," as a thirteen-year-old cutter states (Maigo 2006). In a sample of 44 statements, most of them from Wulff (2004), the cut in words was often just mentioned without any further explanation (n=14). In other cases, the significance of the words was made clearer. The words were often used as descriptions, referring to feelings (n=10) or how the person recognized themselves or was recognized by others (n=8), or describing something wanted and/or feared (n=1). In other cases, the words were related to something artistic or aesthetic (n=3) or to memories (n=2), such as names or initials, for instance of boyfriends, or people who died (n=2). In one case it was stated that the words were an apology, and in another it was said that the cutting had been done for other communicative reasons (n=1). Some just stated that it felt good to cut in words (n=2).

One example of the statements describes a friend's suicide. Heather wrote: "Then Grace died. […] No one knew what did it. We all thought it was suicide, because she had attempted before. My life came crashing down. She was fifteen years old, her whole life was in front of her. I felt so guilty, like I should have called her more, written her, done something. I started by carving her name into my arm. Then other words. Guilty. Pain. Death. Nevermore." (Wulff 2004, 289.) The devastating moment is described as a crash; everything is turned upside down. The experience was first articulated in a word associated with a feeling

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9   Compared to the results of Bandalli's study, my results showed that the appearance of words connected to self-loathing (similar to Bandalli's category "derogatory statements") was more frequent, as were words such as anger and hate. The large category in my study that includes names, initials and subjects is not found in Bandalli's study.

and was materialized in the flesh in the word guilt. Then follows a series of words which form a narrative of sorrow.

Some of the words categorized as descriptive in this study are pejorative names which posit the person involved as an outcast and as being disgusting to others and therefore to themselves. Erikka wrote: "I would write things like "loser" or "hate me" or "worthless," because that's how I see myself. I mean, my own parents think that way, so why shouldn't I?" (Wulff 2004, 242.)

Through the deviant act, Erikka embraces the stigmatic signs of disgrace. The act can be seen as an attempt to take power over the naming by an articulatory act, produced with a sharp tool. Steffani describes in a similar way how she defines herself through the word SELF manifested in scars on sore skin: "I hurt myself on the outside to make the hurt on the inside stop. Maybe feeling sane, is what other people consider insane. Self, know who you really are … and show it" (Steffani 2006).

In all of these examples, the words seem to be related to experiences of something painful: the death of a friend, parents who despise you and an inside which is hurting. The words which have been cut in are articulating the experience in a physical way and, to outsiders, possibly in a drastic way. The word "see" appears in two of the examples, which indicates that the visual mode is important. The frequent use of the words DEATH and DIE could also be an attempt to articulate the affect, the pain through moments that are often equivalent to something chaotic and speechless chaos (which follows when one passes away).

Statement 2: Photograph of Word Cut into Skin

The next type of statement is words cut into the skin remediated into a photograph, which allows for the possibility of producing new meanings. In the analysis, I rely on the above mentioned questionnaire. Even if answers did not explicitly mention photographs with words cut into skin, the result may provide guidance when it comes to the effect of photographic remediations of self-cutting.

The answers in the questionnaire revealed that people who have cut themselves can have a craving to re-experience the act. Interestingly, a number of informants stated that photos of their own or others' cuts could be a substitute for this feeling and thereby prohibit an actual performance of the act. One informant who had been cutting herself for a long time stated that a "feeling of being physically damaged" can be likeable and that "a permanent scar" can be something positive as it "will provide that feeling." If photographs can be a substitute for fresh

wounds and visible scars, they become valuable proof: "they are an evidence that i [sic!] was in pain," as another informant stated. This and other statements articulate physical self-injuries as injuries that are easier to handle than mental injuries and that photographs can replace "real" scars (Sternudd 2012).

Due to their perceived indexical quality, photographs often produce effects of realness; this quality can be expanded to such extent that for some informants their own self-injury photographs would appear more real than the actual view of the wounds. The distancing effect of photography as a medium, distancing both the cut in time and from the skin, seems to make it possible to actually *see* the injury. One informant explained that she can "idealize" self-injury: "it appears as an 'abstract idea of the pain I deserve,'" – "viewing [photos of self-injury] makes [self-injury] more real" (Sternudd 2012, 431–432).

From these statements we can see that the transformation to a photo could convey and sometimes replace the cutting experience, and that it could also constitute a meaning of realness (even more so than the experience of when the cut was made). Some effects of the remediation are the possible extension of the act over time and the creation of a greater awareness of the act itself.

Statement 3: Photographs of Word Cut into Skin on a Remote Screen

Through the distribution of photographs on the internet, new meaning is produced. As Kress and van Leeuwen argue, distribution is not innocent; it not only distributes an identical sign but, on the contrary, the meaning of the mediated message is re-articulated (2001, 7). In this case, the capacity of the internet to link people together on a global scale is important for meaning-making. The internet has enabled otherwise marginalised people with deviant behaviour to find peers who share the same (or what is felt to be the same) experiences, interests, activities, etc. (Adler and Adler 2008). For this study, the self-injury communities which came into being in the wake of the social and cultural awareness of self-injuring behaviour in the late 1990s and early 2000s were examined.[10] Until then, self-destructive behaviour was something you did, not an identity. An informant in the study of Adler and Adler explained that the community she was involved in helped her to "connect my identity to a self-abuser." Before that, she "didn't really think it was a problem, just a habit" (2008, 41).

In the self-injury communities and other places on the Internet which include user-generated material, photographs of self-injury can become part of a collective

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10   For an overview of these communities see Adler and Adler 2011.

articulation and thus a discursive tool for the production of and negotiations about the meaning of self-cutting. The huge numbers of self-injury photos published on internet provide an archive for validation and assessment for people who self-injure. For instance, they can be part of a valuation of self-injury identity; comparing your own wounds with others' could reveal whether you are a real self-injurer (that is to say, bad enough) or not. In these ways, self-injury photos have instrumental as well as identification values (Sternudd 2012).

As part of an internet community culture, self-injury photographs are often articulated in a discourse of confessions, which is an important feature of most self-help communities. These communities make it possible to show your wounds to others who have had a similar experience and still keep them hidden. A twenty-one-year-old informant stated: "I wanted to show my secrets to someone, anyone, even though they didn't know me." The reason for this wish can be an act of solidarity: by publishing self-injury photos you return to others a gift you received from others. "I remember looking through pics there and felt as if I was not alone," said another informant. The loneliness that is referred to above, in the analysis of Statement 1, is alleviated through the interaction in the community. Self-injury photographs become a resource for identification. A person who cut herself formulated it like this: "I came across a picture that looked almost identical to my own cuts. And I realized, 'I am like that'" (Ariel on Psyke.org 2006).

This is an example of how photographs of self-injury are meaningful because they are understood as depictions of shared experiences of bodies hurt and in pain. In this way, someone who has cut herself and who looks at these photos can "imagine what exactly was going through that person's head when they caused the injury to themselves" (Sternudd 2012, 428). Publishing self-injury photos becomes something that community members do, but sometimes, in these communities, the deviant character of cutting vanishes.

Publishing and consuming self-injury photographs therefore becomes an articulatory practice which is associated with a certain self-injury identity. It is problematic for Bandalli that he cannot rule out the idea that cut-in words might have been done with the purpose of communicating with an internet forum, because in that case the words would not reflect the inner feelings of the one who cuts (Bandalli 2011, 127–128). With reference to Whitlock, Powers and Eckenrode (2006), this comes into conflict with the presupposed behaviour of a typical self-injurer, which is keeping their activity a secret. In this way, both the community itself and the photographs of wounds, blood and words become part of a negotiation of self-injury and alternative discourses on mental pain. Even if concepts of inner,

true and authentic feelings and an expressive model on self-injury do not apply on the communities, these internet places provide an opportunity to study alternative articulations of pain. When the articulatory practices of self-cutting contain words, this provides an opportunity to study how "proper" ways of framing pain are constructed and probably also regulate the way in which pain can be properly performed in the community in which the photos appear. To the question of whether self-injury photographs had influenced her, an informant in my study answered "yes, from photos I started writing words on myself."

Distribution through computer-accessible networks opens up opportunities for certain meaning-productions. The computer medium itself activates values of intimacy that contribute to making the internet a successful location for self-injurers to establish their own places. This intimacy has to do with the users' closeness to the screen, according to Michele White (2006, 78), which differentiates the computer screen from mediums that distance the viewer (this is known as the *male gaze*). White's theory of intimacy is easy to apply to the photos of self-injury. In relation to the most common type of self-injury photo, the spectator only has to look down at her own arm to see herself in the same way. The visual structure, combined with qualities of the medium itself, therefore cooperates to establish a discourse of a community of self-injurers – being together, not alone.

In this section, we have seen how the distribution of photographs of words cut into the skin to a remote screen on the internet makes the meaning of shared experiences and communal identification possible. The feeling of loneliness can be changed into the feeling of belonging.

Conclusions

In Statement 1, we saw how the words cut into the skin are used to understand the affect, the pain, by articulating them as a feeling. This is a process in which discourses articulate pain as feelings which are available in a hegemonic understanding of adolescence in distress: as self-loathing, self-blaming and self-pitying – the pain is articulated as individual shortcoming. We also saw how the meaning of cut-in words changed when they were photographed, and how their meaning was shifted towards the meanings of realness and indexical values that made the experience of cutting become extended over time. The meaning of the wounds and words changed again when photos of them were published on the internet, when they were being communicated in communities made up of peers, which extended the experience in space. Self-injury images became the property

of a group which recognizes that its members share the same experience. The photos, as well as the experience, could in this context be valued as something desirable, a notion that challenges a hegemonic apprehension of self-injury.

So, the experience of cutting seems to be carried from Statement 1 to Statement 3 not as a mediation of this experience, but instead, as a remediation that influences articulations of feelings and emotion. The affect, the pain was transformed in my example, through the described stages, from articulations of individual, self-orientated, negative emotions to collective expressions of solidarity, identity and intimacy. This transformation can be troubling to hegemonic order, as described at the end of the poem *Nation* by Vivica (2007):

> "when we are everywhere from
> broken down apartments
> in the dark parts of Queens
> to the big southern mansions
> that are put upon hills in Georgia
> pent up in our rooms
> screaming & jumping to our fucking self-loathing
> rock'n roll that screams out suicide
> we are the future
> & the future is going to be pretty fucked up."

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Figures 1–4. Words cut into the skin. (Printed with permission from the photographer © 2012 Sternudd).

Figure 5. A model that shows the relation between the key concepts in the study.

Figure 6. The words that were cut into the skin as a word cloud created using Wordle™ (http://www.wordle.net).