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Histories, Identities, Media

(Screenshot from Béla Tarr's *Werckmeister Harmonies*, 2000)

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Paradoxes of Visibility

László Tarnay
University of Pécs (Hungary)
E-mail: tarnay.laszlo@pte.hu

Abstract: The paper investigates two possible critical arguments following the pictorial turn. The first is formulated within ocularcentrism, the dominance of sight, and starts with the right to visibility as a general principle that governs today's digital culture but gets twisted in special cases like the Auschwitz photos of the Shoa, the Abu Ghraib prison videos, or recently the website called Yolocaust. The second is conceived outside the visual culture and is meant to vindicate the other senses vis-à-vis the eyes. However, the argument is truncated here only to highlight the boomerang effect of the other senses: haptic vision. It is the case of visual perception when (a) there is a lack of things to see and (b) indeterminate synaesthesia: when vision intensifies the other senses in the embodied viewer. The two arguments converge upon a dialectic of the visible and the imaginable, which is formulated here as two paradoxes that the discussed examples transcend. By enforcing visibility at all costs where there is hardly anything recognizable to see, they lead to two diverging results. On the one hand, the meaning of "image" is extended toward the unimaginable, the traumatic experience, on the other hand, it is extended toward the invisible, the encounter with the radical Other.

Keywords: (un)imaginable, (in)visible, haptic, simulation, synaesthesia.

1. Introduction

Visual culture as an independent discipline has grown out of various interdisciplinary approaches in the history of arts, literary criticism, aesthetics, media studies, medical and physical image processing, etc. Its birth can be described as a paradigmatic shift in social sciences, especially anthropology and the humanities, but it also brought a new methodology in natural sciences to render physical processes of non-visual nature visible. In the often quoted Heideggerian parlance, it is the view of "the world conceived and grasped as a picture" (Heidegger 1977, 130). It is customary to refer to its emergence as

the pictorial turn, which both parallels and contrasts with *the linguistic turn* that characterized human sciences under the reign of structuralism, but in many respects also influenced poststructuralism. For the sake of convenience, the emergence of visual studies is marked by two events: the appearance of W. T. Mitchell's book, *Picture Theory* and the introduction of visual studies in the university curriculum in 1994. The main thesis of visual culture is often summarized as the reification of the representational theory of mind: sensations induced by the environment are cognitively processed in terms of available cultural categories. It is the core idea of social constructivism that in order to make sense of the world we need previously acquired categories that at best mediate between us and the world.

To put it bluntly, visual culture entails that there is no sensory perception *per se* when we simply "stop, look and listen" as well as touch, smell and taste.[1] It also implies, quite radically, that the (visual) perception of the world is *eo ipso* the perception of images so that sensory perception is reduced to image processing: there is no essential difference between perceiving the world and perceiving images. However, images "can speak and tell as much as they can show and represent:" they also harbour a *discursive* power "exceeding those purely iconic or visually discernible" that can be correlated with propositional content (Purgar 2014, 2). It is easy to see that the thesis in question is but a reformulation of the main tenet of the linguistic turn: there is no other – i.e. direct – way to access the world beside language. Knowledge is coded, i.e. *represented*, linguistically. We cannot get around language and the categorical structure it conveys and rely on the direct perception of images. The analogy between the linguistic and pictorial turn is palpable: instead of the language module it is the categorical image processing that is assigned the main task of understanding the world around us. If Roland Barthes once thought that everything from fashion to pots and pans are structured like language (more precisely, they carry meaning that can be linguistically articulated), Jacques Rancière speaks of "a machine that transforms images and life into coded language" (Rancière 2009, 127, cited by Purgar 2014). Moreover, the meaning of images, especially *moving* images, is reducible to linguistic, i.e. *narrative* or *argumentative*, categories.

1 Ingold (2011, 314), for example, criticizes not only the constructivists of visual culture but of the other senses in that they create virtual worlds, soundscapes and "scapes" of every possible kind, on which interpretation is to operate. The relevance of his observation can be seen in the growing number of dimensions in the names of movie theatres, which do not stop at 4D or 5D, but run up to even 7D meaning that senses other than vision like touch, thermal sense or the vestibular can be equally simulated.

20 years after the introduction of visual culture the model is cracking at the seams. It is questioned both internally in its constructivist core and externally in its supremacy over its sensory rivals, the *other* senses. The aim of the present paper is to sketch a possible line of thought, which pulls together the available threads of criticism levelled at the representational theory of the image or image processing in terms of cultural categories. Two major sources can be perceived that are respectively internal and external to visual culture. The first is the *reduction ad absurdum* of visibility, a criticism conceived in the heart of visual studies; it is a reduction not only of the visible but, as we will see, of the imaginable. The reconstructed argument ends with what Didi-Huberman (2015) calls "*noir*," the blackness of imagination, or the unimaginable. Surely, he fancies that there is something beyond that blackness as a way out of the dead-end of the unimaginable. But is it a real alternative? A midway between the black of no image and the blinding white of nothing but images?

The second source is constituted by the other senses, especially touch or haptic visuality, making up the entire gamut of sensory perception of sounds, smells, taste and touch. In fact, haptic vision begins, where the blackness of the unimaginable has left us: the blurred, vague, undecipherable, de-figured images of Auschwitz, but not only them: the textured images of experimental and other films, the domain of haptic vision also belongs here. Haptic vision offers an entirely different way out of the blackness of imagination. It is not that we re-configure, re-identify or even term, personalize the incinerated nameless bodies of the dead, and bring them to light, develop the under- or overexposed image as when the outlines of the Face emerges clearly on the photo paper like the face of Jesus on the Turin's shroud. The difference between the face as portrait and Face as pure exteriority can be given an ethical interpretation. Jean-Luc Nancy (2000) trades the gaze (regard) for the face as the genuine subject of a portrait and thereby avoids the whole problem of reconfiguration. At the same time, he also bypasses the formal-material aspects of the image and thereby of the present framework. However, it is a very interesting line of argumentation that is worth pursuing in a further work.

2.1. The Weight of Ontology

Let us start with the first source of criticism that emerges from within the order of the visible. The supremacy of vision in general is deeply embedded in the history of Western thought. Aristotle considered sight as the most noble of the

senses for three reasons. First, vision is the sense organ most detached from the object of perception. It is – unlike the other senses, especially touch and taste – almost completely unaffected by subjective bodily experience. Thus, it is the most objective sense. Secondly, it offers the most reliable, the most specific and the widest range of information about the world. And thirdly, vision – again unlike the other senses – is the least transitory or evanescent source of information.[2] Sight is comprehensive: it embraces the objects in the visual field in a permanent grasp.

That our age is going digital has two far reaching consequences. Although they are conceptually related, let me consider them separately. The first maintains and corroborates the supremacy of vision. The switch from analogue to digital was precipitated in the first place by the simulation of visual perception. Digital technology produced various techniques and technical gadgets from 360-degree cameras and interactive or motion sensitive virtual helmets to quasi immaterial screening surfaces, which altogether present to the human visual system a sight almost, if not totally, indistinguishable from normal human visual perception. Such a "perfection" of visual simulation can easily be misrecognized for a new ontology. Misrecognized, because the new objects of virtual reality depend *both* on the image generating digital system and the image processing modules in the human brain.[3] Ontologically, they are at best the "objective correlatives"[4] of the coupled processes in the human-digital machine complex.

It is possible to argue that visual simulation transcends the normal conditions of perception because it displays a couple of visual and optical features that are alien to human sight (multiple and changing viewpoint, zooming, deep focus, nonhuman and unnatural camera angles and positions, etc.). The said features modify the subject-object relation of normal perception. The viewer sees the diegetic world of the film differently than scenes in real life. That films have –

2 The terms ocularcentrism and heliocentrism are used in literature to refer to the deeply visual character of the philosophical and intellectual history of the past 2,000 years. For further information, see Jay (1993).

3 It is important to see that the human visual system is constituted by several modules. From the lowest sensory bottom level to the higher conceptual ones.

4 The term was used by the English poet, T. S. Eliot in his essays on the metaphysical status of fictional metaphors in 16th and 20th century poetry. I believe there is a clear analogy between how the metaphor depicting or visualizing two lovers conjoined and intertwined can be depicted or visualized as the legs of a compass (in the often-quoted metaphor of the English metaphysical poet, John Donne) – they are the lovers' objective correlative – and the avatar of a player or any other virtual object being there to be manipulated by him. Digital simulation is a much better or more deceiving method to canvass a "Platonic" realm than verbal icons or even the painter's brush were, because it simulates visual perception instead of *representing* mental objects. Although the analogy offers an interesting historical explanation of the use of digital simulation, nothing in my argument presented here depends on its soundness.

even radically – changed the way we see is a widely held belief. Such a view, however, cannot explain the equally shared idea that digitally generated moving images engulf the viewer *despite* the fact that they are located outside of the virtual world. The phenomenological idea of embodiment is meant to do the work here. "What we see in the film has, indeed, some kinship with our normal embodied perception, but it is enhanced and transformed through correlation with privileged viewing and hearing positions that are not available in our 'normal' perceptual mode. The aesthetic space of film is one of *hyperbodiment* – a belonging to the world that is based on embodiment but which exceeds its restricted viewpoint." (Crowther 2016 – the use of italics belongs to me.)

However, even Crowther's idea of hyperbodiment fails to account for the fact that such embodiment becomes "naturalized," while "we do not confuse watching a film with perceiving real immediately given actions and events." (Crowther 2016) That visual simulation is thoroughly immersive cannot be explained away with sheer habit. If watching digital moving images submerges the viewer into its virtual world, it means not only that they are embodied in it having "a simultaneous in-and-out-of-body experience – a hyperbodiment," but also that their sensory experiences – however distanced or removed their existential body is from the virtual world – are infinitely similar *in kind* to normal perception. It would be indeed quite shocking – and not the least incredible – to learn that our visual system became different as a result of film viewing. What is different, however, is how the snapshots are processed or 'interpreted' by our visual module. Digital imagery appears to be a *prosthetic* device in an analogous fashion to, say, the microscope: it makes things visible, which would otherwise remain imperceptible. The bird's eye view or multiple views of a scene, the slowing down of a recorded event or an 'impossible' angle shot constitute a challenge to human vision not because we are hyperbodied (freed from the constraints of our body), but because we are untrained to construct the sequences seamlessly. Yet they work because we can project our viewing position to almost any other position through the camera, provided there are visual clues that can be processed by some submodule. An aerial photo may have remained forever indistinct to a primeval man, but it can equally be that he would have been able to project himself to a bird's position on the basis of some lookout experience. I call images or image making devices that require such visual projection prosthetic devices. And just as we should learn how to look into a microscope or telescope (i.e. learn what to see) we have to be visually trained to process filmic sequences.[5]

5 It is a tenet of ecological film theory that we perceive and process filmic images with the same visual system that we have developed throughout our evolutionary history. To use it for

As for the ontological consequence of our age going digital we have to consider the cognitive aspects of the supremacy of vision. The simulation of visual perception is then processed by our visual system seamlessly, so much so that it comes very close to normal perception. As a result, "in watching a film our orientation is one that wishes for information or entertainment, i.e., is content-determined." Hyperbodiedness leads to a "simply ontological" reading of digital images. Such an interpretation explains why immersiveness overcomes the critical awareness of film viewing. It is further corroborated by the fact that simulation of perception is accompanied by an increasing degree of interactivity, which adds considerably to the effect of reality of digital images.[6] By acting (and reacting) we create the sense of space in our own body.[7] Or to put it simply, the more we act upon reality, the more we believe in the existence of that reality.

Interaction or manipulation does not sit well with the ambiguity, uncertainty or flexibility of meaning. Action-oriented perception calls for immediate action. Simulation of perception is probably the best interface between the image generating machine and the human perceptual system. However, it is not without

other but similar purposes, we have only to learn to compute bird's eye view on the basis of known clues like the vertical movement of rain and the horizontal surface of the earth. Once it is computed, hyperbodiedness comes spontaneously. To see the relevance of training the eyes consider another sensory module, hearing, the second in the classical hierarchy. It is far more difficult to project our hearing body to another position on the basis of known clues. For example, we project the speaker on the telephone to the other end of the line, if their voice is weaker and scratchy on the basis of using the phone in real life. But if the direction of the sound source is not marked, it would be immensely difficult to locate the source on the basis of its intensity or tone. The Dolby stereo system was once developed precisely in order to simulate the source of sound relative to the existential body of the viewer and to increase the intensity of the effect of horror movies: the cracking of branches is heard from behind the viewer in the auditorium, and not simply from behind the character. Note that in that particular case hyperbodiedness is in fact pure embodiedness without anything like "a simultaneous in-and-out-of-body experience," since we hear exactly what and where the character hears. (For further detail, see Branigan 1997.) But probably the best example for the lack of aural projection is hearing our own voice from a recording. We all have experienced once in our life the shocking revelation that our recorded voice sounds very differently from how we hear ourselves speak. It would be equally impossible to simulate the source of an odour in a film on the basis of known clues as it is impossible to simulate the tactile perception of a character on the basis of other tactile clues. Note, however, that another type of perception, the visual perception of an object, say the bark of a tree, can be such a clue.

6 Mark B. Hansen argues that new media "putting the body to work (even in quite minimal ways) has the effect of conferring reality on an experience, of catalysing the creation of a singular affective experience, that is, one that is qualitatively different from (but that can be deployed to supplement) the 'verisimilitude' or 'illusion' of the cinematic image." In other words, interactivity, just like touch, by making the body work, creates an *ergodic* dimension to the experience of visual images. (See Hansen 2004, 38.)

7 It is called the *ergodic* dimension of human perception. For further information see Hansen (2004).

irony that the pre-digital forms of the image, i.e. photography and classical cinema, although hardly non-action-oriented, were repeatedly declared to be inherently indexical and ontological. Reality weighed down heavily on the technical image. No wonder that one of the most adamant critics of the ontological weight of images, Didi-Huberman says that the question of the ontology of the image is entirely misplaced today, meaning that images have never been fixed entities with fixed meanings: they operate this or that way, they affect us, they are used for diverse and constantly changing purposes, but at the same time they also recall, reiterate, bring back or turn back to *other times*, repressed or forgotten memories. (See Didi-Huberman 2008, 15.) It is the pragmatic or action-oriented aspect of visual images that determines their ontological import. Whether they were produced in a causally effective instrumental way so dear to Bazin or Kracauer or they are generated by a computer program is secondary to *how* they are contextualized through action.

2.2. Visibility as Monstration

With the arrival of the digital simulation of perception, the question of the ontological weight of images returns in full guise. The Platonic realm of images comes to have the upper hand as a result of two distinct aspects, which work in tandem to cement the ontological meaning of digital images. The first is prima facie a *pragmatic* aspect of their divulgation, but it turns out to shape their *semantic* power as well. Dayan (2013) calls this key social factor visibility, or more precisely, the *right to visibility*. To make visible has become the unwritten prerogative of social networking, but it is grounded on a general condition of possibility of any photographic (and possibly all other) images: "behind any image, one must imagine a body that gestures, calling for your attention" (Dayan 2013, 146 referring to Belting 2004). That is, every image is intentional: it is there only to be seen. It entails that it is shareable. Shareability on the internet has far reaching consequences, which I will briefly discuss below. But there is another important aspect of digital images that weighs heavily on their ontological interpretation. It is inherent in the *cognitive* understanding of digital images. Even if we accept that images can mean *this* or *that* thing – be it real or virtual –, as a result of the human-digital machine the life-like simulation of perception obscures the meaning generation process and creates the effect that what we perceive on the screen – be it real or virtual – is real. Let us take the two aspects of digital culture one by one.

Dayan interprets the general power of shareability of images in the field of communication as a force akin to illocution in language use. When an image is "shown" ("monstration" is the term that he uses), it displays the force of an affirmative utterance, which states a fact. Posting an image is a performative act with different forces. There is an essential difference, however, between language and visibility. While an utterance is grounded on a given propositional content that is also expressed with the act, the informative content of a monstrative act has an ambiguous status. Sometimes information is only apparent, that is it is completely covered up by monstration; some other times they are stated in it: "All media monstrations create faits accomplis," but sometimes what is shown does not merit the title of information (Dayan 2013, 148).

The problem lies, I think, in the difference between information and fact. While the difference between propositional content (information) and reference (fact) is *semantic* well-known to the philosopher of language, a posted or shared image may be grounded on information, which cannot be judged to be true or false. In other words, when monstration substitutes or "covers up" information, it blurs the distinction between visible content and its corresponding reality.[8] The visual ontology of the image is doomed to be ambiguous between the so-called "real" and the virtual. But at this point, paradoxically, the analogy with language either breaks down or can be carried further. The illocutionary force with which an utterance can be used is always a function of the given propositional content. The factual content (information and fact blended) of an image, on the contrary, is a function of the monstrative act. To paraphrase Dayan (2013), the force of a monstrative act can be so strong that it either overshadows all informational content (if there was anything *real* before the monstration), or on the contrary, it generates its own *virtual* content.

But one might want to restore the analogy by pointing out that (i) an illocution is never graded (stronger or weaker): it is either acted out or not, and that (ii) there

8 The analogy is between Bertrand Russell's famous example, "The present king of France is bald," and an image of a situation. While Russell's utterance presupposes that there is a king of France (which is not the case), the image also seems to presuppose that what it shows is real. However, we know that neither presupposition should be necessarily true in order for the utterance or the image to make sense. But while we can say as Russell and other analytic philosophers held that the original utterance can be variously at fault (being false, empty, senseless, or infelicitous just like an Austinian speech act can be), an image made visible constitutes a "fait accompli" *for* the viewers discrediting or rendering futile any effort to assess or verify the corresponding truth claim. Where fact and information merge everything that is shown becomes eo ipso true, while what is not shown, does not exist. Thus, by showing the image of the present king of France we would not simply presuppose but downright state that there is a king of France, the one shown *in* the image.

exists a special category of declarative speech acts when the fit between language and world in Austin's words are *created* with the utterance. In such cases the use of language does not describe the world (e.g. the Earth is round) or commits to changing it (e.g. promising something to be done), but makes its referent be (e.g. giving a name to something or someone). Such is also the divine order of "Let there be light *and* there was light," where the first declarative is neatly separated from the second affirmative. Such a neat distinction, however, cannot be made with some corresponding image of creation. Think of Michelangelo's famous fresco in the Sistine Chapel, where we see the figures of Adam and God and their hands extended toward each other without touching. Like the lovers of the urn in John Keats's poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn,* who "winning near the goal" can never kiss, but remain forever suspended in air. But they have a neat compensation: "For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair;" it means that time *for them* comes to a standstill. I think it is very instructive to note that the suspended scenes on the vase for Keats are nothing but a pretext for what he calls *negative capability*, meaning that one settles for half-knowledge or is able to remain in half-truth. Thus, we are left with the half-knowledge that the gap between Adam's and God's hands stands for the act of creation, God declaring that Man *exists,* or it shows the result of the creation affirming that man *exists*. It is the half-truth Dayan refers to, by quoting Judith Butler, that every photograph is already an interpretation. To put it more precisely, it is because what an image shows is half-truth that it demands interpretation. Furthermore, the image itself appears to be an interpretation because its factual content cannot be directly unfolded. While the informational content of God's will can be *juxtaposed* to the referential description of the existing light (and of all the rest of earthly things) in a verbal text, information and reference are inextricably overlaid in an image.

2.3. The Simulation of Perception and the Virtual

The second *cognitive* aspect of digital image processing was probably a motivating force to make images as early as ancient or probably prehistoric times. The urge to duplicate, reproduce or make a copy of the world may have been one of the main motifs to draw, paint, photograph and last but not least, simulate visual perception. The reasons are various and extensively debated: they range from the will to act upon reality to ritualized magic. Today we would say that Man has always wanted to extend reality in some other realm only to get back to the real. Mixed reality as a form of virtual reality is a case in point. The road from the legendary lifelike paintings

by Zeuxis and Parrhasius through the discoveries of optical illusions and films to contemporary video graphics was long, but the underlying idea is unmistakable: to produce a perceptual input to our visual system that processes on a par with normal visual stimuli. Note that the term "indistinguishable" is not the proper term to use here to compare the normal and the simulated stimulus. For the human visual system as any other neuronal area is robust enough to compute a full-fledged picture of the world even on the basis of a poverty of stimulus. Were it not such a black-and-white and badly lit footage, it would never be seen as a documentary of real events.[9] It means that *a fortiori* an (almost) full-fledged simulation of audio-visual perception grabs the viewer's mind with an even stronger sense of reality.

In general, the ontological weight of images seems to be an unavoidable corollary of digital visibility for two reasons. Firstly, because the image reverses the functionality of information (propositional content) and monstration (illocutionary force). Secondly, because the simulation of perception feeds an input to the visual system, which is *prima facie* indistinguishable from what normal perception provides.

The weight of ontology is however further extended to other senses by new media with the use of virtual helmets, telepresence, mixed reality, etc. Since it is still futuristic to simulate other sensory perceptions than the visual and the aural (though certain attempts have been made for example to simulate the olfactory), new media combines the virtually perfect audio-visual input with somatosensory and kinaesthetic effects. The combined net effect can be defined as an (in)determinate form of synaesthesia when the other sensory effects of the perception of an object are activated by and through the spatially stereoscopic audio-visual perception of the virtual.[10] Since it happens many times in everyday experience that we do not have a full-fledged perception of an object or event – Merleau-Ponty's (2002, 267) example of the twig bouncing back after the bird has flipped away is a neat case when we seldom hear and feel the bouncing of the twig, yet through synaesthesia vision complements the missing sensations

9 Certainly, other conditions like realism of style should also apply, which I cannot summerize here.

10 I proposed in another paper that synaesthetic effects should be represented along a continous scale from perfect or determinate synaesthesia, when many or all the senses come together and converge on a definite object providing a full-fledged experience to indeterminate synaesthesia, when the given sense stimulus, most often the audio-visual, is reduced or poor to lead to the identification of the potential object. In the latter case the other senses may become all the more acute to compensate for the poverty of the visual. However different the motives for synaesthesia are in the two cases (complementary vis-à-vis compensational), the synaesthetic effect is often rather gradual than exclusive. (See Tarnay 2015.)

– virtual or extended reality technology capitalizes on the very same robust capacity that works in less than optimal perceptual conditions. Whether the ontological weight of perceiving a dim, blurred figure is a result of an inference in the perceptual system about the content of perception or it follows from the direct pickup of information by organisms in general constitutes the core of the debate between cognitive and ecological psychology. It does not influence the argument proposed here, however. For if perception is embodied – that is, it works in unity with the subject's bodily movement, i.e. their actions – the weight of ontology imposes on the entire perceptual system more heavily. New digital technology complements André Bazin's and Siegfried Kracauer's instrumentalism about the causal power of the camera by revealing that the perceptual system is disposed to take real what it perceives, *provided* it works between the hard-to-define bounds of robustness or in less-than-optimal perceptual conditions.

Thus, the original indexical power of the photographic image that conveys information (truth) about a part of reality is paradoxically preserved in the digital age. To put it roughly, only what can be *posted*, i.e. shared on the internet, is (taken to be) real. But the power is twisted: it is not that the image is ontologically real because it needed reality to be produced in the first place, but the other way around: it is because the image exists that we have access to what is real: the Other of the image. The difference between the visible and the visual collapses or is about to collapse. As a result, the imaginable dissolves into the visible.

However, there are two distinctive parts of visual ontology that digital culture supports: a real and a virtual. The first is sharable "reality," the second is the effect of the simulation of visual perception. Consequently, everything including the imaginable becomes an image as if all other senses were subservient to it as part of a haptic or synesthetic effect. Put together the real and the virtual ontology of the digital image exerts a devastating effect on the Heideggerian conception of the world *as an image*; not because it destroys it, but because it ingrains it. It is no longer a question of representing reality for two reasons. First, because images demand to be acted upon – they are interactive – and as such, they *substitute* or *create* reality. It is a corollary of the ergodic dimension of perception. Second, because external, physical images are seen as incarnations of internal, mental images. The imaginable and the shown become one. The idea that what cannot be imagined cannot or should not be shown, like the Shoah, and the idea that virtual reality like simulation is or should be perceived as reality, two faces of the same coin: images are all that there *is*. *The social and cognitive conditions of monstration exclude both the unimaginable and the invisible*.

2.4. The Weight of Ontology Revisited: The Power of the False

We can hardly foresee even in rough outlines where the technology of virtual reality would lead us and how it would shape the ontological weight of (moving) images, if the simulation of visual perception can still be called images at all without a proper vehicle like canvas or screen needed to carry the image. "Materiality would anyway be inappropriate as a term for today's media. A media is *form*, or it transmits the very form in which we perceive images," writes Hans Belting (2005, 305). However, the materiality of digital images is ungraspable or at least elusive. In lack of anything perceptible or physical to carry or transmit the image, the ontology of the virtual is created – through the simulation of perception – by the perceiving agent. Furthermore, if the analytic distinction between image and material vehicle does not apply to digital images, it is difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate the image from the specific form it is transmitted in. *Form, if identifiable at all, is the form of perception, not of the image: perception is subjective embodiment and as such is confined to the limited position of the viewer, even if the actual viewer can shift their position almost limitlessly with every (new) virtual perceiver*. The perceptual paradox of new media runs counter to McLuhan's famous dictum "the medium is the message," where the form of the medium was determining: now the perception of the virtual is the message. New media postulates a subjectively embodied viewer-agent *in* the virtual world, who coincides or correlates with a fully-fledged viewer embodied in the real world.[11]

Although it is not entirely clear how we should understand it, it seems form encodes everything that is due to the *way* how the image is produced: both the machine's and the image maker's contribution from camera angle, position, framing etc. – everything that Didi-Huberman calls the use value of the photograph, the formal and stylistic play that opens it up to manipulation and interpretation, and consequently, renders it inadequate to the object it is an image of. The result is that the image "lies," that is, it tells a *half-truth*. New media, especially the

11 A qualification should be made here. McLuhan considered each medium to be an extension of man's senses, which are called prosthesis today. While he says that electronic media makes the medium to be the message, he refers to the method of cubism of reducing the three-dimensional representation to a single plane. Thus, he avowedly sees medium-consciousness as part of what Richard Wollheim (1968) calls the seeing-in, i.e. the form of seeing adequately to pictorial representation. The simulation of perception that current new media brings to perfection tends to erase that consciousness in favour of the "ontological weight" of virtual reality. It would be difficult to deny that simulation is a further extension of our senses to the point that the gadget becomes in every way prosthetic, but it would be equally hard to maintain McLuhan's original commitment that it is indeed the medium that is the message á la Picasso or Braque.

simulation of the virtual not only bypasses the materiality of the "old" image, but it fuses its *form* with the laws of (normal) perception. The use value of digital images lies not so much in their potential to relate to the changeable world, the cultural context, or to be re-contextualized in the terms of one's personal history; digital images are used to enact and re-enact real and virtual situations, in which the ontological weight of the images swings back with full force: what we perceive *is* – by the nature of (simulated) perception – real.

As I said earlier, I cannot follow the history of the new ontology of the image here, simply because it would require a futurologist. What should be considered instead is the critique of the inadequacy of the image as half-truth, or using another popular term in French philosophy, the power of the false. Such a critique should go back to the distinction between the physical image reproducible in whatever medium, as Walter Benjamin meant it, and the mental image that has been common currency in psychology. Didi-Huberman relates the idea of the false image, the image that lies, to Lacan's half-saying. The obvious reason is that the imaginary, which corresponds to the mental as imaginable (including the unconscious) is never exhausted by the visible. There is always more to the imagination than meets the eye.

Between the two extreme positions, Barthes's punctum, the "*this was*" or the full indexicality of the photograph and the simulation of embodied perception, there is the indefinite terrain of the formal or stylistic play of the image being inadequate to the ontology of the world as it is. It is the field of Lacan's half-said truths, the supremacy of the signifier of the *lack* of the Real in the Other. Since the latter in Lacan is associated with the structure of desire as a lack in being the weight of ontology becomes a *lacuna*, a hiatus to be filled in, that is a pre-ontology. It is the image as signifier that carves out the territory of the unconscious as the non-imagined or non-imaginable (Lacan 1986). But the image as signifier is a material image, most often reflected in the mirror, that should be distinguished from its meaning in the Other, the mental image. I would contend that the lacunae in the Other correlate with a lack of the imaginable or a kind of "forbidden" or traumatic image. For everything that can be shown is inadequate to that mental image. It is why people like Lanzmann are constantly censoring the representation of traumatic experience. However, not only the traumatic, but anything that is private, personal or intimate is confined to the bounds of interoceptive experience. Whether the traumatic and the interoceptive experience differ in constituting censored and uncensored imagination respectively, I leave to psychoanalysis to decide. Here I would claim only that both can be correlated

with a lacuna, a lack of existing things to see. Consequently, the only way for the imaginable to regain visibility is by means of images, which do not represent or denote things, but adumbrate them at most.

But before moving on to the critique of the photographic image, let us take stock. It seems the argument about visibility reached a stalemate. On one hand we have the sweeping force of monstration, an iconolatry, where visibility is the prerogative of truth. On the other hand, there is iconophobia, which "has stressed the unimaginable (Lanzmann), unknowable (Lyotard), and ultimately unrepresentable (Lévinas) nature of the Holocaust since the 1980s" (Larsson 2012). Two extreme *epistemic* positions concerning visibility: an unlimited ability to produce images (Facebook generation) and the unimaginable, and various forms of prohibiting images. The origin of the conflict between the two appears in the Book of Creation, where God creates Man to his own image: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1: 26) and then God forbade Man to make any image: "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God." (Leviticus 26: 1) Image making and the prohibition to make images have the same source. Producing an image is justified, if it is creating *ex nihilo* for the image itself as the result of a declarative act: what is "shown" exists. Making an image, however, is unjustified, if it is created *after* an existent that transcends the bounds of imagination.

Surely God is like that. But what else? Death may come second. Traumatic experiences third. And so forth. What we have here is the myth of the unrepresentable that determined culture in different periods and to different degrees. It took for instance hundreds of years from antiquity through the middle ages to romanticism until poetical thought replaced God's creative power with the poet's *furor poeticus* to create *ex nihilo*. But if we cannot give face to the "unimaginable," we leave it to eternal forgetting. It was a lesson that the Church learned after the age of iconoclasm and in an age of illiteracy, that without the painted images on the church walls, religious power would deteriorate. And it is also the paradox of the Shoa and the paradox of invisibility that iconophobia leads to forgetting the unimaginable.[12] In contrast, we have the right to visibility, which can be extended as far as to show the unimaginable. The paradox of visibility reaches out to the unimaginable to *un*forget it: to create "memory pegs" in the minds.

12 László Nemes Jeles, the author of *Son of Saul* (2015), talked at a conference about the self-censoring tendency of the first and even second generations of Holocaust survivors. The self-inflicted censorship of almost any representation of the Shoa included verbal testimony as well, and became a collective strategy of forgetting the unimaginable.

Perhaps it is the menacing force of both paradoxes that fuels critical arguments, like Wajcman's, against people like Didi-Huberman and the author of *Son of Saul* (2015), Nemes Jeles, who occupy a middle position between the two extremist positions of visibility or iconolatry and invisibility or iconophobia. What happens, if we lift the ban that God placed on man not to make images? Although there is a scale of so-called middle positions between the two extremes of visibility, lifting the ban we may quickly end up with terrifying examples. Let me briefly discuss three cases here.

The first is the well-documented case of the Abu Ghraib prison photos and videos that American soldiers shot about the tortures they themselves inflicted on Arab prisoners. The images are horrendous not only because of sufferings they show the prisoners were exposed to, but because of the attitude of the American special army unit headed by a woman, a Gulf War veteran. The guards, especially the woman, obviously enjoy the abusive acts committed against the Arabs; for example, there is a photograph in which she shows the victory sign while leaning over the dead body of one of them. The acclaimed film maker, Errol Morris, made a documentary of the found footage intercut with personal interviews, in which the soldiers recount the events separately. Morris was highly criticized for not judging the perpetrators openly while letting them speak for themselves. What is really shocking, however, is how the US soldiers view their own deeds. When the director asks the crucial question: "Why did you photograph the actions?", the answer is: "We did it for our own pleasure." That is, not to circulate the photos publicly.[13] It has a double edge. On one hand it attests to the iconolatry of the soldiers, on the other hand, it tests the conditions of iconophobia on the part of the public. Confronted with the photos, do we feel ashamed because of the inevitable identification as viewers with the abusers? Or do we feel horrified at the violence displayed? Or probably both? The images, it seems, violate both taboos of what is showable or representable and what is imaginable. To put it differently, they short-circuit the two paradoxes of the visible and the imaginable as two horns of the same dilemma: what is shown (or is shareable) is imagined *and* what can be imagined becomes a visible image. There is nothing unimaginable, nor is there anything *un*showable or *in*visible.

13 Here I disregard the obvious fact that with this answer they meant to disclaim the responsibility for recording and divulging the horrendous deeds as potential propaganda. Private, or even perversely intimate, pleasure vis-à-vis public entertainment. Since I am not concerned here with moral justice, but with visibility as a form of *un*forgetting, I would only emphasize the contrast between the silence of the survivors of the Shoa and the obsessed photographing of the Abu Ghraib torturers.

If we want to resist the destruction of the unimaginable and invisible, we should turn to Georges Bataille. He possessed a photo of a Chinese man undergoing an excruciating death by cuts. It is contained in his final book, *The Tears of Eros*. The ritual of executing by cutting the body and incurring the slowest death possible was still practiced and photographed in China around the turn of the twentieth century. Bataille was obsessed with the image, which he found both "ecstatic" and "intolerable" for it "tears at the limits of the image and […] it reaches us through its violence and in its violence, it demands a response from us" (Noys 2013, 25). However, what Bataille sees as ecstasy on the face of the victim at the gate of death is rather an amalgam of a grin and a grimace, the effect of the opium given to the victim to prolong or relieve his pain. To translate it into the terminology used in this paper, the grin remains to be invisible under the grimace, and as such, it is also unimaginable, at least without interpretation. In the context of the *Chinese Man,* the grin on the face of the female boss of Abu Ghraib calls once again for our interpretation: the collapse of the visible and the imaginable is at the expense of interpreting her gesture of victory as an *un*imaginable Satanism, as Bataille may have seen it. In contrast, the photos could have equally functioned as multiple triggers of narcissistic desires akin to the "opium-effect" of pornographic pictures. They have nothing to do with *the events* they show (ontological weight), but with *how* they (as visual aids) send their viewers into a vortex of sensual joy. The unimaginable, "the ecstasy of death" once again slips into the invisible.

My third example is closer to the right to visibility, that is, iconolatry than iconophobia. It is not long ago that Yolocaust appeared on the World Wide Web. Its name contains an allusion to the Holocaust. It was an individual reaction to a trendy phenomenon that young people make "funny" selfies astride on memorial sites of the concentration camps, including the Berlin Holocaust Memorial. The temptation is inescapable to interpret the selfies as mocking the victims of the camps. An artist, Shak Shapira was so shocked at the mockery that he set up a site, Yolocaust where he posted photographs combing the frolicking figures in the selfies with hecatombs of the concentration camps. Shapira brings the right to visibility *ad absurdum* precisely in the sense that Daniel Dayan defines it: it is not only the right to display oneself in whatever situation, but the right of conferring visibility on *others* in whatever context. It is the latter clause that renders the right absurd for it surpasses the bounds of the real. The question is no longer the ontological weight of the image, but whether it is *still* imaginable. However, remember the dictum that only what can be posted and shared is real: Is there anything imaginable beyond

that Real? Shapira's strategy is telling. He would take the incriminating photo of anyone off the site, if the person expresses her regret to have grinned at the holocaust victims. Thus, he (Shapira) proves that reality is visually constructed and/or deconstructed.[14] The imaginable is only subservient to that virtual reality: the imaginary and the Real once again merge. In other words, the virtual has no alternative, not even the *un*imaginable. For as soon as we would think of anything beyond visibility, it becomes imageable. We have seen that imaging as monstration is like a declarative speech act: it confers existence on what it shows. Now we see the opposite: erasing from visibility deprives the scene of existence.

The same process of coming into and going out of existence through visibility in our culture from sex and post-orgasmic selfies to crying ones: becoming an image confers existence, but it can also drive someone out of existence. Sites like the Blue Whale most recently incite to post images of self-inflicted wounds more and more serious until the person is ready to commit suicide online. Visibility is now I contend in the state of a "logical" apocalypse:[15] anything is visible because anything is imaginable, and vice versa. In the context of the apocalypse of visibility, anything can be shown and can be revoked. No wonder that the Holocaust images have caused so much trouble, for they either provoke iconophobia or invite hypertrophy to amend them, "to see everything in them," which means iconolatry, "*icons* of horror" (Didi-Huberman 2008, 34). The argument is clear: images like photographs should be directly – that is, without interpretative tools – recognizable. And rightly so. The trend in digital technology has almost exclusively been to improve the visibility – that is, the graphics – of the images. What a picture shows should be anything but vague, blurred or undiscernible, and last but not least, it should not indicate or attest in any way to the context of its making. It is why the first doctoring of the Auschwitz photos was to crop the black framing that indicated how the photos were "snatched from reality." If they became indeed "icons of horror" purged of everything *in*visible in the original copies, it is all the more surprising why Didi-Huberman says of the latter that they – not the retouched versions – both "*address the unimaginable, and refute it*" (2008, 19).

14 The French satirical weekly magazine, Charlie Hebdo follows a similar policy when mocking the main tenets of Islamic belief. The line is that nothing is taboo: anything can be shown in any context. Whether we laugh at a Hebdo comic or feel shocked by a Yolocaust image of grinning youngsters depends purely on the ethical or ideological frame of mind of the viewer: the images themselves are not ethically or ideologically laden.

15 By "logical" apocalypse I mean apocalypse à la logic: a situation in logic when from a (true) proposition anything follows, even its opposite.

The reason, I think, lies in the attempt to evade the apocalypse of the visible. While he may be right in claiming a middle ground between pure indexicality and the right to visibility, the thought, that (only) the four photos that are "snatched from reality" can address the unimaginable, is highly debatable. The explanation he comes up with is the idea of the image as montage that he borrows from Eisenstein. For Didi-Huberman to show is to put what is shown into relation, to (re-)contextualize it. In other words, the visible is never recognizable *per se*: it always relates to the (un)imaginable in the mind of its viewers. What makes the Auschwitz photos so special is that they establish a relation between the hardly visible or blurred and the *un*imaginable, the traumatic that is so horrific that it is forgotten and the image brings it into memory. It is the "*mémoire involuntaire*," the mental image thus excavated from the layers of the unimaginable that is horrific, not the real image, the photo. Yes, it is the real event of the holocaust that is horrendous.

The question that we should ask is this: why is it that only the *un*doctored, blurred images can relate us to the *un*remembered event? Why cannot a graphically impeccable image uncover hidden memories of the past? However, it is not precisely what I would like to address in the last part of the present paper, for it has a negative presupposition that high visibility cannot evoke unwanted memories. Although I am sceptical whether it can, I do not have any perspicuous argument to prove it cannot. Instead, I would like to argue that images, where – to different degrees – there is a lack of recognizable things to see, *can* relate us to the *unthought* or non-thinkable, whatever it may mean. Not because the blurred image and the unthought are analogical in that they are both unformed in some way. The cognitive route from the image of the unrecognizable to the *un*imaginable is far more complex.

3. The Unimaginable as Visible Content: Pure Sensation

First, it should be noted that the prohibition to show versus monstration bears an analogy with Foucault's definition of discourse. Iconophobia defines and redefines not only the imaginable, but also the thinkable. There is an even stronger analogy with Lyotard's *figures of discourse* that testify and govern the pertinence of concepts, of what is thinkable. "A figure is defined as a visual or textual element that permanently transforms some way of thinking, reformulates a concept, changes or decides the meaning of a descriptive category." (Leśniak 2013, 187.) The term "figure" is used in an entirely different way to the

figurative understanding of images that any kind of "doctoring" is aimed at. On the contrary, figure here refers to an element that works against the polished, graphically impeccable image by unsettling or unfolding the basic concepts of thought. The operation is amply discussed in French philosophy from Foucault, Lyotard to Deleuze, Lévinas even if under very different names with divergent senses. Didi-Huberman borrows the idea of montage from Eisenstein only to state that the images, while reveal one thing, cover up another thing: in part they represent truth, in another part they are fiction. They are like folds: they should be unfolded.[16] But what matters here is not so much the creative potential of images as figures; it is the idea that what sets the disruptive process of thought in motion is always the physical or sensible material, like the black frames of the Auschwitz photos, which were first cropped. It is the "material practices and formal qualities of representation [that] influence the operation of the basic concepts of thought defining the thinking on the Holocaust" (Leśniak 2013, 188). But what should we understand by "sensible materiality" that disfigures (in) the image? Didi-Huberman speaks about the *lacunary nature of images:* "there is an incapacity of the image to transmit all of the real." The image is an image *despite* the fact that "not *all the real* is solvable in the visible" and "there is an incapacity of the image to transmit *all of the real*" (2008, 59).

It is a thesis about the extension of the word "image," while the intension is unmodified: it is an indexical relation to the real, to what is happening. He wants to overcome the unimaginable by *looking* at the photos where there is a lack of things to see. But he would never go so far as to say that the sensible materiality of the image *mediates* between imagination and the eyes. Neither would he agree that unforgetting requires the retraining of the eyes.[17] Following Leśniak I would argue instead that the formal-material qualities of the image *precede* any ethical and political understanding, precisely because the understanding of visual figures becomes indeterminate, unstable *because of* the physicality of the image, which, in turn, evokes desire in the viewer.[18]

16 Cf. "La même image nous montre quelque chose et nous cache quelque chose en même temps. Ici elle révèle et là elle replie. Elle porte une certaine vérité et elle apporte une certaine fiction. Elle a donc elle-même la structure d'un pli." (Didi-Huberman 2011, 16.)

17 Retraining is a term used by Taberham (2013) with reference to experimental film making, especially Stan Brakhage's embryonic vision when figurative understanding is subjected to the formal-textural qualities of the image. The term can be given a wider meaning by applying it to the formal-material qualities of the image vis-à-vis categorical perception.

18 Lésniak follows Rancière in his pursuit of a psychoanalytic critique of aesthetic form as defining what is thinkable. He defines visuality on the basis of visual experience acknowledging that what is imaginable is always already conditioned by material practices, but he never actually asks "how thought is present within sensible materiality" (2013, 187).

At this point I leave the critical line launched *from within* the paradigm of visuality in order to turn to the second line of criticism mentioned at the beginning of the paper that focuses on the emergence of the other senses. The criticism of visuality grounded on the pertinence of the other senses can be used in favour of a visuality that I have defined indeterminate synaesthesia further above, as one of the poles of a gradual scale of normal and simulated visual perception that ranges from the pure perception of sensory qualities to categorical perception. Determinate synaesthesia occurs possibly, when all the senses come together in the categorical or figurative perception of an object or scene. At the other extreme we find what Laura Marks (2000) and others call haptic vision, when the other senses are not directly activated, but are evoked *in absentia* of the perceived object. Roughly put, we can formulate the principle that the more blurred the object of vision is, the more haptic the sensation becomes. Consequently, the other sensations become more vivid as well. We may feel prompted to say that full – here indeterminate – synaesthesia mobilizes the other senses in order to compensate for, or even regain, the imaginable: the object that is perceptively "lacking" in the image.[19] If the image is an image *in spite of all*, that is because it cannot represent the totality of truth, as Didi-Huberman says, it must be an image *minus* (parts of) reality. Not necessarily *all* of reality. Didi-Huberman preserves a residual indexicality of the image, a partial ontology that justifies images like the Auschwitz photos "snatched from the real." He, however, never goes so far as to demand a retraining of the eyes. He does not look for radical sensation. Instead, he aligns with Walter Benjamin, Hans Belting and other aestheticians of the image in that "an image is made to be looked at by others, to snatch from human thought in general, thought from 'outside,' something *imaginable* that no one until then had even conceived as possible" (Didi-Huberman 2008, 6). While the lacunary nature of the image for him is an instigation to imagine the unimaginable, or to obliterate the obliteration, what is "too monstrous to believe," haptic visuality is a gateway toward the Other's singularity, which cannot be conquered or imagined, but only infinitely approached, intransitively and intimately perceived. For it is not only the traumatic, the horrendous that constitute the unimaginable: what is intimate or intraceptively perceived is equally unimaginable. Yet there is a difference between the unthinkable or unimaginable and the invisible: what is *un*thinkable is a question of political, ethical law like the inarticulate cries and

19 It can also be argued that there is an evolutionary reason for that compensation: the camouflaged (also called peekaboo) situations, where our ancestors had to identify the predators by some reduced stimuli. Had it been otherwise, most probably we would not be here now.

silences of the Shoa, the sheer enormity of the crime, an extendable reality of the image of what has *happened.* What is invisible calls for an intensified perception, an indeterminate synaesthesia of the other senses rather than an extra run of the imagination. The unimaginable correlates with verbal testimony: it is impossible to imagine, there is no proper image, no imagination of the Shoa. But "one must imagine" (Didi-Huberman 2008, 39) in spite of all. Where does this "must" come from? Is it the ethics of the gaze or the image? Didi-Huberman argues, it is the calm but hazy zone of the eye of the hurricane. But maybe it is better to say that it is the blindspot of the eye, or the eye itself invisible to the seer: his or her position on the ground (like the threshold of the gas chamber) and we as viewers must necessarily look into *that* eye, the Face of the portrait that looks at us.

Haptic vision and moving images, where there is a lack of things to see, constitute another "extendable" reality. The images, instead of instigating to imagine the unimaginable, call for a kind of "pure" perception, where instead of the absolute object Wajcman introduces in criticizing Didi-Huberman, the haptic vision and indeterminate synaesthesia extending the visible toward the invisible, rather than the unimaginable. While the Absolute Object constitutes the universal truth excluding everything that is imaginable, the Face is the singular and irreplaceable Other, the Unthought, which empties our perception of the categorical and challenges all imagination. If it was said earlier of imagination that there is more than meets the eye, now we can say of visual perception that there is more than meets the imagination. Radically speaking, there is no image but beyond the canonical visible/legible opposition.

To finish, let me draw a matrix of four slots representing pairwise the two basic optional interpretations of images, which are in some way "deviant." Such images exemplify what I have called the paradox of visibility (and *in*visibility). They constitute a binary alternative of visual understanding:

> A) snatching from an otherwise *visible external reality*: here belongs any image that preserves a residual indexicality (an indexical sign of its production), like the Auschwitz photos, which challenge the imagination. Prototypical examples are the animated documentary *Silence* about the Shoa (Sylvie Bringas and Orly Yadin, 1998) or other animated documentaries, which address
>
> B) traumatic experience as an otherwise *unimaginable internal reality* like the life in the concentration camps, sexual abuse in family, physical tortures and other horrifying events;

C) displaying an otherwise *invisible reality*: here belongs any image, which is grainy, blurred, or hardly legible, which is detached from ontological sources and which addresses

D) as an otherwise *unimaginable internal reality*, a unique and intimate experience like the transcendental relationship of the old couple in Michael Haneke's *Amour* (2012) or the intimately carnal relationship of the young couple in Ashley Horner's *Brilliantlove* (2010).

In (A) iconophobia is a reaction to the visible, which is unbearable, for there is far too much to see. Elem Klimov's *Come and See* (*Idi i smotri*, 1985) is a neat example. It also indicates that showing less than the "absolute truth" is either an intentional choice or one enforced by the circumstances. By transcending iconophobia in the other direction (not the "iconolatry" of *Come and See*), we have the option to show (B) what otherwise would be confined to eternal forgetting. In (C) iconolatry is a reaction to iconophobia, the impossibility to show the unimaginable. It is the power to show what otherwise cannot be shown like the *corpus delicti* in the enlarged photographs in Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966). Transcending iconolatry can lead to (D) the experience of singularity and uniqueness. To show less than the whole truth here is a natural, rather than an intentional choice.

The condition of showing less than the whole truth to the limit of unrecognizability, when there are no things to see, is not mandatory, however. For example, the fluttering butterflies in *The Duke of Burgundy* (Peter Strickland, 2012) or the naked bodies in the exhibited photos in *Brilliantlove* are images of lesbian and heterosexual intimacy. They are *not* metaphors but literal images, which through their extremely sensual nature (the images of the butterflies in Strickland's film are coupled with the strident noise of fluttering wings intensifying the haptic effect) synesthetically induce, or even cause, the experience of singularity in the viewer. In other words, the viewer is affected by the images through embodied perception in her own body. Although I would not exclude in principle a similar highly sensual experience in the case of the Auschwitz images and their likes, I am inclined to correlate the first alternative of visual understanding with the imaginable/unimaginable axis. The second I assign to the sensible-sensual/imperceptible-transcendent. But in sum, together they constitute the axes of the paradox of visibility.

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The Postcolonial Self and the Other in Béla Tarr's *Werckmeister Harmonies*

Lucian Tion
University of Singapore
E-mail: tionfiul@yahoo.com

Abstract: This work sets off to offer a polemical response to postcolonialist theories advanced by Homi Bhabha in his seminal work *The Location of Culture*, particularly to Bhabha's famous notions of *ambivalence* and *mimicry* purportedly used as methods of struggle against colonialism. Reading Béla Tarr's film *Werckmeister Harmonies (Werckmeister harmóniák*, 2000*)* as an allegory for the colonization of a former colonial agent in the guise of an ambiguously framed post-imperial Hungary now on the eve of Soviet invasion, I turn Bhabha's notions on their heads, and thus de-stereotype the simplistic hierarchy that sees the colonial agent dominate the colonized subject in a top-down approach. To achieve this, I bring into play Kuan-Hsing Chen's notion of deimperialization as well as the psychoanalysis of Octave Mannoni in order to show that rather than being a straightforward misreading of the Other by an uninformed Self, the relationship between colonized and colonizer appears more like a failed attempt at acquiring the most basic knowledge of the psychological functioning of the Self on both sides of the colonized/ colonizer divide.

Keywords: Bhabha, Tarr, postcolonial, Hungary, Werckmeister.

Greatly simplified, the central argument in Homi Bhabha's (2006) postcolonial theory is that the "East" and the "West" cannot and should not continue to be regarded as disparate entities that came to a thunderous clash during the colonial period, but rather that both are ambiguous notions that, from a cultural point of view, have significantly interpenetrated each other and continue to do so. As part of this process, Bhabha claims, the "East" internalized the images and practices of their former colonial masters, following which, the colonized world, heretofore prey to both cultural and psychological ambivalence, was forced to undergo a schizoid split that was best resolved by its resorting to mimicry – among others – as a means of resistance.

While I recognize the limited usefulness and undeniable veracity of this argument, I contend that exclusive focus on the methods of anti-colonialist struggle undertaken by and from the point of view of "Eastern" nations after their gaining of independence (ranging from armed struggle to mimicry) contributes to a further misunderstanding of the colonizer-colonized divide just as the Eurocentric postcolonial theory alone in the fait-accompli political status-quo of postcolonialism continues to biasedly tilt the balance in favour of the West.

As an alternative, I propose that the initial contact between colonizer and colonized deserves renewed analysis in order for us to understand the psychology of both sides involved in the equation. Particularly, and unlike most postcolonial theorists who focus on the tragic condition of the colonized subject, among which Bhabha features prominently, I argue that more attention should be given to the image of the colonizer, a subject, which was transformed over time into the stereotyped figure of the strong, dominant white male of Western-based stock, irresolutely led by an iron will to dominate and control. Far from sounding an apology to colonialism, and perfectly aware that the colonized subject – as Bhabha rightly observes – fell equally prey to heavy stereotyping, I argue that breaking these stereotypes is sine qua non to understanding the psychology of the colonial divide, and moreover, that in order to break these stereotypes one needs to address the moment, conditions, and mentality of the colonist at the ill-fated moment when colonialism began.

Even though the analysis is worth applying across the spectrum to the postcolonial world from Africa to Australia, in order to shed additional light on – as well as to raise the stakes of – postcolonialist discourse as it has been understood so far in terms of Westerners colonizing Easterners, in this paper I will drastically shift the geographical (as well as ideological) frameset to focus on Hungary, a country which had the (somewhat baffling) opportunity to play both the colonizer *and* colonized roles in the timeframe of well under fifty years; and a text that offers a unique reading of this predicament: Béla Tarr's *Werckmeister Harmonies* – a much (mis)interpreted ode to mystery, which I will attempt to unravel with the intent of highlighting the larger complexity inherent in postcolonialist theory in general.

To do so, I start by engaging with Bhabha's theory of ambivalence and mimicry, to which I later oppose the quasi-forgotten psychoanalytical theories of Octave Mannoni. Although susceptible of racism by today's standards, Mannoni's writings constitute – I argue – an interesting backdrop to Bhabha's, not only because they focus on the psychology of the first-time stand-off between the

West and the "Other," but also because they belong to a point in time when postcolonial studies were only beginning to emerge as an academic field. Thus, Mannoni offers the somewhat "raw" edge of postcolonial studies, which had not yet been smoothed over by the later theoretical sophistication of writers such as Edward Said (1991), Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1999). To round up my alternative reading of postcolonial ambivalence, I bring in the argument for deimperialization put forth by Kuan-Hsing Chen, which I also use as an introduction to the discussion of Hungary's role as an in-between space, that will hopefully put a new angle on ambivalence as understood by Bhabha.

In the second half of the paper I move into an in-depth analysis of Béla Tarr's film, pinpointing the failings of Bhabha's theory to address the pragmatics of "real world" postcolonial politics, claiming that, ironically, Tarr's symbolism stands a better, if grimmer chance to represent postcolonial ambivalence than Bhabha's theory. While praising Bhabha's theoretical acumen minus his idealistic angle, I finally and briefly turn to Jean Luc Nancy and Luce Irigaray, both of whom I read as proposing a more realistic alternative to an otherwise perfectly valid ambivalence.

In his watershed critique of colonialism espoused in *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha correctly identifies the colonizer's reliance on "differentiation" as a means to the production of racist political policy: "The construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse, demands an articulation of forms of difference – racial and sexual," Bhabha irrefutably argues, from where it follows that "the epithets racial or sexual come to be seen as modes of differentiation" (Bhabha 2006, 96). Furthermore, Bhabha moves on to correctly identify that the dichotomy between racial "superior" and "inferior" was enforced by colonial powers to such a degree that modernity itself seems to originate in the idea of civility, of being superior to the colonized Other: "Thus the political and theoretical genealogy of modernity lies not only in the origins of the idea of civility, but in this history of the colonial moment" (2006, 48).

Continuing from this position, Bhabha's placement of the colonial subject at the bottom of the social hierarchy set into place by the colonial powers allows him to formulate his famous theory of ambivalence, whereby the colonized was seen as "simultaneously embracing two contradictory beliefs" (2006, 115), which are, of course, those of the autochthonous, pre-colonial times, and those imposed by the colonizers.

Without refuting any of the valid arguments detailed above, my critique is centred on one question: Why, with such a clearly demarcating setup between Self and Other in place, and so much power endowed to the figure of the agent

of colonialism, does Bhabha largely leave untouched the very figure of this agent in most of his postcolonial theoretical writings, even more so when the colonist himself was the harbinger of modernity?

In his famous chapter *Of Mimicry and Man,* Bhabha uses Lacan's notion of the Imaginary (corresponding roughly to the early formation of the ego in Freudian terms), stating that there are "two forms of identification complicit with the Imaginary – narcissism and aggressivity," which, he argues are "precisely [the] two forms of identification that constitute the dominant strategy of colonial power" (2006, 110). By paralleling the Lacanian mirror stage in the ego's development to the discovery of the Other by the Westerner and vice versa, Bhabha leads us to infer that the alienation experienced by the Other in the relationship with the colonial power imbues the Other with an ambivalence between a desire for sameness and a consciousness of difference, which ends up leaving the Other in a state of what Bhabha calls using Lacanian terminology "lack."

This is a central issue in the argument as this "lack" is repeatedly invoked by Bhabha as a paramount reason for the Other's pursuing of the action of "mimicry" in response to – we understand – the forced need of integration of the colonized subject into both the colonial and the postcolonial world (2006, 107). This contrasts to other interpretations resulting from "lack," which a theorist like Kuan-Hsing Chen (2010) simply refers to as "frustration" and "resentment," and which Nancy (2002) calls "passing between," as in the meaning that gets lost in (un)attempted communication.

Be that as it may, Bhabha identifies the most important reaction to colonization as that of mimicry. Mimicry according to Bhabha carried along, at least at first, a sense of mockery. To illustrate this, he quotes Naipaul, who reminisces on his past as a child growing up under colonial rule: "We pretended to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New World" (2006, 125). However, what for Bhabha in the beginning had only a parodic effect, the mocking and authority-disruptive function of mimicry (2006, 126) seems to have transmuted into a plain Baudrillardian simulacrum (1994) in the postcolonial era, in which the mockery edge of mimicry was carefully polished off.

While Bhabha correctly notices that whole sections of colonized populations used mimicry to get ahead in a (recently made) "white world" by copying "white ways" while simultaneously making a fool out of the material that is mimicked, it seems that *post*colonial societies adapted (and adopted) – sometimes wholesale – pieces of legislature, political organizations, and, most certainly, economic policies exclusively used beforehand by the colonizer. Therefore, isn't it safe

to assume that mimicry in post-colonialism lost its mockery angle altogether to become a tool for development, industrialization and modernization that ex-colonial subjects have eagerly and unabatingly embraced? Furthermore, hasn't the post-colonial world lost the ambivalence that Bhabha identified as a result of Lacanian "lack?" And hasn't mimicry as a subtle tool for building identification that used to offer ex-colonial societies respite from an overdrawn and anxiety-ridden identity crisis, disappeared to usher in the repercussions and effects of the same now unresolved crisis?

It becomes more and more evident that postcolonialism is an age of post-mimicry, since mimicry itself became the sacred agent of capitalism in decolonized postcolonial societies. It is my contention, therefore that Bhabha's notion of mimicry in postcolonial capitalist systems changed roles from being a parodic tool to becoming an object of quasi-veneration by allowing the formerly vilified Other to engage in a role-reversal process of simulation as symbolic punishment for the intrusion of colonialism. In other words, postcolonialism, in the time-honoured fashion in which any revolution is fated to devour its own children, turned colonialist tactics into its own weapons, promoting a weapon of resistance into the seat of power, and ultimately into the means of domination. I am speaking, of course, of the transfer and transformation of capitalism from a mode of exploitation to a mode of production, and from a weapon for conquering without to one of dominating within.

Finally, to return to the second term of the equation, which was left out throughout Bhabha's narrative by way of an issue which, as we shall see, will become central to Chen's argumentation: Wouldn't the perceived absence of the Other from the colonizer's sphere of influence mirror the same psychological "lack" experienced by the Other for his old colonial master during colonial times? And how were the colonizer's Self and the Other constituted before their encounter took place, if this was as influential on their subsequent constitutions as Bhabha claims it was, and rightfully so?

If Bhabha does not address this question, it is because he considers that the contact between colonizer and colonized led to an ambivalence, which forever changed, for better or worse, the identity of the parties involved; an ambivalence we should alone try to first accept and later understand. Therefore, unlike Chen, who makes it his business to focus on the repercussions following this contact, Bhabha does not consider the causes to be as significant as the effects, valuing pure acceptance over reason. However, I claim that in order to understand this postcolonial ambivalence as Bhabha wants us to, it is essential that we first

understand why the fateful encounter between the two parties ever took place in the first place.

It almost goes without saying that the real crisis of postcolonialism does not lay in the rebuilding of an identity that has been irremediably lost to the cruel rape of colonialism anymore, which practically helped efface the former identity of colonial subjects through a capitalism subsequently encouraged and enforced by the very subjects it was formerly forced upon. It has become apparent rather that the crisis has never left the (psychological) space of the colonizing subject – the white male colonizer – who was the promoter of these values in the first place. Moreover, it seems that the moment when this crisis first reared its head was during the pre-colonial age of Enlightenment, more precisely, during the very moment of encounter between what I shall heretofore call the European "Self" and the "Other," a contact which offered both parties a unique opportunity to enter into a precious relationship of knowledge with themselves.

However, as history itself stands to prove it, it is relatively clear to see that this opportunity was wasted, and the encounter ended for both the colonizing white male as well as for the colonized subject in total failure: Failure in attaining knowledge of the Other (on both sides of the divide), as well as failure of attaining self-knowledge. The lack of cooperation and the breakdown in communication, which later became a staple of colonialism is thus, I contend, not necessarily only a failure to understand the Other, but the more tragic flaw of not understanding the Self.

There is consequently some room for doubt that the solution to postcolonial resentment characterizing decolonized societies will spring from an understating of "ambivalence" or "mimicry." It seems rather that these otherwise valid and altogether real values have currently become so ingrained in a postcolonial *modus operandi* that it is difficult to tell them apart. And even if we *were* able to identify them, it seems hardly likely in a capitalism embraced more aggressively by the ex-colonized than by their former masters that these concepts would become useful in shedding light on the still subsiding differences between the irking categories of the "West" and the "Third World." Just as no unrequited relationship (of love or colonization) would be fairly judged without examining the intentions and feelings of both parties, an analysis of the typologies of both sides involved in the colonial discourse needs further undertaking. In order to perform such an analysis, I shall finally turn to Kuan-Hsing Chen's theory of deimperialization.

Speaking about Asia and Taiwan in particular, Chen contends that in the

aftermath of colonialism "The West," as much as "The East," are responsible for doing some individual soul-searching in order to properly understand the reasons for, and the effects of actions undertaken during colonialism: "Postcolonial cultural studies is at an impasse," Chen writes: "the central problem lies in its obsessive critique of the West, which bounds the field by the object of its own criticism" (2010, 1), and his study entitled *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* is a veritable textbook for dealing with colonial-generated trauma in need of confrontation. However, unlike other theorists focusing on a militant approach replete with criticism of the West, Chen suggests that the West itself was traumatized by the loss of the colonial sphere of influence, as much as the East was shattered by Western interference.

He then proceeds to suggest that the work of decolonization hinted at above, while absolutely necessary, will not bear fruit alone, without a parallel work of what he calls deimperialization, a process produced in the centres of power of the former colonizers that needs to be experienced in tandem with that of decolonization. Thus, the loci of economic as well as symbolic power encapsulated in such notions of topoi as "London" or "Paris" would need to undergo a semantic transformation that would lead to a *de facto* renunciation of power. Nothing but a symbolic as well as practical ideological cleansing, Chen argues, would render the loaded notions of these psychologically-charged geographies neutral again.[1]

Chen holds that the nationalist response to postcolonialism that many Asian countries quickly jumped to embrace in the wake of independence acts as nothing but a stumbling block to these countries' sharing, but, more tragically, gaining of knowledge of the region and of themselves. He further argues that in order to move forward, a nation needs to examine, not negate nationalism (Chen 2010, ix), as well as to "move beyond the limits of colonial identification on the one hand, and the postcolonial politics of resentment on the other hand" (Chen 2010, xiii). Ironically, Chen's is the same project that Bhabha holds as paramount to understanding the postmodern postcolonial world. However, unlike Chen, despite his striding both worlds he is trying to bring to coexist peacefully, Bhabha fails to see the enormous fear, self-blame, and disorientation that the West, along with the East, was experiencing at the dawn of the postcolonialist era. Influenced

1 The perfect example of deimperialization not taking place after decolonization is currently (not) going on in Russia, itself a part of the unofficial former Soviet empire that Tarr's film deals with as we shall soon see. With Moscow adamant to renounce ideological power over its former yet unacknowledged colonies (some of which were *de facto* incorporated into the USSR), a current trend of resurging claims over territories adjacent thereto led to annexation and war in one area, and involvement in other wars of supposed "spheres of influence."

by the ideology of armed revolutionary struggle promoted by Franz Fanon (1968), which was only too understandable at the time, Bhabha seems to at least partially get caught in the quagmires of resentment that Chen warns against. Therefore, Bhabha fails to identify that a probable cause for the West's unwillingness to give up the seat of symbolic power Chen clearly sees as a continuing source of discord, stems from the West's own difficulty of processing the repercussions of trauma related to the ambiguous as well as ambivalent colonialist project. Therefore, it is paramount, I argue, not only to understand the postcolonial condition in general, but to analyse the roots of the process that led to its appearance in the first place. More taken for granted than actually discussed within the field of postcolonial studies, the remaining part of this paper attempts an analysis of this process.

"I was forced to realize that the colonials were reluctant to admit that they understood the native as well as they in fact did," writes Mannoni in 1956, "and I saw that the problem for human beings, however much they differed from one another, was to acquire, not the ability but the will to understand each other" (1956, 34). Maybe I should have used this quote belonging to Octave Mannoni to start off this paper. However, Mannoni's falling into disrepute due to his ambiguous, if not racist take on colonialism at the time of his writing in the mid-fifties, when the West was in full process of decolonization, risked to put an overly essentialistic, if not dangerous twist on my argument. The reality is that Mannoni, a French psychoanalyst, who spent half of his life in colonial Madagascar before independence, is one of the first products of nascent postcolonialism who, heavily influenced by Freudian, Adlerian and Jungian theories, dared to bring, albeit with some naïveté, the figure of the colonizer back into the equation, a move largely avoided by later theorists of either Western or Eastern origin.

Writing, as stated, during a transitional time, when neither attitudes nor terminology were still firmly in place (he uses the term "racialist" to refer to "racism"), Mannoni, however, plunges deep into psychoanalysis to examine the contact – particularly the first-time contact – between the white and black races with some (to say the least) curious conclusions.

One of the first concepts he unearths during his analysis of tribal societies along the Malagasy of Madagascar due to the all but forgotten work of German psychoanalyst Fritz Kunkel is that "primitive" societies (I use the same inverted commas as Mannoni) are based on psychological dependence, in the sense that family kinship alters the structure of society altogether, turning humans very reliant on both the other members of society, as well as on the parental couple (1956, 63). Not a stranger to this concept, the modern white man, Mannoni writes,

traded abandonment of the family (or the family's abandonment of himself) for "progress," which Mannoni identifies as an advantage over the "weakness" of the "primitive" society, which the white colonizer exploited.

What he proceeds to say after this quasi imperialist blurt, however, is interesting: A reverse view of dependence seen from the Malagasy point of view – thus, the *in*dependence of the white male – signifies the absence of a soul. For the Malagasy, the soul resides in the very dependence of the members of the commune upon one another, and it manifests itself in the dependence on the parental couple and veneration of the ancestors, which are both absent in the "independent" European. Thus, to the Malagasy it is the European who has the inferiority complex, and not the other way around (Mannoni 1956, 74).

In continuation to this argument, Mannoni proceeds to look at literature as a paradigm for his theory, in essence identifying an extension thereof. Using Daniel Defoe (1883) as a metaphor, Mannoni suggests that the impulse for colonial exploration came from what he calls a "misanthropic neurosis," the cure of which is the process of self-negating and self-testing, which proceeds to bring out the self in a reinforced state, and in a position to rule over others. In other words, Mannoni contends that the colonial sought to invest the self with power that would ultimately bury the initial neurosis (1956, 100), and even the possible inferiority complex sprung from the dependence on the parental relationship. (Recall Robinson's break with his father's command to stay away from the sea, and, how when the storm hits, he feels he is punished by heaven.) Ruling over others is therefore an extension, and externalization of a distorted attempt at ruling over the self. And winning the fight over the Other is thus but an illusory confirmation of self-control.

The European in relation to the Malagasy is therefore a person in conflict with his own soul (might we dare to read *Self*?) because of the (Western) society-imposed dictate that forces one to acquire independence. This can only be carried out by severing what for the Malagasy is considered sacred dependence on the parents. Therefore, from this angle, colonialism emerges as a childish phantasy of an adult, who hasn't emotionally grown up. Possibly rooted in an unsatisfied child's desire to escape his environment, whether this be the father's authority or that of civilization as a whole, what Western critical literature extolled as the "initiatory voyage" might be, in Mannoni's reading, "a flight from mankind," along which any "intrusion must be guarded against" (1956, 101). He goes so far as to read "some of the semi-human creatures the unconscious creates, such as Caliban or the Lilliputians [as] their creator's desire to denigrate the whole

of mankind" (1956, 101). "The 'case' of Defoe," Mannoni writes, "is one of misanthropy, melancholy, a pathological need for solitude, the projection of his faults on to others, [and] a sense of guilt towards his father" (1956, 103).

To finish, Mannoni takes his own version of Freudian theory to its logical conclusion, namely that the encounter with the Other, which invariably takes place during this infantile flight, becomes a projection "on to the colonial inhabitant [of] our deeply-hidden fears and desires" (1956, 198). Interestingly, Mannoni also hints that being confronted with the Other for the first time (a moment which he aptly terms "the beginning of all misunderstandings between human beings") can also become the source of powerful revelations, as "sometimes, before this highly revealing mirror, the white man comes to see himself as he really is." But he warns that "very few men are capable, when they are at length obliged to acknowledge the existence of other people, of recognizing in themselves what they never suspected was there, without an outburst of the fear, hatred, or harshness they had directed towards an aspect of themselves, which in very truth they had wanted to ignore" (1956, 199). Wouldn't it be interesting to reconsider Bhabha's theory of ambivalence at this stage with the concepts of parent-related guilt, escapism and self-conflict thrown in together with the already present colonized trauma and dependency?

So, in the end, what had started out as a flight from inadequacy and inferiority turns into a monstrous projection of the very fear the white colonizer was trying to escape. Although Eurocentric and controversial, Mannoni acknowledges in his last chapter optimistically entitled *The Unity of Mankind* that "by and large our image of [the colonized] is simply a reflection of our own inner difficulties [...] and the racialist reactions of the white man to the black are the product of elements already present in his psyche" (1956, 197). So, it comes as no surprise that Mannoni concludes his analysis with the chilling claim, which today would hardly see the light of day without the tag of racism quickly attached hereto, namely that in the black man the white man "reveals his secret self, not as he is, but rather as he fears he may be. The negro, then, is the white man's fear of himself" (1956, 200).

Although, as Fanon (1968) correctly pointed out in his criticism of Mannoni, the latter fails to understand the colonial subject almost entirely, and is misguided in his Eurocentric apprehensions thereof (Chassler 2007), Mannoni's book dares to approach colonialism from the (until then) untried psychological tradition, and by doing so, opens a road, which does not seem to have been much trodden after the collapse of colonialism, when postcolonial studies – itself a field ridden

with self-protective political correctness – did not allow much daring theoretical speculation to be woven around a very polarized dichotomy.

Moreover, it seems that Mannoni's vilified Eurocentric attitude still represents a point of departure for the more contemporary postcolonial theories of Nancy and Irigaray (2002). Even though neither of the two theorists is considered primarily a postcolonial writer, with Nancy coming from a philosophical tradition and Irigaray from that of feminist studies, both Nancy's theory of "being with" and Irigaray's emphasis on co-being, as we shall see, owe their repositioning of the Self-Other relationship, among others, to Mannoni's psychoanalytical work. Moreover, it is the rifts that Mannoni makes evident in his analysis of the colonial self and the foreshadowing of a pre-colonial condition characterized by inner conflict that brings Freudian projection into postcolonial studies. Thanks to Mannoni we may begin to reconsider the firm teleology we nowadays attach to the colonial project, at least in its opening phases. And finally, Mannoni helps us understand, I argue, that the colonial Self is not a machine-like, simplistic entity guided by the self-righteous precepts of a *mission civilisatrice*, which is somehow innate to the white Western colonizer. If we allow Mannoni the mistakes inherent in his time, we might even be able to see him as a precursor of Bhabha's ambivalent condition, to which the angle of human emotion, contingency and uncertainty can finally (and most necessarily) be brought into play alongside the circumstances surrounding the ill-fated relationship between the West and the Other. Far from being a closed case of predetermined fate, as Enlightenment ironically started to think of it thereafter, the hierarchic relationship between Self and Other, as seen through Mannoni, temporarily reveals its self-questioning and self-doubting character, which never entirely left the racial divide thereafter. However, only by reverting to a time prior to colonization, and by plunging into an analysis of the determinately more complex surroundings of the initial phases of colonialism, can we hope to understand why Bhabha's otherwise valid ambivalence takes the form that it does today. Weaving together the loose ends of contemporary postcolonialist discourse becomes therefore directly contingent on our understanding of earlier theorists and schools of thought that, in the manner of Nancy and Irigaray, necessarily pit against one another opposing concepts in order to sublimate them into a later coexistence.

So far, we explored the hypotheses that the subconscious fear of the Self may be actualized in colonialist representation as dominion over the Other; as well as the political theory of the Self and the Other as loci of the "folding" of projection and raised the question of whether unfolding was reversible and under what

circumstances. In the following I would like to simplify the picture by cutting out the projection of the Other from the equation altogether, and focusing exclusively on the (colonial) Self in the process of decolonization – thus at the stage of the unfolding of projection (in Mannoni's terminology) or qua deimperialization (if we are to follow Chen).

For this reason, I am positioning the Hungarian space as a possible topos, where one could look at the Self and Other as identical, the argument being that, historically speaking, Hungary has fulfilled both the role of the colonizer (during its association with the long-lived Austro-Hungarian Empire) *and* colonized after the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe completed in 1949, and particularly after the bloody repression of the Hungarian uprising of 1956. In order to undertake such analysis, I portend that cinema, and not necessarily only postcolonial cinema specifically addressing issues raised or effected by postcolonialism, but the cinema of such apparently disconnected auteurs as Béla Tarr constitutes a powerful tool of investigation of the relationship between Self and Other in the colonial/postcolonial context.

Combining Chen's political proposition with Mannoni's psychological position provide me with an entry point for my analysis of *Werckmeister Harmonies*, which I read as an alternative to Bhabha's space of ambivalent in-betweenness. While Chen uses the geographical space of "Asia" as a conceptual label to engender future understanding of the disparate selves of separate Asian countries affected by colonialism, I argue that Tarr's film similarly acts as a call for self-knowledge in the likewise fragmented space of Eastern Europe.

Ignored by postcolonial studies until the much-needed work of film theorists such as Anikó Imre (2016), Eastern Europe, and therefore intra-European colonization, has only recently been compared to the one that took place overseas.[2] Following this line of thought, my argument is that Eastern European history easily permits us to consider pre-World War I territories in this part of the world as colonial subjects under the suzerainty of the region's three major empires: the Tsarist Russian, the Ottoman, and the Austro-Hungarian with ensuing similar nationalisms surrounding the construction of their identities in the aftermath of WWII, just as in the Asian case.

I therefore posit that, even though not made apparent in the film, Hungary acts as a paradigm for any one of the multitude of "statelets" that make up the fabric of

2 For works arguing both for and against the integration of Eastern Europe into the broader area of postcolonial studies see the writings of Maria Todorova, Anikó Imre, Katherine Verdery, Michal Buchowski, Niel Lazarus, and the more foundational studies on Central-Eastern Europe by Larry Wolff, among many others.

multi-ethnic, conflict-prone Eastern Europe. Moreover, as noted above, to stage the ominous encounter between the Self and the Other in Hungary is to allow the Self to see itself as an Other, since post-WWII Hungary quickly changed tracks, turning from an ex-agent of colonialism into the victim of colonization. There is no better setting, therefore for the dramatic staging of both Bhabha's ambivalence, Mannoni's inner conflict, and Chen's concomitant decolonization and deimperialization.

Tarr sets the action of his film in a small Hungarian village absorbed in fog, as much as its inhabitants are absorbed in themselves. We descend into this seemingly isolated space situated somewhere in the infinite Hungarian plain through the eyes of János, a slow-witted, yet extra-perceptive young postman and errand-runner for György Eszter, a prominent representative of the now fallen-into-disrepute village aristocracy. In a village, where boredom reigns supreme and where everyone keeps themselves busy through either drink or by entertaining prophecies of impending doom, János and his employer seem the only "sane" pawns in an otherwise dangerous game played by the villagers as if in a stalemate with an ill-intentioned demiurge.

This becomes even more apparent with the arrival of a bizarre circus featuring the carcass of a dead whale and an enigmatic prince as attractions. Based on hearsay from a nearby village, where the circus had initially "performed," and where allegedly the church horologe was suddenly put into motion after hundreds of years of inactivity, the local doomsayers associate the circus with unmitigated disaster. Despite their warnings, János, the embodiment of curiosity *par excellence* dares to wander wide-eyed into the circus truck parked in the middle of the central square of the town.

The placement of this truck in the central square is far from incidental. Traditionally, town and city squares in Eastern Europe served as places for display, dissemination of information, exchange, gathering and communication. What I argue is that this particular setting in Tarr's movie acquires a double metaphorical significance. First, by virtue of its being centrally situated in the middle of the village, the square can be linked to the inner core of the community, and by extension, to the communal self-consciousness of an almost Freudian form of Ego. Furthermore, I argue that the open, agora-like nature of the village square engulfed in mist signifies the unknown nature of this conscience, and judging by the apprehensive way, in which the villagers approach the square in the final scene, the inability of the community to know its own collective self. The truck intruding into this space, therefore, serves as an invitation for the villagers to liaise not only with the unknown Other, but also with their own unexplored consciousness.

Additionally, there is more in the film to invite this particular reading. The object of attraction on display in the circus truck is a colossal whale. Aside from carrying implicit marks of exoticism, which create a further link between the circus and the mysterious Other, the whale taking up the space in the midst of the villagers' symbolic collective consciousness suddenly becomes an agent inviting the villagers down the path toward self-exploration. Suddenly, Mannoni's words ring prophetic, as we realize that the only way for the colonizers to acquire self-knowledge is through the intermediation of the (exotic) Other. Furthermore, the literal filling of the empty communal space with the arrival of the gigantic whale is, I argue, the fulfilment of an unconscious desire of the Self for self-knowledge.

Overcome by fear, however, the villagers ultimately refuse to partake in the process of self-discovery, a journey that is only completed by János. For János, the Other loses his frightening value, and becomes an object of (self) contemplation. The glacial eye of the dead sea monster acts as a mirror reflection of the self, and recalls another anthological screen moment, namely that of the end of *La Dolce Vita*'s (directed by Federico Fellini, 1960) morning excursion on the beach, where the eye of the dead octopus similarly acts as a reminder of impending death. In Tarr's film, János's bemused staring into the eye of the whale seems to substantiate nothing more than the commonplace similarity between the Other and Self.

However, by establishing contact with this eye, János becomes himself an "Other" in the eyes of the villagers. It is the conflict between the villagers' misapprehension of the Other and their own fears that escalates into violence. Unable to perceive the Other as a benign object, as János does, the crowds prove incapable of stemming the tide of their fears and proceed to destroy parts of the town, while the prince's words resonate in a sombre voice-over: "What they build and will build is delusion and lies. [...] They think [read *build*] because they are afraid." Construction, the prince warns, is always a process, thus incomplete. Ruins, on the other hand represent the end of a process, and so they are always complete.

The crowds turn the impoverished town hospital into ruins, only satiated by their own abscess of violence, and finally file silently back into the streets, a monster again put to rest like the whale in the town square. Tarr's message seems clear enough: Violence alone, the will to destruct is the only evidence the crowds can produce to having a conscience. "Let's have the courage to understand this," Nietzsche entreats his readers at the very end of the *Genealogy of Morals*: "man will sooner will nothingness than not will" (2009, 135).

In Mannonian psychoanalytical fashion, the crowds do not fear the Other but themselves. The self alone is the repository of unavowed, unacknowledged fears,

which rise into the conscious as forms of threat to the stability of a mythical and illusory pure origin, which exists as such only in the village's imaginary.

Werckmeister Harmonies is ultimately an allegory of not only the failure to understand the Self, but a necessity to nullify it, à la Nietzsche, because it is (or we think it is) inaccessible. Furthermore, when the empty, misunderstood Self (in the guise of the villagers) is confronted with an Other (the circus), the Self's tendency is to abolish, destroy or at best conquer this Other in order to establish a form of illusory control over it. Not dissimilar to Mannoni's theory, this is, I argue, the nature of the first encounter between the Westerner and the Other in the ill-fated saga of colonialism. The metaphor offered in Tarr's movie is that the Other needs to be destroyed, eliminated, and the process of destruction forgotten (drowned in a river of alcohol) for the Self to preserve the state of ignorance, which is the only condition it can admit to as an acceptable form of existence.

To return to Bhabha's ambivalence and the position held by Hungary in the process between Self and Other, I argue that Bhabha presses his "contingent in-betweenness" too far, undoubtedly out of a certain (un)acknowledged desire to push the agenda of postcolonial studies in a different direction. The problem with this stance is that despite all its promising usefulness for postcolonial studies, it hardly characterizes the real, boots-on-the-ground postcolonial world he takes issues with.

What Tarr successfully shows in his film, on the other hand, is that the interstitial postcoloniality that Bhabha unrestrainedly extols as a way out of neo-colonial impasse is a world full of gaps, ignorance, internecine fighting and power-mongering, which hardly matches the idealism of Bhabha's "in-betweenness." In other words, if post-imperial, pre-Soviet-invasion Hungary can be seen as an interstitial space defining the postmodern condition that Bhabha believes defines the postcolonial world, Tarr offers a reality check, in which resurgent nationalism, confusion, chaos and violence unreservedly strangle the last drop of life out of Bhabha's power of ambivalence and mimicry to assert their status as standard-bearers in a new, interstitial world. Therefore, despite wishing that "[this] side of the psychosis of patriotic fervour, I like to think, there is overwhelming evidence of a more transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities," (2006, 7) Bhabha's visionary project of championing in-betweenness unfortunately fails the break-in test of the postmodern condition. If we are to believe Béla Tarr over Bhabha, power goes so far as to regain some of its Nietzschean flavour by being unapologetically transmitted back into the hands of the shameless "patriots" that Bhabha dismissingly relegates to some bygone, and

not only imagined, but fantasized Andersonian past. Reading Bhabha next to Tarr therefore makes us more aware that the latter understandably falls prey to his own condition as a self-titled representative of the hybrid condition in a world, which has yet to come to terms with its real but unacknowledged hybridity.

Therefore, I hold that while Bhabha's theory of hybridity holds significant currency in the postmodern world, its applicability in a realpolitik context proves to be still limited and not sufficiently substantiated in order to gain – as Bhabha undoubtedly desires – valance as a political modus operandi.

Chen posits that decolonization is but a one-sided action undertaken by the formerly colonized subject in the geographical area that was exposed to colonization, and not a double-sided approach, which should involve the colonizer. For a complete reversal to the pre-colonial status quo to take place, Chen argues, there needs to be a similar deimperialization action taking place within (at the centre of) the colonizer's seat of power. Such a process, he argues, did not only *not* start anywhere in the postcolonial world, but awareness of the necessity of such a process taking place hasn't even entered the former colonizers' consciousness (2010, 7).

In Tarr's film, the encounter between villagers and the whale is telling. At the very centre of a former colonial power, who has not undergone the necessary work of deimperialization (a mixture of grieving and repentance), comes the Other – the Soviets – and affects it in the same way as it – Hungary as a colonial power – previously affected other Others. In this scenario, the perpetuation of misunderstandings, un-knowledge of the Self, and destruction of each other in lieu of self-destruction continue to plague the relations between Selves and Others in a multiple network that extends on and on ad infinitum, with the Other playing the part of the Self for another Other and vice versa. Colonialism is thus, in my reading, the failure of the colonizer, ethnocentric-self to understand its own Self, just as it equally is the failure of the Other to understand *their* self in relation to the Other. The result of such misappropriation does not seem to lead, in practical terms, to the rule of hybridity à la Bhabha. According to Béla Tarr, for reasons that fear continues to make complex, the encounter between the Self and the Other, seen as its mirror image, proves unbearable to the Self. Sadly, Tarr's films show that only a Self nurtured by myth, ignorance and fear, a Self able to rule over others through the networks set up by the capitalist mode of production seems capable of validating its existence.

There are alternatives to this continually reproduced moment of initial encounter between Self and Other, which capitalism has made into a *modus*

vivendi, alternatives that bypass both Bhabha, and even Chen's deimperialization tactics. Even though he may well take his characters from a world dominated by Bhabha's ambivalence, Nancy (2002) furthers the idea that meaning can be made in the process of being with each other, and it does not necessarily have to precede the otherwise misunderstood relationship between the two. Furthermore, Irigaray makes yet another alternative even clearer, as she advocates for gender relationships, in which their members do not have to strive for either equality or opposition, but simply "respect each other's differences" (2002, 103). And she concludes somewhat alongside Chen that "to go in search of oneself especially in the relationship with the other represents a work not yet carried out by our culture" (2010, 43).

What is clear from the writings of these theorists, and further strengthens Chen's point is that direct opposition to colonialism and Otherness does not make a harmonious relationship between ex-colonizer and ex-colonized. What postcolonial humanity needs to learn is either a new language, through which the unacknowledged Other can start to express oneself (a concept again at work in Luce Irigaray's theories on sex), or a re-evaluation and re-appropriation process, through which the two "exes" can accede to self-knowledge.

Idealistic as they may be, Irigaray and Nancy's models offer as much optimism for the future of postcolonialist studies as Homi Bhabha, even though they are not considered postcolonial theorists. Whether it is "co-being," as in the writing of Irigaray on the couple, or "being-with," along the lines of Nancy's theorization of the future of the political world, it takes a combination of partially misread film artists such as Béla Tarr and the repositioning of older concepts to sound the alarm bells for the demystification of the past and a call for self-knowledge. It is only such a repositioning, in which certain actors previously didn't figure, that may bring about the much sought-after change in the field.

That and the inclusion in the field of ambiguously ambivalent Eastern Europe with its history of colonialism and postcolonial segregation followed by isolation and vicious post-communist nationalism, may be one of the possible ways to help us rethink both the Western/Other divide, as well as the field of postcolonial studies as a whole. If Chen's idea of a synchronous decolonization and deimperialization could make Asia itself into a method for the overcoming of postcolonial "impasse," then Eastern Europe may not be far (speaking in utopian terms) from its own "method," through which its "statelets" could set themselves forth to investigate their own nationalisms (thus blown-up sense of Selves) and overcome fear, which is the sine-qua-non for any subsequent hope of living in "co-being" rather than in mutual suspicion of one another.

There is a parallel plot in *Werckmeister Harmonies*, which also gives the movie its title. The musicologist and fallen aristocrat György Eszter is attempting to prove that musical theory as we know it today, specifically musical tonality, is based on an illusion that had been adopted into common practice since Bach embraced the musical theories of Andreas Werckmeister, a 17th-century music theorist. The so-called Werckmeister temperaments are *de facto* equivalences for notations that "cut corners" in order to approximate tonality, thus cheating on the accuracy of natural tones. Eszter claims in the film that Werckmeister's temperaments are based on false foundations, and pines for a time when the Greeks could enjoy music on their "naturally tuned instrument[s]."

Rather than falling for the simplicity of the message, it is my interpretation that, instead of clamouring for a time of musical/earthly purity that preceded the separation into tones (and by extension, that of the separation into ethnicities and nations), Tarr is stating that we are living with the illusion of a clearly-defined and controllable self (hence, nation).

Further examination of Eszter as an ex-colonialist or neo-colonialist reinforces Eszter's current position as ambivalent – and this is not in Bhabha's use of the term. While Bhabha uses ambivalence to refer to the status of the occupied, or the colonized, Eszter is himself an "occupier," a former colonizer (or the metonymy thereof). This may point toward the suggestion that the colonizer inhabits the same amorphous space as the colonized; that is to say the colonizer is just as "ambivalent" as the colonized, even though focus has been shifted away from him because he is supposed to be an agent of power.

As Béla Tarr makes abundantly clear, however, even though he might be a "representative" of the fallen aristocracy, which carried out (or was a beneficiary of) the colonial process due to his very status and power, in the post-colonial era he is reduced to a pawn (even though one of the few rational ones). He becomes a lone outpost of clarity and humanity, who tries (unsuccessfully) to redress the balance set off by imprecise musical theories and colonial games. However, he fails to see the benignly monstrous "truth" under his nose as shown by his confused staring into the eye of the whale at the end of the film, which is fundamentally different from János's curious glaring indicative of revelation or at least benign wonder. In the meantime, and maybe precisely because he fails to understand the Self, Eszter cannot stop the unfolding of real threat, nor can he counterattack against his ex-wife's power-mongering schemes, which end up bringing a Real Other in charge of the town.

Tarr's dark parable is clearly not an oblique critique of colonialism, and for this reason it stands out from the bulk of postcolonial cinema defined, among others, by Claire Denis's film work. Where Tarr succeeds is at repositioning that introspective look at our unknown, disparate, misinterpreted Selves (both as individuals and nations) at that critical moment in time when – to paraphrase Mannoni – everything started to go wrong. And again, instead of simply claiming the presence of syncretism, ambivalence and mimicry à la Bhabha, Tarr is calling for an analysis of the past without focusing on opposition, thus alluding to the offerings of theorists such as Nancy and Irigaray, who are pushing toward a re-examination of both of each other's Selves, that is those of both victim and victor, and perpetrator and subdued. This is because, not unlike Eszter, at one time or another, the roles between these two entities inevitably become blurred, reversed, and possibly superimposed over one another. Thus, for Béla Tarr the challenge to stage the ominous encounter between the Self and the Other becomes the challenge of staging the frightening encounter between Self and Self.

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The Flux of Transmigrant Identities in Thomas Arslan's *Brothers and Sisters*

Anna Bátori
Babeş-Bolyai University (Cluj–Napoca)
E-mail: anna.batori@gmx.net

Abstract: The paper investigates *Brothers and Sisters* (*Geschwister-Kardeşler,* 1995), the first piece of Thomas Arslan's Berlin-trilogy. While putting the film into the socio-historical context of the newly united German Republic, the study aims to highlight the characters' struggle and constant shift between their Turkish and German identity. Through the narrative and textual analysis of *Brothers and Sisters*, the paper reveals the visual forms of social exclusion and concludes that in Arslan's film, the characters bear with no social identity but various stages of identification, which keep them in an in-between, insecure position.

Keywords: Turkish-German cinema, Thomas Arslan, transmigrant identity, multicultural society, accented cinema.

Introduction

Describing the migration policy of Germany as a complete failure at the conference of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in Potsdam in 2010, Angela Merkel claimed that the multicultural idea of society has failed, and the harmonious coexistence of diverse nations in Europe remains impossible (Evans 2010). With its second largest immigrant population in Europe (see: Constant, Nottmeyer and Zimmermann 2012), Germany currently raises the third generation of Turkish diaspora that make up almost half of the immigrant community of the country (see Cox 2011). Because, according to Merkel, the Turkish minority is incapable of integrating into the German society, they form a segregated class within the social structure of the country. With the current wave of European mass-migration and the role of Germany in it, Merkel's arguments raise serious questions about the future, identity and role of the continent. How has migration changed the life of the German majority and how does it affect the Turkish sub-culture? How does the

German-Turkish diaspora identify itself and what is the approach of the motherland, Turkey to the phenomenon? How does the Turkish minority represent itself and what diegetic-contextual forms do we find when it comes to visual embodiment?

Embedded in the framework of new realism in German cinema (Reimann 2006) – the second wave of filmic reflection of the Turkish minority – the present study examines *Brothers and Sisters* (*Geschwister-Kardeşler*, 1995), the first and lesser known piece of the German-Turkish director Thomas Arslan's *Berlin Trilogy*. With the attempt to answer the questions posed above, the paper focuses on the self-identification of Turkish transmigrants, and discusses the dual, transient identity (Hall 1996) that the characters occupy in the film.

The Turkish Question in the Reunified Germany

As Verena Stolcke (1995) puts it, opposed to the old discourse of racial inferiority, the new "contemporary cultural fundamentalism" prevalent in Western Europe (1995, 4) "assumes a set of symmetric counterconcepts, that of the foreigner, the stranger, the alien as opposed to the national, the citizen," which eventually "legitimates the exclusion of foreigners, strangers" (1995, 5–7). In the German context, the essentialist, romantic idea of nationhood – built upon the trinity of a shared language, culture and identity (Minden 2011) – is conceived as a homogeneous unifier shaped by history, passed on from generation to generation, which leaves no space for any other national concept. For this reason, the pejorative, exclusionist labels that have been used for Turks living in Germany, not only strengthen the outsider position of the minority, but assumes their ever-present transitional position.[1] As White states, "Germans have redefined the Turks to meet their own economic and political needs. […] *Fremdarbeiter* (foreign workers), and *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) are terms fallen out of use,

1 As it erased the very East German and West German identities, the re-union of the German Democratic Republic and West Germany brought a radical change and the negative feelings towards settled foreign workers flared up after the reunification in 1990. The definition and search for a new identity involved not only the rethinking of the concept of identity and history, but also meant the facing of the consequences that the sudden demographic, economic, political and social changes have caused. Interestingly, the state of animosity arising between the West German society and the despised Easterners (*Ossies*) negotiated the post-socialist society the same way the Turkish foreign workers were contextualized in the capitalist structure. As Jenny B. White (1997) points out, the tension caused by the national reunification was targeted at the Turkish community. The immigrants, who belonged neither to the East nor to the West, and were outsiders to the German community, became the enemy (Harnisch et al. 1998). Fearing for their jobs, East Germans protested the foreign workforce with equal vehemence, which put the Turks in an in-between position attacked by both sides (White 1997; Räthzel 2006).

replaced in part by *Ausländer* (foreigners) or *ausländische Arbeitnehmer* (foreign employees). A contemporary, more politically correct nomenclature is *Migranten* (migrants) or *ausländische Mitbürger* (foreign co-citizens), never *Immigranten*, as that would imply the right to remain. Turks, as the Other, have always been considered ausländer, and some argue that Germans consider Turks among the most inferior groups of foreigners" (1997, 761).

The Turkish migrant and diasporic communities (Naficy 2001) thus constitute a separate, marginalized layer, drifting between acceptance and social exclusion in the German community (Kolinsky 1996, Baser 2016). On the other hand, they are also excluded from the Turkish national rhetoric and context that, because of not belonging to the Turkish motherland per se, refers to them as a "germanized" (*Almancilar*) group (Baser 2016). Not belonging to Turkey, nor being part of the national German discourse, Turks living in Germany are trapped in an in-between transnational space of "cultural liminality, chastised in both Germany and Turkey for being too foreign" (Vanderlinden 1991, 51).

In a cultural-linguistic context, this in-between, fluid identity position of the Turkish minority has been often expressed and mediated through various literary terms that point out the transitional state of the individual. In his poem, *Double Man* (*Doppelmann*), Zafer Şenocak, a widely-published German-Turkish poet describes this position as carrying two moving worlds within, that are separated by his tongue (Şenocak 1984). Similarly, in her poem *In-between* (*Dazwischen*), Alev Tekinay describes her position as being stuck on an imaginary train that commutes between Turkey and Germany, and which does not provide her with a real sense of home (Tekinay 1990). The travel, constant movement and changing states of belonging are thus expressed by a great variety of rhetorical tropes, such as the above-mentioned train metaphor of dualism that highlights the rootedness of the subject (Yalçın-Heckmann 2005; Yegenoglu 2005). The most telling rhetorical figure that expresses this in-between, *Almancilar-Ausländer* position is the image of the bridge[2] that, while resting on neither bank, connects the two cultures[3] (McGowan 2007).

2 In a recent manifesto, the well-known bridge metaphor has been challenged by Adelson (2005) who, because of its motionless, fixed association, rejects the inbetween-paradigm. As she emphasizes, "the cultural fable we like to tell about migrants 'between two worlds' differs with increasing frequency from stories that literary texts born of migration actually set into motion at the turn to the twenty-first century." There is a need "for more critical imagination brought to bear on component elements, textual structures, and cultural relations that figure in the literature of migration in the volatile decade of the 1990s" (2005, 5).

3 Nevfel Cumart's poem *Zwei Welten* (*Two Worlds*) depicts this transnational state of being as follows: "Between/two/worlds/amidst/unending/solitude/I would like/to be a bridge/but I can/

Transnationalist Discourse

Due to the fact that, as the above-mentioned Turkish-German situation illustrates, globalisation created a multilocal diasporic culture, in which previous discourses about national identity and citizenship have radically transformed (Vertovec and Kohen 1999), the post-colonial scholarship investigating the social-cultural transformations in the continent and beyond has been focusing on the various concepts of transnationalism (Kaya 2012). As Schiller et al. (1992) put it, "Our earlier conceptions of immigrant and migrant no longer suffice. The word immigrant evokes images […] of the uprooted, the abandonment of old patterns and the painful learning of a new language and culture. Now, a new kind of migrating population is emerging, composed of those whose networks, activities and patterns of life encompass both their host and home societies. […] We call this new conceptualization, 'transnationalism' and describe the new type of migrants as transmigrants" (2004, 213).

The new-born, essentialist rhetoric gave way to post-national expressions and terms such as post-national (Habermas 2001), transnational (Bauböck 2010), flexible (Ong 1999) or hybrid identity (Smith and Leavy 2008), which are based on a new, post-structuralist concept of the nation.[4] Stuart Hall (1990) also discusses postmodern and hybrid identities, arguing that identity is always a fluid, rather than a stable condition. As he argues, "we should think [...] of identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. [...] Cultural identity [...] is a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being.' It belongs to the future as much as to the past and [...] undergo[es] constant transformation" (Hall 1990, 224–225).

Hall argues that, because the postmodern social landscape is ever-changing, the new subject shall be described in terms of identification rather than identity. In his other study, Hall (1996) explains that this new, postmodern individual is historically, and not biologically defined, and "assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self'" (Hall 1996, 598). Although for Hall, "the fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy" (1996, 598) and is continuously constructed by various

hardly gain a foothold/on the one bank/on the other/I am losing my footing/more and more/the bridge is breaking/threatens/ to tear me apart/in the middle" (Cumart 1993, trans. Marquis, M. and Furtun, M.).

4 Also, in the contemporary flow of migration, new forms of legal and normative status and identities were formed, such as multiple nationals, ethnizens (external quasi-citizenship) and denizens (residential quasi-citizenship). See Bauböck 2007 and Kaya 2012.

narratives, he does not equate this fluid state with the complete lack of identity. What happens, if the subject cannot identify himself with any cultural context and becomes unable to respond to the cultural-historical interpellation, or on the contrary, takes on a multi-layered process of identification whereby the subject itself, disappears or gets stuck in an in-between position?

As Andrea Reimann (2006) points out, because the transnational German-Turkish subjects have not been allowed to participate in the national and social discourse of the host country, they are permanently relegated to the role of the subaltern (Spivak 1988), while they continuously attempt to develop a strong ethnic community (Kaya 2012). Their dual, rhizomic identity (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) therefore masks a lack of absolute identification, for they are constantly put in the position of the excluded from both the German and Turkish sides. Therefore, we can argue that, in the pre-2000 German discourse and cultural practice – where the Turkish self-representation and its German contextualization is an under-researched and negotiated area – the subaltern subject assumes a transnational, hybrid identity that, as an ever-changing fragmented and fluid state, offers no identification, and therefore no identity for the migrant. In this way, the subject itself creates its own segregationist identity in the very space of the ethnic community that he belongs to. The unique question raised by postmodern hybridization is, as to what extent is the subject able to live with their own fragmented, conflicted and contradictory identity? Also, how does he commute between the various (lack of) identities?

The Two Waves of German-Turkish Cinema

Answering the question posed above requires a detailed exploration of representation (Hall 1996; Stam and Spence 1983). According to the film theorist Hamid Naficy (2001), the contextual and diegetic layer of films can allude to the migrant and diasporic experience of the subject, be that the filmmaker himself or the displaced individual on screen. His term "accented cinema" is a form of aesthetic response of exiled, deterritorialized directors to the diasporic, exilic and postcolonial ways of living. These filmmakers maintain a special connection to their homeland, they memorialize it "by fetishizing it in the form of cathected sounds, images, and chronotopes" (2001, 12) that Naficy defines as "accented style" (2001, 22). This aesthetic approach contains visual markers of homeland and the past, such as landscapes, letters and photographs, that define collective and individual identities. Accented films also use multiple languages and/or

accented pronunciation, while having extensive titling on screen to translate dialogues (2001, 16–39). Moreover, the contextual layer of these productions entails real or imaginary travels, be that a metaphoric journey of identity, or a physical movement of the individual (2001, 33).

When it comes to the spatial-temporal context of accented films, Naficy borrows Mikhail Bahtin's concept of chronotope and distinguishes between open, closed and transitional-transnational space-time configurations that are embedded in the mise-en-scène, filming and narrative structure (2001, 153). Open chronotopes, he argues, use open, external spaces, such as landscapes, while emphasizing the openness by mobile framing and long shots. On the other hand, the closed form is built on closed, claustrophobic settings, such as prisons and, by using static framing and tight shots, accentuates the restricted movements of the characters. His third category, thirdspace chronotope, refers to transitional sites such as borders and airports, and buses and trains that all emphasize diverse, fluid spatiotemporal zones (2001, 154). Chronotopes, "polyphony and heteroglossia […] [thus all] localize and locate the films as texts of cultural and temporal difference" (2001, 25), and create a transnational form of artistic practice that expresses the filmmaker's very identity.

Naficy's chronotopes correspond to two distinct waves of Turkish-German accented cinema. The first tendency (1960–80) uses the closed form and emphasizes imprisonment, oppression and claustrophobia, which arises from small, crowded living spaces, and domestic violence against Turkish women (Göktürk 2000; Reimann 2006; Burns 2006). Films of the first wave, such as Tevfik Baser's *40 m2 Deutschland* (*40 m2 Germany,* 1986) and *Abschied vom falschen Paradies* (*Farewell to a False Paradise*, 1988), Helma Sanders-Brahms's *Shirin's Hochzeit* (*Shirin's Wedding*, 1975), operate with the narratives of victimization and concentrate on the oppressed role of females within the confines of the Turkish patriarchal immigrant society (Göktürk 2002; Berghahn 2011). Reimann calls these productions "*ius soli* films" for they "are about relations across communal divisions, which then proceed to reveal the tensions beneath the appearance of family harmony and togetherness and the fragility of accepted notions of ethnic identity" (2006, 58), in a period heavily influenced by the discourse of the new immigration law and double citizenship (Burns 2006).

The second, and more complex wave of Turkish-German cinema (1993–2004) offers "a more differentiated picture of the Turkish diasporic community. [...] [It illustrates] hyphenated identities [...] as a source of mutual cultural enrichment" (Berghahn 2011, 240), and, instead of the fixed, strict female-male roles, poses

questions of belonging and identity. The second wave is thus a politically more aware trend, which, as Reimann puts it, displays a certain kind of social realism (Reimann 2006) "as response to the efforts of post-wall cinema to normalize and affirm German national identity and […] to the tradition of realism in cinema" (2006, 19). Social realism in this case also assumes the realistic portrayal of the urban environment that the protagonists are enclosed into.

This new generation of films includes, among others, Fatih Akin's *Kurz und schmerzlos* (*Short Sharp Shock*, 1998) and *Gegen die Wand* (*Head-On*, 2004), Kutluğ Ataman's *Lola und Bilidikid* (*Lola and Billi the Kid*, 1999); Yüksel Yavuz's *Mein Vater, der Gastarbeiter* (*My Father, the Guest Worker,* 1994) and *Aprilkinder* (*April Children*, 1998), Imset Elci's *Dögun – Die Heirat* (*Dögun, the Wedding*, 1993) and Thomas Arslan's *Geschwister* (*Brothers and Sisters*, 1995) and *Dealer* (1999). These young filmmakers operate with open chronotopes set in Turkish urban neighbourhoods and, instead of nostalgic longing that was characteristic of the first wave, their stories are permeated by pessimism and utter hopelessness. The protagonists, who stagnate in Gemany without the promise of a better future, are usually young characters who end up in prison (*Dealer*), die (*Short Sharp Shock*) or, as strengthening their outsider position, are forced to end the relationship with their German girlfriend (Reimann 2006). Thus, instead of the "cinema of the affected" (Burns 2006) and its migrant, victimized and male-dominant Turkish identities, the second generation reckons with the stereotypical portrayal of Turks and touches upon contemporary sensitive, political topics that aim to a better description of the situation of the Turkish diaspora, their transmigrant identity and in-between position, while offering an up-to-date image of the dysfunctional, non-homogenous German host society (Burns 2007; Reimann 2006; Cox 2011).

Brothers and Sisters

Born in 1962 in Braunschweig, Germany to Turkish migrant parents, Thomas Arslan – one of the most prominent members of the second generation of Turkish accented cinema – experienced the transmigrant, diasporic state at a very early age. During his high school studies, he spent four years in Ankara, and then moved back to Germany to attend the German Film and Television Academy (CFFB) in Berlin, graduating in 1992.

His first feature film, *Brothers and Sisters* is often referred to as the first piece of his Berlin-trilogy, followed by *Dealer* in 1999 and *Der schöne Tag* (*A Fine Day*) in 2000. These films are all set in Kreuzberg, Berlin and reflect the personal

experiences of Arslan (Burns 2007a). One of the main preoccupations of the German-Turkish director was to break with the ties of stereotypical representation of the first wave of accented cinema and capture the true lives of the minority: "I consider this self-imposed obligation to operate with representative characters to be a dangerous matter. There are enough of these representative figures in the media such as the Turkish greengrocer, who at the same time stands for an entire culture. In many films that often amounts to the usual stereotypes such as 'for or against the headscarf' and 'for or against forced marriage.' To that extent my film is rather untypical of one particular image of the Turks" (Arslan, quoted by Burns 2007a, 371).

Arslan's *Brothers and Sisters* follows the life of three siblings and their everyday lives in Kreuzberg, Berlin. Leyla (Serpil Turhan), Ahmed (Savaş Yurderi) and Erol (Tamer Yiğit) were born to a German mother and a Turkish father, and have each a different mindset and view about the world and their very situation in it.

The story begins with the eldest sibling, Erol's draft notice letter from the Turkish army. Not having a job, and future prospects in Germany, Erol decides to join the military. His choice triggers a series of conflicts within the family, that lead to secrets and tensions coming to surface. The younger brother Ahmed – who is the most educated and level-headed among the three siblings – thinks of Erol's plans as idiocy, and disapproves his brother's idea of joining the army. It is however not only the eldest son who rebels against his very situation in Kreuzberg. The seventeen-year-old family member Leyla, who is kept on a short leash by her father, tries to break out of the domestic prison and live her life as an average teenager. However, her constant fight against the patriarchic family structure fails. Eventually, after violent conflicts within the family structure, Erol leaves Germany, while the two other siblings continue with their lives in Kreuzberg.

The main conflict of *Brothers and Sisters* is the constant clash of the German and Turkish identity within Erol, Ahmed and Leyla. While the two younger siblings accept the surrounding German environment and social context, Erol rejects his German identity and identifies himself as Turk. After getting his draft notice and having an argument with his mother about whether to go or stay in Berlin, he argues that, because he has a Turkish passport, he must join the army. Although his decision can be negotiated as a patriotic gesture, his perceived Turkishness is based more on economic, rather than nationalist reasons. Erol has dropped out of school, has no profession and no job, and lives from suspicious, illegal trades and businesses. During the years, he had also accumulated a huge debt and he is now constantly pushed for payment. When crossing the streets of Kreuzberg, he has to

hide in doorways and alleys for not being spotted on, so that he can escape the confrontation with his lenders. For these reasons, joining the Turkish army seems to be his only way out of the hopeless financial situation and from the unsafe position he occupies within the Turkish-German gangland of Kreuzberg.

Although Erol constantly stresses his position as belonging to Turkey, his Turkish identity is far from stable as it first seems. His mother tounge, and his language of communication is German and, although he argues that he speaks Turkish, he barely uses it throughout the film. Erol interacts with his brother and Turkish environment in German, for which he is constantly attacked by his Turkish friends. Being half German, half Turkish, Erol is an absolute outsider in Kreuzberg. His fellows criticize him for not knowing Turkish, while he is also made fun for not speaking German properly.

Erol's only answer to his in-between, misfit situation is verbal and physical aggression, whereby he hopes to be accepted by the Turkish community. Resonating with the stereotypical, patriarchal representation of Turks in the first wave of the Turkish-German accented cinema, the eldest brother takes on the role of the aggressive, testosterone-driven male in the narrative. First, he attacks his brother for not speaking Turkish with his friends – which Erol himself does not do either – and then accuses Ahmed for being ashamed of having a Turkish father and acting German. Later, as if feeling his outsider position in Kreuzberg, Erol gets more and more suspicious about his environment and more and more frustrated about his financial situation and failed integration into the German society. While having dinner in a kebab-restaurant, he gets paranoid about being stared at by others eating at the same place. His friends try to chill him down, however, his only reaction to the situation is physical abuse. First, he beats up two German-looking boys that, according to him, harmed one of their Turkish friends. By the end of the film, his anger gets out of control and he beats up an innocent boy on the street for coming too close to him. Eventually, Erol's fustration culminates in hitting his own, beloved brother. Since, out of the three siblings, it is Ahmed who identifies himself most with the German context – a point which I will discuss later – this gesture is Erol's absolute turn towards his Turkish self. Interestingly, the only way for the eldest sibling to be accepted by the Turkish minority, and to prove that he belongs there, is his transformation into an agressive male.

In this regard, the representation of Turks in the film of Arslan does not differ from the narratives of victimization. Although it gets a psychological layer that alludes to the economic insecurity of the characters within the German society,

Erol, as well as his father, are depicted as aggressive, dangerous males that suppress their environment. It must be emphasized however that, in contrast to the first wave, the identification with Turkey is not a deliberate decision, but an answer to the growing social insecurity and lack of respect that the male protagonists face. As the enforcer of patriarchy and the head of the family, the taxi-driver father faces difficulties with supporting his family, while his authority and decision-making role is constantly questioned by the female characters in the narratives. Leyla's self-confident, provocative style of communication and the strong, decisive role of the German wife in the mini-apparatus leave the father in a subjected, humiliated position, which he answers with verbal and physical abuse against the family members. He slaps his daughter for not showing enough respect towards him, and has fights with his wife for standing by Leyla. Confronted by his wife for hitting their daughter, he answers that he will leave to Turkey for good anyways, thus echoing his superfluous role within the family structure. As the situation suggests, his home country is his safe place where, unlike in his family in Berlin, his behaviour would be fully accepted and his role as a Turkish man, absolutely respected. Turkey thus automatically becomes equivalent of a male-centred, aggressive world, which also explains the transformation of Erol. Mimicking his father – and getting close to his future home – the eldest sibling slowly becomes a dominant male figure, feared for his aggressive gestures, but respected for his decision to join the army. His turn, however, does not presuppose any kind of identification. In the end of the film, Erol still speaks German and, while the others dance, he sits alone at the table at a Turkish wedding. Eventually, illustrating his in-between position and lack of identification within the narrative, Arslan portrays the eldest sibling in a thirdspace (Naficy 2001): the final scene of the film shows him at the airport as he is being checked in for his flight to Istanbul.

While in *Brothers and Sisters* it is Erol who aspires the most to become a fully respected member of the Kreuzbergian society, his younger brother and sister are less connected to their Turkish roots. Ahmed is more interested in living a social life that involves rap music, girls and hanging out with friends. He also does not have any comments when it comes to debates on Turkish heritage and/or speaking Turkish. Similarly, Leyla has less connection with the country of his father. Although she is forced into the role of the protected and vulnerable subaltern by her father, she makes constant attempts to reckon with this female role. She often sleeps over Sevim (Mariam El Awad), her best friend's house, and goes out in the city while dreaming about having her own flat after she turns 18.

On the other hand, however, Leyla dates a Turkish boy and all her friends come from a Turkish background. Also, unlike Erol, she sometimes switches to Turkish when talking to Sevim. The character of Leyla thus stands for the coexsistence of the Turkish and German world. The conflict between the two identities in Leyla is illustrated through the relationship with her boyfriend, Cem (Erhan Emre). Although the boy manifests everything that the Turkish diaspora would expect from the young girl, Cem is the least masculine character in the narrative. Opposite to the very patriarchal and testosterone-driven figures of Erol and his father, the young boy lets Leyla pay for her cinema ticket and takes on the subordinated – often humiliated – role during their conversations. His inferior role is also emphasized by his physical representation in the narrative. Cem is shorter than Leyla and Sevim, and he is often portrayed in frontal medium shots standing next to his girlfriend, whereby the height difference becomes even more evident. Thus, while at first sight, Leyla fulfils the requirements that his father and the Turkish diaspora have against her, the young girl protests against her subordinated position by choosing someone who is the absolute opposite of the character of her father and the figure of the stereotypical Turk in accented narratives. Ironically however, the choice of the young girl strongly resembles with the figure of her father so far as she opts for a weaker male who can be easily influenced by a German female. In this way, Cem assumes the role of the castrated male, while Leyla struggles with a hybrid identity that constantly shifts her between the German and Turkish self.

While Erol looks at himself as Turk, Ahmed takes on the most German identity in the narrative. Although he only hangs out with Turkish friends, the younger brother has a German girlfriend and he is seemingly attracted to fair-skinned, blonde German women. Sevim, for instance, seems to be attracted to Ahmed, however, the boy only talks to German girls at an underground party. Not being interested in speaking Turkish, or taking part in the illegal activities of the Turkish diaspora gang, Ahmed is an absolute misfit in the Kreuzbergian context. His outsider position is also emphasized by his looks. While Erol is dark-skinned, and has black, curly hair and unshaved skin, Ahmed has dark blond hair and, opposed to his brother's large, black leather jacket, he wears colourful, lighter, ordinary clothes. The identity of the brothers is thus further expressed by their physiognomy that stresses the flux between their Turkish or German self [Fig. 1].

Germany, the Police State (?)

Nevertheless, Arslan has often emphasized his very intention to veer away from the victimized narratives of the first Turkish-German wave, *Brothers and Sisters* depicts the Turkish community subordinated to the German one. This can be best seen in a scene where Erol, Ahmed and his Turkish friends are being scanned by the German police that line them up and violently push the young men against a pool table. While their belongings are being checked, the Turkish boys are aggressively told to remain in silence and only speak when asked, which they accept without any kind of verbal or physical resistance. It is clear that the German policemen treat them as offenders and, while they thoroughly frisk the suspects and examine their official documents, they not only humiliate the young boys, but also destroy some of their belongings. The subordinated position of the boys is also emphasized by their spatial representation. The German police hung upon the figures of the boys who, with their head lowered and facing the pool table, are portrayed as oppressed standing with their back to the police force [Fig. 2]. The two interrogators frame the group and enclose them into a suffocating position, thus emphasizing their absolute power over the boys. Having been ensured that the Turkish boys do not possess any drugs, the police then leave the table. While the dishevelled boys silently dress up, we see the two policemen arresting another group of teenagers in the background.

Although Arslan makes it clear that the scanning of the boys has been a misunderstanding, the whole scene and the reaction of the group after the accident, provides the spectator with a very clear power structure that describes the Turkish-German situation. When after the humiliating scene, Ufuk (Bilge Bingül), a friend of Ahmed and Erol, expresses his wish to join the German police, the group attacks him by stating that the institution is based on spying and attacking innocent Turks – which is justified by the violent police scene. Interestingly, none of the friends has concerns about Erol joining the Turkish army. However, when it comes to Ufuk entering the police academy, the friends turn away from him, so that he eventually leaves the scene.

Arslan's Pitbull Analogy

It must be emphasized that the portrayal of the German society is completely absent from *Brothers and Sisters*, and it is only the appearance of the two policemen that represents the German structure in the narrative. Still, through

various metaphors, Arslan makes obvious attempts to mirror the subordinated role of the Turks. In a scene, for instance, he illustrates the impossibility of one's self-expression through the relationship-analogy of a pitbull and its owner who slowly build trust towards each other.

Joining Tayfun (Bülent Akil), Hassan (Mohamed Khalil) and Ufuk in a doorway in the streets of Kreuzberg, Erol enquires about the dog of Hassan [Fig. 3]. While the elder brother thinks that the pitbull is cute and he himself would like to have one, Ufuk argues that the dog looks like a pig, what is more, he is dangerous too, for he has attacked one of their friends the other week. Hassan goes on arguing that they are not dangerous at all, it is only that one has to win the trust of the animal. As an example, he states that one must sleep with the dog for getting familiar with the feeling. Ufuk ironically claims that Hassan is out of his mind and the pitbull would just rip his throat in his sleep. Despite his scepticism, Hassan stands by his opinion and argues that a pitbull would never hurt a person that has absolute trust in him. Ufuk strongly disagrees with the opinion of Hassan and argues that pitbulls should never be trusted. Their fight then gets interrupted by Erol who asks about the name of the dog that completely confuses the two young men. At first, Hassan does not understand the question and asks whose name he wants to know. Laughing about the confusion of his friend, Erol answers that he asked the name of the dog, the subject of the whole conversation. As if having been talking about something else, Hassan gets even more confused, but eventually understands the question.

Clearly, the conversation of Hassan and Ufuk highlights the tension between the German society and the Turkish minority within it. Hassan possesses a seemingly stable Turkish identity in the film, while Ufuk assumes a more German standpoint, with his very aim to join the police of the state. Hassan, on the other hand, criticizes Erol for his German roots, and tends to switch to Turkish during the verbal interactions with friends. In the dialogue of Hassan and Ufuk, the dog, Rocky – the metaphorical Turk, whose trust needs to be won – is the alter-ego of Hassan, and the whole Turkish minority at the same time. Having a stronger Turkish identity, Erol supports the idea of having a pitbull, while his brother Ahmed is less inclined to participate in the conversation. He only adds that he does not like dogs in general, and listens to the conversation in absolute silence. Ufuk, on the other hand, who most openly sympathizes with the German side, attacks Hassan for putting others in danger by having a pitbull. To summarize, Arslan's pitbull-metaphor mirrors the very identities of the characters of *Brothers and Sisters,* and highlights the importance and lack of trust in the relationship of the Turkish diaspora and the German host society. Similar to the police scene, Arslan puts the Turks in a victim-

position, suggesting that the lack of understanding, trust and care generates an overly false picture of the Turkish diaspora – the pitbulls – who are thought to be wild and dangerous, yet they only need time to show their real, friendly side.

Conclusion

The outsider position of the Turkish protagonists is further emphasized by their representation on the streets of Kreuzberg. The closed form that characterized the Turkish-German cinema of the 1970s, gives way to an apparently open form based on the illustration of deserted and dirty streets. The walls in Kreuzberg are covered by graffiti, while the pavements are brimmed with autumn leaves that, together with the grey, brown and black colours that Arslan uses, give the outer scenes a suffocating atmosphere. Moreover, the protagonists are depicted as constantly moving – being on their way from A to B – that supports the displaced position of the characters and highlights the transmigrant, fluid identity they possess. Kreuzberg is also often depicted from a semi-subjective point of view of the protagonists, thus framing them from behind [Fig 4]. In this way, Kreuzberg is seen as framed by the back of Erol and his brother that creates the impression of a constant observer that follows and spies upon the boys. Consequently, the open formula suggests a place of confinement. Whether it is the gloomy streets of Kreuzberg, or the discoloured interior of the home or Erol and Ahmed that portrays a dysfunctional family model, the characters are represented as enclosed in the very space of Kreuzberg. In this way, the closed formula that characterized the first wave of accented cinema, has transformed into a larger – but still enclosed – scene that encompasses the streets of the city that imprison the characters.

Whether it is about physical movement, or identification with the Turkish and German roles, Ahmed, Erol and Leyla are portrayed as constantly drifting in the narrative. On the one hand, the mobile framing – that accentuates the position of the protagonists as being constantly watched, and long shots help Arslan to establish the very diasporic environment that encloses the protagonists. On the other hand, however, the siblings possess a constantly shifting, rhizomic, hybrid-transmigrant identity that resonates with their physical movements, while offering various ways of identification with either the Turkish or the German side. Because of the fluid identities that characterize the siblings, Ahmed, Leyla and Erol often seem to get confused and lost in the process of identification. They attempt to assume a Turkish or German identity, but constantly fail to identify with solely one role, which pushes them into an in-between, insecure inner state.

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Figure 1. Thomas Arslan: *Brothers and Sisters* (*Geschwister-Kardesler*, 1995): the brothers' physiognomy expressing a flux in-between Turkish and German identity.

Figure 2. The subordinate position of the boys emphasized in the scene with the police.

Figure 3. The argument about the dog staged in the doorway.

Figure 4. The protagonists are depicted as constantly moving, often framed from behind, shown from a semi-subjective point of view.

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Collective Cultural Memory as a TV Guide: "Living" History and Nostalgia on the Digital Television Platform

Berber Hagedoorn
University of Groningen (NL)
E-mail: b.hagedoorn@rug.nl

Abstract: Modern audiences engage with representations of the past in a particular way via the medium of television, negotiating a shared understanding of the past. This is evidenced by the increasing popularity of reboots, newly developed history and documentary programming, re-use of archival footage and nostalgia content. This article takes a closer look at television's abilities to circulate and contextualize the past in the current era of convergence through narrowcasting or niche programming on digital television platforms, specifically via nostalgia programming. Such platforms exemplify the multifaceted way of looking at and gaining access to television programming through a variety of connected platforms and screens in the current multi-platform era. Since the way in which television professionals (producers, schedulers, commissioners, researchers) act as moderators in this process needs to be further analysed, the article places an emphasis on how meaningful connections via previously broadcast history and nostalgia programming are also curated, principally through scheduling and production practices for niche programming – key elements in television's creative process that have received less academic attention. Furthermore, the article discusses to what extent media policy in the Netherlands is attuned to the (re-)circulation of previously broadcast content and programming about past events, and reflects on television's possibilities for "re-screening" references to the past in the contemporary media landscape. The analysis is based on a combination of textual analysis of audio-visual archival content and a production studies approach of interviews with key professionals, to gain insight into the creators' strategies in relation to nostalgia programming and scheduling. Subsequently, the article demonstrates how national collective memory, as understood by television professionals in the Netherlands, informs the scheduling and circulation of "living history" on the digital thematic channel – collective cultural memory hence functioning as a TV guide.

Keywords: representing and re-screening the past, audio-visual and archival materials, multi-platform television, nostalgia programming and thematic scheduling, cultural memory.

Introduction

In the current multi-platform era, modern audiences engage with representations of the past especially via the medium of television: on our connected screens, there is new history every day. Societies continuously negotiate a shared understanding of the past and television facilitates such negotiations (see Hagedoorn 2016; Holdsworth 2011; Hoskins 2004; Bourdon 2003; Edgerton and Rollins 2001). This is evidenced not only by the increasing popularity of newly developed history and documentary programming, but also by the growing appeal of reboots, nostalgia content and the re-use of archival footage. In this article, I take a closer look at television's abilities to circulate and contextualize the past in the current era of convergence through narrowcasting or niche programming on digital television platforms, specifically via nostalgia programming.[1] Since the way in which television professionals (producers, schedulers, commissioners, researchers) act as moderators in this process needs to be further analysed, I place a particular emphasis on how meaningful connections via narrowcasting and scheduling of previously broadcast history and nostalgia programming are curated. Television plays a crucial role in experiences of time and space through scheduling. John Ellis has argued from this perspective that scheduling is the "locus of power in television" (2000, 25–26). More specifically, I analyse how national collective memory, as understood by television professionals, informs the scheduling of "living" history on the digital thematic channel.

To do so, I first relate the theoretical framework of cultural memory to the creation or construction of memory through practices of what I call "doing history," and reflect on television's possibilities for "re-screening" references to the past in our contemporary media landscape. I then zoom in on the role of television professionals as curators and the meaning of curated connections in the narrowcasting and scheduling of previously broadcast history and nostalgia programming. Here, I pay particular attention to key elements of television that have received a smaller amount of academic attention: the shaping of television content by distinct modes of interaction between television professionals through scheduling and production practices. A main Dutch digital thematic channel (the nostalgia thematic channel *US*, previously known as *NostalgiaNet* [in Dutch: *ONS*, previously *NostalgieNet*]) is discussed as a principal case study

1 This article is based on a part of chapter 4 from my dissertation: Berber Hagedoorn. 2016. Circulating History on Digital Platforms: Digital Thematic Channels. In *Doing History, Creating Memory: Representing the Past in Documentary and Archive-Based Television Programmes within a Multi-Platform Landscape*, 92–97, 103–112 and 162–165.

to consider the creators' aims, strategies and conventions of circulating nostalgia and previously broadcast content on digital platforms on a textual and narrative level and a cultural-historical level, respectively. These platforms exemplify the multifaceted way of looking at and gaining access to television programming through a variety of connected platforms and screens. Finally, in this context on an institutional level, I pose the question to what extent Dutch media policy is attuned to the (re-)circulation of previously broadcast content, archival footage and programming about past events.

Media texts cannot be studied in isolation. This study is based on a textual analysis of a nostalgia thematic channel and its connected cross-media practices, as well as its creators' strategies in relation to nostalgia programming and scheduling. When one aims to understand how something works, it is necessary to gain insight into the aims and principles that the studied practices are rooted in – therefore I use the poetics of "doing history" as a research model for exploring the television practitioners' aims, strategies and conventions of contemporary representations of past events on a textual and narrative level, a cultural-historical level and an institutional level (Hagedoorn 2016, 24–33). More specifically, next to a textual analysis of the selected case study, I use a production studies approach to gain insight into the television creators' strategies of broadcasting and multi-platform storytelling in relation to past events and past television. I do so, principally, through semi-structured in-depth interviews with key professionals involved in the channel's production, research and online strategies, as well as key professionals involved in media policy in the Netherlands. Interviews with programme makers are a necessary part of constructing a poetics of doing history, to gain insight into the personal perspectives and vision of professionals regarding their work. As I have argued previously, such an approach can bring the creators' motives to the surface and help make power relations, as well as often *implicit* conventions *explicit*.

Doing History, Creating Memory

Memory is studied across different disciplines within the humanities and social sciences, such as media studies, history, literary studies, visual culture, art history, archaeology, film studies, philosophy, sociology and psychology, as well as (digital) memory studies. As a result, a wide range of concepts are used in its study and theorization: from digital memory (Hoskins 2017), collective memory (Halbwachs 1980), popular memory (Samuel 1994), social memory (Fentress and

Wickham 1992) and *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989) to transnational memory (De Cesari and Rigney 2014) and transcultural dimensions of memory (Bond, Craps and Vermeulen 2017). This article zooms in on the notion of cultural memory, which distinguishes itself from the aforementioned concepts as a *constructive process* with a specific focus on the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts (Erll 2008). Hence, the emphasis in this article is on *creating* or *constructing memory* through practices of what I call "doing history." I follow the perspective of Marita Sturken, who argues that cultural memory is "memory that is shared outside the avenues of formal historical discourse yet is entangled with cultural products and imbued with cultural meaning" (1997, 3). Cultural memory is thus not oppositional to the discourse of official history, but rather "entangled" with it and calls attention to the active, continuous and unstable process of remembering – and therefore forgetting – in socio-cultural contexts. In this context, Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik have also defined cultural memory as the cultural dimension of memory, taken as both the *what* and the *how* that a culture remembers. Both these scholars understand remembering as a "tricky business:" "By remembering we form an idea of our self and shape a sense of our identity; thus, we end up embodying the memory that inhabits us. Yet, memory is a dynamic phenomenon for any individual, but also for a culture as a whole. Memory is affected by politics, ideology, technology, art and popular culture. By changing over time, memory may unsettle received ideas of the past and consequently of the present and even the future" (Plate and Smelik 2009, 1).

Cultural memory can thus be seen as the complex ways in which a culture remembers. The crucial role that media plays in the process of both remembering and forgetting is currently reaching new levels of interest in the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary study of memory. I argue that it is especially the role of media professionals as curators of cultural memory that requires academic reflection. In this article, I will therefore pay specific attention to the television professionals' active role in the "re-screening" of the past in relation to collective memory and the repurposing of past television on contemporary platforms and screens.

Recent studies have pointed out the crucial role of media in not only the formation of cultural memory, but also in providing frameworks for remembering. Contemporary research therefore advocates a *dynamic* approach to the study of cultural memory and the media (Erll and Rigney 2009, 1–2; Van Dijck 2007, 16). Astrid Erll has stated that media and mediation need to be understood as a "switchboard" between individual and collective remembering: "Personal memories can only gain social relevance through media representation and

distribution" (2011, 13). José van Dijck's study points to a similar function, describing media technologies as "tools that mediate between personal and collective cultural memory" (2007, 19). Drawing upon interdisciplinary memory research by Siegfried J. Schmidt, Erll and Rigney argue that media do not only mediate between a human being and the world as "instruments for sense-making," but also mediate between individuals and groups as "agents of networking" – and through both ways, create frameworks for shaping experience as well as memory (2009, 1). I advocate a similarly dynamic approach to the study of television today.

In the current multi-platform era, television can in this manner be studied as a *practice* of memory. Sturken has defined a practice of memory as "an activity that engages with, produces, reproduces and invests meaning in memories, whether personal, cultural or collective" (2008, 74). According to Sturken, the concept of cultural memory is profoundly connected to the notion of memory practices, because the active and constructed nature of memory is emphasized. The concept "practice of memory" also allows for a focus on television as a *continuous*, *unstable* and *changing* memory practice in the multi-platform era, particularly because the production and reconstruction of memory through cultural practices has as its basis the idea that memories are always part of larger processes of cultural negotiation and transformation. As Sturken argues: "This defines memories as *narratives*, as *fluid* and *mediated* cultural and personal traces of the past" (2008, 74; emphasis added).

Such a perspective was initially not given in the study of memory (see also: Halbwachs 1980) and is further problematized by the fact that electronic and digital media – television in particular – have been said to have a problematic or paradoxical relationship with history and memory. Susannah Radstone describes in her work *Memory and Methodology* that in the late twentieth century, experiences of immediacy, instantaneity and simultaneity inflected a crisis of memory in contemporary societies. The development of new media technologies was partly responsible for "deepening" this crisis, since such new media "collapse[d] the distance that previously separated an event from its representation" (Sobchack 1996, 5; Radstone 2000, 7). Thomas Elsaesser perhaps best explains this assumed paradoxical relationship between media, history and memory by arguing that the discourse of media memory – specifically for television – is "constitutively traumatic:" "The media images of television, regarded from the point of view of their referentiality, would […] contribute to our cultural memory above all by preserving the traumatic nature of media-made history as *post-history*. […] A past event, passed on in media images, is both

un-dead and not alive. It is always exceeding, in whatever small and apparently insignificant way, the place and time, the status and hierarchy a historian might assign to it" (Elsaesser 2008, 409; emphasis added).

According to Elsaesser, then, historical events passed on in television images are always ready to return and never to be forgotten, but at the same time "interfered with, blurred, or overlaid by other images, other memories, other possible combinations and associations" and therefore also never quite remembered (2008, 409). In the current media climate, we are witnessing a vast growth of new media and digital technologies, new memory discourses and memory practices. The contemporary media landscape provides many opportunities for media-made history as "post-history." Recent studies and international conferences have therefore started to discuss the considerable role of television today in the everyday process of remembering and forgetting. The current media climate is also uniquely suited to television as a practice of memory and its present role in the construction and circulation of cultural memory.

Re-Screening

In the current media landscape, televisual products and practices of *re-screening* add another multitude of possibilities for televisual references to the past. I use the concept of "re-screening" in its broadest sense, indicating the vast access to a (digital) repertoire of previously transmitted images in today's multi-mediated landscape. Televisual practices of re-screening repurpose previously broadcast images and archival footage (whether audio, video or photographic material), by positioning such images in a new historical and televisual context. A typical week of television viewing may include many instances in which the past is represented on television's connected screens and other platforms via practices of re-screening, such as the following forms of "televisual re-screening."

– Factual television: digital thematic channels and nostalgia networks; archive-based histories and documentary programmes, which repurpose archival images within a new context; news programming.

– Online television archives: the use of video-sharing websites or open media platforms by official archival institutions: to provide the general public with access to their archival collections, to contextualize said materials to make them usable and to stimulate creative re-use. Examples are newsreel archive British Pathé and the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision's use of the video-sharing website *YouTube*, open media platforms offering online access to audio-

visual images, such as *Open Images* (Open Images, *http://www.openimages.eu/.en/)*; the growth of online television archives and cross-domain portals, such as *Europeana (http://www.europeana.eu/portal*) and EUscreen (*http://www.euscreen.eu*).[2] These online and digital repositories offer opportunities for the creative re-use of audio-visual archival materials, as well as for reflections on rights issues related to the re-use of audio-visual material in the digital era.

– **Museum experiences**: "re-screening" as a museum experience or tourist attraction for the public, which employs contemporary strategies of museum exhibition appealing to nostalgia. Such developments are part of (television) archives providing greater access and utilization of audio-visual materials, not only in the archive itself, but also through multimedia public facilities. Examples are the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision's Media Experience in Hilversum, the National Media Museum in Bradford and the *Doctor Who* Experience in Cardiff Bay.

– **On-demand (online and streaming) services; repeats**: on-demand (online and streaming) services, access to "missed" television programmes via catch-up TV services and the scheduling of repeats, including acclaimed and popular television series from an earlier era. For example, the aggressive multi-million bidding war for *Seinfeld*'s streaming rights to its 180 episodes was ultimately won by Hulu (Stelter 2015).

– **Highlight reviewing:** the activity of reviewing "must-see" televised moments and events in the form of short clips or compilations, whether from one programme or a variety of programmes, which serve different functions in different contexts. Think of informative programmes, talk shows and quiz shows and features of the traditional television series such as the "previously on…" overview often used in fictional series, which reminds viewers of important proceedings. This category also included video-sharing sites, web pages and social media sharing video content "that should not be missed" – including classic clips from the archives.

– **Televised celebrations, commemorations and anniversaries:** television events, which assemble and recycle previously aired television images, in both a national and international context, for reminiscence or reflection; this also includes anniversaries of the television's own history and reflections on the television's own past, accompanied by "making-of" or "behind the scenes" production footage. In this context, Amy Holdsworth (2010) has also discussed the necrology as a form of televisual memory.

– **DIY TV archiving:** the rapid advance of "Do-It-Yourself" television archiving or "home modes" of collecting and increased personalization, such as via

2 Last accessed 13. 10. 2017.

digital television recorders, the purchasing of television series on DVD and the increased individual access to television archives curated by *Netflix* or *Amazon Prime* through monthly subscriptions. This also enhances the importance of including the use of video-sharing websites by private citizens to distribute and discuss television memories. Lynn Spigel (2006, 343) has described this trend as "Do-It-Yourself TV history," but in my view "DIY archiving" is a more accurate description of such at-home forms of collecting.

– Mobile telephony and gaming experiences: mobile telephony and gaming experiences of re-screening that stimulate recollection and creative re-use of audio-visual archival material in televisual contexts. For example, the Dutch video labelling game *Waisda?*[3] asked players to add tags to previously aired television footage in an innovative annotation game, resulting in a better ability to search audio-visual archives.

– Retro television and countdown television: programming, which constructs a storyline around clips from the television's past. Interviewees (often celebrities) give the impression to be recalling a specific moment in time in these programmes, but have often been informed to talk about a specific programme or have been sent a tape to watch in advance. Therefore, this type of programming is most inclined to represent a kind of "fake" nostalgia compared to the aforementioned trends.

– Reboots and remakes of celebrated television programmes: the increased reviving or rebooting of celebrated television programmes as remakes: such texts reappear as television remakes, but also re-emerge in different media formats. Think of the revivals of *Yes, Prime Minister* (UKTV Gold, 2013), *Doctor Who* (BBC, 1963–), *Upstairs Downstairs* (BBC, 2010–2012) and *Poldark* (BBC, 2015–), the reboot of *Heroes* (as *Heroes Reborn* on NBC, 2015–16) and follow-ups to *24* (as *24 Legacy* on Fox, 2017), *Twin Peaks* (Showtime, expected to air in 2017), *The X-Files* (FOX, 2016) and *Full House* (as *Fuller House*, Netflix 2016–) to the updating of run-down formats like *Big Brother* (in the Netherlands on Veronica/RTL5, 1999–2008) through recent reincarnations like *I Survived a Zombie Apocalypse* (BBC, 2015) and *Utopia* (in the Netherlands on SBS6, 2013–).

– TV review platforms: websites such as *The A.V. Club* and *TV.com* which feature amongst others detailed episode guides and television show descriptions, user commentary and discussions, videos, cast and crew listings, as well as (live) talk shows and podcasts dedicated to reviewing television shows, for instance the TV talk show *Talking Dead* (AMC, 2011–) and the *Talking Dead* podcast (both made by different creators), both dedicated to reviewing and reflecting on AMC's

3 *See: http://www.waisda.nl.* Last accessed 13. 10. 2017.

The Walking Dead. Such platforms usually encourage active user participation, as well as the inclusion of user-generated content.

These principal examples or prototypes of televisual re-screening – and please note that this list is not exhaustive[4] – on the one hand repurpose previously transmitted and archival images, and on the other hand memorialize the history of television. Several of these practices are not necessarily new – such as the collecting and recording of television programmes, or the use of archival materials in television documentaries – which makes it even more striking to witness how televisual forms of re-screening have gradually been further integrated in both existing and new media practices. Users in modern societies are becoming more and more used to fast and easy access to such a (digital) repertoire. However, intellectual property rights may also restrict this repertoire, including copyright and related rights; for instance, a platform like YouTube contains a considerable amount of infringement that is a challenge to curtail, to say the least. Furthermore, more traditional aspects like the "previously on…" overview often used in fictional series, which reminds viewers of important proceedings can be absent in on-demand streaming content, for instance by providers such as *Netflix* and *Amazon Prime*, the programming of which is designed for binge-watching. Television's continuing convergence is therefore not only actively recirculating several of these forms of televisual re-screening, but in some cases, is also actively replacing or removing them in the current multi-platform era.

"Living" History and Collective Memory on the Digital Thematic Channel

Milly Buonanno has argued that the rise of a, albeit diffused, social demand for made-to-measure television adapted to the niche market ("the specific preferences and interests of a restricted number of viewers"), has also made narrowcasting possible (2008, 22–25). Buonanno describes narrowcasting as specialized or thematic television, as well as "the proliferating system of minority channels and small cable and satellite networks available on subscription" (2008, 22–25). What is more, her work has pointed out that "generalist" broadcasting networks are clearly not in a position to satisfy such a social demand. The scheduling on digital thematic channels demonstrates, as I have argued elsewhere, how television professionals working in such thematic forms of television actively

4 We see these types of re-screening and appeals to nostalgia and memory in other media as well of course, such as for instance in film – e.g. in *T2: Trainspotting* (2017).

participate in practices of selection and reframing, that way creating a "canon." Scheduling in the context of a digital thematic channel can be compared to the work of a *curator* – a knowledgeable "selector" of content – due to the emphasis on pre-selection (Hagedoorn 2013, 61).

A further analysis of the Dutch commercial digital thematic channel *ONS*/ *NostalgieNet* (*http://www.kijkbijons.nl,* last accessed 13. 10. 2017.) can show the crucial role played by programme makers in the construction and circulation of living history in the multi-platform era, and the role of national collective memory in the creative act of scheduling on the digital thematic channel.[5] Drawing upon a variety of archives and archival materials from the 1940s through the 1990s, the channel rebroadcasts popular Dutch television drama series and films and produces its own nostalgia programmes. This commercial channel is part of the standard package of leading suppliers of digital television in the Netherlands. From its start in 2006, *NostalgieNet* catered to its audiences as a cross-media platform and functions as a dynamic multi-platform archive through its video on-demand service. The *NostalgieNet* cross-media platform included a web shop, magazine, website, newsletter and interactive services on Facebook and Twitter – including modest possibilities of "co-authorship" regarding its own programming, meaning that viewers could use Facebook applications to create their own list preference, for example regarding music programming, which would then also be applied to the programming you would see on television. This cross-media content has not remained actively available as a long tail (even before *NostalgieNet* became *ONS*) and offered opportunities for the formation of a "participatory memory" (Hagedoorn 2015) during a limited period of time.

The programming is targeted towards a more senior audience between forty-five to sixty-five years old – a group, which also very much wants to be taken seriously on social media – and is also valued by younger viewers as cult programming. The channel features a large variety of programming, from fictional films and television drama series (classic films, as well as so-called "forgotten gems") to non-fiction nostalgia programming, national as well as regional topics and interests, colour and black-and-white footage, generally between 1940–1990, although archival materials used from the Dutch Polygoon newsreel archive can date back to 1929. Its narrowcasting thus targets diverse audience groups.

5 In comparison, see my analysis of the former cross-media documentary platform of Dutch public television, *NPO Doc/ HollandDoc*. In this case, the hybridity of the platform was made visible through the *dispersed access* to a wide range of programmes on different platforms through cross-platform scheduling, including traditional broadcast television and radio, as well as online forms (Hagedoorn 2013).

This "resurrection" of archived television for public consumption exemplifies what has been described as the clear marking of the *currency* of television memory and nostalgia, and the exploitation of the broadcasters' "sleeping assets" (Holdsworth 2010) – although there are some conditions here, which I will discuss later. From the 13th of September 2015, *NostalgieNet* has become *ONS* [*US*]. Like *NostalgieNet*, *ONS* opts for a target group of active senior citizens with a lot of spare time. The programming enhances travel, nature, culture, history, nostalgia, health and food, entertainment, drama and Dutch films. The scheduling also includes well-known television series from the 1990s appealing to Dutch collective memory, such as *Absolutely Fabulous* (BBC, 1992–2012). New programmes include, for example, *De Gouden Jaren* (*The Golden Years*) (ONS, 2015–) involving modern history. Whereas *NostalgieNet* had a four-hour programming schedule, *ONS* consists of daily horizontal programming times with similar interests. The analysis of scheduled television programmes and curatorial practices and experiences brought several insights to the foreground regarding the digital television platform's main tools and methods for curating, programming and promoting "nostalgia."

Discussions with creators Cees Labeur[6] and Tim Beudel[7] (personal interview, Hilversum, 27 November 2012) point to programming on the platform following three basic rules or preconditions. These preconditions further restrict what Derek Kompare has called "regimes of repetition" (2002, 19). Holdsworth has pointed out regimes of repetition as a useful starting point to investigate the construction of and engagement with television's own memory cultures, as such regimes entail the constant (re-)circulation of a nation's individual and cultural pasts, through the omnipresence of past television in the present (2007, 140). First and fundamentally, as the discussions with the nostalgia platform's creators make apparent, nostalgia here is contemporary history – what the creators term

6 Cees Labeur started his career in 1969 as a journalist for Elsevier Magazine. In 1977, he switched to *Hier en Nu* (*Here and Now*), a current affairs programme at NCRV television. He was a television reporter in the Netherlands and abroad and was one of the regular interviewers at the weekly press conference with the Prime Minister. In 1995, he was one of the initiators and general editor of *Netwerk* (*Network*), a combined current affairs programme of KRO, NCRV and AVRO. Until 2007 he was television manager of informative programmes at NCRV, including *Rondom Tien* (*Around Ten*), *Dokument* (*Document*), *Man Bijt Hond* (*Man Bites Dog*), *De Rijdende Rechter* (*The People's Court*) and *Netwerk*. From 2007 until January 2015, he was responsible for the programming of the digital television channel *NostalgieNet*.

7 Tim Beudel studied Communication Studies at the Universiteit van Amsterdam (University of Amsterdam). In 2005, he joined *NostalgieNet*, managing different platforms and revenues; TV, VOD, e-commerce, print and online. From August 2013, he was Head of Digital at Tuvalu Media. Tuvalu Media creates and produces cross-media concepts. Since September 2017, Beudel is Channel Director of National Geographic Benelux.

"living" history – and in this manner appealing to the collective memory of a nation, which in this case is the Dutch nation.

The platform emphasizes nostalgia as "living" history (not to be confused with the term used for historical re-enactment practices!). What is referred to here is that important events, years and dates connected to national collective memory and from Dutch contemporary history are the incentive for its scheduling. For example, televised media events, such as Reinier Paping winning the Dutch Elfstedentocht (eleven-city skating race) in 1963 or The Beatles' arrival in The Netherlands in 1964 and people's memories of such events. The platform aims to "bring the past alive" via emotion and sharing with others. This is a significantly different approach to the "exploitation" of television's own history and the engagement of audiences with archival footage than the "regular" history programming of public service broadcasters re-using archival footage.

NostalgieNet utilizes different multi-media platforms and methods to facilitate the enhancement of emotion for their niche target audience. This is done by offering nostalgic programming using archival footage in which people can recognize their own childhood, their own father, their own mother or sometimes themselves as a child. Not in a literal sense, although there have been instances, where people actually did recognize themselves or a family member on television. This strategy is further intensified by the platform by offering cross-media possibilities to let viewers share their favourite fragments of the past. The *NostalgieNet* cross-media platform included a web shop, magazine, website, newsletter and interactive services on Facebook and Twitter. There were mild possibilities for co-authorship regarding the platform's own programming here, since viewers could use Facebook applications to create and share their own lists of preferences – for example in the case of music programming – which could then be considered for the scheduling on television.

This form of living history adheres to feelings occurring when watching a programme for the first time, and also to television as a shared experience. This digital thematic channel wants to achieve both, through the selection and through contextualization of archival content, and by making meaningful connections through a cross-media strategy. Its creators regard nostalgia as *emotion*, as something different from historical facts, and this emotion makes sharing and shared experiences possible. As a niche channel, the platform aims to bring people together based on their own interests regarding their own past, to create a collective feeling of "I remember that!" Whether these are shared interests in

music or hobbies, this strategy advocates bringing people together using nostalgia as a common denominator. This is explained by the creators as follows:

> Beudel: History is factual, nostalgia is emotional. And that emotion also makes it easy to share. You cannot very easily share on television, but you can do so on the internet and other devices, such as a mobile etcetera. So, our intent, for television and the internet, was to bring people together based on the interests of their own past. And that could be: 'I went to school here,' or 'I had a Zündapp, or a Puch, for a motorbike...' and then you can form a small group around such a shared interest.
> Labeur: Or around 'I liked The Beatles...'
> Beudel: Yes, you can bring people together using the nostalgia of a given music, interests or hobbies, as a common divisor. But then you must go the multi-media route too. So that was very important in our vision and that is one of the reasons we took a multi-media approach from the outset. (personal interview, Hilversum, 27 November 2012.)

This approach to nostalgia as *emotion* can therefore be directly linked to the platform's initial multi-media approach to storytelling and the perspective on television, internet, DVD, video on demand (in an early form) and mobile telephony as media that can *enhance* one another – especially during a period, when Dutch broadcasters were actively developing and experimenting with new cross-media storytelling techniques.

Secondly, the nostalgia platform's approach to living history is a light or entertainment approach to history – although not necessarily superficial. A *light approach* includes that the platform deliberately does not want content to be too heavy-hearted, and places a focus more on personal and emotional impact instead of historical impact, often through oral history. For instance, a programme about the pirate radio station and ship Veronica would include interviews with people about their memories, how this experience felt and what it meant at the time. However, such a programme would not try to answer questions like what this meant for Dutch television scheduling or for the Dutch broadcasting system as a whole, as other historical programmes perhaps would.

Here, I would like to point towards the contemporary flourishing of "nostalgia" as a commercial and marketing strategy in line with an increased academic reflection on "nostalgia" as a more complex notion that is valid of critical reflection from historical, sociological, political, economic and aesthetic

perspectives (Niemeyer et al. 2014, 6 and see also Boym 2001). *NostalgieNet*'s light or entertainment approach to nostalgia as living history is a significantly different approach to "nostalgia" as a strategy for the seemingly comparable Russian niche channel *Nostalgia* that started broadcasting in 2004. *Nostalgia*'s own approach to nostalgia is targeted towards offering a clearer narrative of the Soviet past and towards its viewers becoming more knowledgeable about this past. Hence in this case, as Ekaterina Kalinina (2014) demonstrates in her analysis of the platform, because "nostalgia" is an emotion, which urges users to go back to the past, it can be experienced as such by *Nostalgia*'s users, but is not part of the programmed content. Rather, *Nostalgia*'s scheduled content fosters an *analysis* of the past, and as editor-in-chief Michael Galich states "where the past is discussed, then it is not nostalgia any longer" (Kalinina 2014, 117). Examples like *Nostalgia* and *NostalgieNet* therefore demonstrate the relevance of case study analysis to point out and allow space for different production perspectives on nostalgia, as well as necessary critical reflection on nostalgia as a complex and multi-faceted notion.

Third and finally, the programming generally does not go further back than 1940–1950. On the one hand, this is quite logical, as there is not much television material before that time. On the other hand, this goes for topics as well because of the platform's *appeal to collective memory* and living history. Therefore, no programmes about the Middle Ages and the like. This strategy has more recently been expanded, so not only to include Dutch programming, which follows the mentioned preconditions, but also programming, which many Dutch people remember, such as *The Onedin Line* (BBC, 1971–1980) with its memorable television theme tune, and *All Creatures Great and Small* (BBC, 1978–1990) (titled *James Herriot* on the thematic channel, because of how the Dutch remember this programme). *'Allo 'Allo* (BBC, 1982–1992) and *Absolutely Fabulous* (BBC, 1992–2012) are other examples, although these are not Dutch programmes, they do appeal very much to Dutch collective memory. Scheduling on the *NostalgieNet* platform therefore reflects a specific *assumption* regarding national (Dutch) collective memory.

The analysis of the scheduling on the nostalgia platform reveals how television professionals actively participate in practices of selection and reframing, that way creating a canon. Scheduling in the context of a digital thematic channel can be compared to the work of a curator. The channel provides access to history programming by functioning as a "thematic periodical" (Müller 2012, 290), based on a selection of topical as well as recurring themes. For example, the series *Nederland Toen*, freely translated as "that's how it was in the Netherlands," pays

attention to how Holland has changed in the twentieth century. The series looks back at everyday life through topics that are recognizable for a large audience, from fashion to sports through household activities to industry. Monthly themes can be based on an anniversary (for instance, Liberation Day) and commemoration (for instance, Dutch East Indies), but also on typical events connected to a specific time of the year. Examples are programmes about the Royal Family in April, variety around Christmas, and the weather is an often-featured theme in January since in the words of Cees Labeur "Dutch people love talking about the weather." Within a flow of 24/7 programming, previously broadcast images and audio-visual archive materials are repurposed and further enhanced by positioning these images in new historical and televisual contexts.

To make sense of all the available archival footage, ordering in formats and contextualization is necessary. For instance, archival footage will be juxtaposed and provided with a new voice-over narration. Selected programmes for the "canon" are (re-)framed and contextualized to offer television users a better understanding of the selected texts. The pacing and timing of the schedule is also important, because the channel often offers counter programming. Furthermore, because the acquisition of programmes takes time and scheduling is devised to join with important events and dates, scheduling is planned well in advance – I have also called this a "ritualized" form of actuality (Hagedoorn 2013, 61).

Finally, as a precondition, next to the creators setting limitations for what kind of content their niche audience will have access to, there are also some difficulties in gaining *access* to Dutch public broadcasters' archives. This specifically concerns the issue of *kannibalisering* ("cannibalizing"). For example, if *ONS*/ *NostalgieNet* as a commercial channel would be able to schedule a 1960s hit programme, such as the drama series *De Kleine Waarheid* (*Everyday Life* [NCRV, 1970–1973]) produced by Dutch public broadcaster NCRV, and this series would then be scheduled against current NCRV programming, the public broadcaster would have to compete against itself. As a result, there is plenty of televisual content still on the shelf, which historical and nostalgia thematic channels would very much like to broadcast and share with their audiences. Subsequently, the case of *ONS*/ *NostalgieNet* helps to clarify how national collective memory – or more specifically, national collective memory as understood by television professionals – affects the scheduling of living history on the digital thematic channel.

Media Policy in the Netherlands

To what extent is media policy in the Netherlands attuned to the circulation of nostalgic television content discussed above? On a regular basis, the Ministry is in contact with the managing directors of radio and television producers in Hilversum. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science must comply with the Audiovisual Media Services (AVMS) Directive set out by the European Parliament and the European Council ("Television without boundaries"). This Directive establishes legal, regulatory and administrative provisions related to the distribution of audio-visual media services. Amongst others, media service providers must fulfil certain *obligations*, including:

– broadcasters must devote at least 10% of their transmission time, or 10% of their programming budget, to European works created by producers who are independent of broadcasters, excluding time allocated to news, sports events, games, advertising, teletext services, teleshopping;

– regarding on-demand audio-visual media services, EU countries shall ensure that audio-visual media service providers promote the production of and access to European works;

– protection of minors;

– the right to information: EU countries may take measures aimed at ensuring that certain events, which they consider to be of major importance for society, cannot be broadcast exclusively in such a way as to deprive a substantial proportion of the public in that EU country (Audiovisual Media Services [AVMS] Directive, 2015[8]). The AVMS Directive prescribes a majority of broadcast time to European works, and for the Netherlands this is 50% (Cees van Koppen, personal communication, 15 November 2017).

Each EU Member State has its own procedures. The question is what kind of broadcasting system is to be set out in the Netherlands. New regulations are implemented in the new Media Act, for instance regarding the extent in which commercials and entertainment are broadcast on the public channels.

Television is becoming more and more significant on European and international levels. Copyright and royalties may become an issue, since legislation is regulated per country. In the contemporary televisual landscape, more foreign content is available on Dutch television. More and more radio and media service providers are also owned by companies from abroad. There are broadcasters, who

8 See: *http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN-NL/ALL/?uri=URISERV:am0005.* Last accessed 22. 09. 2015.

immediately break into new techniques, but offer no new services as such. In the Netherlands, new applications must gain the approval of the Ministry. They need to be agreed upon by the different radio and television broadcasters and their managing directors or boards – decision making therefore takes time.

As Cees van Koppen, former Policy Advisor at the Ministry of Education, Culture & Science Department of Media and Creative Industries argues (personal interview, The Hague, 9 November 2012), the strength of the Dutch system is being *multiform*. From the year 2016, the new Media Act offers opportunities for television producers from "outside" the NPO to submit programmes. Furthermore, the NPO will become increasingly independent. However, the responsibility of the NPO remains unchanged. The core business of the Dutch public broadcasting system remains the focus on education, information and culture, with programmes suitable for all sections of society. Performance agreements determine that a programme should reach about 85% of the Dutch viewers. If the NPO was to focus on one type of programming, this target would become out of reach and, amongst other things, revenues from advertisers would drop (source: Cees van Koppen, personal interview). The Dutch Media Authority (Commissariaat voor de Media [CvdM]) upholds the rules, which are formulated in the Dutch Media Act, as well as in the regulations based on this act, for example the Media Decree. Despite some initial fears, viewers will not be deprived of entertainment. The newly adopted Media Act brings considerable changes by bidding that public broadcasting must be open to outside producers, entertainment is not a core task anymore and the NPO will gain more power, with influence on content.[9]

In their 2006 policy plan, the NPO foresaw an increase in the use of different channels by the public. Their plan was to expand the public broadcasting portfolio by offering thematic channels via subscription television, which would cover themes more in-depth. The three open public channels would serve more as "shop windows" to guide viewers to the thematic channels and on-demand platforms (NPO 2005, 11). The thematic channels and on-demand platforms via the internet would be the pivot in the NPO's cross-media strategy, which was primarily aimed at guiding viewers to content on the different media platforms (NPO 2005, 45). An important challenge in this development regarding the use of archival footage in television

9 See: De Volkskrant redactie. BN'ers roepen Kamer op om tegen Mediawet te stemmen, *de Volkskrant*. *http://www.volkskrant.nl/media/bn-ers-roepen-kamer-op-om-tegen-mediawet-te-stemmen~a4162176/*.
De Volkskrant redactie. Nieuwe Mediawet met ruime meerderheid aangenomen [New Media Act Adopted by a Large Majority] *de Volkskrant*. *http://www.volkskrant.nl/media/nieuwe-mediawet-met-ruime-meerderheid-aangenomen~a4162391/*. Last accessed 13. 10. 2017.

programming was to obtain copyright and licence fees to use this footage, not only for one broadcast on linear television, but also for recurrent broadcasts on thematic channels and on-demand distribution via the internet (Nuchelmans 2014, 33). Not only are these licence fees higher, but also there are myriads of rights holders, who are often difficult to locate (see for instance Korteweg and P. B. Hugenholtz 2011).

However, since the early 2010s the public broadcasting system has seen increasing budget cuts, and was forced to organize itself more efficiently. From 2010 onwards, digital thematic channels and websites would be reduced, and the remaining channels would be more focused and more recognizable (NPO 2009, 2010). Websites needed to have a clear link to the broadcasters' scheduling on other channels. From 2016 onwards, the new policy plan for the NPO has taken effect (see also NPO 2015b). The emphasis in the next five years will be on a greater focus in themes and broadcasting platforms. Driven by financial cutbacks, the number of thematic channels and websites will be *reduced* and the web content will be centralized. In contrast to the previous five-year policy period, "history" will *not* be one of the main themes around which programmes are developed. An added complication concerning a greater focus on on-demand television is that rightful claimants of programme copyrights – especially in the case of archival materials – need to be tracked down and financially compensated. Consequently, only archival materials and websites of programmes that are *actively* broadcast will be available online on the NPO website. The broadcast material of past programmes will be moved to the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision archive, which will become online and will be made available. While websites for "strong brands" that have considerable public value and reach a large audience – for instance, the programme website of the history series *Andere Tijden* (*Changing Times* [NPS/NTR/VPRO, 2000–], *http://anderetijden.nl* Last accessed 13. 10. 2015.) – will specifically be expanded and function as *portals* for dissemination of archival and contextual materials, context materials like programme websites for past programmes will be discontinued. However, contextualization and infrastructure are key preconditions for users of audio-visual archival materials (including television audiences, media researchers and media professionals), not least to find their way through the enormous amounts of materials; and media policy also further complicates the re-use of audio-visual materials (see also Hagedoorn and Agterberg 2016).

In May–June 2015, news filtered through that the NPO was to reduce the number of programming websites drastically and some broadcasters, like *NPO Doc*, would even be disbanded. Broadcasters and audiences reacted lividly, as evidenced by numerous reactions on websites (NPO Doc Homepage, 16 June

2015).[10] In the new Media Act, broadcasters will maintain self-governing within the NPO and keep their own identity. The focus of NPO policy in the period 2016–2020 will also concern a more *integral* programming of broadcasts to connect and interact with audiences, meaning a multi-platform strategy to offer broadcasts that are in line with how audiences are estimated to watch television.

This poses questions in relation to how the success of narrowcasting and contextualization practices for smaller and fragmented niche audiences is measured, especially for those specialized audiences that value linear television viewing. This is even more complicated in the multi-platform era, where television content is dispersed across numerous platforms and screens – and hence, more dynamic and complex to evaluate.

Creating Meaning: Curated Connections via Nostalgia Scheduling and Narrowcasting

The trend of individuals watching a television programme when it is most convenient for them undermines the traditional system of channels and broadcasting companies. Public service broadcasting in the Netherlands traditionally revolves around carefully structured programming and broadcasting schedules devised by network managers persuading viewers to tune into programmes they would perhaps not spontaneously watch. Since the analogue switch-off, legislature regarding digital channels and the general digitalization of society, the NPO has seen a sharp increase in the number of digital thematic channels and websites. In this article, I have considered the role of television professionals as curators and the meaning of curated connections in the scheduled "re-screening" of previously broadcast history and nostalgia programming on the digital thematic channel. I have interpreted my selected case materials within the theoretical framework of cultural memory, understanding memory as a constructive process with a specific focus on the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts (Erll 2008). The discussion of the commercial thematic channel *ONS*/ *NostalgieNet* provides an insight into the scheduling from (national) collective memory, as well as more present-day issues, such as the exploitation and cannibalization of archival footage. A reflection on the extent in which media policy in the Netherlands is attuned to the current (re-)circulation of previously screened content has finally raised questions in relation to how the success of narrowcasting and contextualization practices for fragmented niche audiences is measured in the multi-platform era.

10 See: *http://www.npodoc.nl/nieuws/2015/reageer*. Last accessed 16. 06. 2015.

The analysis points out the crucial role played by programme makers in the construction and circulation of nostalgia in the multi-platform era, and the role of national collective memory in the creative act of scheduling on the digital thematic channel. Programming and scheduling on the analysed platform takes a thematic (rather than kaleidoscopic) approach to nostalgia content and follows three basic rules or preconditions: (1) nostalgia as contemporary history or "living" history, appealing to the collective memory of the Dutch nation; (2) a light or entertainment approach to history, although not necessarily superficial and (3) because of this appeal – and in a lesser context, practical availability of audio-visual archival content – the programming generally does not go further back than 1940–1950. The creators have also set out to further enhance this strategy by means of multi-media modes of storytelling in relation to scheduled content. These three preconditions further restrict what Kompare has called "regimes of repetition" (2002, 19). It helps to clarify how national collective memory – or more specifically, national collective memory as understood by television professionals – affects the scheduling of living history on the digital thematic channel. Important events, years, and dates connected to national collective memory and from Dutch contemporary history are the incentive for its scheduling, and this strategy can be further intensified by cross-platform techniques. The platform ultimately regards nostalgia as *emotion* (something very different than historical facts) and aims to "bring the past alive" via emotion and sharing with others. This form of living history adheres most to feelings occurring when watching a programme for the first time, and to television as a shared experience. This digital thematic channel aims to achieve both, through their programme selection and through contextualization of archival content.

This brings new challenges for the online circulation of audio-visual (archival) materials. The increasing budget cuts and recent media policies in the Dutch public broadcasting system affect the production and online presentation of programmes on digital thematic channels, their related cross-media practices, and ultimately, the function of online circulated material as material for contextualization and memory construction – collective cultural memory as a TV guide. However, the dynamic production and scheduling practices studied in this article offer specific opportunities for niche audiences to engage with the past. Television in this manner can play an important role as a "history teacher" in present-day society. Not only does television achieve this through the scheduling of nostalgia programmes and by telling stories from the past,

but also by making materials from archives accessible on diverse platforms and contextualizing them for specific audiences 24/7.

In the current media landscape, televisual products and practices of *re-screening* add another multitude of possibilities for televisual references to the past, through access to the vast – largely digital – repertoire of previously transmitted images. Televisual practices of re-screening signify less the repurposing or borrowing of "a 'property' from one medium and [the] re-use [of] it in another" (Bolter and Grusin 1999; see also Jönsson 2008). It is apparent that the circulation of television materials is no longer limited to the television set itself, as television today is part of a much wider culture of circulation and more distinct cultures of television viewing. Instead, contemporary televisual practices of re-screening contain the integration and adaptation of past television and audio-visual archive materials in a new context of television itself.

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Multiple Revolutions. Remediating and Re-enacting the Romanian Events of 1989

Mónika Dánél
Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest, Hungary)
E-mail: danel.monika@btk.elte.hu

Abstract. This study proposes a twofold analysis: the presumable strategies of the December 1989 events in Romania and their complexity as it appears in later filmic re-enactments. These re-enactments as theatrical "translations" offer a rhetorical reading of past events, and can also be seen as practices of memories inscribed in the body. The events are interpreted in the duality of the archival image and the acoustic/gestural memory, where the latter is understood as an atmospheric (bodily) memory. The disorientation or disinformation caused by the technical conditions, the circulation or lack of images, the alternating silences and chanting on the street make the past events incomprehensible and medially dissonant.[1]

Keywords: re-enactments of historical events, films about December 1989 in Romania, the experience of space, body and memory.

Simulation, Collective Imaginary, Inner Strategies

In relation to the Romanian events, there is a consensus regarding three particularities: this was the bloodiest regime change in the Eastern European bloc; the television was a medium that influenced the events – and thus its historicity appears as a media event –, and the events were dispersive. The documents, interviews, hypotheses ever growing in number, the different narrative versions nuance and modify today's memories. Their contradictory, dissonant nature indirectly also stages the reflexive understanding of the past event. Borrowing Michael Rothberg's idea, the 1989 Romanian events become comprehensible today as an event that takes shape at the crossing point of the

1 This work was supported by the project entitled *Space-ing Otherness. Cultural Images of Space, Contact Zones in Contemporary Hungarian and Romanian Film and Literature* (OTKA NN 112700) and by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

narratives of *multidirectional memory* (Rothberg, 2009).[2] The simultaneous events of the period between the 21st and 25th of December 1989, the last public speech of Nicolae Ceauşescu and the execution of the Ceauşescu couple, make a chronological approach impossible.[3] These couple of days stratify the various shaping, simultaneous narratives of a military coup d'état and a popular movement, revolt turning into a revolution, each with a different starting point. There are ideas that trace back the events to international – Russian, American or even Hungarian – conspiracies.[4] Yet others emphasize the disruption within the system. The complex, discursive medium, through which one can relate to the events of that time, is created by the hybrid street protests partly organized and directed, and partly spontaneous.[5] The "spontaneity" of the street events is also shaped by ideas of provocateurs. In the narrative of international interference, such is for example the suspicion that foreign agents existed in Timişoara, or the hypotheses about voice manipulations of agents of the yet existing Communist regime on the Palace Square meeting. Ceauşescu convened a mass meeting to the Palace Square on the 21st of December 1989, and the speech he delivered (meant to condemn the events of Timişoara and demonstrate his power) was broadcast live on television. The interpretation of the Palace Square events is an excellent indicator of the divergent nature of the 1989 events in Romania. The archival evidence on the Revolution, the so-called *Revolution Files*, opened to public access in the summer of 2016, also revealed that it was about the collision of various strategies. One of the probable narratives claimed that a sound-and-light grenade

2 In addition to competitive narratives, which do not cancel each other's truth, we must also posit here the presence of simulated, manipulated narratives, which shaped the events with their non-truth as well.

3 I use the dates of the two events broadcast on television (in the case of the execution, the delayed images) because of their wide media circulation. The designation "beginning" and the "end" of the revolution is much more problematic. For instance, one of the currents of Romanian historiography (namely, the chronology of Alex Mihai Stoenescu) tries to overwrite the initiating (and partly Hungarian) character of the events at Timişoara on the 16th of December 1989, and replace it with the protest attempt at Iaşi on the 14th of December.

4 E.g. this is the preconception of Susanne Brandstätter's film, *Checkmate,* which presents the Romanian events at the intersection of international strategies (see Brandstätter–Adameşteanu 2004). The film follows the visual dramaturgy of a chess game, compiling the memories and interpretations of an Eastern European representative of the American secret services, French and Romanian historians, Miklós Németh, the parents of a victim from Timişoara, and other characters. Miklós Németh mentioned, for instance, that Victor Stănculescu, one of the key figures of the events, who organized the technical conditions of the execution of the Ceauşescus, had a fair command of Hungarian, thus the linguistic conditions of a Hungarian conspiracy are met, and the film offers a possibility of Hungarian influence.

5 The military also has a twofold role in the narrative of the events. For a comprehensive summary of the hybrid narratives of the army and the Romanian revolution, see the groundbreaking study of Ruxandra Cesereanu (2009).

was used in the square (Hodor, 2016).[6] (This type of grenade was developed for creating confusion and disarming in hostage-taking situations, efficient mainly in closed spaces, emitting strong light and sound and making it impossible to sense the surroundings.) The agents of the Securitate and the Special Antiterrorist Unit, mingling with the crowd, used these devices to threaten the groups of protesters trying to invade the square. The panic and movement of the crowds created by the sound grenade was sensed by Ceauşescu himself, who archived the effect for posterity himself, as he had to stop his speech because of the noise, and the camera that filmed him recorded it. (The sudden sound that was created must have been quite drastic in the silence required for a public speech.) Also, his gaze pointed directly at the place where the order was broken. Simultaneously with this, as Hodor claimed, the men of the Securitate standing near Ceauşescu concluded that the "Comrade" was in danger, and their nervous movements also indicated it on the TV monitors. As a third component, Ilie Ceauşescu, the president's brother and deputy Minister of Defence, a fanatical producer of the idea of foreign (Hungarian and Russian) invasion, also carried out an intimidating action. In reference to the files of prosecutor Bogdan Licu, Mădălin Hodor claimed that Ilie Ceauşescu gave orders to use a special sound amplifying technique on the square. The president's brother thought that the grenade was an attack, so he had the pre-prepared track of "psychological war" connected to the amplifiers on the square, and this rumbling noise simulating tanks and airplanes triggered panic in the crowd. Hodor's article argues also that the dictator (code name "Comrade Oak") probably saw that there was no imminent danger, so he did not withdraw but tried to continue his speech (eventually completing it), and thus prevented a massacre (for there were armed soldiers all over on the surrounding buildings). This argumentation considers that Ceauşescu's interjections ("*Ho, bă!*", "*Nu, mă, ho!*" – in English, approximately: "Hey!", "Hey, no!") were instructions to stop the shooting. However, this interpretation is somewhat doubtful in the context of the images showing the insecurity on the dictator's face, and in the given situation it could have just as well referred to the fact that the dictator did not want to leave the balcony where he was standing.

The last public speech that was broadcast live has a historical value of a turning point: the disruption of the speech and the live transmission and the temporal distance between the two irrevocably revealed the insecurity, if not outright fear,

6 For the "psychological war" aired on the news of TV2 on December 21, 2016 at 19:29, see: *http://stiri.tvr.ro/razboi-psihologic-in-21-decembrie-1989--armata-a-folosit-tehnica-speciala-pentru-a-induce-panica-la-mitingul-convocat-de-ceausescu_812738.html*. Last accessed 22. 08. 2017.

perceptible in the dictator's voice, visible on his face and movements, and on his entourage. At any rate, the camera archived the dictator's falling out of his role built up and practiced in the course of decades. Using the terms of Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1991), in the moments of the disruption of his speech, Ceauşescu himself became the perceiver of the space that formed in the tension of the representation of space and spatial practice. The structure of the space that had previously been set as a panopticon (in a structure that objectifies people) lost ground because of the revolted occupants of the space, although their experience of the space was not readily visible. The effect, that is, the tension between the abstract (here: dictatorial) use of the space and the experience of the people who moved away from this abstract space, was "broadcast" by the dictator himself. Through him, or rather through the camera and the broadcast, the viewers could also perceive the live space for a short while. Paradoxically, he was the first who could experience the space and pass on the disruption in it thanks to the space representation constructed by the camera.

After this disruption, the previously centralized structure and representation disintegrated into the transmitted images and time planes of partly simultaneous and contradictory events. It was a media event in the sense that the TV studio turned from a space of representation into a location, amplifying the circulation of (phantom) images and further enhancing the dramatic sequence of events. The television had a decisive role in creating the image of the terrorists as the collective (imaginary) enemy.[7] Supposedly, however, other technical simulations also assisted this image of the terrorists created in an unparalleled manner under the technical and mental conditions of the age to look real.[8]

So, while the simulations of the technical apparatus (and their circulation) coded and created the (manipulated) events of the age, other circumstances not unrelated to the technical conditions also shaped these in an invisible, implicit way. Based

7 The identity of the so-called "terrorist" has never been reassuringly solved. Ruxandra Cesereanu in her abovementioned book lists ten different versions. Presumably, it was Ceauşescu himself who first used the term "terrorist actions" in the context of an international conspiracy at the last meeting of the Central Committee. Then it appeared again in the language of the actors of the new power as the "terrorist phenomenon" (Nicolae Militaru), and as "certain terrorist gangs" (Ion Iliescu, interview for the BBC on the 23rd of December 1989). Iliescu staged these "gangs" as the protectors of the escaped dictator and his wife. It gained different contexts in different narratives as an empty signifier, but it is a fact that cannot be avoided that after the 22nd of December 1989, the day the couple escaped, 942 people died, most of them having been shot in the head.

8 The authors of an article published in January 1990 thought it was possible that there were shooting points that simulated shots. Cf. Uluitoarea Tehnică a Teroriştilor. (The Amazing Techniques of the Terrorists) *Adevărul* (20. 01. 1990) *https://romanianrevolutionofdecember1989.com/uluitoarea-tehnica-a-teroristilor-adevarul-20-ianuarie-1990-p-2/*. Last accessed 22. 08. 2017.

on the memories of the participants, I think that the unspoken (hypothetical) strategies of the key individuals in the shaping of the events "collided" and led to various decisions. These inner strategies/narratives were created by the panoptic control as unspoken suggestions and suspicions. However, precisely by being unspoken, they led to decisions, because of the common knowledge of the structure of dictatorship. The virtual stage of the assumed power of phantom images created from simulations and the unspoken strategies was simultaneously efficient and operative. The duality between what the members of the hierarchical social structure knew, based also on each other's mutual supervision, and what they did not know because of the novelty of the situation created an open, malleable medium of suggestions and suspicions, where the responsibility of the individual decisions became stronger (this was the case, for example, of the army barrack commander from Târgovişte, Andrei Kemenici, who guarded the Ceauşescus in their last days). The strategies surrounding the execution of the couple were partly staged as such a virtual game.[9] While the dictatorial structure was loosened by street movements, a play field for individual tricks or agendas also emerged. Supposedly, the group that had the strongest strategic vision was best in transferring the mental conditions based on mutual supervision, and turned the change into a long transition to a new status quo. (In the work of Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujică analysed later on and the restaging of Irina Botea, the process of the naming of this new political status quo signals the fluidity of the reproduction: Ion Iliescu would have been willing to leave the term "Socialist" in the name of the new party, but when he was told it was not the best idea, he easily agreed to name the party National Salvation Front, connected to the people of Timişoara. It was much less important how they called themselves as long as they represented the only centralized power. They had no language, no concept for the change.) For the other strategists, as soon as they

9 The participants of the nearly four-hour-long 1999 talk show, *The Last Days of the Ceauşescu-Couple* tried to legitimize the events of the execution and their own role in these through their own memories. The "show" also played on the reconstruction of the events by the choice of the location (the building of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, the former room of the Political Execution Committee), and later it exposed interpretations of the hypotheses and decisions of the actors, who shaped the events (Victor Stănculescu, Gelu Voican Voiculescu, Ion Cristoiu, Andrei Kemenici, Ion Boeru, Viorel Domenico, Constantin Lucescu, Constantin Paisie). The show can be watched online at: *3.06.1999 – Ultimele zile ale soților Ceauşescu (partea I)*: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNw-gJuHzkg&t=5579s*, and *3.06.1999 – Ultimele zile ale soților Ceauşescu (partea a II-a)*: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tt1qXeZm1H4*. Last accessed 22. 08. 2017. Corneliu Porumboiu's talk show imitation and parody *12:08 East of Bucharest* (2006) can be interpreted in this media context of the 2000s. Radu Gabrea's feature film *Three Days Till Christmas* (2011) can be seen as a re-enactment of this archived show, as a staging of the self-reflective character of the remembering process, in which the participants think about their former decisions.

sensed this centralized power, and because Communism had already conditioned them for it, their interest was to go with this change. This common interest brought into play the silent cooperation among the new people in power, due to which the so-called phenomenon of "terrorists" can still be only analysed in its effects and strategic functions. The apparatus that produced this phantom, which required human sacrifice still cannot be grasped in concrete terms and thus it still cannot be legally prosecuted. We can only trace the history of a word coming "from thin air," which gets stigmatized and demonized because of a television broadcast, which is attached to human sacrifice hovering above the dead bodies and which finally vanishes as a mere ghost.[10] The phantom image is impossible to reconstruct, it fades compared to its extraordinary applicability. The transformation of the media and mental conditions of the age perceivable here must have had a role in the success of this phantom image: the society of those times lost precisely its most intimate lie-detecting sense because of the simulations and techniques of a fake reality, which repainted everything (even the leaves on the trees during one of the dictator's visits), under the influence of a blind faith in the regime change.

Stere Gulea's documentary *University Square* (*Piața Universității*, 1991) recorded the media traces of the long transition by archiving the 1990 events in Bucharest. The documentary follows the series of protests beginning with the 21st of December 1989, which was eventually dispersed by the miners in June, and for which the then President Ion Iliescu was again placed under accusation in December 2016. On the one hand, we may observe the performative, community forming force of the sounds (singing, chanting) in this film. On the other hand, the archival images present all the techniques, with which the (new) power system – besides the physical violence of the miners – tries to purge the protesters from the square "linguistically" by stigmatizing their mere existence or names through a vulgarized political speech.[11] Gulea's film also displays a certain continuity of gestures: at one point in the film (minute 58), for example, Ion Iliescu's hand repeats Ceauşescu's typical gestures. One can even say that Iliescu's body and language "narrates" the mental conditions of the age. The protesters also used the technique developed

10 The divergent semantic field of this word is shown also in the memorial show referred to in the previous note: Constantin Lucescu called in that show the sentence, to which he himself assisted as a defence lawyer, a simulacrum, while also saying that before they arrived at the courtroom they thought they were supposed to sentence *two terrorists* (*doi terorişti*).

11 Ion Iliescu, as the representative of the new power, called the protesters *golani* (rogues) in the Parliament, following Ceauşescu, who had called the protesters from Timişoara *huligani* (hooligans). After the events, in the RAI 2 interview he said that the miners helped to *clean* the traces of vandalism from the square, restoring the green area. And they also "hoed" people out of there, adds ironically the poet and journalist Mircea Dinescu in Gulea's film.

to hail Ceauşescu in their chanting, but they tried to achieve something different through it. The new medium of the freedom of expression is the song, the solid refrain, which creates a commonly experienced sounding space.[12]

The multiple layers of technical and mental conditions, the media traces of trained, manipulated, simulated situations create the hybrid relational space, where one may get an image of the events as transmitted by the archives. The sounding materials (telephone conversations, oral orders) connected to representatives of the old-new power were those mostly left in the background in television broadcasts and archiving processes. At the same time, for the masses in the public spaces the event was created through the chanting, precisely in the medium and time of the sound, the sounding body, as the rhythm or a word or phrase "fixed" the faith in an imagined and desired change. The poet Mircea Dinescu's first free television statement, his hesitating speech turned into a performative message as he almost surprisingly found the expression *We won!* (*Am învins!*), and his body turned into a sounding medium while chanting it.

In my study, further on, I shall analyse the various re-enactments as corporeal modes of memory, first as practices that make the meaning of bodily performativity readable, understandable during the events of the age. Then, as a mode of remembrance, through which a strange past experience can become the experience of one's own body taking on the situation or figure of others. In the re-enactment, the hybridity of the archival traces inscribed into the body, both fictive or with a documentary value, highlights the discursive field of the media ingredients and strategies, while all this appears through the bodies' own experience. The archival image or scene of the past event transferred to the body disintegrates the body as a discursive space, a living archive.

Re-Enactment as an Artistic Strategy and Practice

The re-enactment as a performative act fundamentally reorganizes and stages the relationship of a historical event, of past and authenticity. As a hybrid genre of private and collective memory, it is an outstanding phenomenon of contemporary art, which creates specific formations relating to the historical

12 The *Hymn of the Rogues* (*Imnul golanilor*), composed by Cristian Paţurcă, was remembered as the hymn of the revolution. The refrain goes: "A loafer rather than a traitor, / A hooligan rather than a dictator, / A rogue rather than an activist, / Dead rather than a communist." (In the original: "Mai bine haimana, decât trădător, / Mai bine huligan, decât dictator, / Mai bine golan, decât activist, / Mai bine mort, decât comunist.")

past in-between past (archives, memories) and present relations and concepts. A difference must be made between popular forms of historical re-enactments and artistic re-enactments. Inke Arns differentiates between the re-enactment used in criminology, experimental archaeology and live action role-play practiced in popular culture, when different groups re-enact historical events or past lifestyles as a hobby (Arns 2011). The author discusses the term *re-enactment* in relation to two others: *living history*, which is not necessarily connected to concrete historical events, it is the re-creation of a certain way of life; and *live action role-playing*, where the character is physically enacted, but apart from the previous two versions, it is based on fiction. However, "what all three forms – re-enactment, living history, and live action role-playing – have in common, is that they allow access to history, or histories, through immersion, personification, and empathy in a way that history books cannot" (Arns 2011, 2).

Artistic re-enactments differ from these in their reference to the present: "the difference to pop-cultural re-enactments such as the re-creation of historic battles, for example, is that artistic re-enactments are not performative re-staging of historic situations and events that occurred a long time ago; events (often traumatic ones) are re-enacted that are viewed as very important for the present. Here the reference to the past is not history for history's sake; it is about the relevance of what happened in the past for the here and now. Thus one can say that artistic re-enactments are not an affirmative confirmation of the past; rather, they are questionings of the present through reaching back to historical events that have etched themselves indelibly into the collective memory" (Arns 2011, 2).

The re-enactment is present also because of the *embodiment*, "as a body-based discourse in which the past is reanimated through physical and psychological experience" (Agnew 2004, 330), making it possible to experience the historical past from within. In the role played as a corporeal experience, the play is not merely a role, but it turns into participation. The re-enactment changes the past event into individual experience, leaving traces on the body, and thus the traumas of the past change the players into (post-factum) witnesses (see Agnew 2004, 331). The re-enactments are agents where the past event can be experienced as personal, and as such cultural phenomena, they offer a reflection of historical discourses and make the great narratives of historiography democratic (see Agnew 2004, 335). The re-enactment as a practice that can be applied in education places the written history and the ritual and synchretic oral tradition in the relationship of history and memory side by side: it turns the memory into an intermedial, intercorporeal experience, and as such, it needs

an interdisciplinary interpretation. In the spirit of Augusto Boal's concepts, it changes the Spectator into a Spect-Actor (Boal 2006), and this is something the interpreter cannot withdraw from either. The re-enactment as a contemporary artistic strategy, while it redefines the elements of art (e.g. the author's intention) and its audience, is committed to the historical consciousness as something that can be shaped, and is interested in understanding the historical events from the society of the present: that is, it reconnects the historical past (and indirectly art itself as a re-enactment) to contemporary society. It offers a divergent and non-linear experience of history in-between the past and the present, the multiple viewpoints of a collective and private event, in the duality of an archived past and a bodily presence.

The growing number of re-enactments of the Romanian revolution betray a need for the processing of the past, as well as the collective significance and shocking, traumatic nature of archival images both for directly involved (Romanian, Hungarian, Romanian emigrant) artists, or foreign artists touched by news and broadcasts. It can be said that the works created not long after the events recreated the divergent media complexity of the events, while the later ones tended to understand other subjective viewpoints and narratives. However, in both cases they create the possible narratives of past events, at times even through the dual, distancing and implicating nature of humour.[13]

In what follows, I shall analyse the re-enactment strategies of the visual works of various genres. The plays of Caryl Churchyll *Mad Forest* (1990/1991), Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujică's *Videograms of a Revolution* (*Videogramme einer Revolution*, 1992), Susanne Brandstätter's *Checkmate: Strategy of a Revolution* (*Schachmatt: Strategie einer Revolution*, 2004), Corneliu Porumboiu's *12:08 East of Bucharest* (*A fost sau n-a fost?*, 2006), Irina Botea's *Auditions for a Revolution* (2006), Milo Rau's *The Last Days of the Ceauşescus* (*Die letzten Tage der Ceauşescus*, 2009/2010), Radu Gabrea's *Three Days Till Christmas* (*Trei zile până la Crăciun*, 2011) and Petra Szőcs's *The Execution* (*A kivégzés*, 2014) are considered here as works, through which the re-enactment as a performative act stages the overlapping of the historical event and its media broadcast, displaying the Romanian revolution as a media event. At the same time, making the embodied scenes of the past alive raises awareness through enactment that the

13 The Romanian filmic tradition contains examples of both re-enactment – e.g. Lucian Pintilie's *Reconstruction* (*Reconstituirea*, 1968) – and technical transmission – e.g. Mircea Daneliuc, *Microphone Test* (*Probă de microfon*, 1980). These films expressed the transforming practice of re-enactment and transmission placed in the service of propaganda in (tragi)comedies with a necessarily critical voice in the ideological context of their times.

dead, among whom the executed Ceauşescu-couple can be authentically enacted, but cannot be brought to life, and from the viewpoint of the family of the dead, the Romanian revolution cannot be abstracted as merely a media event of the transmitted images. However, there may be a consensus about that fact that the television broadcast had a central role during the Romanian revolution, television gained its media historical self-definition *through* this event.

My personal starting points are the images made in the family spaces of the Farocki–Ujică film: children and an elderly woman watch a television broadcast, while probably a family member is filming them (one of the children even looks into the camera) [Figs. 1–2]. The images transmit the faces and bodies at the intersection of a television broadcast and a recording camera in a private space, and indirectly also the presence of a handheld camera. The "intention" of a camera that strives to archive the gaze signals that this collective act of watching TV is an event. Showing the people watching without a sound (nobody asks them how they feel, what they think) places the image self-reflectively into the centre of the future viewer's attention, together with the disturbing tension of searching for meaning. Some of the re-enactments – such as those of Irina Botea and Petra Szőcs – can be seen as interpretations of these soundless, archived gazes.

"Silence is part of the signature of a totalitarian state." (Koselleck 1979, 289.) According to the evidence of the above images, the mediatized view of the fall and the dead bodies of those who were in control of silencing in a totalitarian regime (the Ceauşescus) also causes silence. The following archival images can be viewed as the staging of an untouchable media spectacle and viewing as a bodily experience [Figs. 3–4]. The hardly recognizable sight of the television image of the executed dictators causes an adult's hand to make a gesture of pointing, just like a child – who is not yet aware of the presence of the medium in-between the image and their own body – and wants to better understand or reach to what is there on the screen. The owner of the pointing hand – by the deictic nature of the pointing – tries to gain some sort of identification or knowledge in the spots of the screen.

I look at these archival images as signalling the media conditions of the age and recording the physical and mental experience of their contemporary viewing, the sight and effect of all the previously unimaginable television images (the silent watching and bodily reactions). The visual works analysed here are re-enactments (performance, feature film, theatre performance, short film) of past events from various present perspectives, which stage the human presence of the participants of the events and fragments of the technical, media elements of the age, while also bearing the marks of the archival nature of the recorded

images. A common feature of the films is the doubling, reflective retrospection of the re-enactment, while their different genres bring the divergent ways to light to understand the events of the age. Connecting the images above, the following question arises: how can the portrait of the dictator, retouched for twenty-five years to always look healthy, hanging on the walls of classrooms and public institutions, be "replaced" (if at all) in the eyes of children and adults with the image of the dead body lying on the ground in front of the wall? The sight of the screen as mediation without the possibility of touching also signals to me this gap between the media and the mental.

The events of 1989 in Romania earned the name of the first "televized revolution" because of the strategic role of the television, as it was for the first time in history when a revolution took place in live transmission, on TV *as well*, and the street became an extension of the studio, as Jean Baudrillard claims: "the moment that the studio became the focal point of the revolution […] everybody ran to the studio to appear on the screen at any price or into the street to be caught by cameras sometimes filming each other. The whole street became the extension of the studio, that is, an extension of the *non-place* of the event or of the *virtual* place of the event. The street itself became a virtual space" (1993, 64). This resulted in a paradoxical situation: when every information comes from the TV, the viewers should be simultaneously in front of the screen *and* in the place of action. At the same time, "when the TV becomes the strategic space of the event, it becomes unconditional self-reference" (Baudrillard 1993, 63). However, television as medium "teaches us indifference, distance, radical scepticism, unconditional apathy" (Baudrillard 1993, 70). All these contradictions create the common historical significance of television and events, as it conveys by these events, shaped in their turn also by the spectacle of the television, a new practice for all the previous uses of the television. Giorgio Agamben also considers that the role of the television is paramount: "in this way, truth and falsity became indistinguishable from each other and the spectacle legitimized itself solely through the spectacle. Timişoara is, in this sense, the Auschwitz of the age of the spectacle: and in the same way in which it has been said that after Auschwitz it is impossible to write and think as before, after Timişoara it will be no longer possible to watch television in the same way" (2000, 83). Vilém Flusser calls the relationship of reality and image in the Romanian event a "technical voodoo," and summarizes in his Budapest lecture held closest in time to the revolution that "there is no reality behind the image. There are realities in the image" (Flusser 1990). He emphasized the theatrical character of the events that he considered a

turning point, in the Lessingian sense of theatre: "to provoke sympathy and fright" (Flusser 1990). If we accept this claim, then the re-enacted versions – theatralized, dramatized, translated into foreign languages and relocated to different spaces – share the repeatable theatricality of the past event.[14] Nevertheless, they do not distance themselves by this, but elicit a series of questions. What are the media- and performative relations that the re-enactments stage in the remix-practices of a general *prosumer* (a productive user/consumer) in the age of post-media, and how do these differ from the media uses of the contemporary event? Where does the event happen in this case? The participants to the event were indeed the participants of that particular event that we later experience as such? If "the real experience is in the image, what happened behind the image is no use to us" (Flusser 1990), then what kind of role can we find for ourselves as viewers in-between archival and re-enacted images? If we merely look at it as a media event, then how can we deal with the victims?

Language Use, Technical Background and Intonation

The earliest artistic rendering of the Romanian revolution, to the best of my knowledge, is Caryl Churchill's drama entitled *Mad Forest*.[15] Grasping the events as language, drama and theatre performance is also important because it is the first treatment of the revolution broadcast in and fought through images. The play, making use of the cross-section of viewpoints in-between insider (Romania) and outsider (England), stages the parallelism and the intersections of a variety of private and public voices, and this way it achieves the same polyphony within the field of language that appears in the camera movement of the later Farocki–Ujică videogram. The play acknowledges the cultural in-betweenness through bilingualism (every scene begins with a common Romanian sentence repeated in English, as if an English tourist practiced Romanian sentences), translation (through the figure of a Translator character), musical, sounding elements (the Romanian national anthem after 1990 and the chanted slogans during the

14 In Irina Botea's understanding, re-enactment as a construction is about "sharing" and it raises several questions for the present, so it can be regarded as truly real (Picard 2011).

15 In 1990 Caryl Churchill travelled to Bucharest with senior students of the London-based Central School of Speech and Drama and together with students of the Ion Luca Caragiale University of Theatre and Film they created the drama staged in September that year at the National Theatre of Bucharest, and in October at the Royal Court Theatre of London. The play is still a favourite piece of young actors worldwide, offering a possibility of displaying cultural differences through a historical event. My interpretation uses the text of the play and parts of performances found on the internet.

revolution), and the ironic inclusion of western stereotypes (the figure of the Vampire), while it deals with the (cultural) transmittability, the condition for understanding outstanding events.[16] The cultural in-betweenness also shows that the events can only be understood through the distance of retrospection, through the dual authenticity of those who directly experienced the events and those who perceived them through various media and bodily renderings. It stages the "objectivity of multiple viewpoints," as a Romanian critic states, of which the Romanians who were closely affected by the events, were not capable (see Pascariu 2007). The play narrates the events through the intimate and personal everyday practices of two families, and it also signals the gaps of the events. In the juxtaposition of private voices and the emphatic silences between them,[17] it highlights their lack of adjustment. By way of silence and distancing bilingualism, an alienation technique comes into play through which "the refraction of the speech and the activation of silence brings about the spatialization of the truth" (Pascariu 2007). In the three-act drama the revolution takes place in the second act called *December*, between two weddings, stepping out of the restricted family circle suggested by a series of formal introductory sentences. The characters say their unconnected sentences like a short introduction in a foreign language. The events are transmitted through these isolated parallel voices. The first act begins with a collective family recitation of a poem eulogizing Elena Ceauşescu, while in the last act they playfully reenact collectively in a flat, like children, the condemnation and execution of the dictator and his wife. It is as if they could not escape the phantom-like presence of the one-time dictators and the trauma of the execution even in their private daily lives. The play displays the lack of balance between the collective and the private sphere, together with all the questions impossible to answer – such as whether there was a revolution or not (an anticipation of Porumboiu's film), or the gestures and language used by Iliescu (seen in Gulea's film) – as a search for, or inefficiency of, language. Through the Hungarian protagonist (Ianoş) and the various ways of relating to him, the play also highlights nationality problems, and it ends with a *danse macabre*-like

16 Such sentences referring to the conditions of the age start the scenes: "Lucia are patru ouă. Lucia has four eggs." "Cine are un chibrit? Who has a match?" "Ea are o scrisoare din Statele Unite. She has a letter from the United States." "Elevii ascultă lecția. The pupils listen to the lesson." "Cumpărăm carne. We are buying meat." (Churchill 1998, 89, 90, 91, 92.) The Vampire (not dressed as a vampire based on the director's instructions), who just started talking with the Dog at first, came to the site because of the revolution: "I came here for the revolution, I could smell it a long way off." (Churchill 1998, 109.)

17 It is the author's instruction that the director should not be afraid of long silences (see Churchill 1998, 86).

dance choreographed based on fragments of phrases. The show ends with the non-human voice of the Angel–Vampire couple in the midst of flesh-and-blood people, which places thus the events in-between the real and the unreal.[18]

Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujică's *Videograms of a Revolution* (1992) contains an archive of found footage selected from contemporary private and institutional video recordings, and stages the (non)human presence of the cameras during the event. The editing work of the authors (cuts, repetitions, captions for characters, intertitles, narration, viewpoints placed side by side) proves that the two (power) positions of the cameras cannot replace each other. The static camera connected with the position of power and the wobbling "freedom" of the moving, embodied camera taken from the stand and placed on the shoulder, breaking the hierarchy, present the meeting of the different uses and ideologies reflected in the camera positions.[19] The cameras gradually become visible, corporeal protagonists. They become reflected agents, their varying presence is attached to various narrative strategies, and for a short while (four or five days) the television image and the recording camera become the producer, the space and the storage of the vortex of images.

A decisive element in the film from this point of view is the three-part division of the recordings of the last public speech. The *21.12.1989 Bucharest*, *Zum letzten Mal live* (*For the last time live*) and the *Eine Kamera erkundet die Lage* (*A camera investigates the situation*) all signal the simultaneity of the centralized and polarized amateur version of technology. Ceauşescu losing all his resources for intonation and gesture pounds the microphone which (no longer) transmits as a prolongation of body and power, and shouts hello as if on a phone, trying to regain control over the crowd. Next to him, Elena Ceauşescu shouts in a strong and determined voice "Silence! Silence!" (*Linişte! Linişte!*), while saying the exact opposite to her husband in a silent, more intimate, encouraging tone: "Speak, speak!" (*Vorbeşte, vorbeşte!*) They both perceive the situation, but have different reactions. How the representatives of power used technology and language indirectly shows what kind of "audience" they assumed. It also signals how they reduced the reaction possibilities of the crowd to (technical/learned) actions: silence, ovation and applause. The orientation in these practices was guided by the intonation and

18 See: "ANGEL. Zburând în albastru. (Flying about in the blue.) VAMPIRE. 11. Nu-ți fie frică. (Don't be frightened.) 14. Nu sunt o ființă umană. (I'm not a human being.) Începi să vrei sînge. Membrele te dor, capul îți arde. Trebuie să te mişti din ce în ce mai repede. (You begin to want blood. Your limbs ache, your head burns, you have to keep moving faster and faster.)" (Churchill 1998, 144.)

19 For an interpretation of the two types of camera use, see Pârvulescu (2013).

pauses in the dictator's speech, this way they, the orator and the crowd together, reduced the language as a medium to variations in intonation and pauses. When the speech was interrupted Elena's instructions maintained the above communication strategy. Ceauşescu loses his position, shown both by his facial expression (he bites his lower lip, his gaze becomes uncertain) and his shouting "hello," and calls to the crowd like when a phone conversation is interrupted, addressing the crowd, unaware, probably for the first time ever under the influence of the chaos. The panoptic structure of visual choreographies organized very often for the couple, especially in stadiums (where the colours, shapes, letters displayed by the crowd were readable from above) was transformed, the (silent/cheering) sight of the crowd turned into a turmoil, the sound technology which operated the communication of power had broken down, and all these were indirectly also indicated by the interruption of the television broadcast [Figs. 5–7].

Figure 5 shows through the camera how the live transmission is interrupted because of technical problem, Figure 6 displays a red image on the screen, which in spite of what it says (live transmission), no longer broadcasts. Both of the images show an unusual visual problem, one through the disrupting image, the other through the contradiction with the caption. While the live transmission is disrupted, one of the cameras films only the sky (but records the sounds) [Fig. 6]. There is another camera that moves from its position and follows the dictator's gaze, as if becoming his own gaze, filming (and localizing) the movement and turmoil of the crowd, which causes the uncertainty and horror on his face [Fig. 7]. The invisibility of the power medium becomes visible because of the interruption of the live transmission, and this media glitch betrays the attitude of a medium, which had previously served the power in a manipulative way. The images of the *Videograms* fit together the divergent viewpoints of the archival records, displaying on the one hand the technical interruption of the live transmission through the static camera that recorded the speech, which (according to the instructions, in case of problems had to film the sky) still transmitted the excited voices on the balcony and the turmoil of the crowd. On the other hand, they also display the red square on the screen, which says live transmission, but there is no transmission. At this point, the image of the recording camera and the TV screen can still be separated. The separation of the image and the sound in the case of the camera (the camera filming the sky versus the turmoil of the crowd heard in the background), the short disruption of the recording camera and the "transmission" on the screen stages how the elements of the manipulated live transmission fall to their technical pieces. Clearly, this is the breakage, which

most authentically materializes the events of the time. The transmission was not "taken away" like electricity, it was not the picture tube TV set that had broken down, but the transmission was interrupted in a previously unknown way. During the speech, in parallel with official camera positions, the events of the street also created private camera positions: the personal viewpoint of the camera filming from a private flat, moving carefully from the TV screen to the window, in the protecting cover of which it records the events on the street [Figs. 8–9].

The television image and the street are still separated here, they become each other's extension in a Baudrillardian sense after the Ceauşescu couple's escape at 12:08 on the 22nd of December 1989, also documented by cameras. The studio becomes a new location of history – not a retrospective space of transmission, but a performative shaper of the events taking place in the street, and a scene of the events. More and more cameras "look for" the revolution on the streets and squares, transmitting heterogeneous, chaotic images. The divergent functions of camera and the television, shaping and documenting history at the same time, gradually settle back to their earlier conditions and become controlled. (After a while, the camera is sent out from the room being already under the control of Ion Iliescu, and another camera is waiting in the lift during a conversation with the director of the television company.) This way the freed, chaotic image production from before the restoration of power strengthened the new power's legitimacy to set a new order. The martial court of the Ceauşescus was recorded by a single camera, which could have also documented the execution of the sentence, had it not missed the shots fired, so it could only record the dead bodies. The official justification said that the camera battery had just discharged, as we find out from Radu Gabrea's re-enactment.[20] On the news it was first announced that the Ceauşescus were executed and that the images would be shown later on; the interruption, the retroactivity is also symptomatic of the new censorship. The presenter tried to report the news in an articulate, neutral voice, but his short throat clearing still signalled the extraordinary event. The viewers could follow the enumeration of the charges on the screen later on, read by the voice of the presenter, who narrated the sentence and its execution over the image of the couple still alive and forced into a corner by two tables (pausing for 15–20 seconds). Finally, they could see their executed bodies. All of this is perceived in various ways in *Videograms*. In the television building, there are some people

20 This work that re-enacts the execution and the trial not shown in its entirety on television then, also reveals that it needed special negotiations with the representatives of the FSN to be allowed to transmit scenes from the trial.

in a studio who reproduce the images on the screen with cameras and sound recorders, and watch the transmission through camera lenses, in another studio they applaud at the same image, in private homes they point at it, highlighting the mediatedness of the spectacle, or watch it silently, adults and children alike.

The cameras filming the viewers in TV studios and private homes show the event-like nature of viewing. These images represent the duality and simultaneity of seeing and being seen. The camera "sees" the faces looking at the TV screen in private spaces. Media circularity, multiplication and re-medialization is at play: the viewers are turned into images that can be stored, carried and edited, while they themselves are watching the unique traces of the (unrecorded) execution of the dicator and his wife (i.e. of the corpses) on TV, as untouchable images.

The face of the old woman in Figure 1, pictured in a private space, is difficult to interpret, but her gaze pricks and bruises like a *punctum* in the sense described by Roland Barthes in his book on photography (Barthes 1982, 27). It confronts us with the dual (both revealing and concealing) nature of the medium, the vulnerability exposed by the moving, embodied cameras.

Farocki and Ujică's work – except for the title and the end title – is framed by the confession of a woman and a man shot in emotional close-ups. The way these two people turn towards the camera also shows the contemporary camera use of private individuals. In the opening image, the camera transmits the strong emotional message of a woman on a hospital bed. The wounded woman's use of language and media employs the camera as a universal messenger, and posits herself as the subject that produces a message that reaches everyone – just like the dictator. Even her emotional intonation becomes perhaps similar to Ceauşescu's propaganda intonation. The final images of the *Videograms* display a different attitude: a worker voices his complaints and accusations about the dictator. He enumerates the mechanisms of discrimination and hatred, gradually becoming emotional and finally starting to cry, covering his face with his hands.[21] When he fell silent, his peers applauded him (similarly to how the dead bodies were applauded in the studio), as if there were no other bodily or technical ways to relate to a crying man than applause and ovation, after the decades which had conditioned or reduced people to these bodily reactions. Today's viewer, while not seeing the man's emotions and the protective covering of his face as a staged scene, must also experience, by this reaction of applause, the traces of a theatrical reception, the conditioning of the

21 There is also a reference to nationality issues in this scene of Farocki and Ujică's work. The man crying in front of the camera speaks about himself as a victim of manipulation and hatred against Hungarians and Germans.

age. The covering of the face in the epilogue raises awareness of the camera, of the instance of the becoming (and the circularity) of the image [Fig. 10].

Just like the images of the old woman's punctum-like gaze recorded from multiple angles, this image also "confronts" the viewer with an intimacy, with a vulnerability in front of the camera, which was only possible in an age when neither the recording person, nor the people being filmed would have guessed the unimaginable prolification and circulation of these images later on. This series that Farocki and Ujică intentionally placed at the end of their work may also raise the awareness of today's viewers about the nature of remediation understood as appropriation (see Bolter–Grusin 2000, 65), suggested by the personal, emotional, bodily reaction (the covering of the face) that (unconsciously) resists media translation. The events recorded by the archival images also cause some sense of shame in (today's) viewers. The feeling of unauthorized gaze is created by the paradox between the technical possibilities of the age and human conditioning: as the embodied and freed hand-held camera wants to broadcast endlessly and violently.

Later filmic re-enactments continued the basic visual experience of Farocki and Ujică's work, a multiplication of viewpoints, and transformed the intimacy of past events into present through the tension between retrospectivity and performance. The repetitions and editing work – as something that indirectly reveals the gaps in the understanding of the Romanian historical events – emphasize the transitionality, in-betweenness, heterogeneity of the "new beginning." It is because of this that Farocki and Ujică's work had become a model that could be developed in several directions by later films.

Acoustic Past, the Studio as an Extending Space

Corneliu Porumboiu's *12:08 East of Bucharest* (*A fost sau n-a fost?*, 2006), in addition to being a parody of positivistic approach to history, reflects the revolution as an event and the media elements of the revolution (camera use, television, telephone, studio). Through the parody of the genre (a talk show), it also produces a grotesque, distancing and including the viewer's position at the same time. Porumboiu's film stages the tension between the revolution as a media event[22] and as an event of one's personal past. Somewhere in a small town in Romania, sixteen years after 1989, a talk show host invites "eye witnesses" to take part in a discussion at the studio. He tries to locate the revolution in time and

22 For a summary of its discursive context, see Petrovszky–Tichindeleanu (2009).

space with the help of a positivist view of history, and fails. The film reflects on the possibilities of the medium in evoking past events, and reveals how the ingredients of socialization in Communist times (e.g. intimidation, each other's surveillance and denunciation) are present sixteen years later too, and how certain mentalities still have not changed. The film produces the atmosphere of the acoustic past of the revolution – and this is one of the main reasons why it can be considered a re-enactment. The noise of the firecracker sounds like a rifle – Uncle Pişcoci, the common man in the show, the figure who embodies the intimate, family perspective of the "great historical event,"[23] even holds his hands up in fear as he hears it at the doorstep of his house. The TV set that breaks down also crackles in the old man's house producing a sound that reminds us of the past. The man who phones in during the talk show, formerly a Securitate officer, now an entrepreneur, also has a disciplining intonation, an intimidating articulation, effectively transforming the talk show into an interrogation. The Romanian title, reminiscent of Hamlet's question, varies along the talk show, from the first long question (Was there or wasn't there a revolution in our town?) through various versions and at one point it turns into an interrogatory question directed at Mănescu, the history teacher,[24] like this: "Were you or were you not (there, in the main square)?" The Romanian question seems to challenge the very being of the interrogated person.

This film also stages the tension between a handheld and a static camera through the conflict of the cameraman and the host/producer. The TV show host orders the use of a static camera, but the cameraman wants to follow the events with a camera on his shoulders. During the debate, the camera follows the gestures of the investigators and tries also to point at the invisible traces on the poster on the wall in the background that represents the town square in a later state. We see a (virtual) space with multiple layers, and these layers both cover up and reveal the past: the poster, the transmission of the show and the physical presence of the broadcasting camera can be perceived all along because of the image errors following its clumsy movements [Fig. 11].

While the talk show host is concerned with the transmission of the images and the factual investigation of the past, his guests, just like the embodied camera that follows them, always fall out of this frame. The show gradually turns into a personal

23 Uncle Pişcoci, who can be seen here as a representative of oral history, stole two magnolias for his wife on December 21, 1989, to reconcile with her. He watched the live transmission on television, he was happy because of the extra money announced by Ceauşescu, and he confessed that he only went to the square after the dictators escaped.

24 His name is reminiscent of Manea Mănescu, former prime minister, Ceauşescu's brother-in-law, who also left Bucharest on the escaping helicopter.

attack: they use formal and informal language alternately, they make references to each other's previous lives, and they all step outside their role of remembering the past. The voice and character of those who call in extend the space of the studio to include all the inhabitants of the town, and changes the show into an amplified space of interrogation. The talk show as the space of expressing one's opinion turns into a parody through the failure of the evocation of the revolutionary past. At the same time, it appears as the sound space that amplifies the mental state of the town inhabitants and uncovers the surviving mechanisms of the dictatorship: the denunciations based on surveillance, the hierarchy based on intimidation.

Porumboiu's film is about the impossibility of reconstruction, and reflects its human and technical conditions. Supposedly, there is nothing to reconstruct, for the present contains that which had not happened in the past: the lack of the revolutionary turn. The main square and the past events that took (or rather did not take) place there are "covered" with the chaotic presence of the people in the studio. Ironically, in the quietness of the empty studio the cameraman "fixes" the static camera on the motionless poster on the wall. The perfectly set relationship of technology and product (the image) stages the visibility of the space, the film returns to the camera, its static (inhuman, bodiless) independence through the undisturbed "gaze" of the camera directed at the still image of the poster. This situation indirectly reflects the human and technical conditions of the understanding of the past. The empty seats and the camera that was left there ironically create the possibility to think of the historical event as a circulation of images that replace the human participants, it offers the silence of images after the chaotic voices of people [Figs. 12–13].

The cameraman's action to shoot another image after the show can be interpreted as a metaphor for the viewers who create their own inner images as well after the show in their lonely silence. There is also an interesting linguistic analogy included into the show through Uncle Pişcoci, one of the participants. At one point of the show Uncle Pişcoci says: "Sir, we made the revolution as we could, we made the revolution our own way." According to his analogy, the revolution is like city lighting, it lights up in the centre first, then it spreads to the last miserable street as well. He shows the succession with his hands on the table, explaining that first it started in Timişoara, then it spread to Bucharest, then in the end to the "bottom" of the country, to their town.[25] At the end of the film, the

25 This remark can also be regarded as an allusion to the fact that Timişoara was the first European town where electric street lighting was introduced. See: *http://history-of-lighting.org/xviii-iluminatul-public*. Last accessed 01. 05. 2017.

cameraman who films the (Christmas) snow waits for the street lamp to light up in front of the camera, as if a visual denotation of the "light" of the revolution and of Christmas. The light of the lamp that stands in the falling snow in front of the greyish-bluish block may be ironic, but it also shines through the visual composition making it intimate under the falling snow [Fig. 14].

While waiting, the cameraman's voice-over tells us that the old man is wrong, because the lamps are operated by photocells. The lamp lights up automatically when sensing the diminishing light on the basis of the preset values of light. The argument also carries the power of the analogy. This way, besides the concept of history understood as the circulation of images, the film also signals the human version of the comprehension and transmission of events through language, and the transfer of the past through linguistic images, and also expresses the connection between linguistic imagination and the prevailing technical conditions. By this analogy, the contact of the generational perspectives points out that public lighting was centralized in Communism (and it was "taken away" at will), and that Uncle Pişcoci's worldview is also guided by this logic, and that a changing technical instrument also changes how the functioning of a revolution can be "imagined." The cameraman keeps the basis of the analogy (the connection of the revolution and public lighting), only that he sees another type of public lighting, and this way the compared element can also be imagined differently. The revolution becomes visible and transmittable as a linguistic analogy, then the analogy returns to the field of electronics, to reflect back enlighteningly on the revolution, which, in the sense of the analogy, was "triggered" by a darkness/dictatorship that had become natural. The private memory of the cameraman replaces the failure of reconstruction with an aesthetic effect: "Silent and nice. This is all I remember from the revolution. It was silent and it was nice." He includes the silence of the snowfall into the acoustic atmosphere of the shooting, not as a sign of something missing, but as a relationship of the natural and the aesthetic, as the natural perceived in the aesthetic effect. But here the aesthetic effect lies not in its uniqueness, but in its most general meaning (i.e. it is nice), it rather becomes thus subservient to social amnesia.[26]

While it stages the possibilities, modes and human failures of remembrance, the film also addresses this embellishing type of amnesia at the end of the film, and appeals to the viewer's own visual and acoustic memory. The composition and

26 The last person who calls in, a woman, also calls attention to the snowfall. She says that her own child died in the revolution, and that the participants of the talk show should be pleased about the snow before it melts.

colour of the image and the emphasis on the lamp may evoke the opening images of Farocki and Ujică's film. In the case of the images shot from the window of the student dormitory in Timişoara, the narration stresses the difference between events in the foreground and background, the blue sky in the background of the blocks of flats, the people marching on the streets, i.e. the position of the amateur camera filming them, the protection of the window and the technical data of a camera in that age. The street event becomes visible in the background through the reduced technical possibilities of zooming and the fear [Fig. 15].

The complexity of Porumboiu's film can also be experienced in the last scene's visual and acoustic power to evoke various archival recordings. The cameraman, while waiting for the lamp to light up, counts from one to five, and the calmness of his counting may remind us of the counting of another cameraman in the Farocki and Ujică's film, an employee of the Romanian Television Company (TVR) at minute 51.25, who we hear behind a black screen for a short while. The image gradually turns into a broadcast at count ten [Fig. 16].

After these images that probably show bullet traces, we hear Ion Iliescu's first speech from the balcony, with some technical interruptions. Before the black screen, and after the resignation of Prime Minister Constantin Dăscălescu, which eventually happened after three announcements, we hear the speech of Dumitru Mazilu (a Romanian diplomat emigrated to the West) from the same balcony. While Mazilu listed all the elements of a democratic system (reorganization of education, breaking with Marxism-Leninism, elimination of lying and deception, criteria of competence), Iliescu victoriously announces that the Ministry of the Interior is now subordinated to the Army, a new, centralizing power field, which is followed by applause. (The army now commands the troops of the Ministry of the Interior; the army has the supreme command. The Ministry of the Interior is their subordinate.) The black screen has therefore a dividing role as well: it stages the difference, the boundary between two possible "beginnings." The final images of Porumboiu's film evoke visually and acoustically disparate memories from the collective media archive of the 1989 revolution, the elements of the event seen on the archival footage can be dismantled when seen from the perspective of film images recorded later. In the last scene, which is centred on the recording camera as a character, the film also conveys a reflection of the social responsibility of creating an image, of making a film.

Play-Spaces, Recontextualized (Private) Stories

Petra Szőcs's 2014 short, *The Execution* stages the narrative nature of the child's gaze (like the one we saw in the archival images in Farocki and Ujică's film). In the film, placed in a Romanian and Hungarian language context, we see three elementary school children as they narrate, embellish, embody and domesticate the images of the trial and execution of the Ceauşescus to their own family space.[27] In the centre of the film lies the discrepancy between the smiling pictures of the dictator couple and the sight of the dead bodies. The film places two modes of play side by side, and sharpens the difference between them from a child's inner perspective. On the one hand, there is the game *Gazdálkodj okosan!* (a Hungarian version of Monopoly), with the parents' fight in the background, as a possible cause of the little girl's aggressiveness (she stabs her classmate's hand with a pair of scissors). On the other hand, there is the obsessively replayed execution and death, which stages how the event broadcast on television had been implanted into one's own body and the concept of the family. It sounds really eerie and undetachable from the little girl's character when she, as Elena, says: "I don't want to die!" [Figs. 17–18.] The trial and execution images archived probably as memories gain a double reality and voice in this children's game.

Irina Botea's *Auditions for a Revolution* (2006), produced in Chicago, stresses the theatrality and (visual) masculinity of the scenes recorded during the revolution through re-enactment. The filmmaker defines the Romanian revolution in-between the reality of the television and the reality of one's own life, where the participants seemed like actors (see Picard 2011). The textual fragments produced with physiological struggles by young Americans, who speak no Romanian and are not familiar with Romanian culture turn the intonations and gestures of a "revolutionary language" into "meaning conveying" elements. By their performance and language production, they turn the archival images into a theatrical event, the linguistic memory fragments into history read aloud. They create the historical/theatrical event alienated by their acting performance, but physiologically their own. The re-enactment scenes were recorded with a camera of the leading Romanian documentary studio, the Sahia Film, which was used also during the revolution. Due to the weight of the camera, the recording of the (re-enacted) footage also required a physical effort on the part of the female director.

27 The mingling of the concepts of family and country (the country as a large family and the leaders as parents) was a part of the basic ideological conditioning of children during Communism. For a literary treatment of the subject, see Herta Müller's *A Big House* (Müller 1989, 50–52).

At the same time, the film also shows the archival footage from Farocki and Ujică's film and its re-enactments on a screen divided by means of digital technology. This visual simultaneity creates a permanent relationship and oscillation between the technical conditions of the present and the past, between the television images and the re-enactments, all in a virtual space. The participants of the revolution referred to their action saying that "the world is watching us," and by this they defined technology as an extended mediation, and themselves as a spectacle.

In this performance the foreign gaze gains voice and body, embodying the imagined and assumed viewers of the age. The "translatability" of the gestures and intonations of the foreign language dissonance becomes more visible. The young Americans who instead of viewers become performers understand and fail to understand at the same time what they say, they play and experience the distinctive media/physical traces of the Romanian revolution. On the basis of Inke Arns's ideas cited earlier, they turn the events of the past into a history happening here and now. They inscribe the gestures of a foreign event into their own bodies, their own present. A performative staging of this is done through the rhythm of chanting, which turns the scene of the revolution into a present that is just happening. After the struggles of reading Mircea Dinescu's sentences broadcast on television at that time, the young Americans are eventually freed from the unpronounceable Romanian text, and enthusiastically chant the Romanian version of "We won!" ("Am învins!"). This enthusiasm is stopped by the director's "Cut! Cut!" exclamations, who interferes thus with the (re)activation of the body's memory and also signals the intention of the directorial authority in the re-enactment this way [Fig. 19].

Sound and image form separate strata: the images of the streets of Chicago are accompanied by Romanian sentences from archival recordings, while the re-enacters fill the (western) spaces created through their marching with the voices of their chanting ("*Freedom/Libertate!,*" "*Truth/Adevărul!*"). It is as if their voices and gestures extend/translate the archival images of the past Romanian events into their own life space. The slogans and gestures are like quotations mediating the history of Eastern Europe. Due to their strangeness, we also sense their aggressive/theatrical embeddedness into their Western space and their own bodies. Their physiological struggles also stage the aggression of re-enactment, while the play, the repeated bursts into laughter also signal the freedom of making it their own. During the re-enactment, the transposed Romanian events turn the American town space into a "practiced place" (de Certeau 1984), and this way they simultaneously and rhetorically "read" the archival images of the past events and the American town space.

The Chicago actors make the archival images "readable" and make us reflect on them through their personalized rendering. However, in Botea's re-enactment the presence of girls showcases the masculine dominance of the archival images, that no women are found in any of the decisive situations. On the other hand, the narrative of the archival images shows feelings and emotions only on female faces. In the festive TV studio, during the theatrical Christmas speech of actor Florin Piersic, we mostly see tearful female faces. The only weeping male face is also visible on the archival images in Botea's re-enactment. Therefore, this performance emphasizes, strengthens the image of a weeping man, reminiscent of the end of the Farocki–Ujică film (the "sight" of the man bursting into tears), not a decisive image of the visual agenda of the age.

The use of a divided screen keeps the viewer in a permanent confusion, forces them to always change their focus, they can never watch the entire screen at once, because the eye always jumps to one side or the other. Next to the disquieting gaze of the old woman (getting into media circulation) on one side of the screen, we find the media contexts on the other side (TV screens looking at each other, telephone, sentences to be read aloud, the bodily presence of the re-enactors, symbols), but her silence is not dissolved by these, even if the image has an added caption with the translated sound of the original TV broadcast [Fig. 20].

The Handheld Camera as a Weapon

Milo Rau's project *The Last Days of the Ceauşescus. Re-enactment of the Ceauşescu-Trial* (*Die letzten Tage der Ceauşescus*, 2009/2010) and Radu Gabrea's film *Three Days Till Christmas* (*Trei zile până la Crăciun*, 2011) re-enact the trial of the Ceauşescus by the exceptional military court – not broadcast in contemporary media – which condemned them to death and the sentence was executed right away. The complexity of Milo Rau's work also lies in the multiple media translation. Within the project supported by the International Institute of Political Murder, theatre performances were produced, a book was published and a film was created. The film which adds new layers to the theatre performance staged in Bucharest centres on the relationship of the event and its remedialization.[28]

28 The first play within the project took place in Odeon Theatre of Bucharest in the winter of 2009, followed by shows in theatres in Germany and Switzerland. Milo Rau's book *Die letzten Tage der Ceauşescus. Materialien, Dokumente, Theorie* [*The Last Days of the Ceauşescus: Materials, Documents, Theories*] was published in 2010 (Berlin: Verbrecher Verlag), at the same time with the release of the film. For details, see*: http://international-institute.de/ceausescu/*. Last accessed 15. 01. 2017.

Already in the performance, the digital image strips projected onto the theatrical space suggest how the re-enactment in a sort of political theatre renders mediality problematic, and how the event cannot be localized to one single space. This is even more amplified in the film by documenting the production of the play and the audience. It is outstandingly important in this respect that Victor Stănculescu, a key figure of the play, appears indeed in the audience. In fact, he was serving his prison sentence during the performance, so his presence archived in the film opens up the space of political theatre on multiple levels.[29] Milo Rau's film presents the trial and the execution as an event where the viewer cannot avoid the moral question, the dilemma of a (lawful) sentence and murder by various means such as dramatization, the staging of the viewpoints of eye witnesses and re-enactors, parallel memories and inner narrations, the opinion of viewers. The differences between body and role also contribute to the staging of the spatial differences of various perspectives. The actors play several roles: Constantin Cojocaru plays both Ceauşescu and Andrei Kemenici, the commander of the Târgovişte barracks. Victoria Cociaş plays Ana Blandiana, the poet in opposition, and Elena Ceauşescu. The firing soldier who speaks about his memories and the lawyer of the accusation are also played by the same actor. In the re-enactment, two people on opposing sides in the past event appear in one single body, and it depends on the performance of the actor how the historical figures are presented. Multiple distance is generated thus in the space of the re-enactment. On the one hand, we are constantly reminded (also through archival images) of the similarity and difference of the real past bodies [Figs. 21–22] in the present.

On the other hand, there is a difference between the body and its duplicated role. The past characters meet in a common body and diverge in acting. The characters less visible in the visual circulation of the age (Ana Blandiana, Andrei Kemenici) were embodied in relation to the Ceauşescus, but also taking apart their visual traces.[30] In the re-enactors' exaggerated rendition, Elena Ceauşeascu's face seems more terrorized (and her gaze starts to resemble the gaze of the female

29 This enigmatic figure, after he was sentenced again in 2007 in a second trial (the first happened in 1997) for fifteen years of prison for his role in suppressing the revolution (Timişoara, the 17th of December 1989), was finally imprisoned in 2008. He was released five years later for good behaviour and because of his ill health, and died in the summer of 2016, at age 88. Stănculescu, who had a key role in the events of the revolution was less visible in the images of the broadcasts from 1989, but as far as I know, he never got to publish his book with the working title *Mona Lisa's Smile*, mentioned as a plan in the film *Checkmate*.

30 Victoria Cociaş likens Elena's gaze to the terror of a cornered animal, and changes into something different in understanding this terror when she tells them to execute them together. The strong bond between the two people, visible in their last moments, also suggests their lives as a great love story (Cociaş 2010, 60).

face watching the broadcast). She searches for the eyes of Stănculescu, who is folding a paper airplane during the trial.[31]

The re-enactment of the trial, which deployed sarcastic and offensive attitudes (they are addressed informally by their first names, the judge asks Elena about her age, which she had always kept a secret, they ironically hint to her intellectual abilities, etc.), highlights even more the couple's cohesion. Their similar gestures (such as taking their hands to their mouth) are visible on the archival images [Fig. 25]. Milo Rau's production is framed by an image fading into black and the sound of the blowing winter wind. The past event is placed into the atmosphere of a winter landscape (similarly to Porumboiu's snowfall at the end), while several attempts are made to represent the event through varied technical means, Rau's film also confronts us with the unreadable black screen. The sound and the invisible image, the gunfire "transmits" the lack of images. The retroactively inconceivable events become a liminal experience of the medium: the very possibility to experience and produce the missing (archival) image is what becomes problematic. The gunfire behind the black screen forces the viewer to create inner images [Figs. 23–26].

The title of Radu Gabrea's film, *Three Days Till Christmas*, similarly to Milo Rau's title, places time in the centre, but instead of the personified last days, it refers to the time of the feast. It burdens the feast of birth with the images of the execution. The work that mixes archival materials, interview fragments and re-enacted scenes unfolds the viewpoint of the dictator couple through the multiplication of various other perspectives. The time ironically understood as a turning point (12:08) in Porumboiu's film and the archival footage which films the helicopter from below as it takes off is followed in Gabrea's film by an upper camera shot of the helicopter. We also have the events of the street as they were described in the radio transmission, as "another" space, the sound of radio and later TV transmission is heard all along behind the escape perceivable also as a road movie. This way the chrono-topos of the travel becomes a heterotopic space-time. On the one hand, following the couple can have a documentary value: the film claims that the couple had completely lost control of the technical network, so they probably could not have given any instructions after their

31 This seemingly unimportant, casual action during the trial is evoked in Porumboiu's film through the figure of the bored Uncle Pişcoci, who also folds paper as a trace of his (non)presence. In Mircea Daneliuc's comedy *The nuptial bed* (*Patul conjugal*, 1993) the flying of paper airplanes appears as a nostalgic performance of people who yearn for a superior leader in the inner yard of a psychiatric hospital. The absurd present of the film, close in time to the 1989 changes, is also interwoven with archival images of the revolution.

escape on helicopter, this way the hypothesis of "terrorists" guided by them is highly unlikely. On the other hand, our following them may remind us of the story of the Holy Family's flight, as we gradually get into the whirl of a carnival time. Various cultural time-experiences are evoked and stratified, shaping the viewers' positions. The events going on in various spaces are connected by the carnival spirit: the chanting in the street, following Mikhail Bakhtin, sounds like a suspension of the hierarchy, as a dethronement; and in the personal time of the couple, the change of clothes, the eating, the grotesque, sick body correspond to the carnival as a time organized around bodily experiences, manifested in time (Bakhtin 1984, 196–277). It is from this film that we find out that the flesh-and-blood person behind the "retouched image," Ceauşescu, was diabetic. Another element that connects the events to a carnival atmosphere is the fact that the carnival time is an uprooted time that ends together with its liberating euphoria. The dethronement has a twofold consequence in the film: by the demolition of hierarchy, it may lead to accountable and intimate dialogues between the guards and the prisoners in the sense of a carnivalesque explicitness, while the "dethroned" gain their intimacy more and more as a fallible, elderly couple. But the camera movement indicates this fallibility immediately with keeping distance: we see their faces from up close, and at the same time their intimate physical closeness from a panoptic distance, from above [Figs. 27–28].

In Gabrea's film the hand-held camera can be seen in parallel with the use of the weapon of execution. While the trial was recorded by one single camera, and the execution was only partly recorded, in Gabrea's re-enactment the cameraman appears in the images in several instances, placing the camera recording the film itself into a self-reflective position. In the re-enactment, the camera appears near the weapon as a producer of the image of the untouchable corpses [Figs. 29–30].

Epilogue: Chanting, Slogans, Analogy

The historical and media position of the Romanian revolution is also made more complex by the fact that it was probably the last time that a poet as a historical public figure had such a decisive function in Eastern Europe, conveyed precisely by the medium of television. Moreover, the unique historical importance of the Romanian events may also be due to this encounter between the figure of the poet and the medium of television.

Paradoxically, the verbal announcement of freedom happens in the medium, which transmitted the static, setup world of the dictatorship. Mircea Dinescu, the

poet who turned the announcement of victory into a performative statement by his arm swing, steps into the media space of the dictator, so in the re-enactments these archival images can also necessarily be seen in an ironic distance. The constructed image of the poet meeting the Socialist ideal who is still "working" in the time of the revolution is unmasked by the moving camera, for instance by the deframed images in Gabrea's film. During the chaotic preparation of the first free announcement transmitted on television, actor Ion Caramitru instructs poet Mircea Dinescu as follows: "Mircea, you show them you're working!", and while he points to the camera with a paper sheet in his hand, the frame moves and we fail to see their entire heads [Fig. 31]. In Milo Rau's work the image is broken into stripes, which becomes thus repeatable like a chorus, signalling the repetition of announcements or resignations, becoming thus parodistic [Fig. 32].

The re-enactments, which stage polyphony as a fundamental experience, do not allow for the historical role of poetry and the poet to be reduced to one single voice. In Milo Rau's work the poetess/actress in the role of Ana Blandiana connects the revolution as a "personal" story to the "sight of the voice" of groups chanting the slogans of freedom, grasping it in an intermedial image: "However, there was indeed a revolution, that moment full of hope existed... And now I'd like to tell a personal story too. It was December 21, evening, the revolution in Bucharest had been lasting for one day, I was standing in front of the wide opened window and looking out into the dark. They were chanting slogans in the dark. Sometimes it was all clear, sometimes not, depending on how far the groups were. These transmitted both hope and fear, and also surprise that they even got that far. The slogans later became clear. They chanted: Down with Ceauşescu! No violence! and The army is with us! The last two were like spells or requests, because in reality the army wasn't with us and was violent with us, at least at the beginning. These voices were so clearly floating in space that I could perceive them almost optically as a fluorescent inscription against a black background. Yes. And these voices in the dark is the first thing that appears every time I think of the revolution" (Rau 2010). The dark screen of the film is paralleled with the darkness in town, the voices and captions accompanying the (two kinds of) darkness, and the lack of image activates the viewer's imagination.

The poetic force of the voices "visible" in the dark translates the darkness (its resistance to visuality) to human imagination and perception as a sounding memory because of the chanting. The (poetic) image is also indebted to the singularity of imagination. By this image as an event of language turning into poetry, and by the film that stages it, the revolution can now also be perceived

through the mediated aesthetic experience. The historical moments of the encounter between the television and the poet or poetry are created in Milo Rau's work from two different points of view: first, by the "found expression" (We won!) staged by the "working poet," Mircea Dinescu, as a physical and linguistic process; second, by the poetic effect of the fictive Ana Blandiana's remembering lines, which can be understood as a "caption" for the darkness of the (original) screen, for the missing images. Flusser's axiom can perhaps be continued this way: "There is no reality behind the image. There are realities in the image." But the technically recorded images also transmit the lack of images (darkness), and as such, there are subjective, poetic images that are "wedged" in-between them. However, in the flow of image production the archived images have also preserved the possibility of their silence, their resistance to interpretation and domestication. And this is how the silence of the old woman's face and the silent (televised) images of the couple just before their execution are placed side by side in my personal archive. Although these images can be watched, their mute gaze confronts us with the visual experience of the blank screens. They transform us into re-enactors because they force us to address them and lend them our voice.

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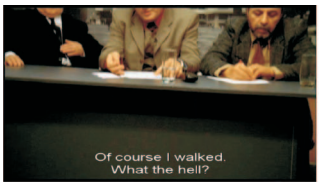

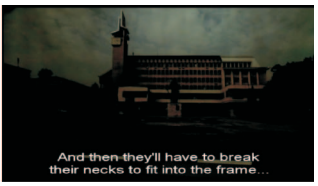

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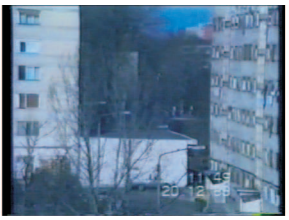


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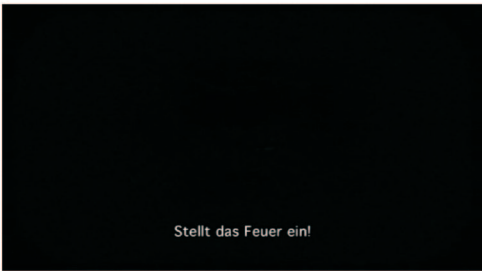

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The Great War: Cinema, Propaganda, and The Emancipation of Film Language

Christina Stojanova
University of Regina (Canada)
E-mail: Christina.Stojanova@uregina.ca

Abstract. The relation between war and cinema, propaganda and cinema is a most intriguing area, located at the intersection of media studies, history and film aesthetics. A truly tragic moment in human history, the First World War was also the first to be fought before film cameras. And while in the field, airborne reconnaissance became cinematic (Virilio), domestic propaganda occupied the screen of the newly emergent national cinemas, only to see its lucid message challenged and even subverted by the fast-evolving language of cinema. Part one of this paper looks at three non-fiction films, released in 1916: *Battle of Somme, With Our Heroes at the Somme* (*Bei unseren Helden an der Somme*) and *Battle of Somme* (*La Bataille de la Somme*), as paradigmatic propaganda takes on the eponymous historical battle from British, German and French points of view. Part two analyses two war-time Hollywood melodramas, David Wark Griffith's *Hearts of the World* (1918) and Allen Holubar's *The Heart of Humanity* (1919), and explains the longevity of the former with the powerful "text effect" of the authentic wartime footage included. Thus, while these WWI propaganda works do validate Virilio's ideas of the integral connections between technology, war and cinema, and between cinema and propaganda, they also herald the emancipation of post-WWI film language.

Keywords: cinema, technology, war, propaganda, film language.

Introduction

The relation between war and cinema – and more specifically between propaganda and cinema – could be traced back to the First World War (WWI), making for an intriguing interdisciplinary research area, plagued by paradoxes and controversies. Its larger philosophical, cultural and ideological context was outlined in the immediate war aftermath, when two irreconcilable discourses on technological progress were launched – a dystopian and deeply pessimistic one, associated with German Expressionism, and an optimistic and utopian one, propelled by

Soviet Avant-garde. On film, the former is epitomized by Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (Germany, 1927), which, according to German historian Philipp Blom, is the quintessential "metaphor of the threat of a world ruled by soulless technology" (Blom 2015, 177),[1] of Enlightenment reason and technological progress run amok. The utopian counterpart of the world, where humans are "perfect parts" (Blom 2015, 189) living in harmony with the machines, is captured by Dziga Vertov's seminal work *Man with a Movie Camera* (USSR, 1929).

Blom forcefully argues that monsters like Mr. Hyde and Frankenstein were but a reflection of real-life attempts well-underway in the Soviet Union to engineer super-efficient New Men and Women, which were mirrored by the designs of Bauhaus architects to create efficient and uniform habitats. While the pessimistic view on technological progress has gradually subsided after the end of the Cold War, social thinkers like George Steiner, Slavoj Žižek and Zygmunt Bauman keep warning against complacency vis-à-vis the inevitable negative consequences of technological proliferation. Bauman, for example, traces the roots of the ubiquitous uncertainty and creative impotence – in his view, the principal features of the social malaise, gnawing at our "liquid" modernity – to WWI and its legacy of frustration with the hitherto unknown dark side of the highly praised Enlightenment values of reason and progress.

A major tragedy in modern history, WWI was also the first major man-made calamity recorded on film, paving the way towards our current disaster-as-entertainment culture, described by Steiner as "casino culture," which stimulates immediate gratification and procrastination, and no longer "feels like culture of accumulation and learning … [but] like a culture of disengagement, discontinuity and forgetting" (Bauman 2012, 117). Paul Virilio joins Bauman's social scepticism in stating that war, technology and propaganda converged for the first time during WWI. Indeed, the growing interest of the powers-that-be in the enormous mobilization potential of moving images during the war affected positively all aspects of cinema – its technology and production structure, and especially its social and cultural standing, sanctioning its ascendance from low-brow entertainment to legitimate art. Thus, the unprecedented artistic sophistication of interwar cinema in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as its formidable power as means of propaganda and persuasion, are the direct results of its achievements as industry and artistry during WWI.

Virilio proposes a model of society and media based on war, claiming that: "War is cinema and cinema is war" (1989, 26) and pointing out that both have

1 I am grateful to Ian Germani for suggesting the link between Virilio, Blom and dystopia.

been symbolically represented by the search light. Virilio starts building the case against what he calls "latent totalitarianism in technology" (Kellner 1999, 104) in his previous work, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology (*1986) by interrogating the ever-growing role of speed – therefore *dromology*, the science of speed (or race) – which he traces back to the rapid development of both military technology and the cinematic apparatus circa 1904, and especially during WWI. He is particularly interested in how "innovations in speed" – or what he calls "dromocratic revolution" – "influence social and political life" (Kellner 1999, 104) since speed relates primarily to warfare and modern media, and is therefore built within the foundations of our technological society.

At the heart of Virilio's argument lies what Zygmunt Bauman calls "sociology of distance" (1989, 19–23). For Bauman, the ultimate achievement of modernity is instrumental rationality, found at its most sinister in the streamlining of death during the world wars, but especially in the Holocaust. Through various bureaucratic tactics, the perpetrators were "distanced" from their victims, construing them as "objects" of "control, manipulation, and extermination," and therefore minimizing the chances for "eruptions of moral responsibility" (Bauman 1989, 19–23). Similarly, Virilio argues, after field reconnaissance became airborne during WWI, human perspective and perception of immediacy were radically altered, making killing easier than before, and foregrounding the increasing "derealisation [or dematerialization] of military engagement" (1989, 1), which was underscored by the current high-tech virtualization of warfare "in which technologies gradually replace human beings" (Kellner 1999). Virilio believes this to be the central ethical issue of the military technologies impact, which drives progress, yet rarely in a positive direction.

Furthermore, Virilio believes that the WWI machine clearly demonstrated that the "derealization of military engagement" has simplified the connection between moving images and propaganda, since the latter is also reliant on the change of perspective and perception of immediacy. Virilio tracks down this collusion between "military and cinematic techniques and technologies" to the first "mass production of aerial photography and cinematic propaganda" during WWI (Stevenson 2008, online). Aerial photography allowed the major deviation "from shapes and representations of physical reality," leading nowadays to the "surrealist heights of unknown cinematic territory, where the old fields of perception are completely destroyed" (Virilio 1989, 27).

Following Virilio, this paper argues that WWI cast the matrix of cinema in its own image in terms of technology, ideology, and even aesthetics, shaping it as an

advanced art form, but also as a formidable tool for oblique persuasion and direct propaganda. Indeed, because of WWI cinema shook off its questionable pedigree of a technological accident and became a legitimate art.

War, European Cinemas and Propaganda

European cinemas took their venerable place among the other arts earlier than other national cinemas worldwide, and France established itself as the uncontested leader of European film production and distribution (Toeplitz 1995, 18). Its major film companies – Pathé Frères, Gaumont, Éclipse and Éclair – had studios in nearly every European country, and enjoyed the benefits of the "truly international character of world film markets," without "quotas and protective custom barriers" (Toeplitz 1995, 18). French films were followed closely by productions from Denmark, Italy and to a much "lesser degree [films] from IMP Film of America" (Toeplitz 1995, 18).

Film language and style also evolved rapidly, introducing original forms of narrative integration and use of intertitles, new approaches to mise-en-scène and camera work such as the "'deep staging' developed by Swedish filmmakers" and the "direct address" of films made in the Netherlands (Dibbets and Hogenkamp 1995, 11). One of the most important developments in European cinemas was their move, just prior to 1914, from "fragmentary artisanal production" to "development as industry" (Toeplitz 1995, 18), which had a lasting impact on both cinema and propaganda, and induced their closeness to the state.

A consensus seems to exist that what made WWI "so destructive was propaganda," taking people "by surprise" (Bardi 2014) and the early twentieth century saw an unprecedented, world-wide "shift to massive state participation and manipulation of public opinion" (Messinger 1993, 117). Taking advantage of the "diffusion of literacy in industrialized countries," media was used "to demonize the enemy," creating a "tremendous barrage of false or distorted information" (Bardi 2014, online). However, propaganda was already a "part of life [in Britain] before 1914, but other institutions of society, such as the church, the press, business, political parties and philanthropy were its major producers – not government" (Messinger 1993, 117).

This "was the first war to be fought before motion picture cameras" (Stevenson 2008) and, since people were not prepared for the onrush of powerful images of battle, death and destruction, film increased the effect of war propaganda. And despite the British tradition of deregulated, bottom-up propaganda, state officials

were the first to show close interest and support for "real war films," as distinct from "faked war dramas" (Reeves 1999, 28–29), a concern which was not yet on the radar of the three other warring empires. Consequently, the first state-financed War Propaganda Bureau was established in August 1914, and it launched its first film, *Britain Prepared*, on December 29, 1915 (Reeves 1999, 29).

Part One: War, Propaganda and the Reality Effect – "Which *Battle of the Somme*?"

An intriguing illustration of the interrelatedness of war, propaganda and cinema, are the three films, made about the battle on the Somme in France, the outcome of which – a source of controversy to this day – was expected to decide how the war would end. One of the bloodiest battles in history, it was fought on both sides of the river Somme between July 1 and November 18, 1916, and resulted in more than one million casualties. Each of the Newly-created propaganda offices in Britain, France and Germany made a documentary about it, claiming victory in the prolonged military campaign.[2]

Industry

The British *Battle of the Somme*[3] (1916) was produced by the film department of the British War Propaganda Bureau (known by the name of its location, Wellington House) led by Charles Masterman and his team in utmost secrecy. The Wellington House films were generally timid and avoided "the hysterical hyperbole of most other forms of wartime propaganda," produced independently, "including propaganda films that have been made since" (Reeves 1999, 33). Genre-wise, this output consisted mostly of what were known as "factual" films or "actualities." The official film propagandists demonstrated aversion to the usual propaganda tricks, which would distort the truth (Reeves 1999, 30), and showed "remarkable ideological restraint," representing the events unfolding before the camera "in a measured, unemotional, almost objective manner" (Reeves 1999, 32). [Fig. 1.]

2 While the British and the German films are well preserved, available and discussed at length, the French has disappeared, which is a pity since judging by the existing commentaries, and especially by the bits and pieces that could be seen on YouTube, it looks quite intriguing.

3 The title of the film as cited in the archive of the British War Museum is *Battle of the Somme*, where it is filed as I [mperial] W [ar] M [useum] F [Jim] A [rchive Catalogue Number] IWMFA 191, *Battle of the Somme* (War Office, 1916, prod. William F. Jury), and not *The Battle of the Somme* as it appears in many publications, including most of the ones cited here.

The film made a huge impression at the time of its première in Britain,[4] when the battle was still far from over – it was released two months before the British offense stopped in November, on August 25, 1916, and the *Manchester Guardian* praised it as "the real thing at last" (Reeves 1999, 37).

Meanwhile, cameramen of the four big French companies provided propagandistic film material both domestically and internationally (Dibbets and Groot 2010, 443). Yet, as Pierre Sorlin writes, "it is difficult to explain why, in January 1917, the Ministry of War broke the agreement in place with the four film companies" and created the autonomous SPCA (*Service photographique et cinématographique de l'armée* [*the Army's Photography and Cinema Service*]), which was "under the direct authority of the government and was given the monopoly of taking pictures and films dealing with the war" (2004, 508). The SPCA produced *La Bataille de la Somme*, 1916 (*The Battle of the Somme*, also referred to in English as *The French Offensive on the Somme*, July 1916) which, according to Sorlin was a compilation, consisting of three parts, selected from the abundant pre-existing, but not yet shown footage. As Laurent Véray writes "[it] was not until 1 July 1916 […] that cameramen were allowed to go near the line of fire to film the beginning of a real attack. The images recorded by one of them, Émile Pierre" – the cameraman of the first art film, *Assassinat du Duc de Guise* (1908), produced by the famous international company "Le Film d'Art" – "show French soldiers in a trench as they fix their bayonets, advance along a passage, then rush up in successive waves onto the ground above them, before disappearing into no man's land. There is nothing more moving, I think, than these men who go over the top, for we never know what becomes of them" (Véray 2010, 413).

The "French […] did their best to outdo their ally at the cinema" (Dibbets and Groot 2010, 444), taking advantage of the delay in the British film distribution abroad. The French film, although loaned out "free of charge" by its international distributors Pathé Frères – at least in the neutral Netherlands – "failed to make a dent in film history" (Dibbets and Groot 2010, 444). And remained a subject of controversy, at the heart of which, as Sorlin believes, lies the filmmakers' misguided partisanship. The French film was thus fatally compromised by the attempt to represent a Franco-British operation without making any allusion to the part played by France's ally (Sorlin 2004, 510).

About two months after the battle, the Germans released their own official propaganda film, called *Bei unseren Helden an der Somme* (*With Our Heroes at*

4 It sold 20 million tickets in the United Kingdom during the first six weeks – meaning that half of the population saw it – a record that was broken only in 1977.

the Somme), made in deliberate response to the British film. It lasts 51 minutes, which, as the German war film historian Rainer Rother[5] writes, apparently created problems in "later releases, particularly in foreign countries" (1983, 538). Ironically, "the belated development of Germany's professional propaganda film unit, known as the Photograph and Film Bureau (*Bild und Film-Amt* or *BUFA*) was prompted not only by the "numerous complaints of German diplomats about the awful quality of German propaganda films," but mostly by what Rother defines as envy for the international success of "this English film"(1983, 525), with which *With Our Heroes* engages in implicit argument, meant to reverse the Entente claim to victory at the Somme. The importance the powers-that-be attributed to *With Our Heroes* explains why BUFA – proud of its first production – chose for its official inauguration the strictly PR "social event" (Rother 1983, 525) of the film premiere on January 19, 1917.

Artistry

Propaganda film units creating these Somme films demonstrates Virilio's point of the integral relatedness between film, propaganda and the state war machine. However, apart from the identical subject matter, the films do not share other common features. John Hodgkins provides a close reading of "the filmic techniques and artistry at work" in *Battle of the Somme*, the "potent film language" of which has been given far "little serious critical consideration" (2008, 9) by historians. Hodgkins argues that WWI films are overwhelmingly looked upon as historical relics, discussed with respect to their production and exhibition history and the authenticity of their images, but rarely as works of film art (2008, 9), being criticized for using "common cinematic tricks" and "wonders […] an editor can create," which capitalize on "viewers' ignorance" (sic!) (Sorlin 2004, 514).

A. The Question of Realism

All three films are critiqued for lack of authenticity and confused chronologies. Such criticism is at best displaced, since the reality effect of any film is, by definition, a construct, and the question of film realism – despite the inherent indexicality of the medium – is a highly debated subject in film studies. As André Bazin claims "realism in art can only be achieved in one way – through artifice" (1971, 26).

5 Rother actually puts its length at 33 minutes, which does not include the last part of the film.

Pragmatically, the reality effect in actualité films, especially on battlefields, is the result of the ex-prompt choices made by cameramen on the ground. Andrew Kelly quotes Geoffrey Malins – a war cinematographer and co-editor of the British Somme film – who "believed that genuine films had to show the 'suffering and agony' of conflict and present death 'in all its grim nakedness'" (1997, 48–9). Yet while their film proves that both Malins and McDowell were willing to risk their necks,[6] it also implies the British command's laissez-faire attitude to both strategic military secrets and human lives. However, as Sorlin claims about the French Somme film, shooting the attacks with heavy and unyielding cameras from "a dominant frontal position" was impossible, if the scenes were not staged "during a drill," because otherwise the cameraman "would have been immediately killed by the Germans" (2004, 514). Discussing the German film, Rother also remarks that the assault scenes, where "the soldiers come directly towards the camera" suggest that either they are "in enemy territory" or, most likely, in "some training area" (1989, 535–536). Therefore, when Dibbets and Groot write that "the first official German propaganda film did not follow the British approach," the strength of which was in "authenticity as a point of departure," it is not exactly clear what they are accusing the film of. They do admit, however, that the British film "included a number of scenes of rather dubious authenticity" (2010, 449). We, as viewers, are set up to judge the nationalist bias of filmmakers from two warring sides. To accept that the British film does "include scenes of dubious authenticity," and even outright staging of soldiers going "'over-the-top' into action" (Reeves 1999, 37) means to agree that the "abstraction and symbolism" of these scenes "work to the advantage of realism." (Bazin 1971, 26.) And to reject similar tactics when exercised by the anonymous creators of the German film means to agree with Rother's brisk account that "the footage of parts two and three is staged […] The places shown come from training areas […] no signs to suggest anything of the Somme battlefield" (1995, 2). And therefore, we have to accept that the "abstraction and symbolism" of *With Our Heroes* "work to the detriment of realism" (Bazin 1971, 26). Which only proves the point that the ratio of authentic to staged scenes[7] could not sway opinions alone one way or another, for, as Bazin writes, "in [the] name of truth [art] can only magnify or neutralize the effectiveness of the elements of reality that the camera captures"

6 For more on the self-sacrificial role of WWI cameraman, see Morrissey (2010), and *Ghosts on the Somme: Filming the Battle - June-July 191*6 by Alastair Fraser and Andrew Robertshaw (Pen & Sword Military; Reprint edition, 2009–2016), dedicated to Malins and McDowell.

7 One of the most detailed researches in this vein is Roger Smithers's on *Battle of Somme*, who concludes that the ratio of faked to authentic scenes is "actually quite small" (1993, 160).

(1971, 26). Besides, as these films are openly propagandistic, with a highly relativized question of truth, their artistic value plays a decisive role for their success or lack thereof.

Seeing the Somme films through the grid of inherent tensions between art and propaganda produces intriguing results, thanks to the friction between what Regine Robin calls "text effect" – the unfathomable poetic function of the medium or combination of creative ingenuity and reality effect, which in cinema might entail extradiegetic elements – and the "thesis effect" of the didactic or propaganda message (1992, 248). Hodgkins's description of the triumph of realism over didacticism in the British Somme film best illustrates the emotional impact of "text effect" over "thesis effect:" "this 'battle-field documentary,'" he writes, "was touching the hearts, minds, and bodies of wartime audiences in ways that other cinematic texts of the era – either 'factual' or fictional – were not" (2008, 12).

B. Structure and Narrative

Hodgkins acknowledges the high level of narrative integration in the film – its classical dramatic structure with well-defined beginning – the preparation for attack, middle – the unfolding battle, and end – the battle aftermath – supported by omniscient, suspense-building intertitles, which contribute further to its "text effect." The German film is also structured in three parts, presented as a rebuttal to the British film, but in the process sacrifices its artistic autonomy, mutating into a series of amorphous episodes. And finally, the tripartite structure of the French film seems to have been prompted solely by considerations of distribution convenience.

C. Camera and Optics

The uniqueness of the British film is attributed by Hodgkins to the ubiquitous point-of-view (POV) shots, and what Tom Gunning (1990) calls "cinema of attractions,"[8] used in relation to early cinema, which "displaces its visibility, willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator" (1990, 57). The change of perspective, introduced by the POV shot was made possible by the crash development of optics during WWI. Moreover, the perception of immediacy has mutated here into what Anne

8 The "cinema of attractions," according to Gunning, was a ruling principle of film aesthetics until 1906–1907, and then went "underground" […], permeating the avant-garde as well as the fiction films, thus becoming "an essential part of popular film-making" (1990, 57–60).

Rutherford calls "'corporeal vision,' thus constructing the field of vision as a tactile, and thereby affective, process" (2002, 21) and evoking the viewers' somatic reaction. No longer alienated observers, the audience were, as one wartime spectator put it, "in the battle and [part] of it" (Reeves 1997, 11). Furthermore, the "jolting, disorienting moments," created through ingenious editing techniques, could also be seen in terms of "the affective experience of modern, industrial warfare" (Hodgkins 2008, 17) Virilio writes about. Stressing again the intense interconnectedness between war, technology and cinema, he interprets a WWI soldier's confusion of sensations during an artillery barrage not as "a panic-stricken terror but a technological vertigo or purely cinematic derealisation […] affecting the sense of spatial dimension" (Virilio 1989, 84–85).

In comparison, the German film uses material taken by a predominantly static camera, which captures endless processions of military personnel, amassing for the assault and crossing the field of vision invariably on the diagonal from the upper left to the lower right corner of the screen. Another preferred camera position is the frontal one – either static or panning – allowing for detailed scrutiny of the intertitle claims that the images are of Entente barbarity, which has left the population at the mercy of Germans, the sole saviours here. Needless to say, these camera positions, privileging medium to long shots, preclude the intimacy of the POV shots, let alone the newly found expressivity of the low-angle ones, which the British film uses copiously in the staged scenes.

D. Cinema of Attractions

Known for its "elements of surprise and spectacle," which include "the newest technological wonders" and "exhibitions of violence" (Hodgkins 2008, 15), the shocking effect of the cinema of attractions aesthetics in *Battle of the Somme* is summarized by S. D. Badsey as the recurrence of death and waste. His notes on the "sinister 'empty battlefield' of the twentieth century," on "ghostly soldiers and monstrous guns" (1983, 113), populating "strange landscapes" (1983, 105), are most eloquent meditations on war on film. While the German and the French Somme films also rely on the "attractions" of heavy artillery equipment, both films stick to their respective propaganda agendas [Fig. 2].

Particularly important for cinema of attractions is what Gunning calls "emblematic […] look at the camera," since it enhances the intimacy between image and viewer thus resulting in a Robin's "text effect" par excellence (Gunning 1990, 57). In *Battle of the Somme*, this intimacy is created by numerous grins and

waves to the camera. Curiously, while in the British film the looks at the camera dispel the "thesis effect" by evoking not patriotic élan, but pity and fear for the lives of soldiers who are about to "fight in 20 minutes" – as one intertitle reads – the looks at the camera in the German film have an opposite impact. For it is the British and French war prisoners, paraded in rows, who do the looking, few of them smiling, others shyly implying unvarnished relief. A unique moment of cinematic authenticity, the spontaneous breaking of the imaginary between themselves and the viewer, works here in support of the "thesis effect" by firming the image of German soldiers as courteous protectors of POVs. If such rare moments of truth were not drowned in redundancies and repetitions – pedantically devoted to the evacuation of enemy civilians, while intertitles rephrase the claim that "Germans protect French refugees from being fired upon by their own countrymen" – the German film might have managed to counterbalance British propaganda [Fig. 3]. Indeed, by avoiding combat scenes and especially the spectacular close-ups of "blighted landscapes" and "twisted corpses" (Hodgkins 2008, 17) that made the British film such a unique experience, the German film tends, in Virilio's words, to "dematerialise the military engagement" through visual metonyms – enemy casualties covered on stretchers or wooden crosses marking soldiers' graves – thus sanitizing the omnipresence of death.

The Somme Films – "Text Effect" or "Thesis Effect"?

The première of *Battle of the Somme* generated "myriad interviews and newspaper reports depicting the visceral, somatic effect" the film had on viewers, describing it as "a horrifying yet profound, even spiritual, spectatorial experience" (Hodgkins 2008, 11). It could be argued that the emotionality, triggered by the "text effect" in *Battle of the Somme* – the artistically most accomplished among the three Somme films – nearly destroyed its propaganda effect; and caused what Bauman (1989) calls unwanted "eruptions of moral responsibility," judging by the opinion of some viewers who "even interpreted the film, in direct contrast to the War Office view, as a plea for pacifism" (Badsey 1983, 109). On the other hand, the research of war historian Nicholas Reeves (1996) might lead us to conclude that the "text effect" reinforced the "thesis effect" since British viewers, emotionally affected by the film, manifested their sympathy for the soldiers in statements of support for the war effort. And yet, following the comments of Canadian filmmaker and essayist Donald McWilliams on the DVD release of *Battle of the Somme*, the propaganda effect of documentaries, "as we now know," is impossible to

evaluate, since "viewers tend to find confirmation in what they see. It is difficult for one film to change opinion. If I see wounded being brought in and I think the war is a good thing, then I am liable to see brave young men who feel as I feel. Nonetheless, in 1916 there was an increasing disaffection with the conduct of the War. But the government decided that the gamble was worth it. The time was ripe that the public be shown something" (2009, 130).

The emotional film reception, both abroad and at home, questions intently Virilio's contention about the role of cinema in the "derealisation [or dematerialization] of military engagement," foregrounding the importance of film form and style in creating an emotionally realistic film experience, open to various – even contradictory – interpretations, as an alternative to a single-minded propaganda message. Whether "result of a sophisticated recognition that the images were 'able to speak for themselves'" (Reeves 1999, 33), or prompted by lenient considerations of secrecy and sheer chance, the unusually innovative aesthetic of the British Somme film displayed a respect for the image long since lost.

Neither *La Bataille de la Somme* nor *Bei unseren Helden an der Somme* went to comparable expressionist and emotional lengths in order to get their didactic points across. Deliberately dispassionate and methodical in attempting to rebuke the excessive British and French propaganda accusations of barbarism, the German film compromises the gritty novelty of its realist aesthetics against the tedium of repetitive images and intertitle messages, stifling the rare instances of "text effects" and reducing the film to an ineffective "propagandistic discourse in images" (Robin 1992, 298).

The French film, on the other hand, was meant to arouse, through shock and awe, more anger than empathy; therefore, it does not focus on the human repercussions of the battle, as the German film did, but on "presenting it as an 'objective' (i.e. without commentary) series of photographs exposing immense damage; replete with shots of burnt houses and corpses […] highlighting the awful human and material cost of the hostilities" (Sorlin 2004, 515). As Sorlin writes, the French war actualities "contributed to forming public opinion and provided the French with a sense of what the 'Huns' would have to pay" (2004, 515), when Germany would be sued for reparations. In this sense, the "thesis effect" of *La Bataille de la Somme* clearly manipulated emotional involvement in the direction required by the powers-that-be, and thus, not unlike the German film, resulted in displacement of, if not in disengagement from, the military experience.

Part Two: War, Hollywood and Propaganda

The end of war radically affected all aspects of filmmaking, tipping the balance in favour of American cinema. As *The New York Times* film correspondent Stuart Klawans notes, "The great victor of World War I in cinema, as in all else, was, of course, the United States. Alone among the combatants, America emerged with its society and economy intact" (2000, online). In her study of American cinema during WWI, Leslie M. DeBauche writes that the "effects of the war far outlasted the nineteen months of US involvement in the conflict," and American film industry "assumed a position of pre-eminence in the world film production" (2000, 140), by taking over "the markets from which France and Denmark have withdrawn" (Klawans 2000).

Yet first and foremost, WWI was instrumental in legitimizing the American movie industry as an important part of American society. Indeed, as Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell write, by the end of the war, President Woodrow Wilson and other dignitaries "were not averse to being seen in the company of movie stars at war bond drives and other social occasions – something that would have been unthinkable before 1916" (2004, 109). This is hardly surprising, seeing the exhaustive work done in selling Liberty Bonds by such stars of the silent pre-war cinema as Mary Pickford, Charles Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks and Theda Bara.

In order to preserve their newly acquired status, the studios were outdoing each other in producing atrocious pro-war propaganda films, among which *The Battle Cry for Peace* stands out with its zealousness. Produced in 1915 by Vitagraph Company of America, the film was directed by a studio co-founder, J. Stuart Blackton. Drawing on the Lusitania tragedy and released just months after it, the film was meant "to sway the American public opinion in favour of entering the war" by showing "the Germans attacking New York by sea and reducing the city to ruins" (Jowett and O'Donnell 2004, 109). Unfortunately – and regardless of its low aesthetic qualities – the film provoked an unexpectedly strong "reverse effect in that the pacifist movement used it to expose the war profiteers and armament manufacturers who would benefit from US entry into the war" (Jowett and O'Donnell 2004, 109).

After declaring war on Germany on April 6, 1917, the bulk of American propaganda films, while a "mixed lot" both aesthetically and ideologically, remained under the rubric "Hate the Hun," illustrated by titles like *The Kaiser: The Beast of Berlin* (Rupert Julian, 1918) and *The Prussian Cur* (Raoul Walsh, 1918), featuring flat characters of brutal German military personnel, who victimize

equally flat characters of innocent civilians, usually Belgians (DeBauche 2000, 140). The only *raison d'être* of these simple-minded "tendentious narratives," to use David Bordwell's definition, is "to create conflicts" that both prove the propaganda thesis and "furnish narrative interest" (1985, 236) through dramatically justified vilification of the enemy.[9] Some of the works, included in film history books, introduced more psychologically complex characters torn between their ethnic identity – Germans constituted the second-largest minority in the US at the time (Jowett and O'Donnell 2004, 210) – and their patriotic loyalties, like the father in *The Hun Within* (Chester Withey, 1918), who, in the name of his adopted homeland, condemns his own son as a German spy.

Melodrama as Propaganda

The most famous Hollywood-made WWI propaganda films – David Wark Griffith's *Hearts of the World* and Allen Holubar's *The Heart of Humanity* – stand out, not unlike the Somme films, because of the intriguing frictions between their "text" and "thesis effects."

Hearts of the World, subtitled *A Love Story of the WWI* (1918) was considered the "quintessential American World War I film" (DeBauche 2000, 140) until replaced in the 1920s by the truly anti-war pathos of King Vidor's *The Big Parade* (1925), William Wellman's *Wings* (1927) and certainly by Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930).

A co-production between two American companies – D. W. Griffith Productions and Famous Players-Lasky Corporation – and the British War Office Committee (former British War Propaganda Bureau). In its efforts to persuade the US to join the war, the Committee went as far "as to import the great American director Griffith to direct a film for them" (DeBauche 2000, 140). Advertised as "the sweetest love story ever" (DeBauche 2000, 140), *Hearts of the World* is defined by film historians and propaganda specialists as an exemplary achievement of Hollywood in using motion picture as a propaganda device.

Like most of Griffith's films this is a melodrama, the generic narrative economy of which effectively supports the propaganda message through extreme polarization of characters as good Americans and bad Germans. According to Thomas Elsaesser melodrama as a "popular cultural form," takes a "severe social

9 Famous film director Raoul Walsh, who made a number of anti-German pro-war films under the pressure of FOX studios in 1918, called *The Prussian Cur* his "rottenest picture ever." *http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0009524/trivia?ref_=tt_trv_trv*. Last accessed 15. 07. 2017.

crisis" – in this case war – and "mediates it within the private context" (Elssaesser qtd. in Hayward 2013, 230) of a fictitious French village, dividing the characters strictly into victims, villains and heroes/ saviours.

The narrative falls into four distinctive parts, representing a string of carefully planned and emotionally charged coincidences. Part one introduces the Boy and Girl – implying the generic all-American boy and girl, played by Griffith's favourite young stars, Robert Harron and Lilian Gish – who live in a French village, fall in love and are about to be married, when the war is declared [Fig. 4].

He then joins the French army as a volunteer, while she becomes a nurse. Part two moves from "the world outside" of British and French Parliaments declarations of war to the events in the village on the front. On the first day of battle, coinciding with their wedding day, the boy gets shell-shocked and the girl, "clutching her wedding dress across a desolated battlefield" (DeBauche 2000, 143), spends the night by his side thinking him dead. Part three focuses on the victims – predominantly women, old people and children – and their suffering and humiliation. While Germans are shown fooling around with hand-grenades, beating the Girl into working harder and enjoying prostitutes and trophy wine, a certain von Strohm, the local German bully – sporting an elaborate Kaiser moustache, a physiognomic trait of cinematic Huns – graduates into the principal villain by attempting to rape the Girl. He catches her stealing food for the Boy's orphaned younger siblings at the local inn of another German national. Naturally, the Boy saves the day after single-handedly frustrating the German counteroffensive, pretending to be one of their own. The final part of the film is devoted to last minute rescues, surprises and recognitions, yet the happy ending comes only with the triumphant arrival of the Americans, drowning the screen in stars-and-stripes [Fig. 5]. If any "text effect" has survived Griffith's tightly controlled "tendentious narrative," it is because of what Bazin calls "aesthetic catalyst," or skilful "integration of unobtrusive elements of reality" into this otherwise "highly stylized work" (1967, 111) [Fig. 6].

Thus, the whole military spectacle of technology, war and death, complete with unsolicited looks at the camera, are used here as backdrops or as a side show at best. And yet, even with their emotional potential curtailed, pushing the visceral images of war into the cinematic distance via medium to long shots, these images still capture the "auratic aspect of the pro-filmic reality," which "ruptures or short-circuits" the formulaic story, "producing an affect of pure temporal distance, of materiality and its loss" (Stojanova 2011, 132).

Propaganda as Melodrama

After a period of long neglect,[10] *The Heart of Humanity* has lately generated newly found interest, mostly in comparison to Griffith's film. Produced by Carl Laemmle's Universal Pictures and premiered on February 15, 1919, the film was a smashing success. It is directed by Allen Holubar, but recent biographers of Erich von Stroheim, who stars in the film (Koszarski 2000), insist that he was the hidden creative force[11] behind the film as he needed to impress Laemmle into producing his first three films.[12] The film looks like upping the antes of *Hearts of the World,* especially regarding its "cinema of attractions" attributes. Indeed, for the spectacle of military technological wonders, Holubar went literally above and beyond the call of duty, providing aerial views of the battle scenes, staged at the Universal studios, and juxtaposed them to accurately reproduced moments from the heroic assault of Canadian troops at Vimy Ridge. Apart from instances of stars-and-stripes waving, which look silly in a film about an all-Canadian victory, the war spectacle would be near-perfect, if it were not lacking the flair of authenticity of military engagements and participants, which contributed so much to the historical success – and longevity – of Griffith's film. No gawking at the camera in Holubar's film, only studio-shot exchanges between actors, trying to pretend they are in the trenches.

The "cinema of attractions" penchant for shocking display of violence and death, morph here into scenes, highly suggestive of sexual violation, thanks to the presence of Erich von Stroheim as the malicious Hun. By 1918 the actor had already played Huns, yet in *The Heart of Humanity* he is more than the stereotypically nasty German officer, the Hun you love to hate; he is the sublime villain! His von Eberhard – a deliberate pun on the actor's name – makes von Strohm look like the village moron.[13] Stroheim becomes the focus of the film early on as his is the only character to evolve – from bad to worse to be sure – as compared to the exemplary Canadian Patricia family, consisting of a virtuous and patriotic "momsey" and her five sons. It remains a mystery why John (Robert Anderson), the eldest Patricia

10 There has been only one 16mm copy preserved at the Library of Congress before it was transferred on DVD.

11 Stroheim is listed as "technical assistant" in the film's credits.

12 *Blind Husbands* (1919), *The Devil's Passkey* (1920) and *Foolish Wives* (1922).

13 The role in Holbar's film inaugurated Stroheim as the quintessential Prussian officer for decades to come, but also led to *La grande illusion*/ *The Grand Illusion* (1937), where – cast against type by director Jean Renoir in his powerful anti-war drama – he played the upright German officer Captain von Rauffenstein, whose outdated chivalry is a memorable nod to the vanished noblesse of the *belle époque*.

brother, brings Eberhard to their settlement in the Canadian Rockies on the eve of war, but apparently historical viewers were more tolerant to the needs of the "tendentious narrative," since many propaganda films of that time feature Germans visiting Entente countries[14] only to be unmasked as wicked brutes when the war starts. Once with the Patricias, Eberhard begins courting John's love interest, Nanette (Dorothy Phillips), with that mixture of lechery and worldly sophistication, considered lethal for the morals of inexperienced girls. So powerfully authentic is Stroheim's presence that the sexual chemistry between him and Phillips is almost palpable in their meeting at the Virgin's shrine in the woods. Nanette, respiring heavily, pretends to ignore von Eberhard's advances, and looking at the statue of Virgin Mary, says "religion is my strength." To which he retorts with Nietzschean flair, "strength is religion in itself," while giving her his trade-mark ice-cold stare through the glinting monocle. And, as film archivist Paulo Cherchi Usai writes, the camera then "cuts to a detail of the sacred statue, where a spider has built its web around the head and the breasts of the Virgin" (1995, 248), supposedly warning against the unholy and seditious German influence. However, the "abstraction and symbolism" of the scene, in Bazin's words, work in the opposite direction and, as a result of their forceful "text effect," suggest instead a forbidden, and therefore irresistible sexual attraction between the two. [Fig. 7.]

As the film proceeds, Stroheim's presence increasingly dominates the narrative, challenging its propaganda message, especially vis-à-vis Anderson, who is stuck here with nothing to act but pose as the picture-perfect war hero. Unlike his four brothers, from whom he is physically and psychologically almost indistinguishable, John remains alive until the happy end since his sole narrative *raison d'être* is to save Nanette, now his wife and Junior's mother, by killing von Eberhard seconds before he succeeds in his macabre design. The infamous attempted rape episode takes the voyeuristic potential of Griffith's analogous scene to hitherto unthinkable heights. The action evolves in Vimy and environs, where Nanette is stationed as a Red Cross nurse, helping war orphans. Once Eberhard spots her in the mayhem of the fallen city, he pays his respects, helps her up the stairs to her room, and then proceeds with melodramatic impiety to tear at her clothes. And when the baby in her care starts crying, he tosses it out the window! The arousing overtones of the episode, and especially its length, transgress the premise of innocence unprotected and begin to resemble rather a hysterical projection of repressed fears and desires. Which explains the smashing success of the film, but makes its propaganda message highly suspect.

14 Another famous example is Cecil B. DeMille/ Mary Pickford's *The Little American* (1917).

Along with Stroheim's mesmerizing presence, scholars ascribe the renewed interest in *The Heart of Humanity* to its innovative stylistic strategies which, judging by Stroheim's subsequent films as director, could be attributed to him. Usai singles out the meta-cinematic episode, where the Vimy Ridge battle is framed as a newsreel, covering both warring sides, and has von Eberhard interviewed, standing "in the middle of a trench […] talking to a newsreel cameraman" (1995, 247). He introduces himself, while staring icily through his monocle at the camera – that is, at the viewer – uttering with menacing calmness: "Paris in a week – then London – and then, America!" The realistic setting and genuine feel of this scene obviously capitalized on historical viewers' trust in newsreel war coverage. A "revealing example of contamination between fictional film and non-fictional aesthetics" (Usai 1995, 246), the self-reflexivity of this episode would have had – if it lasted longer – a much stronger effect on audiences than Stroheim's melodramatic escapades.

Even more intriguing is the creation of a time and space solely through editing, a technique, which would reveal its full propaganda potential in the films of the Soviet Avant-garde in the 1920s. The interconnection between Nanette's compassionate nature and the suffering war infants, for example, is presented by splicing separate images of shabbily dressed tearful kids and medium shots of Phillips's expressive face. And although no establishing shot of the two parties together is ever offered, the viewer – disoriented by the change of perspective – remains convinced that they share the same space.

Conclusion: (Post) War Film Industries, Experimentation and Propaganda

Understandably, not all belligerent countries grasped the mobilization potential of cinema with equal fervour and mastery. And yet, regarding the endemic interrelatedness between state, cinema and propaganda, Klawans writes, "the war's losers came out far ahead of the winners" (2008, online). Indeed, while WWI facilitated the international dissemination of American films, establishing Hollywood classical style as a model, which "other national cinemas emulated or reacted against for decades" (DeBauche 2000, 140), it also nurtured the counterbalancing impetus towards state-directed film industries, which emerged in Europe prior to and during the war, but flourished in its aftermath, and accounted for the artistic resilience of most European interwar cinemas, as well as the policies protecting their film markets. The contradictory results of these

policies are best reflected by the artistic successes of German and Soviet cinemas in the 1920s, and by their totalitarian propaganda output in the 1930s. Thus, as Ramona Curry writes: "notwithstanding the outcomes […] of the Versailles Treaty, the German film industry emerged […] a winner over competing European industries, turning the comparative German business isolation and the wartime circumstance to productive advantage" (1995, 143–144).

Russia however is the more interesting case, providing a textbook illustration of the interdependency between war, cinema, propaganda and a state-run film industry. According to Peter Kenez, "the Russian Monarchy did not consider it was their task to convince people; it naively believed that it was the responsibility of people to obey and follow" (1995, 36). Therefore, a state-run film propaganda model, proposed by a certain V. M. Dementiev, was overlooked. An ultra-reactionary politician, he was an unlikely defender of cinema since he considered it demeaning. He realized however, not unlike Lenin, that moving images were the best way to reach the mostly illiterate Russian population. In his pamphlet *Cinematography as Government Regalia*, published in 1915, Dementiev argues that "cinema must be nationalized and used by government as a monopoly, similar to the vodka monopoly" (Kenez 1995, 41). Being "far ahead of his time in his awareness of the propaganda potential" of cinema, Dementiev insisted that "competing views should be suppressed," and "government control should be established over thinking citizens" (Kenez 1995, 41). His ideas were brought to fruition by Lenin who, despite his contempt for cinema as a lowly art, came to a similar realization and decreed full nationalization of the chaotic Russian film industry only two years after the Bolshevik revolution, in 1919.

Yet before turning into propaganda hot-beds in the 1930s, both Goskino[15] and UFA watched over the development of remarkable experimental trends, the Soviet Montage and German Expressionism. Together with the two other significant post-WWI avant-garde movements – French Surrealism and French Impressionism, which advanced film language in the direction of depth of field, subjective POV shots, and complex framing and composition – Soviet Montage and German Expressionism demonstrated that war-related technological advancements of cinematic equipment – lighter cameras and better optics – propel unconventional aesthetics of filmmaking. And while German Expressionism applied its innovative stylistic devices, immersed in the graphic arts and Freudian psychoanalysis, to illuminate dark corners of the tormented German soul and to prophesize – according to its most sensational theoretician Siegfried Kracauer (2004) – the

15 Renamed later Sovkino, Soyuzkino and again Goskino.

advent of Fascism, French Surrealism, paired with Dadaism, challenged the very foundations of a world based on reason and enlightenment, exposing its "deep anxieties […] fear and suspicion […] and simmering hatred" (Blom 2015, 194). Promptly labelled "degenerate art" by the Nazis after 1933, German Expressionism, Surrealism and Dadaism – while summarily replaced by a return, strongly encouraged by the totalitarian establishment, to representational, figurative art – have indelibly shaped the pessimistic, anti-rational and anti-establishment panache of Modern and post-Modern art.

The achievements of Soviet Montage School – while rejected and even criminalized after 1934 by the nascent Soviet totalitarianism in favour of state-imposed Socialist Realist aesthetics – remain paradoxically relevant to Virilio's ideas because of their technological positivist pedigree. Defined by Virilio as a "visual expression of Marxist dialectic in art," Soviet Montage practices are indeed explained in military terms by Sergei Eisenstein, the most versatile practitioner and theoretician of Soviet Montage, as "collision or conflict [between two montage frames]" (Virilio 1989, 27). Another Montage School champion, Dziga Vertov, also uses military jargon to describe his camera optics as an "all penetrating eye" or an "armed eye" (Virilio 1989, 20). Paradoxically, while Vertov's experimental films, especially *A Man with a Movie Camera*, were neglected after 1934, they have nowadays become desktop manuals not only for film propaganda scholars and filmmakers, but also for advertisers. Today, his experiments, which do manifest the ultimate "deviation" from habitual "shapes and representations of physical reality" (Virilio 1989, 27), endure as basic points of reference for new media gurus like Lev Manovich (2001) [Fig. 12].

Catalysed by the WWI turmoil and refined in its aftermath, the swiftly evolving international language of cinema has not only validated Virilio's ideas of the integral connection between technology, war and cinema, as well as between cinema and propaganda but, as argued above, has challenged, deconstructed and even subverted them. Thanks to its exceptional and ever-evolving level of sophistication, film language has long transcended its subordinate and strictly instrumental role in construing the film message. In its current capacity of a quintessential audio-visual metalanguage, it occupies a decisive place as subject, object and means of self-reflection in the meaning-making process, particularly important in one of the most urgent philosophical and cultural debates of our time, that of technological progress and its consequences.

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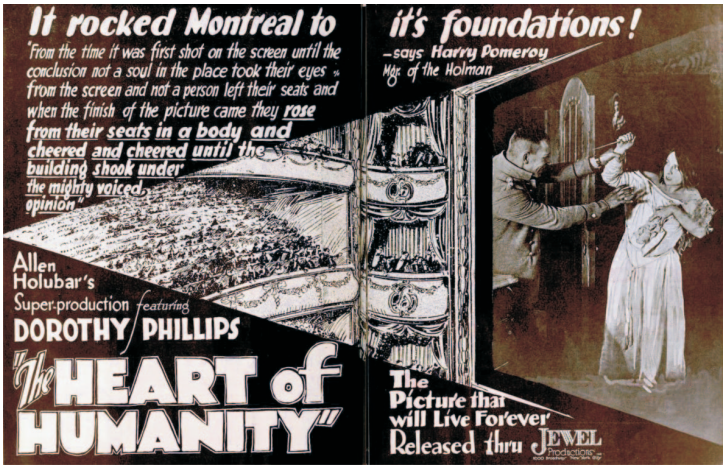

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Film and Media as a Site for Memory in Contemporary Art

Domingo Martinez Rosario
Universidad Nebrija (Madrid, Spain)
E-mail: dmartinezr@nebrija.es

Abstract. This article explores the relationship between film, contemporary art and cultural memory. It aims to set out an overview of the use of film and media in artworks dealing with memory, history and the past. In recent decades, film and media projections have become some of the most common mediums employed in art installations, multi-screen artworks, sculptures, multi-media art, as well as many other forms of contemporary art. In order to examine the links between film, contemporary art and memory, I will firstly take a brief look at cultural memory and, secondly, I will set out an overview of some pieces of art that utilize film and video to elucidate historical and mnemonic accounts. Thirdly, I will consider the specific features and challenges of film and media that make them an effective repository in art to represent memory. I will consider the work of artists like Tacita Dean, Krzysztof Wodiczko and Jane and Louise Wilson, whose art is heavily influenced and inspired by concepts of memory, history, nostalgia and melancholy. These artists provide examples of the use of film in art, and they have established contemporary art as a site for memory.

Keywords: contemporary art, cultural memory, memory, film, temporality.

Introduction

Film and video have become two of the most common disciplines of contemporary art in recent decades. Though the traditional setting of the cinema is still used to display contemporary film and video artwork, new presentation possibilities both inside and outside the exhibition room have been explored. Installations, multi-screen artworks, sculpture and multi-media art are the main art forms in which film and media projections have been given shape. At the same time, film and media have been used to tackle a wide range of themes in art, such as identity, post-colonialism, globalization, history, contemporaneity (time, place, mediation, ethics), etc. Memory is also a major theme, since a large number of

artists deal with the way in which we read, conceive and understand the past and history in accordance with the circumstances of the present.

This article explores the relationship between film, contemporary art and cultural memory.[1] I will set out an overview of the use of film and media in artworks dealing with memory, history and the past. This argument will aim to elucidate the main features of film and media that deal with the past and trigger a memory work in the viewer. In order to do this, I will firstly approach the field of cultural memory and, secondly, I will set out an overview of some pieces of art that utilize film and media to deal with historical and mnemonic accounts. Lastly, I will consider the specific features and challenges of film and media that make them an effective repository for art to represent memory.

Memory Studies and Contemporary Art

Memory studies[2] is a multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary field of studies that considers the processes by which collective memory is shaped in different cultures. It also tackles the ways, in which societies institutionalize collective memory through commemorations of the past in museums, festivals, art, film and so on, and the part played by these activities in producing various forms of social and cultural identity.

The field of memory studies draws on and addresses a considerable variety of disciplines: psychology, literary studies, history, art history, art, sociology, cultural and media studies, film studies and more.

Memory studies have become a central topic in History and Cultural Studies,[3] and memory is now considered as an exclusive phenomenon of the present. Memory is now understood as the perception of the past and is in continuous transformation due to the fact that it is dependent on the conditions of the present

1 The notion of cultural memory was introduced by the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann in his book *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis* (1992) and it gives name to the field of memory that addresses the past in relation to the present. Assmann proposes this term based on Maurice Halbwachs's notion on collective memory, which is carefully analysed in his book *La Mémoire collective* (1950).

2 In 2008, an academic journal was released for the first time under the title *Memory Studies*. It documents the wide-ranging considerations and debates about the theoretical, empirical and methodological concerns that form such a field of study. According to the statement in the journal website, "*Memory Studies* examines the social, cultural, cognitive, political and technological shifts affecting how, what and why individuals, groups and societies remember, and forget." (See: *http://mss.sagepub.com*).

3 Jan Assmann (1992), is one of the most influential writers that have tackled history and the past from the perspective of the present. But there are other writers such as Michel Foucault (1977) and Andreas Huyssen (1995) who have not only tackled history through mnemonic accounts, but also have considered the impact of memory on Cultural Studies.

and is constructed under current circumstances. Such issues have had an impact on cinema, literature and documentary practice, and have grown in relevance in relation to the field of contemporary art.

Especially over the past two decades, the relationship between art and memory has been the object of increasing academic attention,[4] with growing interest in film and cinema as repositories for representing, shaping, re-creating or indexing forms of individual and collective memory. Consequently, contemporary art has become a medium within which to hold current discussions and debates about memory, giving shape to different platforms of memory that resonate with artistic practice.

Film and Media in Contemporary Art

It is worth bearing in mind that there has always been a connection between film and memory. In recent decades, film, media and communication studies are fields that are growing in importance within the discipline of memory studies, according to Anamaria Dutceac Segesten and Jenny Wüstenberg's recent survey of the state of memory studies (2016, 9). This is mainly due to the fact that collective memory has been significantly informed by mass media and cinema over the past century.

It is also worth considering that the relationship between cinema and memory can operate at several levels. (Landsberg 1995, 176.) For instance, cinema memory (the memories of the social activity of going to the cinema) can be considered as a part of cultural or collective memory. Film can tackle the past, historical events or even bring to mind forgotten or repressed accounts of history, rising cultural memory in that way.

Film language is a particularly efficient method of evoking memory, especially by its ability to represent mood and subjective emotions. As a matter of fact, cinema works as a platform or repository for memory. The expansion of studies examining the links between cinema and memory has been remarkable since the 1990s, along with the rise of debates and questions of memory across a wide range of disciplines. The principle themes relating to memory that have been explored in cinema are: cinema and place; cinema, culture and identity; and film, film shows and stars.

Therefore, film can be understood as a site or storage for memory, like other storage mediums that have been used in society, such as analogue amateur

4 The upsurge in contemporary artists dealing with memory and history has led art critics and academics to analyse artistic strategies to deal with memory. Some of the key names are Joan Gibbons (*Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance*, 2006) and Lisa Saltzman (*Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art*, 2006).

photographs and home movies. Contemporary artists dealing with memory have found fruitful material in these mediums to produce their works.

Using such material, artists aim to revise or reassert historical events and epochs of social change, as well as the ways in which people record and pass on their memories. These processes often involve the digitization of analogue mediums and result in final artworks comprising videos, photographs, video installations, image projections or online archives. A range of strategies has been developed to deal with memory and history in art, which has reconfigured art practice and works of memory in general.

Common Strategies in the Use of Film in Contemporary Art

In order to analyse and frame the use of film in contemporary art dealing with memory, I argue that there are three principle strategies used by artists working in the field.

The first one is the appropriation of found and discarded objects or films. Artists use amateur photographs, home movies, old films and other objects due to their power to trigger emotions, nostalgia and melancholy, engage the viewers' attention and involve them in the artwork. The second strategy is a critical reconsideration of the past, i.e. history. Memory is understood not as fixed accounts of the past, but as something that is influenced by contemporary circumstances and emotions. In this way, memory becomes a tool for revising past and historical events and also for helping to understand the present. The third strategy draws on the representation of temporality and time in the artwork. Artists generally employ images and films that embody different times in the past. By doing this, artists echo the way in which memory works; it evokes different events in the past in a non-lineal sequence. They construct a type of narrative that is made up of fragments. In order to explain such artistic strategies, I will consider the work of internationally renowned artists like Tacita Dean, Krzysztof Wodiczko and Jane and Louise Wilson, whose art is heavily influenced and inspired by notions of memory, history, nostalgia and melancholy. These artists set a clear example of the use of film and home movies in art, and also establish contemporary art as a site for memory.

Tacita Dean and the Appropriation of Old Objects and Films

Visual artist Tacita Dean is one of the so-called Young British Artists. Her artworks comprise films, drawings, photographs, audio tracks and installations. She examines the links between different events that take place in diverse times and places, building up narratives that act as a meeting point for the past and present, fact and fiction, individual stories and greater events.

Dean uses banal objects and films to explore essential themes in life, death, history and memory. Her work is based on historical and autobiographical investigations. Among all the artistic disciplines that Dean uses in her works, 16mm film is maybe the one that defines her art production, as she is very interested in the medium's formal features. Since her early work, her amateur photographs and films have explored the border between fact and fiction, but also past and present times. For Dean, an image or a casual encounter with any past remnant becomes a mnemonic palimpsest.

Some of her major pieces belong to a project that tells the story of an amateur yachtsman called Donald Crowhurst. The film artworks in this project are *Disappearance at Sea* (1996), *Bubble House* (1999) and *Teignmouth Electron* (2000). Crowhurst participated in a round-the-world yacht-race in 1968, but his boat went adrift and he died. While sailing, Crowhurst recorded 16mm films and wrote an on-board diary, which Tacita Dean used in her work. After getting lost in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, Crowhurst realized he would not survive for longer than a day in the area of strong wind and would not be able to finish his journey around the world. In spite of the tough situation, he started faking his journey in his notebook writings and on the radio messages he sent. Eventually, Crowhurst lost track of his location and orientation in the ocean and all references of time, and so decided to commit suicide by jumping from the boat.

Dean has associated this event with something that happened shortly afterwards. On the 20th of July 1969, ten days after the boat was found in the middle of the ocean, the Apollo 8 landed on the Moon. This coincidence makes the catastrophe of Crowhurst work "as an allegory of transition to a new regime of historicity" (Royoux–Warner–Greer 2006, 89). In this way, the story of a specific person is not as important for Dean as the allegorical power for marking the time of a historical change. In other words, "what is allegorically shown in the films of *Disappearance at Sea* is not that much the disappearance of the yachtsman, but

what the world will be like if time would be fully absorbed by space, and the past fully absorbed by the present" (Royoux–Warner–Greer 2006, 89).

Teignmouth Electron (2000) is part of the investigation of the Donald Crowhurst story, which took Dean to Cayman Bra Island, where Crowhurst's abandoned boat was found washed up on the shore. Both in this film about the boat and in *Bubble House* (a film about an abandoned house that Dean found on the same island), the void, the flooding and the structures of ruins are the central points of interest. The way in which Dean records the void and discarded objects emphasizes their sculptural nature, specifically by employing slow and still shots to explore the surfaces, textures and the opening in the wall that connects the space outside the house. According to Tamara Trodd, "Dean utilises the sea as a rich metaphoric link to shape the action of time over objects, and also as a system to preserve and transform objects, their losses and the occasional returns, rich and strange swelling, full of corals and calcified."

Dean records discarded objects and ruins on analogue media not only to depict the memories, nostalgia and past experiences that objects and ruins recall, but also because analogue media itself is a symbol of the failure of future expectations and hopes that didn't come true and it helps us understand our current time. In this sense, Dean's films stand as the ultimate platform to hold historical time and also a figurative time that contrasts with the passing time of the film itself. The use of temporality to depict the past is a key strategy in these films. The juxtaposition of several temporalities in the same film succeeds in recalling past events and revising them, as well as their accounts or stories that are now presented as appropriated fragments. From a symbolic point of view, objects and places are located in "a hypothetic and fictitious version of an undated future, that never happened and about which time has been constructed in a strange way" (Trodd 2008, 384).

The post-Duchamp strategy of choosing allegorical elements, commonly known as *ready-mades*,[5] is a relevant feature in Dean's artistic production, and it actually provides key guidelines to understand our current world. In this way, Dean produces elements and objects of historical reference that are articulated, represented and reviewed with the purpose of comprehending the changes and standards that define present time.

5 *Ready-made* is the artistic strategy that Marcel Duchamp coined in 1967 with his work *Fountain*. *Ready-mades* are completely unaltered everyday or found objects selected by the artist and designated as art. Such objects are considered as art due to the designation placed upon them by the artist and the social history that comes with the object.

Krzysztof Wodiczko and the Critical Reconsideration of the Past

Polish artist Krzysztof Wodiczko has projected images onto buildings and monuments since the 1980s, creating a space for recollection. The projections have been seen in cities such as Krakow, Hiroshima, London, Berlin, Madrid and Boston. Combining the history of monumental architecture and video projections, an ideal medium for registering and broadcasting testimony is formed. The images projected are often human faces and hands that encourage the viewer to look and listen; we can hear them recounting memories and personal experiences of certain events. In doing so, stories that are normally kept in private are put on public record.

Wodiczko focuses on the way in which architecture and monuments depict historical and collective memory, which is considered and paired with the stories and images projected on them. All his artworks combine ways of passing on oral history with video media in his aim to give voice to the victims.

In his installation in Hiroshima, images are projected onto the Genbaku dome, the well-known building partly destroyed by the atomic bomb, which is currently the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. As the images are projected, the voices of the victims and survivors from the devastating bombing are both summoned and represented. Wodiczko not only returns the memories of the event to the audience, but he also encourages the retrieval of personal traumatic stories in the viewers' own memory.

By using monuments and public buildings as the "screen" for his film and video projections, Wodiczko draws attention to the collective and historical memory embodied in architecture and monuments, which are now questioned by the images projected on them. Especially since the 1990s, the artist has started adding sound to the images and cooperating with the communities that are represented in the films. In this way, Wodiczko provides a direct testimony of marginalized and excluded citizens, who actually live close to the monuments, but are not part of the history represented on them.

There have been more than eighty public projections made around the world (in Australia, Canada, England, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Spain, Poland and the USA), each tackling topics that have concerned the artist over his forty-year-long career: war, conflict, trauma, memory and communication in the public realm.

Wodiczko names his work as "interrogative design" because they refer to the aesthetic practice that impacts on reality by considering the citizens' life

situation and the institutional buildings in the city. These films are not about designing something that directly solves problems or addresses a societal need, but something that makes people aware of their collective history and that brings to light certain difficulties in society. In Wodiczko's own words, "design as a research proposal and implementation can be called interrogative when it takes a risk, explores, articulates, and responds to the questionable conditions of life in today's world, and does so in a questioning manner. Interrogative design questions the very world of needs of which it is born" (1999, 16).

The work *Bunker Hill Monument Projection* (1998) is a clear example of Wodiczko's projections, in which film images, sound and victims' accounts merge. They question the message of the monument and outline the importance of the viewers as the principal target in a piece of art. The location of this installation is the Charlestown area in Boston, an area marked by the victims of gang violence and the unsolved cases of the killers; topics that are often ignored in political and social debates. Bunker Hill Monument is a sixty-meter high monolith built to commemorate a battle of the American Revolution, which took place there on the 17th of July 1775. It is a monument considered as a symbol of local heroic patrimony and national identity. However, the videos projected depict the faces of mothers and brothers while they tell their experiences about losing sons and brothers to gang violence. Specifically, there are five people in the video, three mothers and two brothers, whose testimonies develop an oral history. The people in the video turn the heroic monument into a kind of large character telling the crimes of silent witnesses. It is worth pointing out that these characters hold candles and photographs of the killed relatives at the same time they talk to the camera. Such objects serve as additional registers of memory and as symbols of the very act of remembering and commemorating.

The relatives' voices catch the viewers' attention. In doing so, viewers become second witnesses and carriers of the mnemonic accounts described. During the three nights in which the film is projected, Bunker Hill Monument establishes itself as a means for testimony and a screen for memory.

The original monument was built to represent the target principles in the revolutionary battle for liberty. On the other hand, Wodiczko's projection on this monument claims for the freedom of the victims, their need to be heard and the right of all people to justice. As the artist claims, "this historic monument, dedicated to the heroes of a Revolutionary War battle, becomes a contemporary memorial to the present-day heroes and heroines who continue another battle on the same (sacred) ground. This battle against tyranny and oppression continues

still, inflicted now by murderous and unpunished urban violence and perpetuated by speechlessness and silence, imposed from without and from within" (1998).

The work *Bunker Hill Monument* is similar to the project designed for the *City Hall Towers* in Cracow (1996) and *A-Bomb Dome* in Hiroshima (1999). Wodiczko's film projections on monuments combine different methods for broadcasting oral history and video media, aiming to give voice to the victims of traumatic events. In the case of the project for the City Hall Towers, the victims are the survivors of domestic violence, people who had never been given the opportunity of telling their memories and traumatic experiences publicly.

In *A-Bomb Dome*, films are projected on the Genbaku Dome, a well-known building in ruins after the Hiroshima bombing that is now a Peace Memorial. Victims and survivors of the devastating bombing tell their life experiences in the film. Victims not only pass on their memories to the citizens, but also revitalize the mnemonic story of the building itself.

Wodiczko's pieces of art can be understood as genuine acts by which the stories embedded in architecture and monuments are reinstated. Such stories are overlapped with the memories of those people excluded from official accounts on history and past events, providing a new interpretation to the building. Images merge with the surface of the building façade where they are projected, a surface with the marks of the passing of time. The texture of the film changes and integrates the cracks in the façade as a metaphor for the traces created by social segregations.

Wodiczko's pieces of art establish themselves as revisionist works of history that retrieve the stories about experiences disregarded in official accounts to provide them a place in the public realm and the collective consciousness. As a matter of fact, such stories even gain a higher level in comparison to the values and memories represented in the monument.

Monuments are meant to comprehend and generate memory, and film and media fulfil the task of looking at (recording images) and giving visibility (broadcasting images). Wodiczko's projections overlap and merge both assignments. In doing so, the one-direction communication in traditional monuments, by which fixed stories about the past are represented and delivered to the public, now becomes a multi directional act of communication, since the artworks demand the viewer to do a critical reading. It is now the viewer's task to construct the historical and mnemonic account about the events represented in the film installation. In watching the film and reconstructing the mnemonic account, the viewer becomes a secondary witness of the historical event. In Lisa Saltzman's words, "through displacements

and postponement of projection technology and the temporality of testimony, the projection of the monument video, delayed and with power, offers at the same time that needs to be reproduced, the possibility to bear witness" (2006, 45).

Citizens attend a type of visual and audible ceremony that makes them become testimony of the actual witnesses. Viewers morally commit and take the witnesses' stories as their own, due to the empathetic feeling of belonging to the same society and sharing a collective and historical memory that is built up by everyone.

Spectators are key figures in these kind of public artworks, because they are the subjects who need to review history and the past. In doing so, the objective of the artwork is fulfilled. As Suzi Gablik states, ephemeral artworks displayed in a specific location "leave in the spectator a kind of moral echo strange in permanent installations and canalise in the dialogue with the public about certain social issues. The appearances and disappearances make installations more imaginative and seem to come up from the stone in the buildings as secretion, or as a repressed memory or dream" (1991, 102).

The ephemeral, immaterial and imaginative features that Gablik refers to are the ones that take us into the realm of memory and its intangible quality, providing the installation with a suggestive characteristic that catches our attention and urges us to mentally retrieve stories of the past.

Wodiczko's installations for specific locations create places of memory where citizens reflect not only on their own history, but also on the mnemonic process by which we construct it.

A work of memory develops during the period of time that the projection remains displayed. In that portion of time, the victims' personal memories become collective memories for the spectators watching the installation and hearing the stories. The artist is an intermediary that reviews history and produces a space that holds the private and the public, memory and history, as well as art and daily life. In Diana Nemiroff's words, "Wodiczko's epic narrative replaces the realism of the production by the realism of representation. It is not only the role of the artist demythologised in this intention, but also the piece of art is redefined as a place for a dialectic interchange, more than economic by nature. Thus, the narrative in the projection fuses with its reception to create a critical model for reinterpreting art in social life" (1986, 26).

Ultimately, it is worth pointing out the impact that Wodiczko's art makes in the sphere of public amnesia. His works offer, even if only temporarily, the possibility of representing a part of the history of a community to be remembered and reviewed, and integrate it in the citizens' memory.

Jane and Louise Wilson and the Use of Temporality

British twin artists Jane and Louise Wilson (1967, Newcastle) work on art forms such as media, film, photography and installation. Historical memory is a common topic in their artistic career, generally articulated through empty locations, areas that have been evacuated due to war conflicts, as well as ruined, non-functional or abandoned places. Historical memory in the Wilson sisters' works is completed with the experienced histories and memory accounts of citizens of certain events. A common feature of their film works is actors occupying old locations that have important links to historical matters. Such physical occupation suggests a connection between the psychological aspect of people and architecture, taking the viewers to different times and places, normally set between the Second World War and current times. In their works, "there is a need of reflexion about how we relate to memory and recent past, especially with traumatic issues that, as a psychological defence, we urge to forget."[6]

It is worth pointing out some of the Wilson sisters' key pieces of art, such as *Hypnotic suggestion 505* (1993), a recording of the old flour factory in Oporto; *Gamma* (1999), a video installation with several screens recorded in a US military base in Greenham Common (Berkshire), a place used as a warehouse for nuclear missiles during the Cold War; *A Free and Anonymous Monument* (2003), a film made from images of a microchip factory, children's games, a lake, a rusted petroleum platform and the Apollo Pavilion in Peterlee New Town, near Gateshead; *Spiteful of Dream* (2008), a film recorded in the community centre of Bosnia-Herzegovina, with men and women's voices telling their traumatic experiences as emigrants seeking asylum in the United Kingdom; or the photographic series *Oddments* (2008), about one of the biggest bookshops in London, with a room in which expensive books with front pages missing are stored, something that makes them dysfunctional. Jane and Louise Wilson's long artistic career and specifically these artworks show the artists' commitment to exploring historical memory.

Unfolding the Aryan Papers is a film that links personal and historical memory, reality and fiction, as well as body and space. It is a clear example of a work that uses temporality as a strategy to evoke memory. Temporality means the way we experience time, and it is closely linked to the notion of past, present and future. Through the strategic representation of moments from different times, the artists trigger a memory work in the viewer.

6 *Tempo suspenso. Jane & Louise Wilson*, (exhibition catalogue), CGAC, Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, 22. 08. 2010–02. 03. 2011: 3. (Author's translation.)

It is relevant to elucidate the difference between the notion of time and temporality to clearly understand how they are embedded in contemporary artworks.

The field of time studies is very large, which means that different concepts from different disciplines get blurred into each other to define it, often leading to contradictory understandings of time. Fernand Braudel (1958, 730) claimed that, for historians, time is a measure. However, Charles Tilly confronted Braudel's claim with the problem of time as it appears in historical sociology, since it depicts the socio-temporal conditions that underlie events and processes (2001, 570). Paul Ricoeur points out that the meaning of history is a narrative or a story, and therefore, time has a "when" category of meaning in the narrative order and is no longer an external measure, but a cultural dimension (2000, 173). For Niklas Luhmann, time is a symbol that indicates that several things can happen at the same time, and no single action can achieve complete control over the conditions in which it is taking place (1995, 41).

In order to analyse the links between film and memory in visual arts, I will employ the notion of time given by Polish sociologist and professor Elżbieta Hałas, which also draws on Luhmann's analysis. According to Hałas, the concept of time relates to a quantity of duration that changes in a uniform and sequential order. Time is, in a sense, empty; without content or meaning beyond its own linear progressing. It is when nothing happens, and goes on not happening (Hałas 2010, 310).

On the other hand, temporality stands for the way in which we undergo and live time. It is a variation of time, which allows us to discern the difference between what already happened and what is about to come. The dimensions that characterize temporality are neither uniform nor predictable. Time can be fulfilled and made anew through a profound change or rupture of some kind, making what happens thereafter radically unlike what had come before (Hałas 2010).

In Elżbieta Hałas's own words, "time is basically given in changes, which may be reversible or irreversible. Of significance for the cultural perspective is precisely the thesis that time – whatever it may be – does not necessarily require irreversibility, which allows us to distinguish between time and temporality. Temporality refers to experiencing and representing time with metaphors which emphasize its irreversibility" (2010, 42). More specifically, temporality within culture is the awareness of time passing that materializes in representations and experiences of time.

In *Unfolding the Aryan Paper*, there are several stories that intersect, stories about subjective and personal memories and also about collective historical

memory. In order to materialize this project, the Wilson sisters obtained a commission from Animate Projects and the British Film Institute, where they had access to comprehensively research the Stanley Kubrick archives at London College of Communication. Specifically, the artists focused on Kubrick's unfinished project *Aryan Papers*. Kubrick's film is based on Louis Begley's book *Wartime Lies* (1991), which deals with the attempts of the Jews to escape from the Warsaw ghetto. The book tells the story of a Polish woman, Tania, and her nephew, who pretended to be a Catholic to escape from the Jews' persecution during the Nazi occupation in Poland. In spite of all the years that took Kubrick to research on such events, and having even chosen the actors and locations, the film was never made. One of the main reasons for Kubrick to cancel the film *Aryan Papers* was the release of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993). The release of *The Aryan Papers* was cancelled because Kubrick and the top brass at Warner Brothers were worried that it would suffer commercially if it appeared after Spielberg's movie.

Besides, as many other post-war artists and after Adorno's statement "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (1967), Kubrick faced the challenge of representing or dealing with the unrepresentable, that is, producing images of the terrible sacrilege perpetrated by the Nazis. Kubrick eventually decided to abandon the project, unlike Alain Resnais, who completed the film *Night and Fog* in 1958. Resnais made this film by putting together appropriated images about the locations where the Holocaust took place and new images recorded by him.

The main concern in *Unfolding the Aryan Papers*, besides its use (and exploration) of temporality, is exploring the relationship between the body and politicized architecture. The Wilson sisters hired Johanna ter Steege for the film, the actress Kubrick chose as the main actress to take the role of the Jewish woman, Tania.

Johanna ter Steege met with Kubrick several times to plan her role, rehearse some scenes and try some camera shots. In *Unfolding the Aryan Papers*, Tania acts the role that Kubrick planned for the actress. She re-enacts the rehearsals and scenes that they shot, reconstructs her own memories and actions and poses in front of fascist neoclassic architecture wearing thirty different dresses that were to be worn in the film. Staring at a point out of the shot frame, Johanna retrieves her memories of what was an important time in her professional career, and she later tells in voice-over the details of the meetings with Kubrick. Her words are full of emotions as they go from an initial excitement to an eventual disappointment when the project fails. The actress's personal memories mix with the dialogue in the original plot in *Aryan Papers*, in which Tania talks about her German love and

their plans to leave the country. The Wilson sisters deal with the Holocaust in an indirect approach, refusing a mimetic representation or referring to the specific events that took place. In doing so, they express what really defines the Holocaust and its memory: the impossibility of being represented. As Louise Wilson states: "I think the film shows just the impossibility of representing something like the Holocaust, which is exactly what Kubrick struggled with and what made him feel overwhelmed in terms of what he could have created as a director" (2011, 143).

The figure of the main actress works as a central element in the Wilson sisters' film and symbolizes the dialectics between her role as an actress and the affective or emotional features as an individual, who remembers the past. The different temporalities help construct the plot and trigger a memory work on the viewer. Metaphorically, the film develops a document for history and a piece of fiction through film; it unfolds in a comparison between fact and theatre. *Unfolding the Aryan Papers* rejects a direct representation of Holocaust by using images of the events and aims to tackle that period of time through Steege's personal story, even if not leaving aside the appraisal of Kubrick's productions and his legacy in present times.

Historical and personal memory, what can and can't be represented, the absence and the presence, trauma and affective emotions, fictive accounts and personal accounts merge in the medium of art. These topics are contentious but can be handled effectively in visual art, since it is a suitable site to hold metaphoric messages. The Wilson sisters "have demonstrated that they belong to a privileged generation to counter Adorno's declared silence about the debatable possibility of the barbaric. This fact is not based in a modernist perception as an open process but as a position that accepts doubts, instability of senses and the ability of visual art to positively construct other accounts to commemorate the past."[7]

Conclusion

The works by artists Tacita Dean, Krzysztof Wodiczko and Jane and Louise Wilson are representative of the development of what Susannah Radstone calls *memory-work*, a process of involvement with the past that has both an ethical and historic aspect (Radstone 2000, 11–13).

The different uses of film in contemporary art, proposing the contrast between analogue and digital platforms, as well as going beyond the limited spaces of

7 *Tempo suspenso. Jane & Louise Wilson*, (exhibition catalogue), CGAC, Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, 22.08.2010 – 02.03.2011: 3. (Author's translation.)

galleries and museums, make the viewer aware of the ever-evolving ways in which we record, document and broadcast our everyday life and the past, as well as the large impact that images have on memory processes (remembering, commemorating, recording events, etc.).

Films and video artworks dealing with memory show that culture is characterized by what Mieke Bal called *acts of memory* (Bal 1999). They are not just representations of the past in the present, but rather an interpretation of the influence of such past events from a current perspective. It is an act to activate and give sense to past experiences and events, paying particular attention to the shape they take in the present. As Mieke Bal states, "cultural recall is not only something you have by chance, but something you perform, even if in many cases, such acts are not consciously conceived" (1999, VII).

Memory works and acts of memory are materialized in all types of objects and images from the past. And that's why film and video artworks are an ideal site, through which visual strategies can be developed to help memory be broadcasted, represented and shared.

The analysis of Dean's, Wodiczko's and the Wilson sisters' artworks demonstrate that some features of film and video make them an ideal medium to represent memory and trigger a memory work in the viewer. Dean focuses on the aesthetics of analogue film and records abandoned places as a strategy to make the viewer recall the past and historical events. Wodiczko uses film to retrieve the testimonies of the victims from the past and selects specific monuments and buildings (carriers of historical, political and social connotations) as the screen to create a dialogue between architecture and film. Such strategy enables a critical revision of past and historical events.

Time and temporality are features of film and video that become the key strategy in Jane and Louise Wilson's works, and are utilized as a means to catch the spectator's attention. In doing so, the Wilson sisters' films not only echo the way in which memory works, but it also evokes different events in the past in a non-lineal sequence.

Contemporary art dealing with memory has executed a distinguished role in the retrieval, reinterpretation and representation of the past. In this way, it has become a quasi-archetypal medium to demonstrate the importance of memory in current times both for life and for contemporary culture. Contemporary art, in its commitment with history and society, has demonstrated itself to be a fruitful means to investigate the meaning of memory, history and temporality in contemporary culture. Eventually, the primary goal in Dean's, Wodiczko's and

Jane and Louise Wilson's works is not to restore an event from the past, but to retrieve it and confirm memory as a cultural, anthropological and existential fact. Their works bring the past closer to the present, so that the recalled past might disclose what was otherwise forgotten, unseen, or unrealized.

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Post-Modern, Post-National, Post-Gender? Suggestions for a Consideration of Gender Identities in the Visual Artworks and Moving Images of Neue Slowenische Kunst

Natalie Gravenor
independent scholar
E-mail: natgravenor@gmail.com

Abstract: Active since 1980, the multidisciplinary Slovenian art collective Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK, New Slovenian Art) and its branches, the fine arts group IRWIN, industrial music band Laibach and theatre troupe Gledališče Sester Scipion Nasice (The Scipion Nasice Sisters Theatre), have seen their works widely and often controversially discussed, most often in the context of subversion and over affirmation of totalitarian imagery, as well as the contemporary nation-state and nationalism. Gender, as another often essentialist category, has not figured prominently in the analysis of NSK's output and impact. This paper proposes some areas (participation, representation) for investigation, as well as points of departure for a theoretical framework starting with key texts on gender by Judith Butler and R. W. Connell to analyse the moving images, performing and fine art produced within NSK in terms of the role gender plays therein, as well as its relationship to the construction of other defining categories such as nation and class.

Keywords: gender, nation-state, music, video, fine arts.

Introduction

The art collective Neue Slowenische Kunst (New Slovenian Art) is an art collective founded in 1980s Yugoslavia. It encompasses multiple disciplines (visual arts, graphic design, theatre, music, film and philosophy/theory) and explores questions of identity, particularly through the prism of the nation-state and totalitarianism. By 1992, Neue Slowenische Kunst founded the NSK State as "State in Time," thus turning to a post-national discourse. The NSK State in Time project opened spaces for the reflection about and experimentation with

new forms of social organization, including new myths, rituals and symbols. The prefix *post* harbours the hope of finding a solution to the damage caused by the implosion of the Yugoslav superstate, the ensuing ethnic conflicts and their violent generation of identity on the basis of nation, distinction and exclusion.

Besides nationality, sex or gender is the defining (officially defined) criterium of a person's identity. Sometimes hierarchical and immobile gender relations are essential components of national identity. So far, gender as an analytical category has been seldom discussed in relation with NSK. What role do gender issues play within the NSK? Has the post-national discourse rendered gender an irrelevant category? What is the evolution of how gender roles and identities are depicted in NSK over time? The following article should be understood as a first tentative approach, adding thought fragments to these and other questions on the topic of NSK and gender, encouraging additional questions that need to be formulated and investigated.

This initial discussion suggests the works of the following gender theorists as a theoretical framework. Firstly, with *Masculinities,* Australian sociologist R. W. Connell provides a comprehensive sociological study and history of ideas that not only delineates shifting concepts of masculinity (as a key concept of gender) as a function of particular social structures over time, but also articulates a scientific method that seeks to offset the deficiencies of socio-biological and social construction models of gender and sexuality. Furthermore, US philosopher Judith Butler's post-modernist approach and foregrounding of social construction and performance seems appropriate for discussing the NSK artistic project. These theoretical considerations, particularly those of Connell, inform the thick description and analysis used to discuss various visual and also musical articulations of NSK according to gender issues, after a short empirical overview of the participation of female (-identified) actors in the NSK and NSK State.

The Participation of Women in New Slovenian Art and the NSK State

Neue Slowenische Kunst was founded as an umbrella brand in the mid-80s in the Yugoslavian Socialist Republic of Slovenia by previously active artist groups like Laibach(kunst) and IRWIN. There was a myth of "Gender Equality" in socialist Yugoslavia – similar to the mythic equality purported in other "people's democracies" at the time (also in distinction against the inegalitarian, exploitative West). In fact, the percentage of employed women was higher than in many Western European countries, conditions for working mothers, such as access to childcare

were better, but the double burden of career and housework was as pronounced in the East as it was in the West, and traditional gender roles had not disappeared. The art world, as a subset of society, was like in the "West" a "Boys' Club," with the exception of artists such as Marina Abramović, Marina Gržinić, Sanja Iveković. (In the international art world dominated by the "West," female artists from Eastern Europe were, as Bojana Pejić angrily stated, doubly marginalized – by gender and origin, see Kowalczyk–Łagodzka–Zierkiewicz 2010.) This is the social and historical context in which the aforementioned artists and later NSK were operating.

Many artists in Eastern Europe (once again, Sanja Iveković is an exception) avoided the F-word feminism because it was considered a "bourgeois" category. Nevertheless, the work of these artists negotiates core concerns of feminism: rebellion against oppression and reduction of the woman, the questioning of masculine hegemony and its effects, claiming self-determination of the female body, taking responsibility for more visibility, equality of opportunity and participation, dissolution or reconfiguration of the dichotomy private/ public, breaking the shackles of heteronormativity and necessity of reproduction (Pejić 2009, 23).

Interestingly, few artists involved in the cosmos of Neue Slowenische Kunst were female, except one of its most influential personalities. The dramaturg and art theorist Eda Čufer was an NSK co-founder and director of theatre companies such as Gledališče Sester Scipion Nasice (the activities of which will be discussed later). She was a driving force behind the foundation of both New Slovenian Art, the Gledališče Sester Scipion Nasice being one of its constituent parts, and the NSK State in Time. Together with members of IRWIN she wrote founding manifestos, and was instrumental in the planning of constituent actions such as the creation of virtual embassies in Moscow and Berlin. To date Čufer fulfils a role as intellectual leader (ideologue?) and facilitator of the NSK idea.

Since the founding of the NSK State in Time in 1992, 1200 women (of 6000 NSK Citizens) sought NSK "citizenship." This begs the question of what incentives or deterrents there are for women to apply for a NSK passport (and offers an interesting future topic for empirical research). The First Congress of NSK Citizens in Berlin in 2010 saw a strong male majority. Of 31 delegates, who were selected in an open application process for all NSK citizens to discuss the future of the NSK State and propose their own innovations, four were women. One female delegate did speak out for consideration of gender issues, for greater incorporation and participation of women and the exploration of "hidden history."[1] This was included in the documentary film *Time for a New State,*

1 Documentary film *Time for a New State: 1st NSK Citizens Congress, Berlin* by IRWIN in collaboration with

First Congress of NSK Citizens State in Time (2013), Berlin by IRWIN and Igor Zupe (writer: Eda Čufer), an audio-visual record of the results and mood of the Congress. This raises the question whether there should be Women's Fora in NSK as platforms for articulating and discussing/ developing further demands, how to operationalize measures like a female membership quota, special events for female delegates, etc. Or does it even make sense to encourage this type of networking and discourse, because it may simply reflect the dynamics of the official democracies in miniature, which NSK delegate Christian Matzke warned against in another context. Another suggestion was the creation of "propaganda" targeted to attract more women to join NSK (see McGrady 2011).

Another possible reason for the (far) less pronounced reflection of gender issues in the NSK discourse can be found in the founding principles: overcoming individuality and creating a collective organism. In the founding manifesto of Laibach, "10 Items of the Covenant," Article 4 states: "The triumph of anonymity and facelessness has been intensified to the absolute through a technological process. All individual differences of the authors are annulled, every trace of individuality erased."[2] Among the Five Principles of Friendship, which are listed in the NSK passport, male forms are exclusively used, like "brotherly."[3] To this day, in many languages the masculine form is assumed to also include females; only in women-only groups is this also grammatically signified (e.g. the French female third person plural "elles").

For the creation and perfection of a collective identity as espoused by the NSK State, the question arises to what extent gender may or may not even be a relevant category. The category gender serves to assign a person to a larger group based upon the prevailing binary gender model. Knowledge from the past 25 years, especially the work of Judith Butler on gender performativity, has created a potential for living and expressing changing, multiple, contradictory, fluid and individual gender identities. Seen in the context of the 1980s, when there was significant backlash against the achievements of various feminist movements (as against other progressive, egalitarian activism) and the AIDS crisis led to sexuality and gender being negotiated in essentialist terms with repressive effects, Butler poses a vital question in her seminal book *Gender Trouble*: "what best way to trouble the gender categories that support gender hierarchy

Igor Zupe (2013).

2 Laibach: The 10 Items of the Covenant. 1982. *http://garagemca.org/en/materials/1246?id=14*. Last accessed 07. 09. 2017.

3 See: *http://nsk.mg-lj.si/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/MG-MSUM_nsk_VODIC_eng_ogled7_pred-tiskom-1.pdf.* Last accessed 07. 09. 2017.

and compulsory heterosexuality?" (1990, viii.) Taking the practice of drag (in particular that of performer Divine in the film *Female Trouble* and other works by director John Waters) as a point of departure and foregrounding the gap between acts "expressive" of "natural" versus "performative gender practices" (1990, viii)[4] (particularly in, but not restricted to queer culture), Butler furthermore writes: "Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constructed in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts* [...] through the stylization of the body [...] the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of abiding to gendered self" (1988, 519, emphasis in original). Butler thus focuses on both the fact and act of social construction, posing basic phenomenological questions about the subject's agency, if the subject is constituted through social practice (1990, 142–143).

In terms of analytical relevance for the NSK project, Butler furthered the discussion of malleable, multiple, non-traditional gender identities, which figure in the NSK works to a certain degree. Furthermore, gender studies use analogous concepts of identity construction and performance to the NSK project, likely due to the fact that both arose during the 1980s and 1990s under the influence of structuralism and post modernism and its core notions of deconstruction and bricolage.

Representation: Gender Images and Designs in Various Branches of NSK

Certainly, just as or even more significant for gender relations than the (quantitative) analysis of female participation in NSK is an analysis of the explicit or implicit (absence as a sign) representations of gender roles and images. This includes the representation of different forms of sexuality. Gender imagery and roles in the cultural production of the respective branches of NSK are examined below.

Laibach

a) Masculine

Gender research is often equated with and reduced to a feminist approach and a focus on women and the feminine. However, the analysis of images of

4 And also Butler (1988). This article is seemingly an earlier articulation of arguments presented in the section "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions" of *Gender Trouble* (1990).

masculinity is just important to delineate the boundaries and continuities for the development of a multi-layered understanding. The music group Laibach with its militarist-totalitarian image offers, beyond its well-explored project of ideology, deconstruction approaches to thinking about constructions of masculinities. The Australian gender researcher R. W. Connell sees the state as "masculine institution" and recognized in the military and the industrial capitalist mode of production the two essential constituents and negotiating pillars of hegemonic masculinity of the 20th century (Connell 2005, 73). Connell uses the concept of hegemonic masculinity as one category alongside "protest masculinity" and masculinity "reformed" in reaction to criticism from women's movements to foreground the importance of power relations (2005, 120). "Masculinity, as the argument so far has shown, is not a system in that sense. It is, rather, a configuration of practice *within* a system of gender relations." (Connell 2005, 84.)

Connell charts transformation over the past 200 years as gentry (hereditary land owners) masculinity as the hegemonic mode faced these three developments: "challenges to the gender order by women, the logic of the gendered accumulation process in industrial capitalism and the power relations of empire" (2005, 191). The increased importance of bureaucratic process and exchange value in capitalist society had not led to the de-valuing of military might and violence. Instead, "violence was now combined with rationality, with bureaucratic techniques and constant technological advance in weaponry and transport" (Connell 2005, 192).

As a particularly "exemplary form of hegemonic masculinity"[5] Connell has cited fascism, which took the militarization of society to terrible extremes. "In gender terms fascism was a naked reassertion of male supremacy in societies that had been moving towards equality for women. To accomplish this, fascism promoted new images of hegemonic masculinity, glorifying irrationality (the 'triumph of the will,' thinking with 'the blood') and the unrestrained violence of the frontline soldier. [...] The defeat of fascism in the Second World War cut off this turn in hegemonic masculinity. But it certainly did not end the bureaucratic institutionalization of violence. [...] The Red Army and United States armed forces which triumphed in 1945 continued to multiply their destructive capability, as the nuclear arsenal built up." (Connell 2005, 193.) In the context of the late Cold War and the menace of institutionalized violence precipitating world destruction which Connell is referring to, fascism (and totalitarianism in general) has been the core object of Laibach's complex aesthetic deconstruction of the traumata of the 20th century. They are exposed through the band's use (simulation) of hyper-

5 Connell, 1995/2005, illustration caption on pages 148–149.

military imagery, sonics and rituals and organization through the devices of over-affirmation and irony.

About the sexes in industrial societies Connell writes: "The expansion of industrial production saw the emergence of forms of masculinity organized around wage-earning capacity, mechanical skills, domestic patriarchy and combative solidarity among wage earners. Women were, in fact, a large part of the original workforce in the textile factories of the industrial revolution, and were also present in coal mining, printing and steelmaking. They were involved in industrial militancy, sometimes were leaders of strikes, as Mary Blewett has shown for the weavers of Fall River, Massachusetts. The expulsion of women from heavy industry was thus a key process in the formation of working-class masculinity, connected with the strategy of the family wage and drawing on the bourgeois ideology of separate spheres" (2005, 196). Connell furthermore describes labour with at least some parallels to the military: "Heavy manual work calls for strength, endurance, a degree of insensitivity and toughness, and group solidarity. Emphasizing the masculinity of industrial labour has been both a means of survival, in exploitative class relations, and a means of asserting superiority over women" (2005, 55). The "martial" and the "industrial" are essential topoi of Laibach. Though likely not intended as a critique of hegemonic masculinity, the use of these topoi opens a space to apply gender studies to analyse power relations in general [Fig. 1].

On first view, Laibach appears consistent with the observation of the late Polish art critic and curator Piotr Piotrowski that in socialist societies, men are attributed active and women passive roles (2012, 246–247). Laibach's appearance is consequently "tough:" short hair (singer Milan Fras sports a manly moustache, and the upper lip of Dejan Knez was also adorned with fuzz for a time), paramilitary or pseudo-military uniforms or naked chests, motionless faces, stiff movements. In early stage shows Laibach used fire, an essentialist, "male" coded element (water, on the other hand, has "feminine" characteristics attributed to it). The Laibach sound is loud and brutal; an electronic sound storm which also suggests military equipment: drums, Alpine Horn, orchestral bombast. The recurring motif of the deer is a symbol for the Slovenian nation and male potency, especially as used within R-rated jokes or references. The deer is also a postmodern gesture – it is a reference to the 19th century Scottish landscape painter Edward Landseer. Laibach uses natural symbolism (which also includes Alpine landscapes, especially Slovenia's highest peak, Mount Triglav, appearing in music videos of the group such as the 1986 clip *Opus Dei* (*Life is Life*) (directed by Daniel Landin,

1986) or the archaic family tableau in *Sympathy for the Devil* (directed by Peter Vezjak, 1988) and insignia of the industrial age in equal measure. Visual motifs include gears, hammers, factories and male workers (often stripped to the waist). Rhythms reminiscent of the assembly line often dominate in the music. The very first recording of Laibach, *Industrial Ambients* (1980) was actually a "field recording" of factory noises from the band's hometown Trbovlje.

Laibach, it could be argued, pursues an implicit, systemic gender discourse with its use of military and industrial signifiers and almost parody-like masculinity (bringing to mind again Butler's theory of gender performativity).

b) Feminine

Just like in the spheres of society and the military industrial work (until the end of the 20th century) for which the band is both subset and a distorting mirror, women played no major role in the early years of Laibach. This changed in 1987, when Anja Rupel, singer of popular Slovenian synthpop group Videosex, joined Laibach as guest vocalist on the Beatles cover version *Across the Universe*. Rupel was also a lesbian icon who sang the first Slovenian female-addressed love song, *Ana* from the year 1984.[6]

Prior to this, the 1986 *Life Is Life* video features a cameo appearance by a bare-bosomed female archer wearing the same trademark headdress as singer Milan Fras. Furthermore, Laibach began featuring female percussionists in live performances. The drum in rock music has long been a "masculine" instrument, so while the presence of female percussionists is noteworthy, they are still relegated to the background, supporting the male band members. A more significant indication of a stronger female presence is featured singer Mina Špiler, formerly of the indie band Melodrom. In 2006, she joined the "Volk" tour as a guest singer; now she is cited as an official band member, with the deep gravelly voice of Milan Fras, lead singer since the death of the first Laibach singer Tomaž Hostnik in 1982 and one of the band's trademarks, receding more and more into the background. Does the sweeter aural and visual appearance of Špiler have commercial motives, an overture to a female fan base? On the Laibach album *Spectre* (2014) and the accompanying tour, Fras and Špiler share lead vocals, often singing alternately within a song. Harmonies, however, are rare (except

6 See Bulc, Gregor. Hard Bosom: Top Pro-Gay Tracks from ex-Yugoslavia (Part One), article on Bturn-Blog, *http://bturn.com/8384/hard-bosom-toppro-gay-tracks-from-ex-yugoslavia-part-one*. Last accessed 11. 04. 2017. The first Yugoslav pop song with openly lesbian lyrics was most likely *Moja prijaleljica* (*My girlfriend*) by Croatian group Xenia from 1982.

for the *Warme Lederhaut* [2013], the cover version of The Normal's JG Ballard homage *Warm Leatherette*) – duelling duet and separatism rather than gender-blending? This "separatism" sees Fras and Špiler showcased in separate tracks on the otherwise largely instrumental *Also sprach Zarathustra* (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 2017), music composed for a theatre piece based upon Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical work. The album harks back to the band's earlier, more martial (sometimes orchestral) sound, after the pop-oriented "Spectre."

Another recent work featuring Laibach is the documentary *Liberation Day* (2016), chronicling the band's journey to Pyongyang in 2015 as the first Western rock group to ever perform in North Korea. The film focuses on the preparations for two big shows (of which one was cancelled by the North Korean authorities) as the band members and director Traavik (who set up the concert and acts as go-between between Laibach and the North Korean handlers) deal with technical problems and censorship issues. The different band members' reactions to these challenges are stereotypically "gendered." While the males are generally stoic or solution-oriented (if exasperated at times), Špiler is shown in a barely suppressed outburst, when she is informed that a song for which she especially learned the Korean lyrics and was to perform in a traditional Korean-style dress was removed from the program at the last minute. It's however unclear if these reactions are typical of the band members' actual temperaments or shaped by subconscious gender stereotypes. An interesting side note is that on the film's website, Fras is referred to as "the figurehead" and Špiler as "the first lady" (with founding member and purported "mastermind" Ivan Novak described as "the supervisor").[7] North Korean women appear in the film largely as performers in the choir or professionals working at the concert venue in a slightly gendered division of labour (male technicians, female interpreter) that are visible but not interacted with (the North Koreans the audience gets to know better are the male officials responsible for supervising the concert). Gender equality in North Korea is constitutionally guaranteed, and women frequently shoulder the double burden of fulltime employment (48% of the workforce in 2016[8]) and responsibility for housework and childcare.[9] Since 2015 women are also required to serve in the

7 See official *Liberation Day* website, *http://www.liberationday.film/players/*. Last accessed 31. 07. 2017.

8 See *http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=KP*. Last accessed 31. 07. 2017.

9 Ju-min Park, In North Korea, men call the shots, women make the money, Reuters.com, May 15, 2015. Last accessed 31. 07. 2017.

military.[10] At the same time, North Korean society is still shaped by patriarchal attitudes.[11] *Liberation Day* supports the notion of women's subordination in North Korea (while not really contradicting the de jure equality) although the Laibach entourage, too, is a boys' club (except for the largely objectified Špiler). Is this an indication of the actual gender power relations within Laibach or just for the tour, to acquiesce to North Korean expectations, real or imagined?

In Sašo Podgoršek's documentary *Divided States of America* (2004) about Laibach's US tour immediately after George W. Bush's re-election, Laibach's following is a display of diversity: in addition to the usual (male) suspects from the Goth-Wave-industrial scene and also "White supremacists," the viewer also meets leftist African American Beatniks and a variety of women whose only common trait is their fascination with Laibach. This ranges from an amorous/sexually coloured admiration of Milan Fras to various appreciations of Laibach's social potential.

Laibach's lyrics, too, have become more feminized. While lyrics in the early years like samples of Tito speeches, texts about surveillance and war were in the foreground or the songs were instrumentals. One instrumental is *Slovenska žena* (released in 1985), meaning "Slovenian woman." The usual noise from metal-electronic sounds in assembly line rhythms is overdubbed with high, echoing female vocals which fade towards the end of the piece to return briefly. If Laibach sings about feelings and the elementary form of interaction between (not only) man and woman in *Die Liebe* (*Love*, 1984) it sounds like this: "Love is the great force that creates everything,"[12] i. e. desexualized, abstract, totalitarian. In 2012 *Die Liebe* is sung live by Fras and Špiler, each singing verse and chorus successively, without harmony.

Laibach détournage cover versions of Eurotrash stompers[13] like *Life Is Life* (1986), *In the Army Now* and *Final Countdown* (both 1994) and *Mama Leone* (2004) revealed not only a totalitarian "Hidden Reverse" in Western pop music – particularly evident in *Geburt einer Nation* (*Birth of a Nation*, 1987), in

10 See *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_North_Korea*. Last accessed 31. 07. 2017.

11 Ask a North Korean: are women treated equally in your society? *The Guardian*, February 14, 2015.

12 Thanks to Alexander Nym for pointing out the double meaning in the original German lyric "Die Liebe ist die größte Kraft, die Liebe, die alles schafft." "Schafft" can be translated as both "create" and "accomplish."

13 Laibach has also covered songs from the "serious," partly male coded rock canon, such as the Beatles' entire *Let It Be* album (minus its title track, in 1988), *Sympathy for the Devil* by the Rolling Stones (1988), *Ballad of a Thin Man* by Bob Dylan (2012) and recently *Love on the Beat* by Serge Gainsbourg (2014). Ironically, *Love on the Beat* was the title track of Gainsbourg's 1984 album, with a cover featuring the Gallic macho wearing heavy female makeup.

which Queen's *One Vision* became through a literal translation of the text with minimal changes an anthem of "Gleichschaltung" (coerced conformism). The cover version, especially of "female" coded Eurodance tunes, also softened and feminized the Laibach sound while strengthening the subversive potential (at least before the cover song strategy temporarily lost its bite due to repetition and less than imaginative execution).

c) Queer

The "male-dominated society" ("Männerbund") as also evident in the early stages of Laibach is often attributed with homoerotic undertones. And particularly fascist aesthetics have always exercised a strong fascination within gay subcultures – the masquerade-like hyper-masculinity and the danger factor, frightening and pleasurable at the same time. British choreographer Michael Clark, an important player in the queer subculture in London in the 1980s, collaborated on his dance piece *No Fire Escape in Hell* (1986) with Laibach, an excerpt of which can be seen in Daniel Landin's music clip of *Država* (*The State*, 1985) [Fig. 2]. Clark said in Goran Gajić's documentary *Laibach: Pobeda pod suncem* (*Laibach: Victory Under the Sun*, 1988): "The music is strong, powerful and frightening and also has humour. Although Laibach would deny this." Another curio is a photo of band founding member Dejan Knež, on which he purses his lips to kiss another man.[14] With the cover versions of Eurotrash and disco songs (see above), Laibach introduced the element of camp – ironic appreciation and deconstruction of kitsch – that is adopted from gay culture.

Other industrial groups and Laibach contemporaries such as DAF, Throbbing Gristle, Coil, Revolting Cocks and Laibach's Slovenian compatriots Borghesia, pioneers of the LGBT scene in Ljubljana, made their examinations of gender more explicitly than Laibach did, especially in terms of exploring transgressive, non-heteronormative sexualities. Queering as an interpretive method is not uncontroversial, particularly when it used to analyse cultural developments prior to the establishment of present-day categories, but queering Laibach seems appropriate, given the group's contemporaneity with the dawn of post-modern identity politics and exploration of fascist aesthetics as an articulation of an extreme, violent masculinity that subordinates and even excludes femininity.

14 Thanks to Alexander Pehlemann for this information.

d) Post-Gender → Post-Human?

After the social and political upheavals of 1989–1991, which Laibach helped to engender (no pun intended), the band returned after a break with the album *Capital* (1993).[15] It consisted entirely of original compositions and was a report on the new world order and accurate comment on the transformation from a planned to a market economy. In particular the music video for *Wirtschaft ist tot* (*Economy is Dead*, 1993, dirs.: Peter Vezjak, Laibach) staged the four members of Laibach as androgynous, even post-human, robot-like creatures: still recognizable in their typical costumes, but sprayed from head to toe with silver paint [Fig. 3]. Female figures appear too in the video, with recognizable feminine shapes and also covered in silver. The traditional roles are reversed: the women are raking in coal (literally, not figuratively), while the men perform office work such as answering the phone. Furthermore, the male vocals of Fras and the rest of the group are higher, sweeter, less guttural. Is this the result of (late) capitalism's feminization and commercialization?

The video of *Final Countdown* (dir: Sašo Podgoršek, 1994) takes the dehumanization a degree further [Fig. 4]. The clip both advertises the single of the same name and is a PSA to join the NSK State. Milan Fras (the other members are no longer recognizable as individuals) can be seen as 3D computer animation. He is founding an NSK Embassy on Mars, the building inspired by Jože Plečnik's phallic, never built design for the Slovenian Parliament building. Laibach and the NSK State have thus left the limitations of the (gendered) human body and the Earth behind.

Since the late 2000s a process of separation between Laibach, perceived as the dominant branch of NSK and the other branches ensued. It might be interesting to compare the increasingly diverging developments in relation to gender. Laibach's dominance is also why the group's activities are accorded the most space in this paper. The following comments and observations about gender representations in other NSK branches are first suggestions for closer examination.

15 Alexander Nym adds that the different formats of the album each offered variations on CD, LP and music cassette. The two latter formats contain different versions of the track *Steel Trust* by Laibach side project Germania, which represents Laibach's "female side" (according to a remark by Laibach spokesperson Ivo Saliger to Nym) and features both overtly romantic lyrics and their impressive delivery by a female voice. The result, especially in the vinyl version, in its relentless kitchiness, is something of a challenge to Laibach fans more attuned to their harsh and brutalizing sound.

Laibachkunst/ IRWIN

Laibachkunst and later IRWIN largely created the visual elements for Laibach and also Gledališče Sester Scipion Nasice. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this paper, they are being examined as independent artistic phenomena. As for an initial investigation into gender aspects, four short works that provide starting points for an in-depth analysis will be discussed below.

Laibachkunst and IRWIN often portrayed women as "women" – not so much full-fledged figures as post-modern references. Images of femininity are often quotes from previous art works, the result of Irwin's/ NSK's artistic strategy of retrogarde as well as the postmodern gesture of quotation and collage. A particularly striking example is the poster for an exhibition by Laibach at the Art Gallery ŠKUC in Ljubljana in 1983. In the black-and-white silkscreen print an elderly lady drinking coffee smiles dreamily at the viewer. The cup is adorned by the black cross of Laibach "borrowed" from Malevich and Beuys. The image is an appropriation of the famous painting *Kofetarica* (*Coffee drinker*, 1888) by Ivana Kobilca. The Impressionist painter was the most famous visual artist in Slovenia at the time. Her visibility and success as a woman in the art world in the late 19th century was exceptional. Laibach's colour reduction (which eliminates the petit-bourgeois floral pattern and upholstery in the original for a stylized, almost Warhol-esque effect) and insertion of its own logos and copying by silkscreen added a layer of ironic feminist statement to this already iconographic image.

Irwin's assemblage cycle *Malevich Between the Two Wars* (1984–2000) is a carved wood framed like a Russian Orthodox icon, a collage of a picture of a Nazi sculpture with two naked warriors clinging to the same sword and in the background, a realistic portrait of a woman in warm, in some exhibition situations even golden hues. Her head is obscured by the naked warriors and the picture by Malevich, of a cross with a red and a black bar (the Suprematist primary colours) on a white background. Irwin's interest was probably less the role of the woman in the portrait (which serves only as a quotation of the accepted academic painting) and more the interplay between Nazi Art, Russian Orthodox devotional objects and Suprematism. In contrast to Laibachkunst's *Kofetarica Poster*, the use of a female portrait is not necessarily essential for the piece to work. Nonetheless, these assemblages generate a gender discursive momentum. They act almost like a visual equivalent to the Laibach track *Slovenska žena* (*Slovenian Woman*) – the male-militarist elements are dominant, but the female presence is both marginalized and constant, eternal.

The next two works discussed are less quotations from art history, but rather social interventions in the microcosm of the art world. In *NSK Panorama* (1997), also by IRWIN, the commentary on gender discourse is striking. A colour photo shows people on a meadow that have formed a circle and are holding hands. Motion blur suggests the movement of a folk dance in progress. Women and men alternate in the circle. While the men (including IRWIN members) all wear dark or black suits, the women almost exclusively are dressed in Slovene national costumes, except for the half-hidden NSK co-founder Eda Čufer. All cheerfully take part in the dancing party. A simple and ironic statement about the interplay spread of the binary pairs tradition/ modernity and female/ male.

The last work, *Namepickers* (1998) by IRWIN, shows how the dichotomy East/ West can cancel out the male-female opposition. We see two identical photographs with Yugoslav/ Serbian artist Marina Abramović, who has been active in the West since the late 1970s and five members of IRWIN. Abramović is in black lingerie (with the Laibach-/ Malevich Cross bandaged on her right arm) lying on a bed and cared for by IRWIN. The left photo is signed by Marina Abramović and costs DM (German marks) 16,400. The right image is copyrighted by Bojan Brecelj and costs DM 1,200. Brecelj is an esteemed photographer in Slovenia, but not an international art star like Abramović, who lives in New York and is exhibited in all major museums. *Namepickers* acts like a reversal of the work of agitprop collective Guerrilla Girls, an identification of sexism and inequality in the art world. This is seen by the Guerrilla Girls, given the emancipatory claim of many artists and curators, as particularly hypocritical. *Namepickers* can be read as a plea against marginalized groups being played off against each other in the hope that various experiences of inequality be addressed with solidarity.

Gledališče Sester Scipion Nasice (Scipion Nasice Sisters Theatre)/ Rdeci pilot (The Red Pilot)/ Kosmokinetisches Kabinett Noordung (Noordnung Cosmo-kinetic Cabinet)

As mentioned in Section 2 (Participation), in 1983 Eda Čufer founded the theatre collective Gledališče Sester Scipion Nasice (Scipion Nasice Sisters Theatre) with Dragan Živandinov and Miran Mohar (from IRWIN), named after the Roman consul who exerted censorship on theatre performances. The collective had already determined the date of dissolution (1987) and thus anticipated the NSK State in Time, by being not a theatre within a fixed space, but rather a fluid platform for networking and cooperation.

The collective planned their work in one-year periods. For the retrogarde-phase in 1986, the biggest action of Scipion Nasice, the performance of a "mashup" of France Prešeren's Slovene national epic *Krst pri Savici* (*Baptism at Savica*) with legends about the Triglav mountain was planned. The new piece was called *Krst pod Triglavom* (*Baptism under the Triglav*). Laibach, at the time still banned from public performance under their own name,[16] composed and performed the musical score. The set was designed by IRWIN, influenced by Russian Suprematism; a replica of Tatlin's Tower to the Third International was a central part of the decor.

Against the background of the Germanization and Christianization of Slovenia, a love story unfolds between the pagan Slavic war hero Črtomir and Bogomilla, a pagan priestess who had converted to Christianity. In the relationship Bogomilla sets the tone and she convinces Črtomir to be baptized for her sake. In the end the lovers go separate ways – Bogomilla "marries" Jesus (cf. Monroe 2005, 90) while Črtomir less voluntarily wanders the countryside as an itinerant preacher. In terms of gender aspects, *Krst pri Triglavom* is interesting in that the traditional male-female disparity is neutralized by other coordinates, in this case Christianity, which was becoming more and more powerful around the year 800 and could bring social advancement through conversion [Fig. 5]. Bogomilla appears to be the stronger of the two lovers, and her position was solidified with her Christianization. Črtomir, on the other hand, once the celebrated warrior, loses everything. In the video recording of the play by video artist Miha Vipotnik, panels are regularly displayed in the constructivist style with the inscriptions like "Female Emotions" and "Male Emotions." The displays indicate the gender-coded emotional difference, but are design rather than discursive elements.

While Gledališče Sester Scipion Nasice disbanded in 1987, the theatre group Rdeči Pilot (Red Pilot) emerged with many of the same key figures, then came Kosmokinetisches Cabinet Noordung, which successively continued the work until the mid-1990s. The founding manifesto of Rdeči Pilot states:

"WE, the members of 'Red Pilot' have no stage. WE are the KOSMOKINETISCHES THEATER 'RED PILOT.'

WE have no lungs, no liver and no balance organs, because WE are liberated from gravity.

WE have no genitals, as we have emancipated us from the freedom drive.

16 Thanks to Alexander Nym for the following supplementary information. The administration of Čankarev dom, arguably Ljubljana's most important cultural venue, decided to ignore the ban on Laibach's name by crediting them in public announcements, which was an important step both in terms of validating Laibach's position in the art world, as well as demonstrating the uselessness of the ban.

WE build the observatory for the conquest of parallel worlds.
WE are workers that build the drama of the cosmos."[17]

Rdeči Pilot joins the conversation about the tendency for separation of identity (especially gender identity) from the body, seed and soil in the mid-1990s, in which Laibach and the NSK State also participated.

Plurality and Opening: Folk Art

Since the mid-1980s, followers of Laibach and NSK have produced images, texts, videos, websites and objects influenced by visual motifs of NSK as vehicles for their own creative and artistic reflection and as continuation of the art and ideas of NSK – this body of work is called Volkskunst or Folk Art (Monroe 2012, 15). Newly established NSK Embassies and NSK events in Leipzig, Berlin, Paris, London, Moscow, New York are becoming exhibition spaces and discussion platforms for Volkskunst. Until now, many of the artworks remained fairly close to the NSK symbolic world: Laibach Crosses, deer, uniforms and traditional costumes. Ever since the first NSK Citizens' Congress in Berlin in 2010, Volkskunst has become more diverse. This development was supported by a poster contest in the run up to the Congress and a call for Volkskunst works for an exhibition. Furthermore, one Congress objective was to find ways to promote diverse NSK culture (s?) by the citizens themselves. An analysis of Volkskunst according to gender criteria could be very productive with these initial questions: which kinds of images are produced (content analysis of images), who produces them, how are they disseminated and what options are available specifically for male and female citizen artists to participate in this image production? At this point, two examples will be described briefly as a stimulus for further analysis of Volkskunst according to gender and also other theoretical criteria.

Peter Blase's assemblage sculpture *NSK Sledge* (2011) consists of a replica of a human torso mounted on a sled. At the top of the sled is a picture of IRWIN against a black Malevich square of black slate. According to Blase, the torso is representative of all NSK citizens of all ages and genders.[18] Particularly remarkable about "NSK Sledge" is the matter of fact symbolic integration of women like Jessica Beuys, shown with her husband and Beuys's photographer, Ute Klophaus.

17 Kosmokinetisches Theater 'Roter Pilot.' Founding manifesto (1987). In *Gledališki Festival, Programme Brochure, Čankarev dom, Ljubljana*. 1989. Reprinted in: Arns, Inke. 2002. *NSK. Eine Analyse ihrer künstlerischen Strategien im Kontext der 1980er Jahre in Jugoslawien.* Regensburg: Museum Ostdeutsche Galerie, 124.

18 Calvert 22, ed. 2012. *NSK Folk Art. Catalogue*, 33. London.

This way Blase makes the people (women) visible who have supported the great artist Beuys in his work, but would otherwise have remained unknown. "NSK Sledge" is a tribute to the collective creative work, especially to those who do this work in secret, often the women.

Valnoir Mortasonge won the poster competition of the NSK Congress with a motif that brings together NSK delegates in a meeting room full of NSK insignia. The delegates all have human bodies, but the heads are animals such as deer, rooster, eagle and bear. Is Mortasonge's selection of exclusively male animal heads a reference to the male dominance among NSK delegates and a self-ironic reminder to delegates to maintain certain standards of debate culture and not to exhibit the negative behaviour traits associated with certain animals like the rooster?

Summary

This initial examination of selected visual and performing art, moving images and music produced by the branches of NSK provides first answers to the questions posed at the outset. In terms of the role gender issues play within the NSK, the discourse surrounding the state (in its extreme totalitarian incarnation), the military and industrial labour offers at least an implicit critique of hegemonic masculinity as defined by Connell that be further explored to investigate gender relations as a significant issue within broader questions of power relations in (late) capitalism as it has become the dominant economic system. Regarding the second question, particularly the music clips of Laibach in the mid-1990s and the manifesto of theatre group Red Pilot indicate that NSK indeed strove to overcome the category of gender along with that of nationality (interestingly, other categories such as class don't figure in this discourse) and promote a collective identity that transcends the human body as a whole. Thirdly, the depiction of gender roles and identities in NSK over time appears to have evolved from the hyper-masculinity that excludes women altogether or the treatment of women as abstract references in the early 1980s to more fluid identities and explicit critique of gender power relations in the 1990s, as exemplified with the visual art produced by IRWIN and music clips by Laibach such as *Wirtschaft ist tot*, which breaks down gender role assignments in the wake of the dissolution of socialism and crisis of late capitalism. In the mid-2000s, the strong vocal and visual presence of Mina Špiler has become a permanent addition to the previously all-male line-up; at the same time, traditional gender roles seemed to have returned and the masculine and

feminine elements of Laibach as embodied by Milan Fras and Špiler are often segregated – an (ironic?) throwback to earlier societies where men and women lived separate but unequal lives? This change over time also indicates that the Laibach, as a branch of NSK, is even less explicitly dealing with gender issues, while still grappling with the nation-state. On the other hand, the inclusion of female participation as a topic at The First Congress of NSK Citizens in 2010 shows that the NSK State in Time now acknowledges gender as a relevant category within all the post-everything discourse. And the absence of explicit gender discourse is also a statement about gender power relations.

An investigation of the NSK State and its constituent groups of artists according to different gender aspects is at the beginning. The preceding remarks should serve as an inspiration to use gender discourse and its tools as an extension of analytical repertoire. Issues of public visibility and social participation of women, constructions of masculinity, queering, post-human discourse, cultural-historical examinations of images of femininity and masculinity and more may provide new insights into NSK. The NSK State in Time is, by definition, always in motion, and therefore the instruments must be continuously developed and refined to map this "territory." The greater involvement of methods and concepts of the many approaches that are lumped together as gender studies – also in relation to other identity parameters such as nationality and class – could make a contribution to deep analysis and understanding the iconography, aims and impact of NSK.

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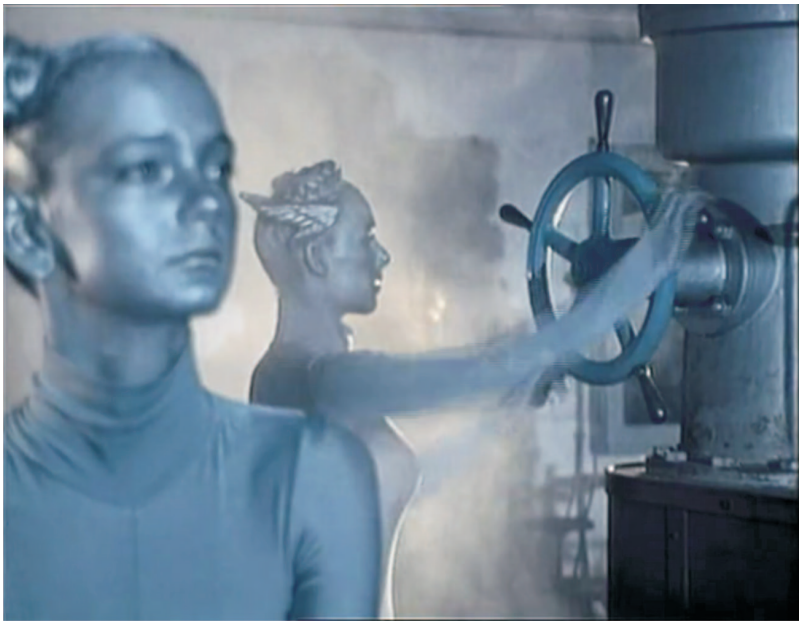


Figure 4. Screenshot of *Final Countdown*.

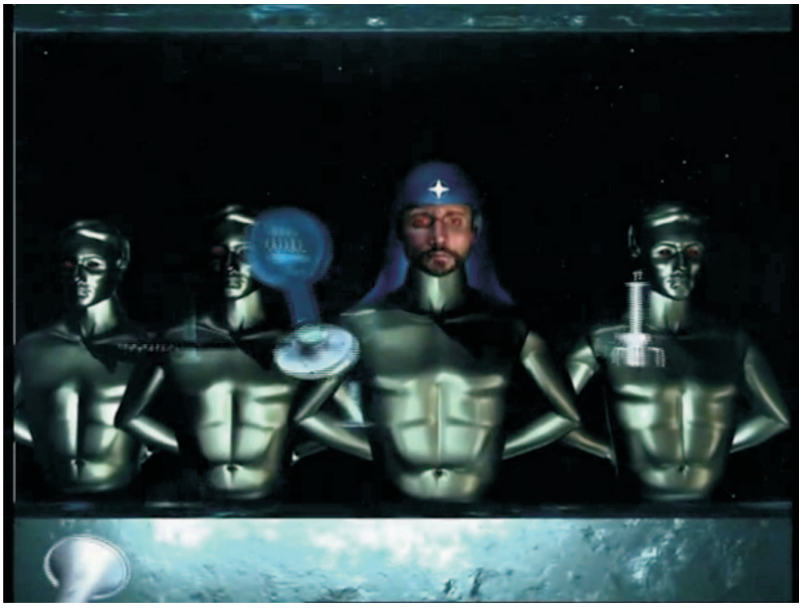
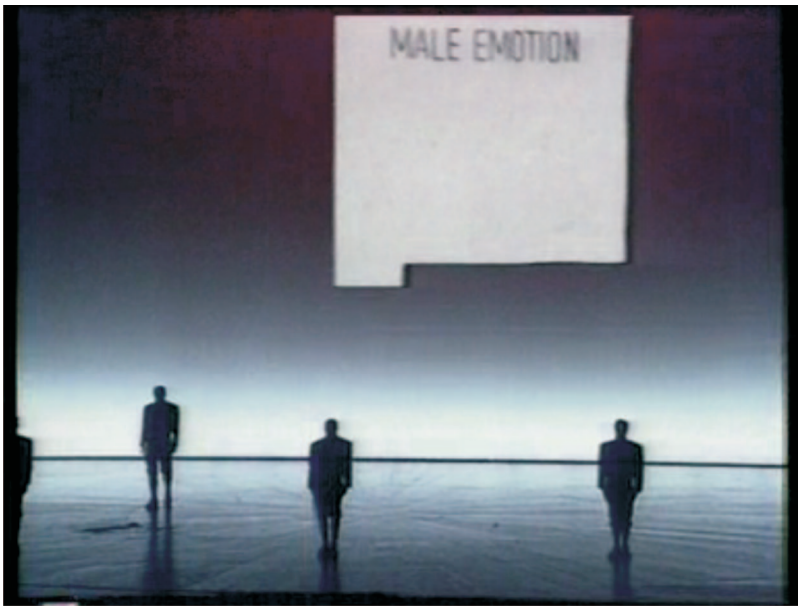


Figure 5. Screenshot of Miha Vipotnik's video documentation of *Krst pod Triglavom* (*Baptism under the Triglav*).



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