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# CINÉMA&CIE
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## To Each Their Own Pop.
## The Mediatization of Popular Music in Europe (1960–1979)

Edited by

Alessandro Bratus, Massimo Locatelli and Miguel Mera

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INTERNATIONAL

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# Experiencing Mediatization: The Legacy of the 1960s and 1970s

Alessandro Bratus, Università di Pavia
Massimo Locatelli, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano
Miguel Mera, City, University of London

## *Frames and Frameworks*

Pop music meets the media… The following issue is dedicated to a social and cultural phenomenon that we could call the "mediatization of pop music".[1] With a particular focus on the 1960s and 1970s, it is our contention that these two decades significantly shaped our current mediatized culture both in its form and content. We hope to widen the notion of mediatization by highlighting a range of historical processes that have had phenomenological after-effects. The experiential prototypes that were developed during this pivotal period later became persistent paradigms.

Guiding much of our thinking has been the concepts of frames and frameworks. A frame delimits certain boundaries, but a framework can encompass and contain a variety of different frames. From a geographical point of view, our framework is a European one, but that is by no means a simple or consistent boundary. In the contemporary context of the European Union, for example, the language of Framework Agreements is often used to articulate social dialogue and outline general, shared principles. In essence, this is way of thinking about the preservation of individual, national, or local identities, while also recognising pan-European commonality within the shared framework. With that in mind, the question can thus become: in what ways do the various manifestations of mediatized popular music during the period speak to each other?

In the 1960s, almost all European countries both in the East and in the West (with the notable exception of the United Kingdom, and a late straggler in Greece) had re-structured their mediascapes around state owned television, which subsequently shaped their public spheres and political debate. At the same time, music grew to a mature, international industry through the diffusion of 45 and 33 rpm records, jukeboxes and high-fidelity technology. The diffusion of cassette which peaked at the end of the 1970s only confirmed that pop music had become a rival, dominant form of cultural consumption: often a generational one, made of garage rock, jukeboxes and milky bars, and teenagers drawing sonic boundaries around their bedrooms and their lives. Interestingly enough, public broadcasters were able to cooperate on a wider basis (*e.g.* the European Broadcasting Union and the Eurovision project) through entertainment formats, like sports, game shows, and especially music shows (the Eurovision Song Contest), shaping an inclusive European framework. At the same time, at the beginning of the 1980s, scholars in cultural studies like Phil Cohen noticed that 'traditional forms of youth organisation, of whatever tendency',[2] were no longer appropriate vehicles of political and social education. Even in the perceptions of left-leaning political spectra, in the western arena, the rise of youth movements, following the 1968 events, substituted working class consciousness as the ultimate horizon of experience. Since then, instead of political or confessional organizations, it was popular media and music that offered the contact point between public and private spheres, between the personal and the political, and this shift should be reconsidered as a focal trope in modern culture.

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[1] 'Mediatization theory suggests that growing media authority and the integration of media into nearly all cultural practices evoke cultural change', and vice versa that 'cultural practices in other domains become dependent on the media and their various affordances'. Stig Hjarvard and Line Nybro Peterson, 'Mediatization and Cultural Change', *MedieKultur*, 29.54 (2013), 1–7 (p. 2). Cfr. also Benjamin Krämer, 'The Mediatization of Music as the Emergence and Transformation of Institutions: A Synthesis', *International Journal of Communication*, 5 (2011), 471–91, and Tobias Pontara and Ulrik Volgsten, 'Musicalization and Mediatization', in *Dynamics of Mediatization: Institutional Change and Everyday Transformations*, ed. by Olivier Driessens, Göran Bolin, Andreas Hepp and Stig Hjarvard (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), pp. 247–70.

The two decades, indeed, are well known to be fundamental in many respects: economic growth was significantly accompanied in western countries by a lowering of the amount of weekly working hours, giving rise to the very notions of leisure time, of commodity and of disposable income.[3] The boost in the birth rate in the most industrialized countries until the first half of the 1960s involved a structural change in the generational composition of the population, leading to an increase in the share of young people from the end of the decade and throughout the 1970s and leading to an explosive mixture of young people and free time.[4] On one side, the so-called modern economic growth based on gross domestic product indexes and the marketing of goods and commodities,[5] constituted a common economic framework. On the other side, the mediatization process progressed across Europe at different speeds. As countries with low industrialization rates were involved, in the long term, in a more or less successful catch-up process with the major economies (communist countries, for instance, moved towards a wannabe competitive state economy, until they ran into bankruptcy in the 1980s), we can assume that the global and the local developed intertwined relationships.

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[2] Phil Cohen, 'Losing the Generation Game', in *Rethinking the Youth Question* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 250–71 (p. 251) (first publ. in James Curran, *The Future of the Left*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984).

[3] The standard reference in economic literature is to: Gary S. Becker, 'A Theory of the Allocation of Time', in *Economic Journal,* 75.299 (1965), 493–517. Countries like Germany did not significantly add spare time in the following decades (340 min. per working day in 1964, 449 in 1980, 470 in 2000, while media consumption has contextually doubled, from 116 min. a day in 1964 to 220 in 2000, at the dawn of the digital era). Cfr. Wolfgang Mühl-Benninghaus and Mike Friedrichsen, *Geschichte der Medienökonomie* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012), p. 192.

[4] The share collapsed at the beginning of the 1980s. See, for instance, the data analysis of the Italian Institute of Statistics: Istat, 'Sessant'anni di Europa', <https://www.istat.it/60annidieuropa/popolazione.html> [accessed 28 December 2018].

[5] Gianni Toniolo, *L'Italia e l'economia mondiale. Dall'Unità a oggi* (Venice: Marsilio, 2013), p.

Nevertheless, the national dimensions of the process of mediatization cannot be underestimated. The analytic frames of local public discourses, in television and the press, require a political evaluation with different, interacting perspectives: 1) a classical dialectical level, in which totalitarian regimes are not alone in revealing areas of conflicts between dominant institutions (*e.g.* censorship in broadcasting) and popular or youth sub- or counter-cultures (*e.g.* rock music in eastern countries); 2) a tactical level, where media institutions negotiate with pop cultural instances, using the freshness, or we should say, the naiveté of youth icons and sounds as communication or marketing work tools (that is the case of many popular film and television genres, where the rebellious youth narrative, through happy endings or romantic plot-points, became a conservative star vehicle propagating intergenerational dialogue); 3) an institutional level, which channels pop music in specific formats and genres, mostly festivals and pop music magazines, with the Eurovision Song Contest at the "highest" level; 4) a cultural-political sphere, where popular culture, music and media are finally involved, or even interfere, in the shaping of national or local identities, or any other imagined community. Miguel Mera, in his contribution, follows this trajectory right to its political consequences in the present time: he explores varied interrelationships in the British film productions of the 1960s and 1970s through three general attitudes — 'Discovering Europe', 'Defeating Europe', and 'Reappraising Home' — in order to demonstrate that the decision to leave the EU in 2016 'was not a flash in the pan', but rather a journey reflecting conflicted notions of freedom and accountability.

## *Negotiating Identities*

Mediatization is, of course, a heavily contested term. Couldry and Hepp argue that it has emerged as 'the most likely "winner" in a race between many terms, all cumbersome or ambiguous to varying degrees'.[6] They also highlight the difference between "mediation" and "mediatization". The latter is a concept

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8. The standard reference in economic history is to: Simon Kuznets, *Modern Economic Growth. Rate, Structure and Spread* (New Haven and London: Yale Press, 1966). It needs to be said that the 1973 global economic crisis changed the social and demographic trends, but not the processes of increasing mediatization of our habits.

[6] Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp, 'Conceptualizing Mediatization: Contexts, Traditions, Arguments', *Communication Theory*, 23.3 (2013), 191–202 (p. 191).

used to understand the changes in media and communications as well as changes in culture and society, and this differs from "mediation" which refers to the process of communication in general, that is, how meaning is constructed. "Mediatization", then, is explicitly about change and focuses on the role of particular media in the processes of sociocultural evolution. Couldry and Hepp also point to two main research streams that have shaped the development of mediatization as an analytical term: the institutionalist and the socially constructivist. The first tradition places the media and social institutions at a macro level, governed by their own rules. Here, mediatization emphasizes an adaptation to institutionalized rules. The second strand refers to the process of a negotiated construction of sociocultural reality and analyses media at various levels within that process. Significantly, what this body of research points to is an understanding of media "consequences" beyond simple media "effects". There is a subtle interplay that works across frames and within frameworks.

As we have already suggested, these concepts are inextricably linked to the challenging question of identity. There is very little research on European identity that does not emphasize the vagueness of the term and its problematic uses. However, the negotiation of a plurality of identities is witnessed throughout the 1960s and 1970s as popular culture becomes increasingly compartmentalized according to genre, age, or social status. In terms of media aggregation, the identification of communities, especially among the young, became based increasingly on public participation (whether political or cultural) which served as concrete manifestation of lifestyles that moved gradually away from traditional cultural affiliations towards a broader, more transnational context. The more overtly political dimensions of the media output of the period appeared, with a particular emphasis on the modes of popularization of the countercultural and avant-garde trends typical of the era, foreshadowing their entry into the cultural mainstream. The search for and assertion of a number of different forms of identity through popular music and the media can, therefore, highlight local, countercultural, political, and generational issues within national contexts and can provide new ways to read the European space within those decades. The comparison between national perspectives can also usefully signal how the construction of a mainstream language is not simply a matter of "cultural imperialism", nor is local identity simply an opposition to a dominant, mainstream other. Indeed, there are often subtle identity shifts between artists, styles, and mediatized musical approaches. Spanish musical cinema in these decades could serve well as a case in point. Its history highlights the inevitable mediatized consequences of living under a dictatorship, in particular the notion of *desarrollismo* (developmentalism) which promoted a specific form of "modernity" through the mass media. Spanish music was transformed to serve Francoist political interests with popular songs and the images of pop bands used as symbols of national modernity. But foreign modern musical influences too, mostly from Italy and France, came into play and challenge the assumption that the Franco regime censored Anglo-American popular music genres. In fact, the presence of numerous foreign singers, genres, and fashion was continuous during the late 1950s and 1960s.

An idea that travels across different countries and cultural contexts in these decades is the frame of opposition, that can be seen replicated to an unprecedented extent in the realm of popular culture, taking different shapes and forms. Such an oppositional, confrontational attitude went hand in hand with a relativization, in practice if not in principle, of the boundaries between "high" and "low" culture. The increasing commercial potential of the latter helped to change the balance of power between industrial apparatuses devoted to their production and public recognition: 'Comparative and historical definitions of high culture lead us toward situations in which, by recognizing the existence of many centres of meaning and value, and by further recognizing the dynamic processes of selection, formation and interaction we can envisage precise kinds of study and work.'[7] On the other hand, the relative positioning of what are identified as high- or low-brow cultural objects and practices reveals that the cultural discourses from different social groups may vary, according to the need of each cultural context in reply to the nascent paradigm of globalization, as an 'on-going process of the formation of worldwide social relations'.[8] The conscience of a wider environment in which local and national politics and culture are situated created sets of tensions that required the negotiation of the most urgent issues at the local level. At the same time, the contrast between opposed social or cultural stances served to arrange such issues within the polarization of endogen and hexogen forces that emerged in public discourses and confrontations during the 1960s and the 1970s.

The frame of opposition acquires a central relevance in Ewa Mazierska's essay on Polish rock, seen through the lens of the cinematic appearances of a prominent popular music performer, Czesław Niemen. In these films the association — typical of most western national cultures — of genres of youth music with countercultural and generational conflict is jeopardized by the connection with an idea of authenticity rooted in traditional, folk culture, as well as by the link to the Romantic legacy of Polish art music heritage. This has the effect of "neutering" — as the author termed the process — the most dangerous and potentially disruptive aspects of the oppositional cultures revolving around popular music of the time. Here the gap between "high" and "low" culture, though not resolved, is embedded in a larger-than-life media character capable of connecting different aspects of the national culture, and it bridges the gap between the past and the present by positing an uninterrupted continuity.

The role of folk culture in these contexts can be read in terms that have been recently characterized by Jean Hogarty as a 'structure of feeling' that is manifested in a 'retro culture', where people are 'defined by their disillusionment with contemporary popular music and their sense of being haunted by popular music(s) past'.[9] In her book such a quality is presented as typical of the digital era thanks to the connection younger fans have with the music of the previous generation, whereas for the latter the music of preceding decades was the music of their time and youth. However, the widespread discourse on rock's authenticity inherited from the folk community,[10] as well as the opposition between commercial pop music and the "truthful" rock practice of music making, indicates the continuing presence of an oppositional frame in the process of "othering" the popular music of the Anglophone mainstream in respect to the national production of Continental European countries. Another similarity emerges when considering the different modes in which the live show is presented in each media and national context: the divide between the mediated and the un-mediated not only insists on different conceptual coordinates, but also varies according to the media on which it is presented, depending on the different degrees of cultural and economic capital that their modes of production imply. Despite their differences, what is consistent across all these case studies is a frame of opposition that does not only affect the narrative or the underlying values of popular culture but is also reflected in the modes in which the musical or audiovisual products organize their content in terms of visual and aural perception. If the case of Mazierska's "neutering" of Polish rock emphasizes the institutionalist view of mediatization processes, other essays in this issue bring in the constructionist perspective to define the cultural agenda of the media relationship with pop.

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[7] Raymond Williams, 'On High and Popular Culture', *The New Republic*, 22 November 1974. Available online at <https://newrepublic.com/article/79269/high-and-popular-culture> [accessed 2 January 2019].

[8] Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), p. 71.

## *Connecting Experiences*

As mentioned earlier, it is important to understand the process of mediatization not only as described in communication theories, but also as a cultural practice related to changing personal experiential spaces and their representation in popular media. A phenomenology of contemporary, mediatized experience involving audiovisual media and the interrelationship between sound and the image, music and film, popular productions, reproduction technologies and the spaces we live in have by now only scarcely and tentatively been examined.[11]

In the same decades we refer to, in fact, new experiential models were elaborated and proposed to audiences, which would later be developed into recurring models of production, distribution and consumption. In particular, what was later labelled “liveness” in the performance and media studies of the early 2000s in fact acquired a central relevance around these years. The term eventually became a common trope in academic literature after the foundational text by Philip Auslander,[12] stressing the relevance of the bodily presence of the popular music stars and the crucial reference to the moment of the live event in the aesthetics of popular music. Under the umbrella-term “authenticity”, value judgements strongly rely on the crucial position acquired by the ‘corporeal liveness’ of the performer,[13] thanks to the advancement in recording sound and audiovisual technology, together with the widespread opportunities for musicians, directors and producers to experiment with these new stylistic and technical devices. Even though the concept of liveness was first recognized and described as late as the end of the 1990s, the ideology of authenticity — which puts at the core of media consumption the mutual connection and the feedback loop between the performance and the record — was part and parcel of the incorporation of these values in the writings of former underground press, self-appointed journalists and critics within the institutional framework of so-called “rock culture” in Anglophone countries.[14] As Allan Moore has convincingly argued, authenticity is ascribed as a consequence of the negotiation between the characteristics of media texts and the expectations of the audience related to specific styles and genres;[15] the experiential and experimental communicative models popular culture proposed in these years were instrumental in the expression of the newness of modern, contemporary trends.

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[9] Jean Hogarty, *Popular Music and Retro Culture in the Digital Era* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), Kindle, ch. 5.

[10] Simon Frith, '"The Magic That Can Set You Free": The Ideology of Folk and the Myth of the Rock Community', *Popular Music*, 1 (1981), 159–68.

[11] *E.g.* Vivian Sobchack, 'When the Ear Dreams: Dolby Digital and the Imagination of Sound', *Film Quarterly*, 58.4 (2005), 2–15.

In the wake of the 1968 political and aesthetical turmoil, popular culture across Europe helped affirm the ‘very idea that popular music cannot be mere entertainment, and could involve the entertaining of potential societies [...]. The political effects of 1968 may have been ephemeral, but the cultural effects were anything but’.[16] As demonstrated from various standpoints in this issue, the same long-term effect can be found not only in the British popular music Allan Moore had in mind. The moment of the live show in cinema and on record in Italy, the topic of the essay by Alessandro Bratus and Maurizio Corbella, is similarly concerned with the consideration of the profound effect the cultural change elaborated in the course of 1968, with contrasting ways to present a media culture either centred on “live-ness” or “live-less” aesthetics. The different ways in which the performance is portrayed highlight cultural tropes that belong to the individual media and very specific temporal contexts, demonstrating a fundamental disparity in the degree of trustworthiness and credibility assigned to them within the national media culture. At large, cinema provided an earlier critical look at the construction of liveness in record production, which professed a more naïve and transparent relationship with the event as if it was captured by the microphones in a studio environment. In the same vein, the seriousness of purposes associated with rock music is presented in Anja Lindelof's account of the presence of popular music performance on Danish television, presented in ways that were meant to escape the standard narrative related to rock culture in Anglophone countries and to describe the inner complexities of contemporary trends. The formal choices employed in these cases promoted the televisual frame as a faithful witness of the event, relying on the widespread trope of the capturing devices as objective and direct forms of restitution for the live event.[17] Television here performs a witnessing task similar to that of the production of live albums in Italy, but within a different communicative frame that encourages producers to take chances with an experimental language in which extreme close-up and reaction shots are key — as in the cases pertaining to Italian cinema after 1968 and some Spanish television programmes. Again, the idea of migration of expressive tropes across countries and media can be proposed as one of the common trends connecting the articles of this issue, and it foreshadows a number of paths that can lead to future comparative and interdisciplinary research endeavours.

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[12] Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

[13] Paul Sanden, *Liveness in Modern Music: Musicians, Technology, and the Perception of Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 38.

[14] Steve Jones, *Pop Music and the Press* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002); Alessandro Bratus, ‘Scene through the Press: Rock Music and Underground Papers in London, 1966–73’, *Twentieth-Century Music*, 8. 2 (2011), 227–52.

[15] Allan F. Moore, ‘Authenticity as Authentication’, *Popular Music*, 21.2 (2002), 209–23.

[16] Id., ‘British Rock: The Short “1968”, and the Long’, in *Music and Protest in 1968*, ed. by Beate Kutschke and Barley Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 170.

Otherwise, it is possible to work in the light of the information that has emerged in the recent inter-disciplinary debate surrounding the detailed, chronological redefinition of the relationship between the different threads in the production chain of the audiovisual media industry and the audience. The field of popular music production for the record industry and the media may be understood as the entry step in the mediatization of cultural practices, which meant above all a new type of audience experience that was made possible through the development of new technological environments for sound and audiovisual media (noise-reduction, stereophony etc.), leading to different experiences of spatiality. Massimo Locatelli goes back to the sensuous turn in public debates and the social sciences of the time, connecting it precisely to these social technological improvements. Following Frances Dyson's approach to contemporary new media as accumulation of auditive technologies of the past, Locatelli shows how the 1970s transformed film sounds into 'almost palpable envelopments' that were ready to be embraced by later, immersive and virtual, technological experiences.[18] The late work of Rainer Werner Fassbinder offers an exemplary case study of the tension between, on the one hand, the radical political instances of the author and the critical tradition in the use of music score in German films, and on the other, a desperate need for a lively, bodily communication and a vibrating, passionate use of audio tracks. This ultimately reached a balance in popular productions like the BRD-trilogy and the television series *Berlin-Alexanderplatz* (WDR, 1980), which helped to move the wider audience of popular media into the future world of intensive and emotionalized media spatialities.

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[17] John D. Peters, 'Witnessing', *Media, Culture & Society*, 23.6 (2001), 716–23.

[18] Frances Dyson, *Sounding New Media: Immersion and Embodiment in the Arts and Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2009), p. 3.

In conclusion, we were in search of a common way to define and compare the notion of “pop” in European countries. This goal is far from being achieved. National identity stands in all case studies as the projection horizon of cultural instances and industries. Americanism or Anglophilia, as well as pro- or anti-Europeanism, emerge as the result of different and localized forms of negotiation, and bi-lateral exchanges are revealed to be significant too. Many countries also rely on regional folkloric traditions. Germany had notably defined a national way to “sound” culture (technological and avant-gardist), communist countries added Cold War dilemmas to the already complex practices of cultural production and evaluation. Smaller countries like Denmark needed to import lots of cultural goods like music and TV shows from the English-speaking world, and thus became a sort of laboratory for the present, globalized world. Greece and Albania remained isolated and self-sufficient. Western Mediterranean countries — the area that in this issue has been less fully considered — seem, moreover, to have trusted more deeply in their own melodic traditions, counter-balancing English-language imports with the production of export goods, creating a Southern- or Romance European network which could be a next step for future research.

The following contributions address, nonetheless, a general, methodological instance: exploring different case studies, they show how the two poles of the mediatization process have been strongly tied together from the 1960s onwards. On one side the mediatization of politics, information, science, and of any field of knowledge had a great impact on cultural production in terms of content, forms, genres, styles and theoretical approaches. On the other side, cultural production has been in turn mediatized through a new technological network centred on television. This network or mediascape reflects and reshapes individual experience, influencing decisions and actions. We could schematically sketch out this overlapping in terms of a binary logic contrasting frameworks (institution, politics, media production and distribution) with frames (the different cultural practices of, say, counter-cultural music making, identity building, participation to or withdrawal from the European dream, liveness and authenticity, tourism as appropriation and tourism as encounter and discovery, immersive media design, the domestication of technologies and the mediatization of emotion). With that in mind, it is possible to approach some of the hard-to-handle categories to which we need to refer. In the last twenty years, for example, young people, who were recognized as social actors in the 1960s, have been revealed to be a more fluid and contradictory collective formation, demanding further attention towards generational, gendered, national, class, cultural, and life-style divisions. Such a nuanced notion of youth requires a depth that only case studies can address in their specificities. The same thing happened with the definition of "pop": what was "popular music" (and film, or television) after the two decades we delve into? The conventional narrative tells us that the difference between high- and low-culture became blurred. The papers collected in this issue remind us that any blurring probably happened because of mediatization processes, that altered the frames and the frameworks of mainstream production. Every kind of sound (even avant-garde music or films) could then be re-used in film and television, and become popular. Popular film and television, at the other end of the spectrum, could become explicitly political, appearing counter-cultural, or targeting intellectual audiences using Top 40 music. Media experience began at that time to be defined much more by cross-media relationships and the usability of the piece of music, genre, style, and form, than by any textual content or structure. And this is how these two decades paved the way for the mediatized world we still live in.

# Softening of Polish Rock of the 1960s and Early 1970s through Screen Media

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*Abstract*

The purpose of this article is to examine the representation of Polish rock in Polish cinema and television in the 1960s and the 1970s, in other words (roughly) the first decade of the existence of Polish rock. My argument is that these films minimize their associations with youth, contemporaneity, modernity, rebellion and a western outlook — typical of rock — amplifying connotations which are not seen as central to the genre, such as its closeness to folk music and national culture. In my research I will draw on the history of Polish popular music and Polish cinema in the 1960s and its interface, and the division between pop and rock.

The purpose of this article is to examine the representation of Polish rock in Polish cinema and television in the 1960s and the 1970s, in other words (roughly) the first decade of the existence of Polish rock. I am interested in which bands were represented on Polish screens most often, and what aspects of their music and artistic persona were foregrounded or suppressed. For this purpose I will consider: two rock films produced in Poland in the 1960s, *Mocne uderzenie* (*The Big Beat*, 1966), directed by Jerzy Passendorfer and *Milion za Laurę* (*Million for Laura*, 1971), directed by Hieronim Przybył; two short fiction films about popular musicians, produced in this period by state television, *Kulig* (*Sleigh Ride*, TVP, 1968) and *Jak powstali Skaldowie* (*How Skaldowie Were Born*, TVP, 1969), both directed by Stanisław Kokesz; and a musical clip to a song by the band Breakout. I will also examine screen representations of Czesław Niemen, the greatest Polish rock star of the 1960s. I will cover the majority of audiovisual media devoted to rock in this period. Hence, although I will use only a sample of material, this sample is representative of the dominant tendencies in representation of rock music on the Polish screen.

My argument is that these films minimize their associations with youth, contemporaneity, modernity, rebellion and a western outlook — typical of rock — amplifying connotations which are not seen as central to the genre, such as its closeness to folk music and national culture. In my research I will draw on the history of Polish popular music and Polish cinema in the 1960s and its interface, and the division between pop and rock.

## *A Very Short Introduction to Polish Rock and Cinema of the 1960s*

According to historians of Polish popular music, the symbolic date of the birth of Polish rock is the first concert of the band Rhythm and Blues, which took place on 24 March 1959.[1] The concert occurred six years after the death of Stalin and his Polish counterpart, Bolesław Bierut, and his replacement by Władysław Gomułka as the leader of the Polish United Workers Party (the PZPR). This change coincided with a cultural shift in the position of socialist realism from dominant to residual. Gomułka, who was seen as a "nationalist communist" , gave up on many of the policies of his predecessor. There was more political and cultural freedom under his rule, although political censorship was by no means abolished and his style became more authoritarian the longer he remained in office. Admittedly, artists had greater freedom in the first years of his rule than in the 1960s, known as the period of "small stabilization". This term conveys hostility toward grand projects and encouragement to focus one's energy on everyday life, leaving politics to professional politicians.[2]

Polish rock in the 1960s, known as bigbit, big-beat or bigbeat, reflected both its western influences, as conveyed by the foreign name of the band Rhythm and Blues, and the conditions of "small stabilization". Its creators and promoters, most importantly Franciszek Walicki, the manager of several early Polish rock bands, tried to ensure its existence and flourishing by convincing the authorities that it was not an alien and hostile force coming from the West, but a phenomenon which was rooted in Polish culture.[3] This was important because

> Władysław Gomułka treated the Western world with suspicion and never understood it. The Western mass culture was seen by him as a threat to socialism, Polish national culture, and to formation of the young generation. He spoke about artists that some of them were forgetting [...] about these social duties, their own nation and its needs, and look only at the West, searching there for artistic inspiration. This wish to catch up with Paris or New York, these snobbish attempts to keep up with various art movements, that appeared in the West and

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[1] Przemysław Zieliński, *Scena rockowa w PRL-u: Historia, organizacja znaczenie* (Warsaw: Trio, 2005), p. 15; Tomasz Leszkowicz, 'Od rock and rolla nie było odwrotu', *Histman.org*, 22 January 2015, <https://histmag.org/Od-rock-and-rolla-nie-bylo-odwrotu-10569> [accessed 4 November 2018].

[2] The term "small stabilization" is borrowed from Tadeusz Różewicz's play *Świadkowie albo nasza mała stabilizacja* (*Witnessses or Our Small Stabilization*), published in 1962. Its protagonists, He and She, define this crucial term as the diminishing of requirements and responsibilities. During small stabilization morality takes a back seat, as people were preoccupied with material pursuits. However, they did not complain because they were anxious not to lose what they had gained. The personality type described by Różewicz can be equated with 'homo sovieticus', also marked by passivity and a lack of ambition.

[3] Anna Idzikowska-Czubaj, *Rock w PRL-u: O paradoksach współistnienia* (Poznan: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2011), p. 137.

> soon disappeared, would be funny if they had not entailed concrete ideological, cultural, and moral damages.[4]

Walicki did so by coining the slogan ‘Polish Youth Sings Polish Songs’ which encouraged Polish rockers-to-be to switch from English (or any other language) to Polish. Such a move also reflected a wider trend of “polonization” of state socialism during the 1960s,[5] a trend that was acknowledged by the leading authorities of Polish rock.[6] As a result, the 1960s saw a mushrooming of bands, influenced by western rock, but singing in Polish, such as Niebiesko-Czarni, Czerwono-Czarni, Czerwone Gitary, Skaldowie and Trubadurzy. Of them, Niebiesko-Czarni, founded by Walicki, deserves special attention, as it was a super-band, with a number of distinctive personalities, such as Michaj Burano, Wojciech Korda, Czesław Niemen, Andrzej Nebeski, Helena Majdaniec and Ada Rusowicz. The idea behind it was to create an incubator of new talents. It was assumed that after proving their skill and getting some experience, the more creative members would set up their own bands with their own styles, which is precisely what happened. From the perspective of the entire history of rock music in Poland in the state socialist period, the 1960s are regarded as a period of success, as testified by the fact that the first Polish Golden Record, for the highest number of records sold, was rewarded to Czesław Niemen: the greatest bigbit star of this period. By contrast, in the 1970s such awards were dominated by Estrada singers, such as Maryla Rodowicz and Halina Kunicka.[7]

The crucial factor in the development of Polish cinema in the 1960s was a resolution from the Central Committee of the Party, which demanded that Polish filmmakers produce films that were popular but socialist in spirit, and avoided vulgarity.[8] This directive resulted in an increase in the production of genre films, including criminal films, comedies and musicals, and a strict division between popular and arthouse directors. This included two musical comedies made between the beginning of the 1960s and early 1970s, which were "bigbit films", *The Big Beat* and *Million for Laura*. During this decade rock music was also used in other films, such as *Dwa żebra Adama* (*Adam's Two Ribs*, 1963), directed by Janusz Morgenstern, which included a fragment from a rock concert.

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[4] Władysław Gomułka, quoted in Piotr Zwierzchowski, ‘Socialist Content, Hollywood Form: Crime Films and Musicals in the Polish Cinema of the 1960s’, *Panoptikum*, 17 (2017), 199.

[5] Bartosz Machalica, ‘Polityka historyczna PRL-u. Tezy o zmienności i niezmienności’, in *PRL bez uprzedzeń*, ed. by Jakub Majmurek and Piotr Szumlewicz (Warsaw: Książka i Prasa, 2010), pp. 89–101.

[6] Przemysław Zieliński, *Scena rockowa w PRL-u: Historia, organizacja znaczenie* (Warsaw: Trio, 2005); Idzikowska-Czubaj, pp. 117–77.

[7] Jotem ‘Kilogram złota’, *Magazyn Muzyczny*, 1, 1989, 22. The term ’Estrada’ has multiple meanings. Aimar Ventsel, drawing on the work of the scholar of Russian popular music David MacFadyen, argues that in the French tradition *estrada* means ‘small stage,’ and defines it as ‘a wide ranging term that includes pop music as well as modern dance, comedy, circus arts, and any other performance not on the “big”, “classical” stage’. *Estrada* artists could have also performed stand up, or as circus artists, and were often officially named so. However, in the popular understanding of Soviet people, the term *estrada* was interchangeably associated with the term “popular music” or ‘pop music’ and the term *svezdy estrady* (*estrada* stars) was generally (but not exclusively) used to indicate successful and well-known singers. The musical output is probably not so defining for the genre as the form: typical for *estrada* music was (and still is) that the singers were — as a rule — accompanied by huge orchestras dominated by the wind instruments. See Aimar Ventsel, ‘Estonian Invasion as Western Ersatz-pop’, in *Popular Music in Eastern Europe: Breaking the Cold War Paradigm*, ed. by Ewa Mazierska (London: Palgrave, 2016), pp. 69-88.

[8] ‘Uchwała Sekretariatu KC w sprawie kinematografii’, in *Syndrom konformizmu: Kino polskie lat*

Cinema was not the only audiovisual medium, which tried to capitalize on the popularity of bigbit music. The other was television, which, from the 1960s, started to include in its schedules short films showing musicians singing not for a live audience, but for the camera, typically against a picturesque landscape. These short films, which can be regarded as predecessors of Polish music videos, often featured bigbit stars. This period saw the production of two longer television films, *Sleigh Ride* and *How Skaldowie Were Born*, which appeared simply as a collection of clips, held together by a thin narrative.

Many of the musicals of the 1960s were popular among viewers, but typically lambasted by the critics, who reproached them for fragmented narrative, low-quality humour, low production values and inability to develop its own formula for a successful genre film. Some critics openly or tacitly assumed that it is impossible to make a good genre Polish film; for that, Polish cinema lacked the required tradition and budgets.[9] Subsequently the focus of historians of Polish cinema was on arthouse cinema, to the detriment of research on popular cinema and musical films especially. For example, the seminal history of Polish cinema written by Tadeusz Lubelski in Polish, does not mention the two bigbit films I consider in this article.[10] Similarly, the histories of Polish cinema published in English, by Marek Haltof and Paul Coates do not examine these films.[11] In the last decade or so, this situation has been addressed, in some measure, thanks to several articles about Polish musicals by Polish film scholars.[12] Other forms of interface between music and the audiovisual media, such as television films and the early music clips, however, have never been studied.

In the subsequent part of this article, I describe the character and the context in which rock performers appeared and, consequently, the connotations of their performances.

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*sześćdziesiątych*, ed. by Tadeusz Miczka and Alina Madej (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1994), p. 33.

[9] See, for example, Mieczysław Skąpski, 'Pierwszy polski musical', *Głos Wielkopolski*, 76 (1967), 12; ZeD, 'Pastwię się nad Laurą', *Trybuna Robotnicza*, 142 (1971), 16.

[10] Tadeusz Lubelski, *Historia kina polskiego: Twórcy, filmy, konteksty* (Katowice: Videograf II, 2009).

[11] Marek Haltof, *Polish National Cinema* (Berghahn: Oxford, 2002); Paul Coates, *The Red and the White: The Cinema of People's Poland* (London: Wallflower, 2005).

[12] Piotr Fortuna, 'Muzykol – kulturowa metafora PRL', *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, 91 (2015), 121–40; Zwierzchowski.

### *The Folkization and Popization of Bigbit on the Polish Screen*

*The Big Beat* is hailed as the first Polish rock film, and on occasions even as the first Polish postwar musical.[13] However, judging by the film's crew, its rock credentials were not particularly strong. The film's scriptwriter, Ludwik Starski, started his career before the Second World War, writing the scripts of many Polish musical comedies of the 1930s, as well as for the first postwar musical films, *Zakazane piosenki* (*Forbidden Songs,* 1946) and *Przygoda na Mariensztacie* (*An Adventure at Marienstadt*, 1954), both directed by Leonard Buczkowski. He was 63 when the film went into production, hence represented a very different generation from the film's target audience. The director, Jerzy Passendorfer, was only 43 but, judging on his subsequent career — he is best known for television series about the Polish Tatra folk hero, *Janosik* — he was seemingly not interested in the genre of musicals and was known for being hostile to bigbit.[14] Most likely he was entrusted with directing the first Polish musical for a young audience simply because he had acted as an assistant to Buczkowski, when he directed *An Adventure at Marienstadt*.

As the title *The Big Beat* suggests, the film was meant to capture the new phenomenon of the fascination of young Poles with rock music. The plot concerns a young man named Kuba who on the day of his wedding is hit by his "girlfriend", who accuses him of leaving her without saying goodbye. It turns out that she had mistaken him for Johnny Tomala, a bigbit star who looks exactly like Kuba. Inevitably, Kuba's fiancée Majka is taken aback by this discovery and the wedding is called off. This story of mistaken identities, typical of Polish musical comedies from the interwar period, serves as an opportunity to present the work of two popular bands of the 1960s, Niebiesko-Czarni and Skaldowie. Skaldowie accompany Tomala — or rather, Kuba impersonating Tomala. Such a choice can be explained by the simple fact that Skaldowie were very popular at the time, winning several competitions for young bands and being awarded the "band of the year" by the *Jazz* magazine, albeit less popular than Czerwone Gitary and less associated with youth culture. *Jazz*, in particular, described them as 'not appreciated by the Polish youth'.[15]

My hypothesis is that they had a privileged position on the Polish screen in relation to all the Polish bigbit bands who started out in the 1960s because they were, together with No To Co, most closely connected with folk music.[16] The leaders of the band, brothers Andrzej and Jacek Zieliński, came from the Tatra mountains (Podhale), where, used musical motifs from this regions and frequently performed in folk clothes. Being a bigbit band, they did not play authentic folk music, but one adjusted to the taste of wider audiences, particularly those living in the cities. One Polish historian described the result of this approach as 'folklorist, to differentiate it from the authentic folklore'.[17] Folk music and music inspired by folklore was promoted in all state socialist countries as an expression of the authentic 'spirit of the people' and an antidote to supposedly poisonous western influences. However, Poland seemed to take the task of preserving its musical folklore more seriously than the rest of the bloc, as demonstrated by the nationwide collection of Polish folk music (Akcja Zbierania Folkloru Muzycznego) in the years 1949–1954, recording songs and transcribing their lyrics. In subsequent decades this action was scaled down and limited to certain regions. Nevertheless, it resulted in the collection and cataloguing of over 40,000 items. According to Ryszard Krawczyk, who was himself engaged in this initiative, it was the most comprehensive collection in Europe.[18] There also existed numerous state institutions, including a special department of the Ministry of Culture, devoted to folk music and art. Although such actions did not have a direct effect on the development of Polish rock music, they sent a signal to the musicians, their managers and the music establishment that it paid to be "folklore-friendly". Another sign of privileging folklore was the organization of a youth folklore festival in Miechów from 1970.

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[13] Skąpski.

[14] Barbara Wachowicz, 'Mocne udrzenie', *Ekran*, 30 (1966), 16.

[15] Cfr. the description on the Polish *Wikipedia* page: <https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skaldowie> [accessed 4 November 2018].

[16] Przemysław Zieliński, *Scena rockowa w PRL-u*, pp. 86 and 148; Timothy Ryback, *Rock Around the Bloc: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 95–6.

In *The Big Beat* Skaldowie do not play up their folklorist identity, but they come across as tame. Contrary to the title of the film, they do not use "big beat" — their clothes are neat and they sing quietly about love and everyday life, not about youth rebellion. To employ the widely used, albeit not unproblematic distinctions between "rock" and "pop", according to which rock is a more authentic and artistic sector of popular music and "pop" as its more commercial, "inauthentic" and watered-down version designed to appeal to everyone,[19] Skaldowie comes across in *The Big Beat* as a pop band. In fact, even though the reviewers of this film did not use such vocabulary, they criticized this way of using Skaldowie, depicting the band as bland and not sitting comfortably with the concept of "bigbit".[20] The same argument can be used in relation to the second band playing in the film, Niebiesko-Czarni, the super-band who had many leading singers. On this occasion its pop credential manifests itself by showing performance of the least "rock" singers of the band: Ada Rusowicz and Piotr Janczerski. Significantly, a year after the film premiere Janczerski left Czerwone-

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[17] Józef Burszta, *Kultura ludowa – kultura narodowa* (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1974), p. 299; Karolina Bittner, *Partia z piosenką, piosenka z partią. PZPR wobec muzyki rozrywkowej* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2017), p. 138.

[18] Ryszard Krawczyk, '30 lat Ogólnopolskiej Akcji Zbierania Folkloru Muzycznego', *Ruch Muzyczny*, 14, 1980, 3–4.

[19] Simon Frith, 'Pop Music', and Keir Keightley, 'Reconsidering Rock', in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. by Simon Frith, Will Straw and John Street (Cambridge: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), resp. pp. 93–108 (p. 94–5) and pp. 109–142 (p. 109).

[20] Skąpski.

Czarni to set up the band No To Co, which in an even more conspicuous way than Skaldowie would use folk motives. The director himself described his film as something for a 'wide audience', full of 'nice songs'.[21]

No To Co were cast in the second Polish rock film, *Million for Laura* by Hieronim Przybył, a director who specialized in comedies and television series, typically derided after their premiere and nowadays mostly forgotten. To a large extent the film repeats the formula, used for the first time in *The Big Beat*. There are again mistaken identities, of people and objects. Most importantly this happens to the eponymous Laura, a baroque Italian guitar which by accident finds itself in the house of the main character, a trader at the Różycki bazaar in Warsaw, and eventually is offered as the main award in a competition for the best bigbit band. The competition, however, does not take place in Warsaw, but in the remote mountain region of Bieszczady, which forces all the characters to travel to there, either in search of fame, of the guitar, worth million dollars, or lost love.

This setting can be explained by the filmmakers' search for the best scenery to showcase the work of the band Łobuzy, played by No To Co. Once the band moves to Bieszczady, we hear them singing about the pleasures of rural life while performing such tasks as raking hay, walking in the hills among the sheep and talking to shepherds clad in traditional costumes. In dialogue, they allude to the fact that they might exchange their repertoire with the shepherds. The competition in which No To Co take part turns out to be a music festival, in which all kinds of acts are welcome and where bigbit music is in minority.

Skaldowie appeared two years later in the television film *Sleigh Ride* directed by Stanisław Kokesz, which offers another example of connections between bigbit and folk. During his career, which lasted from 1950 until his emigration to the United States in 1981, Kokesz made a large number of short and middle-length films, many of which were devoted to artists, mostly musicians, and some to tourism. None of them made a lasting mark on Polish documentary cinema and most of them are forgotten, in part because he stayed away from politics and was perceived as a producer of "useful films". *Sleigh Ride* is his best-known production, due to repeated screenings on Polish television, usually in winter, when its events take place. Anecdotal evidence which I collected, mostly among people in their fifties and sixties, suggests that for this age category it was the most important television production about Polish popular music, along with Marek Piwowski's film about Czesław Niemen. *Sleigh Ride* can be seen as a Polish response to the Beatles films, directed by Richard Lester in the 1960s, particularly *Help!* (1965). This is suggested by the similarity of certain episodes of these two films. However, *Sleigh Ride* has nothing of the narrative complexity and production values of Lester's film — it only lasts 28 minutes, it is set in practically just one location and it has a weak plot, concerning a professional photographer or a tourist with a high-class camera, whose car breaks down in the Tatra mountains during winter. The photographer is rescued when joining a sleigh ride, in which some of the most popular performers of the time participate: Skaldowie, Niebiesko-Czarni, Alibabki and Maryla Rodowicz, who sing their songs while speeding through the wintry landscape and engaging in winter sports such as skiing, until they reach a large house, where they continue performing. The film comes across as a collection of music clips joined together by the motif of a journey through the mountains with the photographer, the only character who does not sing.

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[21] Julian Woźniak, 'Jerzy Passendorfer i *Mocne uderzenie*', *Nowiny Rzeszowskie*, 304 (1966), 15.

On this occasion we can identify three ways through which the rock connotations of Polish bigbit are "softened". The first is via a blurring of the division between rock and pop. Although Skaldowie and Niebiesko-Czarni are normally categorized as rock, while Alibabki and Maryla Rodowicz as pop, in the film they all take part in the same sleigh ride and their performances merge seamlessly. This happens because most of the songs concern winter, and in the outdoor scenes we do not see the main attributes of rockers, their guitars, as their hands are occupied with skis or the reins of horses. The second way is by linking rock to the mountain folk culture, which the sleigh ride epitomizes. This also happens through the costumes of the performers, who wear traditional mountain dress, and the depiction of a party where the attendees, also clad in traditional costumes, dance to the songs of the rockers. The title song, *Sleigh Ride*, is sung by Skaldowie and Alibabki, who begin with high-pitched voices, reminiscent of mountain singing. Finally, stripping rock of its sense of rebellion and the present moment happens through their association with the photographer. This character, played by one of the greatest Polish stars of the 1960s, Bogumił Kobiela, seems to come from a different epoch. His car is from before the Second World War; his clothes are also typical of a gentleman from the early 20th: he wears breeches and knee-high socks and sports a curled moustache. Although the photographer is presented as an eccentric outsider, in line with the way Kobiela was cast in most films, ultimately the film's message is that rock music and the rock lifestyle are innocuous and can coexist with different cultures: pop, folk and archaic. As well as being influenced by these cultures, rock manages to update them, for example rendering mountain culture folk sexier and more contemporary. Skaldowie's ski acrobatics brings to mind the scene in the Alps in Lester's *Help!*, in which the Beatles show their physical prowess.

One year later Kokesz made another film about Skaldowie, *How Skaldowie Were Born*, this time bringing the band to the Baltic coast. Again, this film in some way emulates the work of Lester, who in turn followed the first film about the Beatles with another. In the main database devoted to Polish film, filmpolski.pl, *How Skaldowie Were Born* is described as documentary, but in fact it is a mockumentary, filled mostly with music clips, presenting the most popular songs of this band. The mockumentary part consists of a voice over belonging to the leader of the band, Andrzej Zieliński, who presents the beginnings of the band in a humorous way. He says that the second member was easy to find because it was his own brother, Jacek. However, the next member, a drummer, was playing in a brass band and he was snatched during this performance, using chloroform. In this way the film suggests that Skaldowie's origins lie in part in Polish brass bands, and hence a military tradition. This idea is reinforced by the use of costumes. Skaldowie are shown in white mock military costumes with epaulettes, bringing to mind the costumes of the Beatles from the cover of their album, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, released two years earlier. The drummer is shown sporting a similar costume. In this way Kokesz shows the continuity between the Polish military tradition and bigbit, as well as pointing to the similarity between Polish and western (British) rock. Another member of the band is spotted when singing 'O Sole Mio' in a mock opera voice, when working as a welder in the shipyard. Andrzej Zieliński explains in the voice-over that if the guy was able to sing with enthusiasm in such conditions, this means that he will fit into the band. Although this is meant to be a humorous comment, it suggests that there is no conflict between rock and this Neapolitan song. The rest of the film shows the band performing against the background of the Baltic Sea: riding the pedalo, sitting on a boat, jumping from a boat into the sea, juxtaposing with the image of attractive female holidaymakers. The film thus acts as an advertisement for the Baltic tourist industry. An exception is a clip to one of Skaldowie's greatest hits, *Prześliczna wiolonczelistka* (*A Super-Beautiful Cellist*) performed with a female cellist (played by popular actress, Ewa Szykulska) and a military orchestra. Such a performance evidently suggests that Skaldowie's music fits into such a non-rock context very well.

The tendency to "soften" the image of Polish bigbit can also be observed in the early "music clips", produced by Polish television, the forerunners of music videos which started to be shot in Poland in the 1980s. One of the best known clips to Polish songs from this period is of the band Breakout, *Gdybyś kochał hej* (*If You Loved Me, Hey*) from 1969. The lyrics for this song were written by the previously mentioned Walicki, who inevitably tried to make the songs come across as Polish not only by virtue of the Polish language, but also in view of the topics, lexical choices and rhetorical figures. 'If You Loved Me, Hey' reads:

If you loved me just a little bit, hey
If you loved me as much you don't love me,
If you weren't as you are,
wanted me as much as you don't want me...

You would be a wind and I would be a field, hey
You would be a sky and I would be a poplar, hey
You would be sun and I would be a shadow
If you just changed yourself...

If you weren't in my dreams at night, hey
If you finally left me alone, hey

Maybe I would forgive you,
Maybe I would forget…

The frequent use of the word 'hey' and the choice of nouns which refer to nature (wind, field, sky, poplar) renders the verse similar to a folk song, although it is performed in a distinctly rock style. The video adds much to the rustic character of the song. It is set somewhere in rural Poland, whose agricultural methods and way of life look like interwar or an earlier period, rather than pertaining to modern times. We see a windmill, a field covered with stacks of hay and a singer, Mira Kubasińska, drawing water from a well, putting pots on the fence to dry, and feeding chickens some grain from a bucket while sitting on the steps of a simple farmhouse. Its doors are open, perhaps to signify the openness and hospitality of Polish peasants. Kubasińska has her long hair plaited in braids and wears a waistcoat made of sheepskin on a simple white shirt. She plays a peasant woman and represents nature. In contrast to her, the three male members of the band have a rock outlook, sporting long hair, and are playing their instruments, standing on the stairs of the mill, rather than being engaged in any peasant activities. The conflict and unfulfilled love, as described in the song, is reflected in the position of the male and female members of the band. The conflict can also be seen as reflecting the two sides or roots of Polish bigbit: Polish folk and western rock. The lyrics suggest that it can be solved, if there was only good will on both sides; a view that can be attributed to Walicki himself.

## *Niemen and the Polish Ideals of High Art*

Czesław Niemen was the greatest Polish rock star of the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1960s Niemen had many hits with songs about love and everyday life, but gradually he moved to more lofty themes. Rather than relying on texts written by authors specialising in popular songs, he increasingly used poetry, particularly that written by Polish Romantic poets. Niemen was also among the best travelled Polish stars, playing concerts in the socialist East, especially the Soviet Union, where he was a major star, and the capitalist West, to countries such as Germany and the USA, as well as performing in more exotic places, such as India and Cuba.

Given that Niemen played such an important role in popular music, it is natural that he and his music featured extensively in Polish films of the 1960s and 1970s. Not only can we find numerous traces of his screen presence in this period, but they are remarkably versatile. They include a documentary, a poetic film centred around one of his most acclaimed songs and a full-length fiction film where he is cast in an important role (even though he remains off-screen). On top of that, in several films his music was used as a soundtrack. Let us examine some of these examples. The best known of them and most controversial is *Sukces* (*Success*, 1968), directed by Marek Piwowski, who at the time was already an outstanding documentarist and subsequently author of the ultimate Polish cult film, *Rejs* (*Cruise*, 1969). Piwowski's specialized in capturing on camera the gulf between the way people see themselves and how they are seen by others. *Success* is based on such a premise. The director allows Niemen to talk about himself, but what we hear is somewhat inconsistent, pointing to two features of Niemen, which no doubt he would like to have hidden from his fans: his conceit and his hypocrisy. For example, he claims that he 'feels life deeper' than ordinary people, therefore he tends to be misunderstood and muses on the privileges he enjoys thanks to his fame, such as being allowed into crowded restaurants, which he shuns because he wants to be treated like everybody else. However, the very fact that he ponders on his fame suggests that he is not immune to its pleasures.[22] At the same time as denouncing Niemen as falling short of the high moral and aesthetic standards required of the rockers, Piwowski also underscores Niemen's folkishness, by showing him dressed during rehearsals in a sheep-skin waistcoat, as worn by people living in the Tatra mountains.

A more respectful image of Niemen is offered in *Bema pamięci żałobny rapsod*. (*Mournful Rhapsody in Memoriam of Bem*, 1969), directed by Janusz Rzeszewski, who subsequently specialized in nostalgic musical films set in interwar Poland. The film is a musical clip, although much longer than what Polish viewers could watch on television at the time. The song 'Mournful Rhapsody in Memoriam of Bem', which lasts over sixteen minutes, is regarded by many critics as Niemen's greatest artistic achievement, on account of both its lyrics and music. For example, Piotr Chlebowski, in an essay entirely devoted to 'Mournful Rhapsody in Memoriam of Bem', argues that recording this piece by Niemen was a breakthrough in Polish popular music, because it 'moved popular music from a song to artwork, from a simple to a complex form… From 1969 in Poland a rock record became a coherent whole, as opposed to being a collection of banal songs'.[23] The song is based on a poem by Cyprian Kamil Norwid, a Polish poet typically regarded as a Romantic, but with a strong affinity to the Classical tradition, as demonstrated by the fact that 'Mournful Rhapsody' is written partly in Latin. It concerns the death of the Polish General Józef Bem, (1794–1850) a hero of the Polish fight for sovereignty during the time of partitions, who was also a leader of the Hungarian Uprising of 1848–49. Bem thus epitomized the ideal pairing of patriotism with universalism. Apparently, it was not Niemen himself who discovered Norwid's poem: it was suggested to him by a popular songwriter Wojciech Młynarski. What is more important, however, from my perspective, is that the figure of Bem and 'Mournful Rhapsody in Memoriam of Bem' perfectly capture the position adopted by Gomułka in the 1960s, which was a mixture of nationalism, yet one that did not denounce the ideal of internationalism, which was the official stance of Marxism-Leninism. Choosing such a poem was also in tune with "turning to the classics", as was the trend in the 1960s in Poland. This turn could be explained by the fact that the classics were popular but also seen as innocuous, simply because they were safely embalmed in their graves.[24] I am not suggesting that Niemen used Norwid cunningly, to avoid political controversy, but this was an outcome of his choice. The fact that television decided to produce a video to this song confirms it. Musically, 'Mournful Rhapsody in Memoriam of Bem' bears many similarities with the precursor of progressive rock, 'In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida' (1968) by Iron Butterfly, on account of such characteristics as its excessive length, the long passages of instrumental music, when Niemen plays the organ, and its solemn mood. Rzeszewski's film strengthens these connotations. Its setting is a room filled with burning candles, which looks like a forest. Among them we see a group of people, dressed in black and white with their heads bowed, as if attending a funeral. Against this image we hear a chorus of female voices singing in Latin. Only after their voices are silenced, do we see Niemen singing in Polish and playing an electric organ, which is also decorated with burning candles. The image brings to mind a church, with Niemen as the church organist. Later we see him walking in this "forest of candles". He wears something like a black military uniform with white or silver decorations, with a large medal hanging round his neck. Such attire can be traced back to the cover of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's*, as in the case of Skaldowie, however, the Beatles' costumes were playful while Niemen's is solemn. Progressive rock was inevitably a subgenre of rock, whose purpose was to legitimize rock as a serious form. It can, however, be argued, that in 'Mournful Rhapsody in Memoriam of Bem' Niemen took it to a different level, rendering it as the type of music which would fit school curriculums, and Rzeszewski's film strengthened this claim to be considered as patriotic high art.

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[22] Niemen was so unhappy with the way Piwowski portrayed him in his film, that he wanted it to be banned, see Dariusz Michalski, *Czesław Niemen: Czy go jeszcze pamiętasz?* (Warsaw: MG, 2009), pp. 99–102.

[23] Piotr Chlebowski, 'Norwidowy *Rapsod* w interpretacji Niemena', in *Unisono na pomieszane języki*: *O rocku, jego twórcach i dziełach (w 70-lecie Czesława Niemena)*, ed. by Radosław Marcinkiewicz (Sosnowiec: Gad Records, 2010), p. 61.

A similar effect is achieved by Andrzej Wajda, who cast Niemen in the role of Chochoł (The Mulch) in his film *Wesele* (*The Wedding*, 1973), based on the 1901 play by the Polish post-Romantic author, Stanisław Wyspiański. Wyspiański's *The Wedding* is considered one of the most important works engaging with the Polish national character, and Wajda's film enjoys a similar reputation. Wajda himself is lauded as the greatest master of Polish cinema and being cast in his films was regarded as a privilege. In the last scene of the film we hear (but not see) Chochoł, who sings the song 'You had, Yokel, a Golden Horn', which accuses Poles of having lofty ideas, but not being able to implement them. This vice has particular importance in the light of the fact that the play was written during the times of partitions, when Poland did not exist as a separate state. Chochoł is a symbolic "soul of the nation"; his role is to make Poles realise who they really are. Assigning Niemen such a role points to Wajda's recognition of the significance of Niemen in Polish contemporary culture at large, as opposed to merely Polish popular culture.

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[24] The importance attached by the state to the classics in the 1960s is well captured in *Adam's Two Ribs*, directed by Janusz Morgenstern. We find there a leader of the local council, somewhere in the province, who proposes to name a street in his town after a local engineer, who achieved successes working in Africa. This idea, however, is opposed by other members of the council who want the street to be named after Adam Mickiewicz, which in this context reflects both the nationalistic bias of Gomułka's regime and a desire for stabilisation, for the return to a "safe", depoliticized tradition.

My final example of using Niemen's music on screen in the 1960s is *Korowód* (*Pageant*, 1967) by Krzysztof Trzos, a docudrama about three young men who steal a western car and travel to the Baltic coast. Here they meet a group of girls and enjoy themselves, swimming and sunbathing, and attending a party, until they are caught by the police. The background of their adventure is pop-rock music. The film begins with an episode showing the three men dancing at a party and finishes with a large group of people dancing a conga line. Slow motion is used during these scenes which makes the characters look ecstatic and oblivious to the outside world. In the middle of the film we also see Niemen singing his most popular song, *Dziwny jest ten świat* ('Strange Is This World'). The performance appears to be extradiegetic, although it is possible that the characters see it during their stay in Sopot, where the International Festival of Songs was held, and where Niemen performed this song the year the film was made. At some point Niemen's performance is cut and the camera returns to the characters, who most likely rest in a hotel after a day full of adventure. At this stage the song appears to be played by the radio as it stops when one of them gets up and switches the radio off, as if he wanted to silence anybody who might challenge his behaviour. The episode showing Niemen's performance is quite long, lasting over two minutes, constituting about ten per cent of the duration of the film. Given that the subject of 'Strange Is This World' is the fight between goodness and evil, and the hope that goodness will prevail, it can be seen as a commentary about the wrong path taken by the characters and an expression of hope that they will be redeemed. Conversely, Niemen's song can be regarded as part of the pop-rock culture which contributed to the moral decline of the characters. It is also worth mentioning that what in this film stands for the soundtrack of the characters' criminal activities is in fact a jazzy tune rather than proper rock music. This most likely reflects the ignorance of the director (and scriptwriter) about the music to which his characters were most likely listening at that time.

The conviction that there is a link between rock music on the one hand and delinquency and criminality on the other, was not confined to Polish or Eastern European cultures of state socialism; such an idea also applies to the capitalist West. However, what is characteristic of this film in particular is that the danger of rock music is accompanied by an opposite idea: that it can be a source of illumination and redemption or, at least, that Niemen's song can perform such a function.

## *Conclusions*

In conclusion, Polish screen media in the 1960s and early 1970s typically placed Polish bigbit in a non-rock context, by associating it with a softer version of popular music (pop), folk music and folk culture, military music, the high culture of Polish Romantic and post-Romantic literature, tourism, and humour. Instead, typical associations of rock with youth and rebellion, are absent in these films. Rendering rock music as non-rock (according to western standards) in part reflected the character of bigbit, which was not particularly rebellious or anti-establishment, but instead affirmative, testifying to the pleasures of being young and falling in love. It can also be seen as reflecting a higher level of censorship and self-censorship in film and television than in popular music industry. At live concerts Polish bands could sing and behave practically how they wanted, because Estrada, which organized live events, was decentralized and thus more difficult to control, and concerts were rarely visited by censors[25]. It was, however, more difficult to achieve such a level of independence in cinema where scripts were assessed by a special committee before they went into production. Television production was even more censored, it being a more centralized institution and hence more dependent on the government's approval than semi-independent film units, which decided about film production. Hence, television had to conform even more closely to official ideology. The softening of Polish bigbit on the way from live environment to the screen media reflects a trend which also applies to western media, as exemplified by films with Elvis Presley, and 'audiovisual performances by Pat Boone, Frankie Avalon, Fabian, Bobby Ryddel and other "teen-idols" in the late 1950s and early 1960s which were widely perceived as inappropriate, sanitized and tamed versions of the original, raw and rawdy rock'n'roll stars of the mid-1950s'.[26]

The examples considered in this study also speak to a certain level of ignorance and confusion about the nature of rock among Polish filmmakers, reflecting the age gap between them and Polish rock musicians. Furthermore, one aspect of this representation, namely accentuating the link between rock and Polish folk and Romantic culture, reflects on the drive for "polonization", pertaining to Polish culture of the 1960s and, to some extent, the 1970s. The screen image of Polish rock would considerably change in the 1980s when it would become more rebellious and overtly political, and many filmmakers, often of the same age as the rockers, would attempt to record it and amplify its edginess and counter-cultural character.

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[25] Raymond Patton, 'The Communist Culture Industry: The Music Business in 1980s Poland', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2 (2012), 433–37.

[26] Antti-Ville Kärjä, 'Ridiculous Infantile Acrobatics, or Why They Never Made Any Rock'n'roll Movies in Finland', in *Popular Music and Film*, ed. by Ian Inglis (London: Wallflower, 2003), pp. 117–130 (p. 123).

# This Must Be the Stage: Staging Popular Music Performance in Italian Media Practices around '68

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## *Abstract*

Popular music gained increasing cultural relevance in Italy during the *Sessantotto* ('68) — a tumultuous period essentially extending over a decade, until about 1977. Because of the ideological baggage that performance acquired in those turbulent times, representing performing musicians and the social bodies interacting with them in live contexts became a key challenge for audio/visual media such as cinema, television, radio, and the recording industry. This article attempts an intermedia approach to liveness in mediatized popular music performance by cross-examining the concurrent ways in which two of the above-mentioned media practices — namely film and record production — dealt with the increasing significance and presence of popular music performance in Italian culture at that time. The agency of media as relational frames between performers and the public was strategic in determining the affordance of new popular music genres among young Italian audiences in the 1960s and 1970s. We wish to suggest that the impact of these genres on Italian young audiences reverberated across different media, generating a set of recognizable patterns.

## *Introduction*

Popular music gained increasing cultural relevance in Italy during the *Sessantotto* ('68) — a tumultuous period essentially extending over a decade, until about 1977.[1] Similarly to what happened in other countries, new trends in popular music genres and performance practices went hand in hand with political and generational protest movements, especially — but not uniquely — the reception of rock-related styles 'as a sort of *lingua franca* of opposition culture the world over'.[2] Because of the ideological baggage that performance acquired in those turbulent times, representing performing musicians and the social bodies interacting with them in live contexts became a key challenge for audio/visual media such as cinema, television, radio, and the recording industry. Umberto Fiori has commented extensively on the cultural "shock" that the importation and revisiting of popular music from abroad provoked in Italy during the 1960s and 1970s, especially concerning the sharp contrast between the exuberant style of rock'n'roll and beat performers, and the local tradition of Italian popular song:

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[1] On this historical periodization, see Antonella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 31–3.

> The music's success, then, was on the level of a very intense and very individual aesthetic experience, one to be contrasted with that offered by the Italian songs of the time. Above all else, what created interest and made the greatest impression was the self-confidence and exuberance of the performers, together with their modern and distant world.[3]

Implied in this assessment is that the impact of performance was to a great extent prepared and shaped by the media:

> Clothing and fashion associated with rock were more widespread than the music itself, mainly because they were spread by the press and above all the cinema, which had a far more effective distribution network for transatlantic products.[4]

This article attempts an intermedia approach to liveness in mediatized popular music performance by cross-examining the concurrent ways in which two of the above-mentioned media practices — namely film and record production — dealt with the increasing significance and presence of popular music performance in Italian culture at that time. We shall expand on how these two media promoted divergent and fragmented, yet deeply intertwined ideas of liveness.

In addressing such a culturally and geo-historically shifting category as liveness, we propose to tackle the notion of 'staging', theorized by Simon Zagorski-Thomas in relation to music recording. For Zagorski-Thomas, 'staging' refers to 'aspects of the "event" that are external to the performances and yet contribute to the meaning we perceive'.[5] It thus includes all of those 'para-performative' elements that surround a music act and 'allow the listener a sense of participating in a specific performance and a vicarious relationship to the audience for that performance not accessible through studio productions'.[6] Analysing how "media stagings" evoke a live performative space — that is, the site of co-presence where 'the aesthetic and the political coincide'[7] — can be a valuable testbed for examining the respective attitudes of records and films. By understanding the two as representational practices infused with different values and ideas of fidelity to a posited originating event,[8] we aim to assess not so much the extent to which a performative space is "faithfully" recovered by its mediatization, but rather how the intermedia 'debt',[9] which any "staged" recorded sound or image owes to reality, becomes a trigger for cultural engagement. Following Steve Wurtzler, 'any representation can be thought to consist of the moment of representing, the absent event posited by the representation, and a consumer's encounter with both'.[10]

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[2] Gianmario Borio, 'Music as a Plea for Political Action: The Presence of Musicians in Italian Protest Movements Around 1968', in *Music and Protest in 1968*, ed. by Beate Kutsche and Barley Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 29–45 (p. 41).

[3] Umberto Fiori, 'Rock Music and Politics in Italy', *Popular Music*, 4 (1984), 261–77 (p. 263).

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Simon Zagorski-Thomas, *The Musicology of Record Production* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 73.

The element of space is central to us in a twofold way. On the one hand, the spatial dimension acts as a catalyst for discursive configurations of narrative, formal, and symbolic elements of performance within both cinema and record production, where the reciprocal roles of performers and audiences are linked to their positioning within the aurally or visually represented venues. On the other hand, a spatial relationship between media and their interpellated audiences can also be highlighted.[11] The agency of media as relational frames between performers and the public was strategic in determining the affordance of new popular music genres among young Italian audiences in the 1960s and 1970s. We want to suggest that the impact of these genres on young Italian audiences reverberated across different media, generating a set of recognizable patterns. In our brief, introductory survey, we shall however limit ourselves to sketch a preliminary framework that will serve as a starting ground for further investigations. We aim to account for the variety of the modes of performance representation, intending them as hints at broader cultural trends in Italian popular culture of 1968 and its aftermath. For this reason, our article privileges the close reading of a set of case studies and resists the temptation to produce a coherent, if premature generalization.

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[6] Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 60.

[7] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetic* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 51.

[8] For a thorough discussion of these issues, and their consequences in terms of the creation of different types of subjectivities in mediatized performance, see Steve Wurtzler, '"She Sang Live, But the Microphone Was Turned Off:" The Live, the Recorded and the Subject of Representation', in *Sound Theory/Sound Practice*, ed. by Rick Altman (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 87–103.

[9] Pietro Montani, *L'immaginazione intermediale. Perlustrare, testimoniare, rifigurare il mondo visibile* (Bari: Laterza, 2014), p. xii.

[10] Wurtzler, 'The Microphone Was Turned Off', p. 88.

[11] For a discussion of Jean Comolli's notion of 'interpellation', see Wurtzler, 'The Microphone Was Turned Off', pp. 98–9.

### *Live(less)ness in Filmed Popular Music Performance before ’68*

Two classic musical sequences featured, respectively, in Fellini’s *La dolce vita* (1960) and Antonioni’s *Blow-Up* (1966) exemplify one significant aspect of the phenomenology of popular music performance in 1960s Italian cinema. Both involve real performers — namely Adriano Celentano and The Yardbirds — and both seem to exploit pop music performance to activate cinematic dimensions that deliberately move away from realism. Furthermore, both feature a temporary interruption of the performance’s flow to mark what Amy Herzog would term as moments of ‘excess, rupture, fluidity, and the dissolution of the space-time continuum that orders the reality of everyday experience’.[12]

Celentano’s performance of Little Richard’s hit ‘Ready Teddy’ at the Baths of Caracalla in *La dolce vita* (00:37:25–00:39:56)[13] starts in a relatively realistic fashion — if one excludes the evidently imperfect lip-syncing resulting from the post-synchronization of the audio-track (Fig. 1a). However, as soon as the performer falls off the stage as a result of his exaggeratedly “springy” rock ’n’ roll moves, the performance takes an odd turn: at first, the flow of the music breaks down, as though the off-frame musicians had (realistically) stopped playing, owing to the incident that had occurred to their frontman; yet, when the music starts up again, neither Celentano nor his band perform it on stage: instead, they begin to dance in a circle with their audience, in time with the rhythm of the music, so that the gig ends in an oneiric, typically Fellinesque procession-dance (Fig. 1b).

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[12] Amy Herzog, *Dreams of Difference, Songs of the Same: The Musical Moment in Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 7.

[13] Timecodes refer to the DVD release issued by Medusa (Cinema Forever – The Mediaset Collection, 2003).

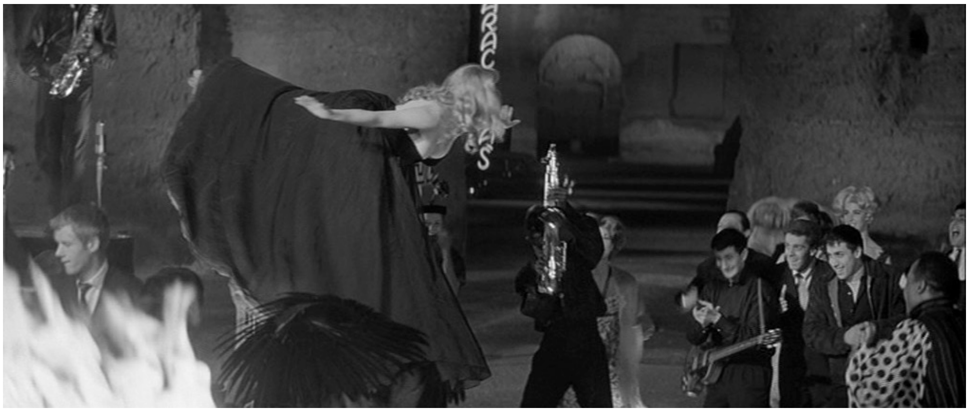

Figure 1a-b: Film stills of Adriano Celentano performing 'Ready Teddy' in *La dolce vita* (Fellini, 1960)

Antonioni's treatment of The Yardbirds' hit 'Stroll On' is even more daring (1:29:50–1:33:08).[14] On the one hand he places the British wonder band in a studio mockup of the Ricky Tick — a famous club in Windsor, Berkshire, which featured a wealth of pop acts at the time (Fig. 2a); on the other, he has the extras playing the audience stand still throughout most of the performance, looking almost unaffected by the engaging groove of the song (Fig. 2b). The uncanniness of the situation is further emphasized when the crowd suddenly gets animated as Jeff Beck throws the neck of his smashed guitar at them.

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[14] Timecodes refer to the DVD release issued by Warner Home Video (2004).

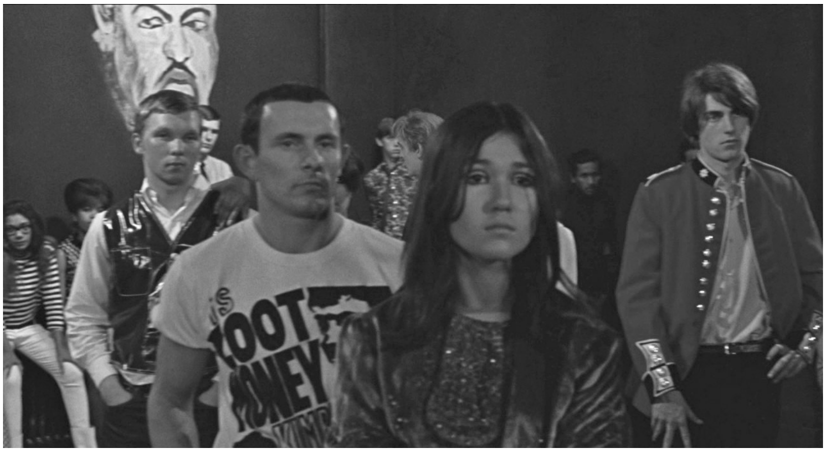

Figure 2a–b: Film stills of The Yardbirds performing ‘Stroll On’ in *Blow-Up* (Antonioni, 1966)

Both sequences problematize liveness for different expressive purposes; most significantly for our argument, they do so not so much by directly intervening in the musical content of the performance, but rather through sabotaging its “natural” staging. It is the relational bond between the performers and their audience that is put into crisis. In both examples, eschewing conventional representations of performance may be understood as a sign of the underlaying scepticism the two directors exhibited toward the music rituals of a younger generation they struggled to comprehend. Both Fellini and Antonioni seem to exhort the viewers to not believe the supposed cathartic effects these performative styles were expected to produce. More overt in Antonioni is the denial of the supposedly disruptive political significance of the performance act: deprived of its spontaneity, the act unwinds as alienated nonsense, whose effects are limited in their extent and scope by the physical disconnection of the performance space from the outside world.[15]

Rather than standing out — because of their supposed authorial legitimacy — as exceptional cases, the two examples just mentioned may be seen as signalling a broader attitude toward music performance similar to that found in more popular strands of Italian cinema in the 1960s, typically represented by the successful genre of the *musicarello* — roughly comparable to an Italian version of the American juke-box film musical. All in all, performance in *musicarelli* functions rather like a “performance of the record”, in the sense that the singer’s presence, lip-syncing to his or her own hit, more often than not serves as a mere

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[15] In passing, it is worth noting how Antonioni’s attitude toward the younger generation and its musical values evolved from *Blow-Up* to his next film, *Zabriskie Point* (1970).

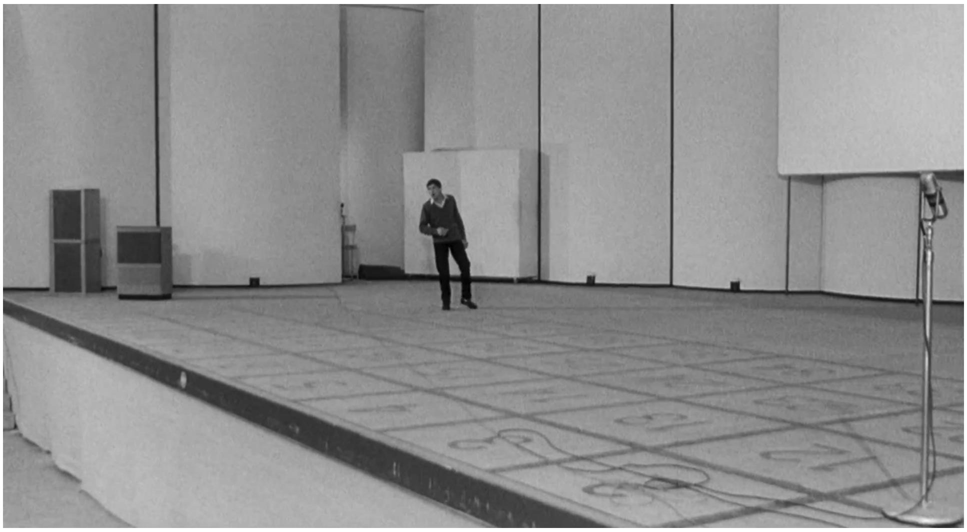

Figure 3: Film still of Gianni Morandi performing 'I ragazzi dello shake' in *Highest Pressure* (Trapani, 1965)

doubling of the audio track, if not as a cumbersome redundancy; this is especially the case when — as frequently happens — the lip-syncing is poorly realized. In general, *musicarelli* show little or no concern about evoking a performative "here and now", preferring instead to conjure up idealized performative spaces, 'pseudo-events'[16] which exhibit a very tenuous connection, if any at all, with live performing experiences.

In *Highest Pressure* (*Altissima pressione*, Enzo Trapani, 1965), Gianni Morandi's performance of 'I ragazzi dello shake' (00:25:58–00:28:03)[17] is inserted into a neutral, almost sanitized space, something in between a TV studio and a provincial movie theatre (Fig. 3). While the presence of loudspeakers and a microphone on stage may at first glance evoke a live setting, the microphone is actually never used by the singer, but only by the announcer to introduce the musical guest. Remarkably, the interaction between the performer and the audience appears highly unnatural and artificially "staged". The fans resemble a television audience that is instructed to cheer at given times, regardless of the actual performance. There seems to be no effort to disguise the fact that Morandi is actually lip-synching to the song in playback (the track even ends with a fade out, as several other song acts do in this film).

The identification of the performance act with the record functions in such a way that the record stands out as the "original" and performance its "copy".

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[16] Wurtzler, 'The Microphone Was Turned Off', p. 96.

[17] Timecodes refer to the authorized online streaming release of the film, licensed by Under The Milky Way on YouTube <https://youtu.be/Zy8wXOEJQdY>.

Consequently, the spatial core of music-making representation in *musicarelli* becomes the studio, rather than the live venue. This is confirmed by the comparably higher care with which *musicarelli* tend to portray the recording studio with its wealth of technological equipment. Settings such as the singer recording his or her vocals — this time, in front of a microphone — and facing the sound personnel in their white gowns separated by a glass in the mixing room, are anything but rare in films such as the Italian release of *Go, Johnny, Go!* (Paul Landres, 1959),[18] *Highest Pressure*, *I ragazzi di Bandiera Gialla* (The Kids of Bandiera Gialla, Mariano Laurenti, 1967), and several others. Even in these cases, however, we should not confuse these films' care for visual details with their substantial disregard of the sonic aspects of the recording experience: like the "live" acts described above, the studio performances as well are sonically, for the most part, nothing more than playback versions of the published record.

The centrality of the record as an idealized performative experience, detached from a clear correspondence with reality, resonates with Fiori's description of 'a peculiar distancing effect' that characterized the reception of rock-related styles in Italy and was charged 'with [a] potential for both criticism and action, which was probably unknown to the English or American public'. 'The only way of participating actively in this music', Fiori continued, 'was through possession of records, without even the illusion of a more dynamic relationship with the source of music'.[19]

## *The Live Album as Intermedium: The Club and the Televisual Mode of Reception*

As an object aimed at reproducing a past musical event, the live album frames the live experience within discursive boundaries that are both genre- and event-specific. It relies in the first place on linking the concert experience to other types of mediatized experiences of performance in order to maximize the affective stance at the core of the liveness effect.[20] While cinematic representations of the time problematized liveness by staging performance in unbelievable or unlikely guises, as we have seen, live albums from the same period seem rather to be concerned with referencing recognizable typologies of performing venue and suggesting prominent links with other media, such as for instance television in the case we are about to consider.

*Mina alla Bussola dal vivo* (Mina Live at La Bussola, PDU, 1968 — recorded during the show on 14 April in the same year) was the first live album to be released by a highly popular Italian performer and media personality during the decade. Here, the performance is presented as an exclusive event in an indoor space. Despite her ubiquitous presence on television, as well as in *musicarelli*, in commercials and elsewhere,[21] Mina's media presence was always characterized by an emphasis on her exceptional qualities: as a virtuoso performer and outstanding vocalist, as an emancipated woman, as an "independent" singer who produced her own records. In the same vein, her live show is here also framed as an event whose access is restricted to a limited group of people. In an attempt to emphasize the uniqueness of the live album experience, only half the songs featured in this record were subsequently released as studio versions, thus displaying a specific taste catering to a group of *connoisseurs* assumed to be the target listeners of this record and — at the same time — distinct from her mainstream audience. Finally, the environment of the club creates an aural space where the listening experience is staged as a private — almost intimate — experience; the songs are arranged with marked dynamic contrasts between *pianissimo* and *fortissimo*, and the use of vocal techniques such as crooning and whispering is frequent.[22]

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[18] The Italian release of the film (*Dai! Johnny, dai!*, 1960) was screened with an added prologue in which Celentano performs 'Impazzivo per te'.

[19] Fiori, 'Rock Music and Politics in Italy', p. 267.

[20] Auslander, *Liveness*, p. 60.

Other mainstream performers who saw their live gigs in clubs and similar venues released on record in the following decade — *e.g.* Franco Califano (*Recital*, 1977), Domenico Modugno (*Dal vivo alla Bussoladomani*, 1977) and Luciano Tajoli (*Bussoladomani. Dal vivo*, 1978) — occupy a similar position to Mina's: all of them exploited the recorded live show to present a rearranged and refined version of their songs in terms of instrumentation (though not in terms of the formal structure), while in none of their albums does the live performance seek to be a faithful rendition of the studio recording. What is also noticeable in all of these is the limited emphasis they place on depicting the relationship between the performer and the audience: despite the small venues in which the live show is taking place, the performers are rarely heard addressing the audience, even to introduce the musicians or the songs. The space reserved for the aural perception of the performers/audience interaction is limited to the clapping and cheering, in what may be described a hierarchical relative positioning of the audience as subjugated to the performers. When some occasional dialogue is audible, it involves the singer and the musicians on stage, and thus stresses the performers' separation from the public, rather than the inclusion of the latter as a real co-protagonist of the show. Such a presentation of the relative roles of performers and audiences highlights a symbolic distance between the realms of artistic production and the everyday listener's experience, thus strengthening existing social structures and boundaries.

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[21] For a summary account of Mina's career, see Paolo Prato, 'Virtuosity and Populism. The Everlasting Appeal of Mina and Celentano', in *Made in Italy. Studies in Popular Music*, ed. by Franco Fabbri and Goffredo Plastino (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 162-71.

[22] Such a performative style is also consistent with other examples of Mina's presence on contemporary television, where she presented her own songs and lots of covers in orchestral arrangements, most of which were not subsequently recorded in the studio and released on record. See Rachel Haworth, 'Making a Star on the Small Screen: The Case of Mina and RAI', *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies*, 3.1 (2015), pp. 27–41.

The mediatization of the live show, then, builds its own system of meanings 'as a multi-layered communication medium *dispositif* that connects the stage event of a theatrical production with a wider range of processes and procedures, and which also incorporates media for technical reproduction like sheet music or commercial records'.[23] A crucial element in the staging of this first type of recorded live show is thus the "vertical" — meaning non-reciprocal and non-inclusive — relationship between the performer and the audience, which stresses the exceptional nature of the former and rewards each individual listener with a self-appointed sense of his/her good taste.

On the whole, what Mina's live album suggests through its "aural staging" is that the listener is allowed to take part in a restricted community, a community that allows each individual an opportunity to distinguish him/herself from the undifferentiated mass of the "mainstream" audience. Such an attempt to offer a sort of "elevated" entertainment can be seen as cohering with the modes of consumption afforded by a certain idea of televisual edutainment, which was widespread in the policies of Italian national broadcasting at the time. Public television in the post-war era was characterized by what media historians have labelled as a project of "pedagogic enlightenment" aimed at the creation of a modern, post-fascist, cohesive image of the national popular culture.[24] This conception was based on the notion that television was solipsistic yet democratic at one and the same time, capable of guaranteeing access to everyone but also of satisfying the needs of those who were cultivated enough to appreciate certain subtleties. On the one hand, in positioning herself at the "high-brow of the low-brow", in this album Mina provides a connection with her audience which is strengthened by the sense of distinction that the very appreciation of her own music affords. Moreover, the reaction of the live audience itself follows a predictable "script"; her fans can be heard not only in between the songs, but also at the climactic moments of the arrangements (the first occurrence of the hook and its repetition, the reprise of the chorus, particularly danceable instrumental or virtuoso passages). The overall impression is that the audience responds to the act while being disciplined by the structure of the songs itself, as in a carefully scripted situation-comedy.

In its connection with the televisual mode of reception, the live show as presented on record can be considered a specific sort of phonographic artefact in which the staging has the effect of realizing an 'intermedium',[25] connecting different forms of artistic expression through a series of widespread cultural conventions related to a particular performative experience. The reference established by this group of records with specific performative circumstances also confirms the mentioned link with television: all the live concerts quoted above took place in a famous club, La Bussola, located in a renowned vacation site in the northern coast of Tuscany, a music venue that acquired national relevance for its being frequently elected as a broadcasting location for TV programmes by the RAI.

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[23] Nils Grosch – Carolin Stahrenberg, 'The Transculturality of Stage, Song and Other Media: Intermediality in Popular Musical Theatre', in *Popular Musical Theatre in London and Berlin: 1890–1939*, ed. by Len Platt, Tobias Becker and David Linton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 187–200.

[24] See, for example, Gianfranco Bettetini, 'L'Italia televisiva chiama davvero l'Europa?', in *Le televisioni in Europa Vol. 1. Storia e prospettive della televisione nella Repubblica Federale Tedesca, in Gran Bretagna, Francia e Italia*, ed. by Claus-Dieter Rath *et al.* (Torino: Edizioni della Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1990), pp. 247–82.

[25] Werner Wolf, *The Musicalization of Fiction. A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999).

### *Staging Large Venues: The Public Pop Concert and Its Media Paradigms*

Large-sized concerts and festivals went through a tormented history in Italy in the aftermath of 1968. After the infamous attempt to import the psychedelic vibe of the Monterey Pop Festival to a free event of the Rome Pop Festival in May 1968 at the PalaEUR, with an international cast of soon-to-be superstars,[26] the number of public pop concerts increased gradually until the early 1970s. This included events such as Palermo Pop (which took place three times between 1970 and 1972), the free pop festival at the Caracalla Baths in Rome (October 1970), and the Festival della Musica d'Avanguardia e Nuove Tendenze (Festival of Avant-garde Music and New Trends), first held in Viareggio (May–June 1971), before being moved to Rome and Naples in the following years. After these experiments with big crowds, the Italian underground scene took on a series of lower profile, highly politicized and self-financed rallies, such as the series of public concerts promoted by the underground magazine *Re Nudo* that culminated in the large public concert at Parco Lambro in Milan on 26 June 1976.

By the mid-1970s, the tense socio-political context surrounding pop and rock music in Italy had made it extremely difficult to find safe concert venues where the security of performers and audiences could be guaranteed. On the one hand, the left-wing radical "free music" movement proclaimed the so-called *auto-riduzione* (self-reduction) of ticket prices,[27] while on the other, some popular music performers — especially singer-songwriters — were publicly "prosecuted" on stage by audience members and accused of being "not political enough" in their songs and performances.[28] All these circumstances led to the widespread assumption that Italy was an unsafe place for live music in those years. Fiori pointed out how much the link between music and politics in Italy laid its foundations on a fundamental ambivalence:

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[26] Among others, Julie Driscoll & The Brian Auger Trinity, Donovan, Captain Beefheart, Ten Years After, Soft Machine and Pink Floyd, and the Italians I Giganti and Camaleonti were involved. The festival, poorly received by a sparse yet rowdy audience was interrupted on its fourth day (of seven) due to public disorder. See Matteo Guarnaccia, *Re Nudo Pop & altri festival. Il sogno di Woodstock in Italia 1968–1976* (Milano: Vololibero, 2011), pp. 23–7. Claudio Pescetelli, *Roma beat. I duemila giorni che cambiarono la città eterna* (Genova: Editrice Zona, 2015), pp. 156–69.

[27] See Fiori, 'Rock Music and Politics', p. 266.

[28] One of the most infamous "public trials" happened at the Palalido in Milan, at the end of the show held on 2 April 1967 by Francesco De Gregori. For an account, see Enrico De Regibus, *Quello che non so, lo so cantare: storia di Francesco De Gregori* (Firenze: Giunti, 2003), pp. 90–2.

> The taste for a kind of music was seen as a collective political choice and indeed this latter was often seen as more important than the music itself. This is to say that the choice was made less on the basis of the immediacy of personal taste and more according to the continually debated criteria of an affinity between a common political and social ideal and a particular artist or record.[29]

What was the role of film and records in this context? In general, all of the above-mentioned events were poorly documented, with the exception of the Caracalla Pop festival, which was broadcast on radio and became the site of a curious filmic remediation we will return to shortly, and the second edition of the Festival della Musica d'Avanguardia e Nuove Tendenze (1972), which was telecast by the RAI. The inaugural edition of this festival also led to a compilation album called *Al Festival Pop Viareggio 1971* (At Viareggio Pop Festival, Ariston Records, 1971); this, however, featured only studio tracks by Nuova Idea, Stormy Six and Top 4. The first properly cinematic attempt to document a massive countercultural event was Alberto Grifi's unreleased footage of the 1976 Parco Lambro festival. Because of the *cinéma-vérité* style of Grifi's operation, which deliberately refused to take on the shape of a finished film, this work may be seen as the closest attempt in Italy to react expressively and politically to the concert movie aesthetics that had by that time crystallized in Anglo-American documentary production.[30]

Apart from this example, Italy struggled to develop a self-standing concert-movie genre. The releases of *Banana Republic* (Ottavio Fabbri, 1979), documenting Lucio Dalla and Francesco De Gregori's 1979 tour, and *Concerto* (Luisa Zappa Branduardi, 1980), documenting Angelo Branduardi's European tour *La Carovana del Mediterraneo* (The Mediterranean Caravan, 1978–1979), arguably count among the first proper concert movies in Italian film production. Notably in both cases, the contemporary release of the homonymous live albums (*Banana Republic*, RCA, 1979; *Concerto*, Polydor, 1980), which became all-time best-sellers, largely overshadowed the films' fame. Reasons for this Italian peculiarity may well have been technological: for one thing, Italy had for many years been devoid of the technical basis for direct cinema, that is, direct live sound itself. Not only did dubbing imbue every facet of film production practice, it had also developed into an artistic resource in auteur cinema. It is plausible that the late and generally weak emergence of the music documentary genre in the 1980s was a belated side-consequence of the diffusion of the large-sized concert practice in the country. In other words, it was only after the live performance started being perceived as a participative, transformational collective experience and the record industry had

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[29] Fiori, 'Rock Music and Politics', p. 269.

[30] For direct cinema's aesthetic linkage to rock music, see Dave Saunders, *Direct Cinema: Observational Documentary and the Politics of the Sixties* (London: Wallflower Press, 2007).

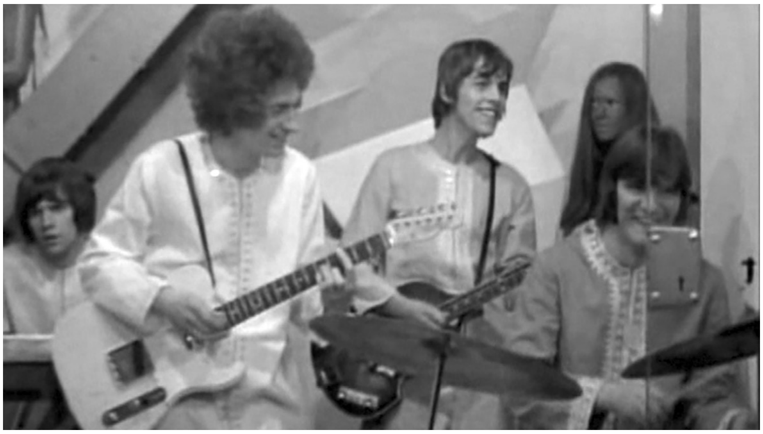

Figure 4: Film still of Freedom performing 'The Game Is Over' in *Attraction* (Brass, 1969)

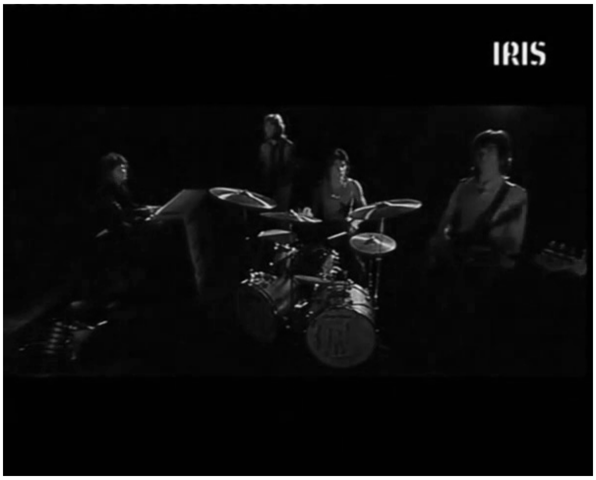

Figure 5: Film still of the New Trolls performing 'Il nulla e la luce' in *Terzo Canale – Avventura a Montecarlo* (Paradisi, 1970)

established the live album as a successful marketable format (see the next section) that the necessity for suitable audiovisual means started to be manifest.

One would assume that the arrival of progressive rock on to the Italian music scene from the late 1960s might have affected the modes of live staging in film. This is true only in part. The inclusion of progressive rock bands in musical films certainly brought a new kind of psychedelic imagery to performance stagings and a mutation of the *musicarello* framework, but this rarely translated into an emphasis on liveness — quite the contrary, in fact. The increasing importance of the LP album format favoured ingenious visual depictions of performance that ventured into psychedelic "places of the mind", as evinced by the visionary settings of Freedom's diegetically performed soundtrack in *Attraction* (*Nerosubianco*, Tinto Brass, 1979) (Fig. 4). Likewise, the performative space of the New Trolls' soundtrack in the film *Terzo canale. Avventura a Montecarlo* (Third Channel: Adventure in Montecarlo, Giulio Paradisi, 1970), is highly conceptual: the band performs the original soundtrack of the film from a visualized "somewhere-else",

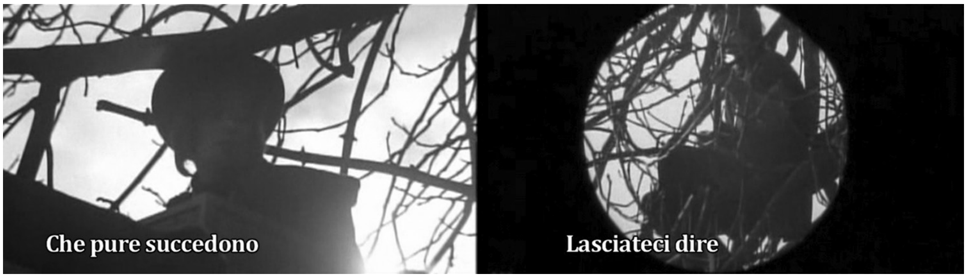

Figure 6: Film stills of Freedom performing 'The Better Side' in *Attraction* (Brass, 1969)

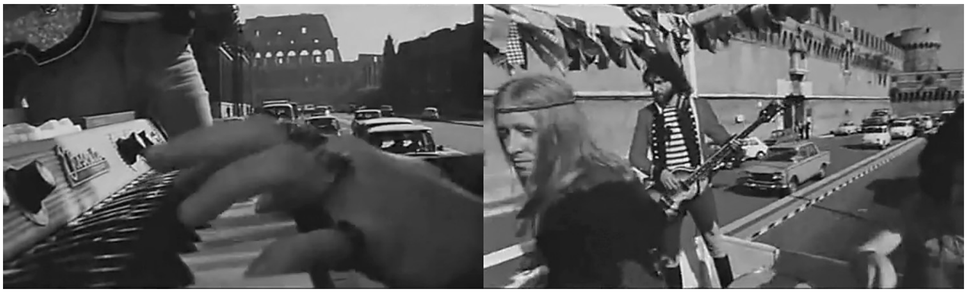

Figure 7: Film stills of The Trip performing 'Travellin' Soul' in *Terzo Canale – Avventura a Montecarlo* (Paradisi, 1970)

separate from the film's diegesis, halfway in-between an Andy Warhol-influenced, live multimedia setting and the Cinebox aesthetics (Fig. 5).[31]

Still, in contrast with what had happened before 1968, performance is no longer treated as an autonomous entity detached from the films' story-world but is rather intertwined with it. Often set in public, open spaces, performance takes on a symbolic force in which a community recognizes itself desiring for new kinds of existential experiences. This is all the more apparent when the open-air staging is imaginative, evidently aimed at upending the usual order of everyday life.[32] In *Attraction*, Freedom play in the bucolic setting of Hyde Park while the main female character pursues her free-love fantasies (Fig. 6), while in *Terzo Canale* The Trip play in their uncovered van while driving around the streets of Rome (Fig. 7).

*Terzo canale* deserves further attention for its deep connection to a historical concert like the Caracalla Pop festival. Eddie Ponti's recollection provides a precious testimony of the *literally* cross-media origins of the Caracalla Pop festival, in which the film is not (just) a document of the live event but constitutes the actual pretext around which the event itself was set up:

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[31] The Cinebox was the Italian video-jukebox concurrent of the Scopitone.

[32] The influence of psychedelic films such as *The Magical Mystery Tour* (Bernard Knowles and The Beatles, 1967) is self-evident in both these examples.

> Meanwhile we had made a deal with Radio Montecarlo, with a very famous record company and an equally famous film company to produce a film which would include all of us: Trip (the main characters), Four Kents, Jody Clark, New Trolls, Primitives, Mal, Sheyla, Ricchi e Poveri and your humble servant. In order to set up the exterior shooting with an oceanic crowd we endorsed the idea of a guy who at the time looked rather crazy to us but who would later reveal to be the cleverest: Giovanni Cipriani. This way the first open-air Italian festival was born: a massive gathering of people at the Caracalla Baths, and us performing on a trailer truck (we could not even imagine those pharaonic stages that would later become the norm).[33]

*Terzo canale* consists of a sort of pastiche of a *musicarello*, a psychedelic promotional movie and a concert movie – all combined with references to the Italian *poliziottesco* genre, road movies, underground culture, and (perhaps too much) more. The film's odd storyline revolves around an adventurous and unlikely road trip to Montecarlo, where The Trip are expected to perform. Incidentally, the location where the band ends up is none other than the Caracalla Pop Festival (while Montecarlo is, of course, the name of the radio station that originally broadcast the event). In this chaotic mishmash there is room for both a parody of and a sincere homage to the concert movie genre. When the band arrives at the concert venue for the sound-check, the off-frame sound of the microphone-tester's voice — a direct quotation of the sound-check scene from the *Woodstock* film (Michael Wadleigh, 1970) — can be heard as a caricature of a psychedelic experiment with tape delay. On the other hand, the post-synchronization between the visual footage of the Caracalla concert and The Trip's album track 'Fantasia' stands out as a genuine attempt to conjure up an effect of liveness that was indebted to the contemporary explosion of the concert film genre abroad. The (post-synchronized) Caracalla live set dominates the final part of the film (Fig. 8); the carefree irony that pervaded the whole first part of the movie is no longer allowed: the prog-rock live experience has become the performative core of the cinematic experience. This film aptly testifies how the cultural imagery of the rock event — having reached Italy cinematically, via the contemporary Anglo-American concert movie genre — was inextricably blended with the rise of a live concert culture in the country.

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[33] Eddie Ponti, from *Nuovo Sound* 11 (March 1975), as quoted in Pescetelli, *Roma beat*, p. 236. For more on the Caracalla Pop Festival, see ivi, pp. 236–49. English translation by the authors.

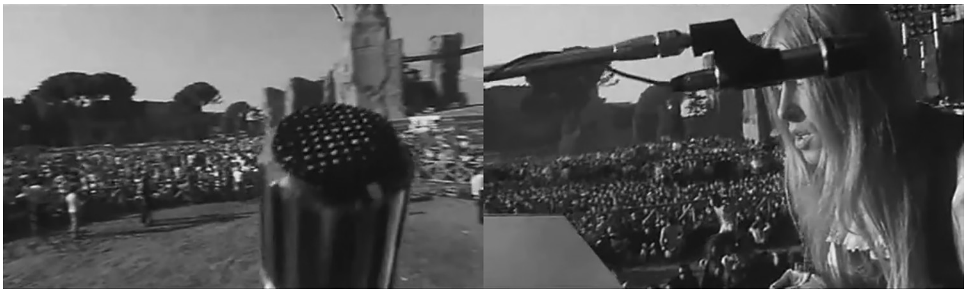

Figure 8: Film stills of The Trip performing ‘Fantasia’ at the Caracalla Pop Festival in *Terzo Canale – Avventura a Montecarlo* (Paradisi, 1970)

### *Hearing the Crowds: The Audience as Co-protagonist in the Live Outdoor Concert Album*

One of the first examples of a live album set in an outdoor space ever released in Italy is *Dal vivo. Bologna 2 settembre 1974* (RCA International, 1975), documenting the performances of singer-songwriters Lucio Dalla, Francesco De Gregori, Maria Monti and Antonello Venditti at the national annual meeting of the Italian Communist Party (Festival Nazionale dell’Unità). The cover of the album, showing a filtered picture of the crowd attending the event, already calls our attention to the concert as an opportunity for collective empowerment, a moment in which popular music stars are ‘elevated to the position of avatars and spokesmen of the counterculture’.[34] As already noted at the end of the previous section with reference to the close of *Terzo Canale*, in this album too the imagery of the live event is mediated first of all by a string of concert films that were produced in the Anglo-American market in the second half of the 1960s, and which provided a model for the social and cultural reception of the rock concert.

By evoking a wide-open space, *Dal vivo. Bologna 2 settembre 1974* testifies to the sheer physicality of the performers facing thousands of people, transforming the concert into an act of symbolic engagement in socio-political causes. Large spaces and crowds do not easily allow for rarefaction and subtleties in the strictly musical delivery of the performance; instead they call for violent contrasts and unexpected turns in the action, even at the risk of seeming raw and unrefined. Improvisation, also in its symbolic valence of extemporaneous collaboration between a performer and the audience, is another key component in such kinds of aural representation of the live show. In the first track of *Dal vivo. Bologna 2 settembre 1974*, Lucio Dalla’s ‘Abcdefg’, the sparse scatting of the singer in the song's central part literally emerges from the crowd's buzz; thus begins the process that transforms a track lasting less than three minutes in its studio recording into an exercise of virtuosity and collective improvisation of more than eight minutes. The feel of participation in the act of music-making is aurally and symbolically acknowledged in a rendition of the live performance in which the hierarchical distinction between the performer and the audience is programmatically disrupted.

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[34] Norma Coates, ‘If Anything, Blame Woodstock. The Rolling Stones: Altamont, December 1969’, in *Performance and Popular Music: History, Place and Time*, ed. by Ian Inglis (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 59.

A second example is 'Caos (II parte)', from Area's *Event '76*, released by Cramps in 1979, but recorded during a concert at the University of Milan on 27 October 1976. The same track was released on the LP *Maledetti* [Damned] (Cramps, 1976) in a much shorter studio performance: the live version was actually split between the two sides of the LP and has a total duration of more than thirty minutes. As the liner notes written by the band's vocalist Demetrio Stratos clarify, 'Caos (II parte)' is a highly structured form of chance process in which 'every 90" the improvisation is forcefully varied following the change in the emotional state that each musician has chosen and is trying to interpret. [...] the basic function is therefore totally liberating, it does not aim to teach or demonstrate anything, but tries to overcome the differences between music and life'.[35] In the live version of the same track the same structure takes on a process of expansion: as heard on the first side of *Event '76* the track flows through a very similar sequence of improvisational situations with respect to the record, but their individual duration is nearly doubled, with the result that the first part of the track lasts about 20 minutes. At the end of this sequence, the audience claps as if the performance of the "song" has reached its end, but the track continues on the second side of the record for another 9 minutes; this second part of the piece consists of three different improvisational situations based on elements not previously heard on the studio recording. Improvisation in public performative situations requires more time to be developed and to grow from the shared "vibes" of the musicians and the audience. The growing duration of the songs in the live show also works as a critique of mass culture embedded in the record as a product of the recording studio: 'The "live" album frequently is judged positively if the increased "presence" signified by it is perceived as invigorating the studio-produced original or approximating the "aura" of non-mediated performance'.[36] The more the live performance departs from the studio track, the more the experience of the live show is valued for its uniqueness and acknowledges the contribution of the audience in the act of music-making.

The interaction between performers and audiences became a key feature in live albums documenting concerts in non-mainstream genres such as progressive rock, singer-songwriters and avant-garde, improvised music. Even though they do not always present live shows in outdoor spaces, they nevertheless evoke the same atmosphere and the sense of collective engagement highlighted above. This is especially evident when the recordings include a spoken introduction to the songs by the main singer (or his/her thanking the audience at the end of each song), a detail that, as we noted above, was lacking in records set in indoor spaces, such as clubs. These introductory fragments of conversation often expand on the background or the context of the songs, or just include some small talk between the performers onstage and the (collective) entity of the audience, creating a sense of intimacy and inclusion that would be unthinkable when listening to the albums analysed in the second section of this article. By recovering another "para-performative" aspect of the live show, such details also convey the impression of listening "on location".

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[35] English translation by the authors.

[36] Wurtzler, 'The Microphone Was Turned Off', p. 94.

Some other examples of this kind can be heard in the above-mentioned *Dal vivo. Bologna 2 settembre 1974*, as well as in Premiata Forneria Marconi's *Live in U.S.A.* (Numero Uno, 1974), New Trolls' *Live* (Magma, 1976), Francesco Guccini and Nomadi's *Album Concerto* (EMI, 1979). In the latter example, each song is preceded by a short presentation by the lead singers, interspersing the show with short stories about their life on tour, their choices regarding the set list, and occasional puns and jokes. The fact that the album documents two shows in venues that are very close to the home towns of Francesco Guccini and most of the Nomadi (respectively the Club 77 in Pavana and the Kiwi Club in Modena, Emilia Romagna) favoured their framing as particularly "authentic" examples of live shows in which the audience's participation and real-time feedback acquire a special flavour. The connection between the band on stage and the crowd in the pit acquires a political valence, first of all, where this relationship was instead programmatically downplayed, favouring a participative approach to a collective effort towards the reconfiguration of established social roles. At the same time, the collaboration with the crowd in the moment of music-making, and its inclusion within the performative space aurally represented in the record, emphasize the potential for the performance to be a transformative experience for those who attend the live show. Since such transformation takes place in a public space, it opens up symbolic spaces for the catharsis of society as a whole.

## *Conclusion*

Our focus on staging has stressed the relevance of spatial and relational configurations of performance as symbolic nodes for social and ideological debate. The critique of mass culture or the celebration of the status quo, the detachment or absorption of everyday life within art, the private or public nature of the performative venue, the hierarchical or collaborative attitude in the relationship between the performers and the audience are the main axes along which the representation of live performance developed in Italy in the scrutinized period. A crucial role in the "staging" of the para-performative elements of the live events portrayed in cinema and on record is played by the 'performance registers'[37] involving the performer, the audience and the technology at the moment of the performance; in this respect, sets of conventions related to the divide between mainstream and non-mainstream acts, their associated performative venues and spaces, and the specific kinds of intermedia experience they afford, can be fleshed out.

The examples we covered highlight how a "liveless media culture" and a "culture of mediatized liveness" — though subjected to different agendas according to the specific audiences targeted and individual authorial attitudes — were highly intertwined in Italy in the 1960s and the 1970s, with a prevalence of the former in the pre-1968 period and a strengthening of the latter in the post-1968 period. Over this watershed, the pop recording industry started to explore the market of live albums with increasing attention: the number of live albums grew considerably between 1968 and 1979, according to a trend that did not seem to privilege specific music genre patterns over others.[38] As for television — though the majority of music programmes continued to be based on playback (with the famous exception of the Festival di Sanremo) — a cautious inclusion of live music acts can be detected in those years, especially in such programmes as the pioneering *Senza rete*,[39] in the growing broadcast of summer music contexts such as *Cantagiro* and in the above-mentioned rare broadcasts of independent free festivals. At the other end of the liveness spectrum, cinema seems to have allowed for a timid transformation of the status of live performance at the turn of 1968. In staying anchored to post-synchronization techniques (for obvious technological reasons), it still transitioned from a clear neutralization of musical performance to a more ideologically loaded treatment of rock music acts.

Emerging from this initial survey is the status of youth culture in Italy at that time as a contested field of cultural production where antagonistic images of the political, the social, the present and future state of the nation were proposed, negotiated and exploited for public consumption.[40] It is our hope that pinpointing popular music performance as a cultural node in a specific socio-political context may constitute a way to interrelate separate investigations into different media and reciprocally illuminate their respective agencies.

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[37] Jem Kelly, 'Pop Music, Multimedia, and Live Performance'. In *Music, Sound and Multimedia. From the Live to the Virtual*, ed. by Jamie Sexton (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 105–20 (p. 112).

[38] According to the statistics extracted from the Discogs database for this research, during the 1960s and the 1970s the number of live recording releases on the Italian market proportionally far outnumbered even that of US/UK record production. While in the latter national contexts, the presence of live records peaked in the 1960s and remained steady during the 1970s, in Mediterranean Europe (France, Spain and Italy) the trend continued to grow at a remarkable rate also in later decades.

[39] The audience was encouraged to understand the title of the show, literally meaning "without net", as "without the safety-net of playback". The programming of the show followed a monographic criterium: each episode featured one or in some cases two pop artists or bands accompanied by the resident TV-studio orchestra. Curiously, the first director of *Senza Rete* was the same Enzo Trapani who had directed the film *Highest Pressure* just a few years before; the film itself was a spin-off of the TV programme *Alta pressione* (High Pressure), directed by Trapani in 1962. The transformation of this influential TV director's attitude toward liveness over the space of only a few years, as reflected in these three different audiovisual artefacts, is a subject that would be worth considering in greater depth in its own right.

## *Endnote*

This article brings together two independent papers presented by the authors at the one-day symposium 'To Each Their Own Pop' (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan) on 23 October 2017. The two papers respectively dealt with popular music performance in Italian record production (Bratus) and film (Corbella). The authors are equally responsible for the overall conception and outcome of this article and co-wrote each part of it. For the purposes of research evaluation, the credit for each section may be ascribed as follows: *Introduction* (Corbella – Bratus); *Live(less)ness in Filmed Popular Music Performance before '68* (Corbella); *The Live Album as Intermedium* (Bratus); *Staging Large Venues* (Corbella); *Hearing the Crowds* (Bratus); *Conclusion* (Bratus – Corbella).

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[40] Concerning this topic, a thorough account of the relationship between mass culture and the Communist Party in the Italian cinema industry can be found in Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943-91* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

# The Production of Liveness: Television Concerts on Danish Television (1964-1978)

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## *Abstract*

This chapter investigates the development of audiovisual media through the prism of popular music performance on television, as it developed in the rich music environment around and within the Danish Broadcasting Company (DBC) during the 1960s and 1970s. The focus is on the relation between the institutional setting and the preferred program formats' visualization of music. On the one hand, music on television influenced the relationship between musical genres and visual (re)presentations, and helped to shape the (changing) visual genre conventions. On the other, generational discussions of music programming, choice of repertoire and not least how the various concert formats were (or were not) linked to a notion of liveness can be seen as a changing agent for the institutional approach to audiovisuality. The study draws on archival television program material and interviews with former employees from DCB, and discusses television concerts as the prevailing programming ideal for Danish television in the period 1964–1978.

## *Rock Culture on Television — A Biased History*

In March 1977, the nationally acclaimed Danish rock band, Gasolin', performed in the last episode of the popular and long-running television program series *Musikhjørnet* (The Music Corner, DR, 1970–1977). On Saturday evening during prime time, they performed alongside a variety of other acts such as the Danish Radio Chamber Orchestra and a boy scouts' choir, intertwined with interviews with artists as well as live audience members.

Gasolin's two tunes were performed in play back. It was the first and only time during the show's existence that any group was allowed to use play back for their performance. Gasolin' used this opportunity of live transmission as they played their first song, 'This Is My life', to make fun of the televised concert format and of classical performance conventions, exchanging instruments and, for example, borrowing the chamber orchestra's harp while acting with overtly exaggerated gestures and mimicking opera singers. By doing so, Gasolin' distanced themselves both from the concept of television performance and from the attempt to break down the boundary between different musical genres, which was the cornerstone of *Musikhjørnet*. This live broadcast series had run more or less regularly since 1970 with music performance as its core, presenting many upcoming as well as established (primarily Danish) artists across various music genres who performed for a live studio audience, and insisting on addressing musicians and audiences across these genres and across these professional levels in a common language. This incident introduces key discussions that are central to the argument of this article.

On the one hand, this episode confirms well-known anecdotes of rebellious rock performances on television, in which live music performance is used to extrapolate an uncomfortable relation between subversive popular music and conventional television entertainment. Dismissive conclusions, such as the idea that 'the effect of fitting rock'n'roll into a medium like television is to make it safe, to deprive it some of its significance',[1] continuously haunt the combination of music and television, and subsequently the history of popular music on screen is often seen through the prism of avoidance, provocation and scandal. Emphasizing how inspiring musical experience has often been associated with the television screen, Keith Negus quotes the rock critic John Walsh remembering Jimi Hendrix' performance in *The Lulu Show* (BBC, 4 January 1969) as an example of one such memorable programme, exactly because it 'brought the inherent anarchy of rock music into the living room'.[2] This experience was made possible by the live transmission of much early television, and thanks to the conceptualization of television in early popular music studies as toothless entertainment. In his historical account of BBC's *Top of the Pops* (1964–2006), Paul Fryer explains the issue of lip syncing, as the music

> was to be portrayed as safe and deodorized; the packaging of that music also had to be shown as harmless, a process requiring constant supervision. The insistence on miming served that purpose, restricting the possible occurrence of physical and lyrical spontaneity, the loss of control by the show.[3]

The need for harmlessness relates to the very idea of television entertainment. As formulated by John Mundy in his historical overview of popular music on screen, the shows that introduced rock'n'roll on American television were

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[1] Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock 'n 'Roll* (London: Constable, 1983), p. 153.
[2] Keith Negus, 'Musicians on Television: Visible, Audible and Ignored', *Journal of the Royal Music Association* 131.2 (2006), 310–30, (p. 317).
[3] Paul Fryer, 'Everybody's on Top of the Pops: Popular Music on British Television (1960–1985)', *Popular Music and Society*, 21.3 (1997), 153–71 (p. 166).

> catering for what was still regarded within the entertainment business as a largely undifferentiated audience, and served to perpetuate a definition of popular music which, whilst it included country music as well as black artists like Nat King Cole, was essentially targeted at white, northern, urban tastes.[4]

Subsequently, the episode reflects ideas of authenticity and rebellion. Such stories of provocative television performances can be seen as an example of what Sarah Thornton has described as a ‘dogged ideological opposition’ between subcultures and the media.[5] Media scandals has been seen as a crucial part of the ‘seductive *modus operandi* of popular music’,[6] and, as exemplified by The Beatles’, The Rolling Stones’ and The Doors’ performance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* (CBS, 1948–1971), television becomes a main location for the unfolding of such scandals.[7]

On the other hand, the episode shows that the story of rock on television obviously is more complex than this. The urge to use playback in this situation was not a restriction made by the broadcasters. On the contrary, it was a condition set by the band in order to participate, a condition that, according to producer Marianne Albrechtslund’s recollection, did not suit the production team but was accepted since the participation of Gasolin’ had great symbolic value for the program’s intention to bring together high-quality performances from both high culture and popular culture, and to make this last program in the series ‘something special’. And this provocative performance was perhaps the only one of its kind in the history of the show. In other instances, the urge to provoke came from within this DBC itself, such as when the producer and host in a program on the music of *The Pack* (27 January 1978) announced in the introduction that ‘for all the moralists watching, who are waiting for something to be upset about, I promise you that it will come at the end of the program’ and eventually spelled out the number to call in order to file a viewer complaint. One might speak of entangled histories, as television and popular music emerged and simultaneously in Denmark, and just as music has played a pivotal role in the development of DBC, television broadcasts of music help to legitimize rock(’n’roll) as “serious” music.

Others have disclosed this bias when writing history, demonizing television in rock mythology. Norma Coates, for example, shows how the scholarly emphasis on censorship neglects the fact that Elvis, prior to his famously restricted performance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* (6 January 1957), in which he was only shown from the waist up, had performed several times on television under far less restrictive conditions.[8] In her comparison of *Top of the Pops* and ITV´s *The Chart Show* (Channel 4, 1986–1989), Sarah Thornton recognizes the way in which different programme formats called for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between mainstream and niche, pointing towards how the aesthetics of *The Chart Show* made it sufficiently narrowcast to escape the negative symbolization of mainstream television.[9] ‘To hear music is to see it performed, on stage, with all its trappings’, Simon Frith suggests,[10] and investigating music on television relies on this idea that music as well as television are inherently audiovisual phenomena. This article takes on this line of enquiry, acknowledging the moments of growing interest in the various ways in which television has played a role in spreading and developing rock and other popular music (subgenres.[11]

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[4] John Mundy, *Popular Music on Screen. From Hollywood Musical to Music Video* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 184.

[5] Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1995), p. 116.

[6] Javier Santiago-Lucerna, ‘Pushin’ it to the Limit. Scandals and Pop Music’, in *Media Scandals*, ed. by James Lull and Stephen Hinerman (New York: Columbia University Press 1998), p. 24.

[7] For the negotiation of The Rolling Stones’, The Doors’ and Bob Dylan’s (missing) appearances on that show in relation to television’s production ethics, see Ian Inglis, ‘*The Ed Sullivan Show* and the (Censored) Sounds of the Sixties’, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 29.4 (2006), 558–75.

Finally, the episode illustrates a transition point for popular music performance on Danish Television. As a one-channel public service broadcasting monopoly, DBC was the sole provider of daily audiovisual media until as late as 1988.[12] Hence, the discussions, ideals and concerns around and about the development of new audiovisual formats were therefore somewhat different to the commercial American and multi-channel British contexts of much research on television music, even if the overall development lines share certain characteristics. Coates discusses rock’n’roll performances of the 1950s, Thornton comments on music television of the 1980s. I suggest that the presentation of rock on Danish television from the mid-1960s and throughout the 1970s provides an example of a vibrant relationship between the developing genre of rock and public service television. This is a version of what VanCour describes as ‘the continual reinvention of long-standing formats such as […] broadcast symphonies’,[13] which in the context of this article is labelled “television concerts”.

While popular entertainment music (or “light music”, sporadically including rock’n’roll) was a constitutive part of broad television entertainment from its inception in the 1950s, jazz and beat became key signature for the development of a targeted youth programming in the mid-1960s. Around 1968, rock culture became television program content in its own right under the label "rhythmic music" and these television concerts remained central to the programming even as a change in preferences in favour of a return to a broader notion of popular music became prevailing around 1977–1978. By then, the prevailing ideal of 'genre-less high-quality music performance', epitomized by *Musikhjørnet*'s urge to break down established barriers between different music genres, and the process of legitimizing progressive rock as an art form triggered new program formats, institutional changes, technological developments, new musical sounds and performing ideals. These paved the way for a less "serious" conception of television entertainment, adopting a more inclusive attitude towards the commercial and competitive aspects of music.[14] This change was underlined by the fact that at the same time DBC re-entered the Eurovision Song Contest, from which it had withdrawn in 1966.

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[8] Norma Coates, ‘Elvis from the Waist Up and Other Myths: The Impact of 1950s Music Television on the Masculinization of Rock and Roll’, in *Medium Cool: Music Video/Music Television/MTV*, ed. by Roger Beebe and Jason Middleton, Duke University Press 2007, pp. 226–51.

[9] Thornton, p. 125.

[10] Simon Frith, *Performing Rites. On the Value of Popular Music* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 211.

[11] Cf. research literature such as James Deaville, ‘A Discipline Emerges’, in *Music in Television*, ed. by James Deaville (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 7–33; Coates, ‘Elvis from the Waist Up and Other Myths’; Keith Negus and John Street, ‘Introduction’, *Popular Music*, special issue on ‘Music and Television’, 21.3 (2002), 245–48; Anja Mølle Lindelof, ‘Look! It’s Rock’n’Roll! How Television Participated in Shaping the Visual Genre Conventions of Popular Music’, *Music, Sound and the Moving Image*, 1.2 (2007), 141–59; Simon Frith, ‘Look! Hear! The Uneasy Relationship of Music and Television’, *Popular Music*, 21.3 (2002), 249–76.

[12] For those living close enough to the Swedish and German borders, television channels from these countries were available.

[13] Shawn VanCour, ‘TV Music and the History of Television Sound’, in Deaville, pp. 57–79 (p. 69).

Having sketched out positions in existing research on popular music on television and hinted at characteristics of the specific Danish, historical context, the rest of this article will trace how the DBC engaged with "rhythmic music" on television from 1964 to 1978. "Rhythmic music" is a general and pragmatic term that has been

> used in several Danish cultural and artistic battles to delimit and legitimize different kinds of so-called "serious" popular music. The term was coined in the local jazz debates in the 1930s, further developed in the late 1960s and in the 1970s when rock fought to become artistically respectable and became fully institutionalized in the 1980s when the Rhythmic Music Conservatory opened in the Danish capital, Copenhagen. Rhythmic music is an ideologically informed genre rather than one based on specific stylistic traits and has greatly influenced the organization and values of Danish musical culture since the 1970s.[15]

Based on archival television programme material and conversations with former employees, and in order to understand the ways in which this specific combination of an institutional framework and aesthetic considerations has helped to define the audiovisuality of rock culture in a Danish context, the questions this article raises are: at the level of production, how were these new music genres inserted into the production mentality of the institution and discussed by producers and executives? At the textual level, how was music presented and performed and what kind of ideological negotiations can be found in this programme output? To do so, I will start by sketching out the importance of liveness for the production mentality of the DBC.

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[14] For a detailed account of this historical development, see Anja Mølle Lindelof, *Rockens rulletekster. Populærmusik på dansk tv (1951–1988)* (The Roll-up Titles of Rock'n'Roll. Popular Music on Danish Television, 1951–1988), Ph.D. dissertation (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2007).

[15] Morten Michelsen, 'Rhythmic Music', in *Encyclopaedia of Popular Music of the World*, vol. XI, ed. by David Horn, John Shepherd and Paolo Prato, p. 644–45. The idea of "the serious" is central for the conception of rock as different from pop. See *e.g.* Keir Keightley, 'Reconsidering Rock', in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. by Simon Frith, Will Straw and John Street (Cambridge University Press 2001), pp. 109–42.

## *DBC and Liveness*

Music performance is inextricably bound to the institutional context in which it appears, and the way in which popular music is presented, visualized and performed relies on the prevailing production culture.[16] Institutional analysis serves as a framework to understand the rich music environment around and within the national public service monopoly of the DBC during the 1960s and 1970s. This includes the overall programming policies and organizational structures as well as its production mentality — *i.e.* the dispositions, values, and working "practical consciousness" of people at various points within the production process. Production mentality concerns the cultural and social exchanges inside the organization, it can be defined through the notion of cultural intermediaries[17] and includes the belief that institutional structures and beliefs are not fixed, but rather dynamic and continuously developing in exchange with society.[18]

That live music has been pertinent to the production mentality of DBC should come as no surprise. Live music has been an integral part of public service broadcasting corporations in Western Europe from the very outset. The very notion of "the live" is historically contingent, as it relies on processes of mediatization, and it developed alongside early radio broadcasts.[19] The fact that most broadcasting corporations did establish and keep their own ensembles was just as much a result of the various interests subsumed in a production mentality favouring live music, whether played by "in-house" radio orchestras or otherwise hosted and produced under circumstances controlled by the broadcasting corporations. In fact, many radio orchestras lived on long after records became the primary source for music consumption.[20] Even if 'the many desirable features of liveness'[21] can be described as a specific quality of broadcast technologies, the tension between live and recorded ("mechanical") music was central at a time when early radio developed a sharp institutional positioning in favour of live music broadcasts.[22] This it remained so, even as the amount of recorded music overgrew live music on air. In Denmark this happened in 1963, with DBC's launch of a third radio channel – the first broadcast channel to address a specific audience group, targeting especially young people through the use of music.[23] Subsequently, by the mid-1960s the notion of liveness was no longer a question of technology alone, rather it also emphasized an "eventness" (whether of television or of musical performance), that included the sociability of the event as a combination of aesthetic, commercial and social interests.[24] The discussion of television concerts taps into this, because television — "radio for the eyes", as it was labelled just 30 years after radio made it possible to listen to music that was visibly detached from its apparatus of production — grew out of that same institution and became, without much ado, subject to the same jurisdiction and public service ideals. Ideals based on a "transmission aesthetics", most explicitly in the visual puritanism of television news, but also more broadly as a process of naturalizing the new medium as a channel for dissemination,[25] even if most music television actually came from studio productions.

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[16] See Diane Crane, *The Production of Culture: Media and the Urban Arts* (London: Sage, 1992) and John Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

[17] The term production mentality is coined by John Corner, *Critical Ideas in Television Studies* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press 1999), p. 71. For elaborations on the Bordieuan idea of cultural intermediaries, see Keith Negus, 'The Work of Cultural Intermediaries and the Enduring Distance Between Production and Consumption', *Cultural Studies* 16.4 (2002), 501–15.

[18] André Lecours, 'New Institutionalism: Issues and Questions', in *New Institutionalism: Theory and Analysis*, ed. by André Lecours (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 3–25 (p. 7).

[19] Philip Auslander, 'Digital Liveness: A Historico-Philosophical Perspective', *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art,* 34.3 (2012), 3–11.

[20] As late as 1963, the Danish Radio Big Band and an experimental jazz and fusion orchestra were established inhouse DBC. See also Anja Mølle Lindelof, 'Why Do Radios Have Orchestras? Understanding the Production Mentality of DR through the Case of the Danish National Chamber Orchestra', in *Tunes for all? Radio, music and relations*, ed. by Morten Michelsen *et al.* (Aarhus:

The television studio and its technical staff were readily available. This made possible, for example, the launch of the first regular program series presenting rock('n'roll) and beat in concert, *Klar i studiet!* (*Ready in the studio!*, 1965–66). The show reflected the local, national music scene, explicitly focusing on music performance by local and a few international (mainly British) acts in live, on stage performances. It was produced in the late evening hours when the television studio was otherwise not in use, and as an example of the engaged spirit among the television staff, sound technician Bjarne Hermansen remembers how he and other technicians often helped the young musicians repair and improve their

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Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2018), pp. 251–68.

[21] Andrew Crisell, *Liveness and Recording in the Media* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2012).

[22] See Steens Kaargaard Nielsen, 'The Cautionary Tale of Emil Holm and the Gramophone', in Michelsen *et al.*, pp. 259–83. According to Auslander, 'Digital Liveness', the earliest example of the use of the word 'live' in relation to performance appears in the BBC Yearbook for 1934 and reflects listeners' complaint that the amount and use of recorded material was "too liberal".

[23] As a reaction to Radio Mercur, a private, commercial radio station broadcasting from a ship in international waters outside of Copenhagen (1957–1963). Legislation made Radio Mercur come to a stop in 1963, and instead DBC launched a new, third, channel. A story that is in many ways similar to the challenges made to the BBC by Radio Caroline from 1964. See David Simonelli, 'BBC rock music programming on radio and television and the progressive rock audience (1967–1973)', *Popular Music History*, 2.1 (2007), 99–100.

[24] See *e.g.* Martin Barker, *The Remarkable Rise of Live Cast* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan 2013), Paul Sanden, *Liveness in modern music* (London and New York: Routledge 2013), Matthew Reason and Anja Mølle Lindelof (eds.), *Experiencing Liveness in Contemporary Performance: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

[25] See Henrik Søndergaard, *DR i tv-konkurrencens tidsalder* (DBC in the era of competing television channels) (København: Samfundslitteratur, 1994) for the broad history of DBC.

music gear. This became even more apparent as DCB's television production grew; it became physically detached from radio and the amount of broadcast hours rose markedly: 'Now we have the studios to be used, and then we had to make a studio program. It was also often cheaper to use the studio, because we had the technical staff prepared for it', as producer Carsten Fischer explains, and — even if several producers in dialogue emphasise OB-transmissions as their favourites — studio-produced television concerts became the norm. The impetus for *Musikhjørnet* was to fill a newly introduced timeslot from 6 to 7 p.m., live from the studio and, accordingly, to present a content of "broader interest" — which was at least one of the reasons for including a variety of artists and amateurs performing classical, folk and beat.

The technical staff were organized in an independent department, in order to secure the highest possible professionalism in the production apparatus across the various program categories. This, on the other hand, complicated the possibility of building up more permanent teams around specific program series and the influence of specific program aesthetics on, for instance, the camera work. 'We were young, we were excited, and we could also excite the technicians, and it was really important to get them engaged', Per Møller Hansen explains, and both Edmondt Jensen, who became one of the leading producers of television concerts in the period, and Marianne Albrechtslund, producer of *Musikhjørnet*, emphasize the importance of this cooperation, explicitly addressing that the camera aesthetics was a joint venture between the producer and those behind the cameras. Marianne Albrechtslund describes this work as 'the inspiration of the moment. It was certainly about getting the good camera men, those who were responsive to the music in question and developed visual impressions from the music they heard'.

This focus on pragmatic spatial and material concerns as well as on technically high-quality productions has a certain explanatory power, but it cannot alone account for the specific puritanism of the television concerts. Another issue that was central to the production mentality was the perception of the television audience. Because of the non-commercial monopoly, targeting audiences was not an issue. Without a need to deliver audiences to advertisers, Danish television viewers could basically be conceived of as an undifferentiated audience, with only children's television as the exception. The politically mandated aim for the public service, to deliver programs "for everyone", was only implicitly defined, partly by the current and politically conditioned interpretation of the balance between the educational and the entertaining and partly due to by a silent re-production of the values and beliefs of the different production teams. Changing ideas about the criteria for good television entertainment are central to Danish broadcasting history, and for the period in question at least two developments are important in that regard. The first is that in 1966 there was a radical reorientation in the entertainment department, away from "popular entertainment" based on variety show with catchy tunes and relaxational purposes and towards entertainment that was explicitly socially and politically engaged — or to use the wording of the time: ‘Seriousness, attitude and opinions’. This was mainly due to a new head of television entertainment from 1966–1976, Niels Jørgen Kaiser. The other, partly related development was the affiliation of a new generation of producers due to increased airtime, who engaged with television and with the new musical sounds in different ways than the older generation of radio-trained television pioneers. The relatively few programs presenting beat and rock(’n’roll) until then had been produced in the children and youth department (B&U), launched in 1964, but from 1967–68, rock(‘n’roll) — now labelled jazz/beat — was departmentally “promoted” to television for adults. Production thus moved to the entertainment department, with its more prominent timeslots and larger budgets. According to Jensen, Kaiser explicitly argued that he wanted ‘us to be able to compete with the foreign producers and that is only possible, if you are allowed to try to work with the acclaimed, international artists’.

The first production was a television concert with The Doors (30 October 1968). The importance of new music interests among the staff is suggested by this anecdote told by Hansen: while the young, and (in relation to television production) in-experienced Edmondt Jensen was ecstatic about the possibility of producing The Doors in-house, the two more experienced music producers from the older generation, both passionate jazz fans were less enthusiastic, and they played dice to decide who had to produce the program (the loser of the game). In the years that followed, internationally renowned groups were occasionally presented in concert, including Country Joe & The Fish (30 April 1969), Led Zeppelin (18 May 1969), Randy Newman (8 February 1973) and Dr. Hook (11 April 1975). On a more regular basis jazz and beat formed an alliance resulting in a comprehensive broadcast series, *Jazz/Beat* (1969–73, produced by Edmondt Jensen and Per Møller Hansen) and drawing on the already well-established conventions for jazz on television, including a preference for television concerts — jazz/beat became its own content area. During these years, Copenhagen had a well-established jazz scene.

In B&U, on the contrary, the number of concerts decreased, partly due to the department’s rejection of the commercialization of youth culture, and popular music’s part in this. As an alternative, most music performed in programs led by B&U in the following years was written and performed by the hosts and other employees themselves — a situation which somewhat paradoxically in a broader historical view made DR the main contributor to the production and sale of music for children in Denmark.

## *Live in Concert*

And how did these negotiations behind the screen come across in the actual program output? Common for the majority of these programs and series, whether they belong to B&U, the entertainment department or the music department, is that they were focused on live music performances, produced live in the television studio. Television concerts might rely on one single band in concert or on the interchange of several shorter pieces by changing bands, thereby making the border between this latter form and the variety show format potentially fluid. What characterizes the television concert, though, is its transmission aesthetics, the way in which the performance as a live event is balanced with the urge to "let the music speak for itself". Describing his visual intentions, Edmondt Jensen states:

> I rarely used those wild camera pans that you often see today, I prefer to see the protagonist. I like extreme close-ups and I think television is a close-up medium. Especially when you picture people who are really good at what they are doing — and that's not anyone! Especially if you're lucky to cut to... if there is a significant solo going on and you hit it on the beat... That's just great! And it means taking chances. Of course, the fear of any producer is to cut to a soloist the moment he stops playing. That goes for the audience as well: to get the right clips in order to show their reaction.[26]

While the melodic and formal structures of the music define the visualization — simply speaking, you see what at any time seems to be the most prominent audible part — the quote clearly articulates a double consciousness in the production regarding the specific performance situation. On the one hand, the camera work privileges the television viewer through the use of visuals that allow for perspectives that are otherwise not possible at a concert. This is not exclusive to television concerts, but accounts for music films as well. For example, as suggested by Alessandro Bratus, *Pink Floyd: Live at Pompeii* (Adrian Maben, 1972) also uses extreme close-ups and other visual effects as a way to construct a privileged position for the viewer. The concert video constructs a textual combination of effects that "authenticates" the video for the cinematic viewers.[27] This is done through postproduction, but as many of the textual effects are the same in the live, edited television concert, the authentication is arguably not depended on the editing process. One the other hand, the concert audience is explicitly not television viewers; rather, they are understood as part of the performance as well. The productions were recorded live but most of them scheduled for broadcast later, and the presence of the live studio audience emphasizes the idea of liveness as an autopoietic feedback loop of bodily co-presence between audience and performers in the performance event.[28] As described by Karen Lury with regard to the role of the audience in shows like *Top of the Pops* and *Ready, Steady Go* (ITV, 1963–1966)*,* 'the audience's presence, their proximity and affective reaction was used to try to fill in the gap between the performer separated — in time and/

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[26] Interview with Edmondt Jensen (1943–2004), by the author (12 February 2004).

[27] Alessandro Bratus, 'In-between Performance and Mediatization: Authentication and (Re)-Live(d) Concert Experience', *Rock Music Studies*, 3.1 (2016), 41–61.

[28] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 38.

or space — from the television viewer'.[29] But while Danish television concerts, with a few exceptions, did integrate a live studio audience, it remains on the margin of the show, sitting rather than dancing, literally on the edge of the frame.

Another way of characterizing television concerts is by alluding to what they are not. One thing that is striking across the various programs is the lack of experiments with specific televisual elements. If not a regular break with emerging practices, then it was at least a deliberate choice to pursue an established format which developed independently of television but which had already been pursued regularly in the context of DBC, first and foremost for symphonic concerts but more lately also for jazz on radio as well as television. New formats for presenting music on television had started to develop as television slowly became part of everyday life during the late 1950s.[30] In particular, the highly popular programme series *Record Parade* (1957–63) investigated new television specific formats by lip syncing the artists' record hits in short music films. It included various music genres, presenting for example Tommy Steele and Cliff Richard, as well as their Nordic pendants Little Gerhard and Otto Brandenburg, and made early rock'n'roll become a part of the broader evening entertainment.[31] The mid-1960s, characterized by the search for media specific program formats in relation to television entertainment[32] as well as for classical music as in the case with television opera,[33] saw some formal experiments with popular music programming. B&U portrayed a popular band in the documentary *48 timer med Belli og Rivalerne* (*48 hours with Belli and the Rivals*, 30 April 1966), which was clearly inspired by the crazy comedy *A Hard Days Night* (Richard Lester, 1964), and it produced a handful programs in the 1968-season of *Toppop* (1967–69), in extraordinary outdoor locations. Within the entertainment department, a couple of studio performances were produced in 1967–1968 that experimented with scenography, kaleidoscopic lighting and unconventional, skewed camera angles, inspired by the psychedelic universe of the music played. It is worth noting that these productions were almost exclusively made by one specific producer from each of the two departments, pointing towards the relative freedom of individual choice — as long as it coordinates with the overall values of the department.

A second thing 'missing' is dance. This is noteworthy, not least when compared to *American Bandstand* (ABC, 1952–1987, Syndicated 1987–1989) or *Top of the Pops*, for instance, which even had its own dance troop; shows in which dance was an important element of the program content, and a way to construct and influence dance styles and consumption patterns.[34] *Ready in the Studio!* sought to create an interior and an atmosphere that 'imitated places where the young typically would go' with small café tables where invited young audiences were seated and interviewed, but there is no evidence that this included dance as well.[35] Its successor, *Toppop* did not have an audience in the studio. One of the very few programs from this period in which dance played a role, *Krobal* (*Dance at the Inn*, 1965–1970), had nothing to do with youth or with rock culture. On the contrary, it signalled old school television because it transmitted traditional dance and local community atmosphere from local inns and dancehalls around the country and because of its host, the grand old man of early television entertainment, Otto Leisner, who had also hosted *Pladeparade* (1957–1963). Interestingly, this was also one of the few shows that according to some of the sporadically available viewing figures had more viewers than the daily news. It was not until much later, especially with the launch of *Eldorado* (1983–84), that dance in connection to rock culture appeared as central to studio produced music entertainment. At that time, jazz/beat had turned into rock/pop as the prevailing genre label in relation to television entertainment, and DBC was preparing for the unavoidable television competition bound to come. Interesting in this regard are the many similarities between *Eldorado,* the first and highly popular hit list-based program — nationally praised for its use of new technologies and post-editing possibilities to create a new visual aesthetics for music on television — and the much earlier British program *Six-Five Special* (BBC, 1957–1958) as described by John Hill,[36] especially with regard to the programs' way of addressing its audience. They were both based on the popular music of their time, oriented towards the youth but with explicit strategies to appeal to various ages — and both were a result of the competition from other broadcasters to an established public service monopoly.

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[29] Karen Lury. *British Youth Television: Cynicism and Enchantment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), p. 63.

[30] Regular television broadcast began in Denmark in 1954.

[31] For a detailed analysis of the music performances of this show in relation to emerging audiovisual genre conventions, see Lindelof, "Look! It's Rock'n'roll!".

[32] Hanne Bruun, 'Tv-Underholdning' (Television Entertainment), in *Dansk Fjernsyn fra 1951-2008*, ed. by Stig Hjarvard (København: Samfundslitteratur, 2006), p. 230.

[33] Agnete Mei Hytten, 'Opera For Fjernsyn' (Opera For Television), in *Fluktuationer. Et Festskrift til Ib Nørholm*, ed. by Eva Hvidt *et al.* (Frederiksberg: MA Musik, 2001), pp. 139–57.

## *Concluding Remarks*

By way of the production mentality of Danish monopoly television during the 1960s and 1970s, the analysis of the television concert challenges traditional assumptions in popular music about television's institutional reluctance towards rock culture as it shows how tensions between divergent genre conventions and generational splits were just as operative inside the DBC as they might have been outside. Through its music broadcasts, DBC actively participated in positioning rock as culturally valuable, "serious music" and at the same time took part in the gendering of a rock discourse[37] and — through its emphasis on rhythmic music — in institutionalizing the rock/pop-split that became pertinent in the rock music history of the 20th century. As such, interest in Denmark's public service broadcasts of popular music is inextricably linked to a complexification of rock history[38] and its nuancing of the heroizing of rebellion, album canonization and sales figures in established rock historiography, in favour of an everyday presentation of music in audiovisual performance. The aesthetics and ethics of music production served to legitimate the new popular music genres with their changing names, including rock('n'roll) and beat under the umbrella genre label "rhythmical music", and to allude seriousness and quality through television concerts as the main TV format for popular music during this specific period, naturalizing the production apparatus of television in order to transmit seemingly universal ideals of live music performance.

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[34] See Fryer; and Mundy, p. 7.

[35] None of these programs have survived in the archive, so my knowledge of the show is based on interviews and remarks found in memoirs and newspapers.

[36] John Hill, 'Television and Pop: The Case of the 1950s', in *Popular Television in Britain*, ed. by John Corned (London: British Film Institute 1991), pp. 90–107.

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[37] Norma Coates, 'Filling in Holes', *Music, Sound and Moving Images*, 1.1 (2007), 21–5.

[38] See eg. Morten Michelsen, 'Histories and Complexities: Popular Music History Writing and Danish Rock', *Popular Music History*, 1.1 (2004), 19–36.

# Engaged Soundscapes: The Emotionalized Sound of Rainer Werner Fassbinder

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*Abstract*

The case study for my paper will be the late work of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, which dates from a time when the author's concern to provoke and explore new languages was reconfigured in a more mainstream and international manner, shaping a new way of imagining popular film (*Despair*, *Despair. Eine Reise ins Licht*, 1978; *The Marriage of Maria Braun, Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, 1979) and television production (*Berlin Alexanderplatz*, WDR, 1980). In his work with a stable team of technicians (with regard to the soundtrack, musician Peer Raben, editor Juliane Lorenz, and sound engineer Milan Bor), it may reasonably be claimed that he transformed the passionate explosion of the "long 1960s" into a mature mode of production ready to enter the 1980s and beyond and to reach into our times. In this paper I will explore the experiential dimensions of the soundscapes and the music, arguing that the advent and practice of sound-mixing in the 1970s, the way in which this was used to intensify the whole audiovisual experience in film and television fiction, played an important role in reconfiguring our reflexive consciousness of social relations and political issues as individualized and emotionalized.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the broad movement towards individual participation and physical involvement in political issues led media discourses to embrace experimental languages.[1] A number of filmmakers in Europe and in the USA began exploring the limits of classical film style, developing what David Bordwell labeled as intensified continuity.[2] Thenceforth, intensified cinematic conventions making use of a wide range of perceptual triggers to activate strong, emotionally driven responses were increasingly to become an ever more central trope in quality film and television production. Not by chance, in the late 1990s — following a wider trend, or "sensuous turn", in the humanities[3] — film scholars, too, began investigating emotions in film experience, gradually incorporating into their work tools from the psychology of emotions and the affective neurosciences.[4] My contribution will delve into this discussion, highlighting a still partially neglected area of interest in this context, the auditive dimension of our emotional involvement in film and the media.[5]

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[1] Christopher B. Strain, *The Long Sixties. America, 1955–1973* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

[2] Geoff King, *New Hollywood Cinema* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002); David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

The case study for my paper will be the late work of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, which dates from a time when the author's concern to provoke and explore new languages was reconfigured in a more mainstream and international manner, shaping a new way of imagining popular film (*Despair*, *Despair. Eine Reise ins Licht*, 1978; *The Marriage of Maria Braun, Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, 1979) and television production (*Berlin Alexanderplatz*, WDR, 1980). In his work with a stable team of technicians (with regard to the soundtrack, musician Peer Raben, editor Juliane Lorenz, and sound engineer Milan Bor), it may reasonably be claimed that he transformed the passionate explosion of the 'long 1960s' into a mature mode of production ready to enter the 1980s and beyond and to reach into our times. In this paper I will explore the experiential dimensions of the soundscapes and the music,[6] arguing that the advent and practice of sound-mixing in the 1970s, the way in which this was used to intensify the whole audiovisual experience in film and television fiction, played an important role in reconfiguring our reflexive consciousness of social relations and political issues as individualized and emotionalized.[7]

## *The Sensuous is Political*

German film productions had a notable impact on modern film narratives, contemporary matters of style and the very notion of authoring,[8] and it was a center of creative involvement in the "personal is political" debate in the

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[3] Phillip Vannini, Dennis Waskul and Simon Gottschalk, *The Senses in Self, Society, and Culture: A Sociology of the Senses* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

[4] Cfr. Murray Smith, *Film, Art, and the Third Culture. A Naturalized Aesthetics of Film* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[5] Core readings in recent literature: Annabel J. Cohen, 'Film Music from the Perspective of Cognitive Science', in *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*, ed. by David Neumeyer (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 96–130; Lars Kuchinke, Hermann Kappellhoff and Stefan Koelsch, 'Emotion and Music in Narrative Films: A Neuroscientific Perspective', in *The Psychology of Music in Multimedia*, ed. by Siu-Lan Tan, Annabel J. Cohen, Scott D. Lipscomb and Roger A. Kendall (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 118–38.

[6] *E.g.* Alf Gabrielsson, John Whaleyand John Sloboda, 'Peak Experiences in Music', in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology*, ed. by Suan Hallam, Ian Cross and Michael Thaut (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 745–58.

[7] Julie Brownlie, *Ordinary Relationships: A Sociological Study of Emotions, Reflexivity and Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[8] Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: A History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989).

1970s. The more "global" in today's film studies has tended to emphasize the cultural dynamics of the international and transnational relations of German film, pointing to its exemplariness in a changing European mediascape,[9] and a number of recent studies have reconsidered the classical works of the New German Cinema movement in this frame. Emotionalizing tactics have also been underlined by authors reinterpreting the whole modernist project and the role German film authors like Alexander Kluge assumed in it,[10] and in this context the centrality of operatic conventions and/or film music has been the subject of a substantial reassessment.[11]

In fact, within what used to be considered a fundamental new wave in European cinema —and taking for granted an interest in authors still working such as Werner Herzog and Wim Wenders — a central place in the debate around emotion and the cinema has also been given to Rainer Werner Fassbinder, whose work is currently the subject of an almost nostalgic process of recovery and reverence. In March 2018, one of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's early productions, a five-part TV miniseries called *Eight Hours Don't Make a Day* (*Acht Stunden sind kein Tag*, 1972-73), was given its U.S. premiere, introducing a new generation of American audiences to the prolific German director and actor, prompting an academic site like the Daily Jstor to ask 'Why do Rainer Werner Fassbinder's films still resonate?'[12] The concept of "resonance" will be central to our discussion, and several scholars have also been struck recently by the same question, stressing the different emotional aspects of his work: Stephanie Bird underscored the comic moments of the melodramatic, quasi masochistic narrative trajectories of Fassbinder's films;[13] Hermann Kappellhoff stressed the political value of the 'group choreography' of his early work;[14] Patrik Sjöberg delved into the more personal, autobiographical moments of his production, *e.g. Germany in Autumn*

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[9] Randall Halle, *German Film after Germany: Toward a Transnational Aesthetic* (Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Sabine Hake, 'German Cinema as European Cinema: Learning from Film History', *Film History*, 25.1–2 (2013), 110–17.

[10] *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination*, ed. by Forrest Tara (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).

[11] Caryl Flinn, *The New German Cinema*: *Music*, *History, and the Matter of Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Caryl Flinn, 'Undoing Act 5: History, Bodies and Operatic Remains in The Power of Emotion', in *Alexander Kluge*, pp. 211–40; Larson Powell, *The Differentiation of Modernism: Postwar German Media Arts* (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2013).

[12] Matthew Wills, 'Why Do Rainer Werner Fassbinder's Films Still Resonate?' <https://daily.jstor.org/why-do-rainer-werner-fassbinders-films-still-resonate> [accessed 30 June 2018]. Cfr. also Tony Pipolo, 'Straight from the Heart: Re-viewing the Films of Rainer Werner Fassbinder', *Cinéaste*, 29.4 (2004), 18–25.

[13] Stephanie Bird, 'The Funny Side of Fassbinder: From Melodramatic Vicious Circles to Comic Double Vision, *The Modern Language Review*, 105.4 (2010), 1087–104.

[14] 'In Fassbinder's early films, the staging of gestures causes the represented social behavior to appear like elements of a ceremonial liturgy, which leads all social forms of expression back to the desire and suffering of the individual'. Hermann Kappellhoff, 'The Distribution of Emotions: Fassbinder and the Politics of Aesthetics', *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory*, 86.3 (2011), 201–20 (p. 219).

(*Deutschland im Herbst*, 1978), with particular attention to the body of the author as an emotional marker — or, I would dare to say, 'sounding body';[15] Thomas Elsaesser, in his 2013 monograph, in which he re-evaluates the meaning of the Holocaust for postwar German films and culture, in offering a reconsideration of trauma theory today significantly cites a Fassbinder work, *The Third Generation* (*Die Dritte Generation*, 1979), as a central case study;[16] Heide Schlipphacke, too, explicitly interpreted Fassbinder's work as a conscious expression of the disquietude and fear of the post-war era, the 'age of anxiety'.[17] Trauma, pathos, melodrama, melancholia: Fassbinder, who still serves as a reference point for every queer biography of more contemporary filmmakers and/or for any more or less provocative critical discourse of resistance,[18] fosters research into the emotional side of experience, without prejudices or preconceptions. Thomas Elsaesser's thesis that, by positing the very bodily and scandalous presence of the director at its center — and regardless of exclusively gender-based readings —, Fassbinder's cinema blocked and opposed a capitalistic value system based on mere economic exchange (a theory put forward following the tenth anniversary of the director's death) is still both compelling and legitimate.[19]

## *The Intensified Body*

As a consequence of the above considerations, critics and researchers generally link the perceptually challenging visual style of Rainer Werner Fassbinder to a political vision, understanding his complex camera work as a means of escaping, or at least revealing, social constraint and monotony. Thomas Elsaesser, in the same 1994 volume mentioned above, described this issue canonically, as follows:

> The emphasis given to the looks lingering in the frames, the exchange of glances, the restless camera and the many close-ups of characters intently looking straight ahead out of the frame are clearly marked as excess, if only because so often, no narrative knowledge passes along the lines of sight thus traversing the space. Excess also, because of all the images with mirrors, windows, partitions, or the frequent compositions dominated by obstructions to vision, and because there is a virtual

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[15] Patrik Sjöberg, '"Ich Bin's, Fassbinder," or The Timing of the Self', in *The Autobiographical Turn in Germanophone Documentary and Experimental Film*, ed. by Robin Curtis and Angelica Fenner (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2014), pp. 277–96.

[16] Thomas Elsaesser, *German Cinema – Terror And Trauma: Cultural Memory Since 1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 189–214.

[17] Heidi Schlipphacke, 'The Future of Melancholia: Freud, Fassbinder, and Anxiety after War', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 52. 1 (2017), 6–21. Cfr. also Wystan Hugh Auden, *The Age of Anxiety: A Baroque Eclogue* (New York: Random House, 1947).

[18] Dennis Ioffe, *Border Crossing. Russian Literature into Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 20–22.

[19] Thomas Elsaesser, *Fassbinder's Germany. History Identity Subject* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), p. 257.

> absence of any direct view of any of the characters. The frame appears always cluttered, divided and usually open only towards the spectator inscribing him/herself as a presence, though often "across" an object partially blocking the view: the hand printing press or the gramophone are so prominently stationed in Biberkopf's room that they almost become silent witnesses.[20]

In this way film language embodied the abolition of a high-low distinction in culture, expressed by the interplay of modernist aesthetics with genre production and exploitation. As Susan Sontag famously put it, 'Sensations, feelings, the abstract forms and styles of sensibility count'.[21] At the same time, filmmakers confronted the classical past, reprocessing its style markers through technological advance: 'Four strategies of camerawork and editing — argued David Bordwell — seem central to the new style: rapid editing, bipolar extremes of lens lengths, reliance on close shots, and wide-ranging camera movements'.[22]

During the second half of the 1970s Fassbinder himself moved from the edgy avant-garde cinema of his early years, where the emotional involvement of both the character and the viewer were immobilized in the emptiness of the frame (the cold love of *Love is Colder Than Death*, *Liebe ist kälter als der Tod*, 1970), to his films on the history of Germany, a major project based on the emotional power of classical Hollywood language, with particular attention to the woman's films of the 1950s and to Douglas Sirk.[23] In doing so, his aim of creating emotional overexposure, and thus undermining social and cultural equilibrium, met also the "intensification" practices described by Bordwell in relation to contemporary camerawork and editing strategies. But the notion of "intensification" in Fassbinder's case should be widened towards, on the one side, a more self-reflexive use of visual codes, and, on the other side, towards a renovated sound design.

Traveling back in terms of historical backgrounds and costume films, in fact, this type of intensified continuity finds a predecessor in Weimar modernism, as, for example, in the free floating camera work of operators like Karl Freund, so that Fassbinder was able to reinforce the expressive potential of the legacy of a beloved auteur theory, citationism. At the beginning of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, for instance, the main character, Franz Biberkopf (Günther Lamprecht), leaves the prison, and his turmoil is expressed by a dizzy, circular moving look into the sky: the editing overlaps the long shot of Biberkopf entering a quadrilateral Berlin courtyard, stumbling to the ground and looking up above himself, and a vertical, subjective contreplongée rotating along the walls of the high buildings surrounding him, which appear to be moving. The open reference to Murnau and to Karl Grune's *The Street* (*Die Strasse*, 1923) here is not an innocent game but a conscious attack on aesthetic stability.

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[20] *Ivi*, p. 234.

[21] Susan Sontag, 'One culture and a new sensibility' (1965), in *Against Interpretation: And Other Essays* (New York: Dell, 1966).

[22] Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, p. 121.

[23] Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *Filme befreien den Kopf*, ed. by Michael Töteberg (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), pp. 11–24.

The "intensifying" development of the technological and stylistic codes in film and television has played a far from secondary role in a wider cultural and social change towards experiential and emotional readings of our individual and collective life, which careful observers of the artistic and literary scene, such as Sontag, identified in the mid-1960s as a 'new sensibility'.[24] More recently, the rediscovery of emotion and the senses has emerged powerfully, causing a real 'sensuous turn' in academic debate, which goes as far as to influence the way in which historical and critical research is carried out.[25] Many key concepts in the humanities, especially in the cultural history of the 20th century, have also been reconsidered in the light of their "sensous", emotional impact. In a recent contribution on Alfred Döblin's modernism, Mario Slugan needed to go back to Fassbinder in order to demonstrate the strengths of a definition of montage built solely on perceptual, stylistic, and narratological criteria. He posited one subset of a broadly conceived hyperstimulation — the perceptual experience of disruption — as the essential intermedial trait of montage, and then proceeded to tease out its specificities in different media. In the case of film, he articulated both visual and sound montage in terms of their spatiotemporal dislocation and their divergence from editing norms,[26] thus testifying to the inextricable connection between a perceiving gaze and its "resonating" auditory experience. What many Fassbinder studies have failed to observe, in fact, is the aural dimension of his stylistic innovation, which goes beyond the mere experience of dislocation.

## *The Sounding Body*

The "dislocative" affordance posed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder's filmscapes is without doubt a central question: its origin has been identified in the considerable dilemma around the narrator's voice (who is speaking in his narratives?)[27] as well as in the open intermedial exchanges he plays with, especially in the case of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.[28] What is undoubtedly true is that Fassbinder consciously has recourse not only to multiple semiotic agencies and points of view (the identification of his persona with Döblin's Franz Biberkopf allowed any and every sort of narrative shift throughout the filmmaker's career) and to different, usually contradictory sources of discourse (film, radio, television, literature, and even Döblin's mathematical formulas are embedded in his narrative texture), but also to wider and often-cited sound-related allegories, such as the one that opens *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, and the even more famous one that ends *The Marriage of Maria Braun*. In the first case, Franz Biberkopf walks quietly with a jailer in the silent prison courtyard and is directed to the exit gate, where a warder greets him and opens the metal door. Until this point we have only heard the faint voice of an opera singer from a distant radio (the aria, with its old-fashioned lo-fi sound texture, begins as extra-diegetic with the title boards and becomes a possible intra-diegetic music when the street outside the prison is shown, for a brief moment, with its urban soundscape, cars roaring, and so on). But now, as Franz looks out of the gate and takes a step forward to reach the threshold, the camera cuts to a frontal close up of the man stopping terrified and staring into the unknown, while the unpleasant clangor of the city rises rapidly and forces him to cover his ears with his hands. Here Fassbinder freezes the frame and the scene, adding the metaphorical value of the stillness, and finally superimposes on this close up the title of the first section: 'I. Die Strafe beginnt — The punishment begins'. We can refuse to look at the real world, but its sound will inevitably reach and overwhelm us.

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[24] Sontag, 'One culture and a new sensibility'.

[25] Vannini, Waskul and Gottschalk, *The Senses in Self, Society, and Culture*, p. 25.

[26] Mario Slugan, *Montage as Perceptual Experience: Berlin Alexanderplatz from Döblin to Fassbinder* (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2017).

[27] *E.g.* Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

[28] Though apparently not attentive to the authentic urban landscape: cfr. Andreas Fickers, Jasper Aalbers, Annelies Jacobs and Karin Bijsterveld, 'Sounds Familiar. Intermediality and Remediation in the Written, Sonic and Audiovisual Narratives of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*', in *Soundscapes of the Urban Past. Staged Sound as Mediated Cultural Heritage*, ed. by Karin Bijsterveld (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2013), pp. 77–115.

The final sequence of *The Marriage of Maria Braun* has a similar, even more tragic tone. The main character, a World War II widow, played by Hanna Schigulla, discovers during the reading of her second husband's will that all her lifelong efforts to be independent have been wiped out by a simple contract between the two men in her life: Hermann (Klaus Löwitsch), who was supposed to have died in 1945, and Karl (Ivan Desny), just departed. The long scene is accompanied by the running commentary of the football world cup final of 1954, the so-called "Miracle of Bern", a match that 'has been built up as a mythical place of remembrance in the history of German sport'.[29] We hear the radio throughout the sequence in a fragmentary way, the volume varying according to the different rooms in which the action takes place (higher volume when Hermann sits in the living room listening to the game, lower volume in the other rooms of the ground floor, even lower or not at all when Maria needs to rest and calm down upstairs); then, after the abrupt explosion that ends the lives of both Maria and Hermann — whether intentionally or not is unclear, for Maria leaves the gas oven open and lights a cigarette —, nothing else remains but the voice of the radio commentary and the burning villa.

The intermedial, narrative and discursive dimensions of Fassbinder's multi-layered soundscape construction have been widely recognized and researched, but these examples should lead us to a further consideration about its role in the shaping of a modern soundscape. The early 1970s witnessed the introduction of multi-track recording, a technological device that allowed young American filmmakers, the "movie brats", to adapt the soundscape of their films to the new style and language they were creating at a visual level.[30] While experimenting with more sensitive color print, brighter lenses and zoom lenses, multi-track recording fostered the creation of a multi-layered perceptual space, where the different sound tracks (dialogue, music, noises) exceeded the rules of continuity and overlapped each other, overriding or "dislocating" the usual sense of spatial unity. The textbook case in this sense is James Webb's sound design for Robert Altman's *Nashville* (1975); a reading of Leigh Brackett's screenplay for Altman's *The Long Goodbye* (1973) testifies how the director's technique had evolved in such a direction, as 'there are entire pages of parenthetical cues, clearly stating how overlapping is to occur'.[31] The improvement in Dolby systems and in sound reproduction devices in movie theaters caused the role of sound engineering to expand and assume a paramount importance in film production. Although the technological change was introduced in film production by previous developments in the music industry, the decade testified the birth of a new audibility in the world of audiovision, made of multiple sound layers enhancing immersive space perception. Considering also the arrival of graphical intervention and trans-media design, Laurent Jullier referred to post-1977 film productions, when all these practices were finally spreading, as the immersive *film-concert*.[32] According to Frances Dyson's approach to contemporary new media as accumulation of auditive technologies of the past, we could say that the 1970s transformed film sounds into 'almost palpable envelopments' ready to be embraced by later, immersive and virtual, technological experiences.[33]

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[29] The central role played by *The Marriage of Maria Braun* in the construction and political exploitation of this match has been underscored by Diethelm Blecking, 'Das "Wunder von Bern" 1954 – Zur politischen Instrumentalisierung eines Mythos', *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung*, 40.4 (2015), 197–208 (p. 197).

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[30] Jeff Smith, 'Film Sound in the Hollywood Renaissance, 1968–1980', in *Sound: Dialogue, Music, and Effects (Behind the Silver Screen Series)*, ed. by Kathryn Kalinak (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2015), pp. 83–106. A central figure in this was sound recordist Chris Newman, who, on *The French Connection* (William Friedkin, 1971), *The Godfathe*r (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972) and *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973) 'created multi-tracks by running two tape recorders simultaneously [...] driving back and forth to the Nagra factory so they could keep making adjustments to our new four-track recorders', Chris Newman in CAS, online forum, JwSound, <http://jwsoundgroup.net/index.php?/topic/17292-chris-newman-in-cas/&> [accessed 28 June 2018]. For an overview of the impact of music recording and mixing technologies on film, cfr. Julie Hubbert, 'The Compilation Soundtrack from the 1960s to the Present', in *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*, pp. 291–318 (p. 299). Michel Chion, introducing his notion of *superchamp* (superfield), traces back this history to musicals like *Woodstock* (Michael Wadleigh, 1970) and *Tommy* (Ken Russell, 1975): Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 155-156.

[31] Online exhibit by the University of Michigan Library <https://www.lib.umich.edu/online-exhibits/exhibits/show/altman/altmanesque-sound---music/the-altman-sound> [accessed 28 June 2018]. Cfr. also Smith, 'Film Sound in the Hollywood Renaissance, 1968-1980', pp. 91–3.

[32] Laurent Jullier, *L'écran postmoderne* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), p. 140.

[33] Frances Dyson, *Sounding New Media: Immersion and Embodiment in the Arts and Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 2009), p. 3.

Although there are no similar witnesses to the mode of production of Fassbinder's sound or to the recording technologies he used, we should note how he also integrated these improvements into his bigger productions of the late 1970s. While trusting in the intensified continuity of perpetually moving and zooming cameras, fast editing and intensive close-ups, he was able to organize a complementary soundscape made up of multiple levels of narration and, accordingly, of sound sources, with the overlapping of different tracks, continuous variations in the high-low volume range, contradictory matching of visual, verbal, written and musical information. Think, for instance, of the powerful sequence of Franz Biberkopf's first visit to his wife's twin sister. Both her rape and the subsequent flashback to him killing his wife begin with a dialogue and the noises of everyday home life (a door opening and closing, footsteps on an old wooden floor) in the foreground. But in both scenes the volume of the dialogue and of the diegetic noises is deliberately turned down, reducing them to an auditive background, and Döblin's estranging original text enters with its false, anguished, scientific objectivity (in the second case in the form of a judicial news report, and quoting Newton's laws of physical force), describing the crime scenes as a resonating place ('At a first blow she said "ouch" and no longer called him "you dirty bum", but "oh, man", instead'),[34] while the diegetic sound is partially deadened in the frozen background. During the rape scene, some violin music enters after a little while, at a very low volume, almost as a third level of environmental sound, melancholic and suave, while in the murder scene the music comes right at the end, after the noises have risen again violently (Franz exits banging the door hard), with a full orchestral score full of pathos that opposes, as an emotional commentary, the coolness of the last title board presenting the mathematical formula of acceleration, 'the degree of the disturbance effected by the force'.[35]

Rather than playing with modernist, Brechtian distanciation effects, the title sequence of *The Marriage of Maria Braun* exploits these improvements in sound technology even more widely in their full, immersive efficacy. Maria marries Wehrmacht officer Hermann during a violent bombing raid, the day before he leaves, apparently never to come back. When the bombs have almost reached the small ceremony, everybody flees, including the celebrating city official. Hermann and Maria chase him down the street and force him to sign the marriage contract. Then the title boards start, introducing a melancholy Maria searching for her missing husband at the train station. The whole initial sequence is characterized not only by impressive close-ups, rapid editing, fast camera movements and zooms, but also by the frantic juxtaposition of explosions, the hissing of bombs, shouting, and snarling threats, which are gradually replaced first by the incipient film music and then by the obsessive noise of the trains. This auditory immersion in a war context anticipates the role played throughout the whole film by the environmental sounds of the factory: thematic connotation, narrative framing, emotional reinforcement, a marker of perceptual intensification.[36]

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[34] Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story of Franz Biberkopf* (London, New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 74.

[35] *Ivi*, p. 75.

## *The Senses in Context*

Film in Germany had a longstanding tradition of experimenting in sound and music. Following Brecht's and Weill's legacy, authors like Kluge and Straub and Huillet challenged the rhetorical conventions of German speaking, and tried even to translate musicological questions and urges, from Bach's counterpoint to Schönberg's serialism, into an abstract, visual concept.[37] A red line of contrapuntal use of the soundtrack against the image could be traced back from comedian Karl Valentin's shorts and Georg Wilhelm Pabst's version of Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* (*Die 3 Groschen-Oper*, 1931), to the first distancing and thrilling use of electronic music in the soundtrack of *Rosemary* (*Das Mädchen Rosemarie*, Rolf Thiele, 1958). As we could show, Rainer Werner Fassbinder got started in this tradition, and made wide use of spatiotemporal dislocation techniques; but he enhanced it in his late work by embedding the novel sound design of this decade and thus constructing a more complex, immersive experience of emotional plenitude. Here he excelled: making modernism visible and audible for the masses. Bringing hopelessness to the mainstream. The political instance of the sound/image counterpoint became a personal cry of despair, the lack of meaning of the serialized sound-image caused the destruction of the sounding body of his heroines, and finally of the living body of the author himself.

This kind of enhanced, multi-layered spatiality was a novelty in German film, and its appearance on German television was even more unprecedented. Thomas Elsaesser acknowledged Fassbinder's importance in reconciling the romantic ideal of authorship with the commercial needs of the film industry, and his brilliant tactic was being part of it while at the same time remaining on its margins. The same is true of his relationship with the German public television broadcaster.[38] Jane Shattuc has studied this relationship in depth, underlining the difficulty experienced by the wider TV audience with the complexity and literariness of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, although some of the viewers' commentaries she quoted need to be more properly understood. When the series appeared them to be 'badly lit' and incomprehensible,[39] they were rejecting precisely those stylistic properties that Fassbinder was transferring from art cinema to popular television, properties which would inevitably become the norm in the following decades: low key photography as the color gradience of intensified continuity, sound-mixing as its sounding board — that is to say, the audiovisual design of the future, "emotionalized" and multi-layered mediascapes.

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[36] Cfr. Amedeo D'Adamo, *Empathetic Space on Screen: Constructing Powerful Place and Setting* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 119.

[37] 'As in twelve-tone musical technique, then, the importance of the camera in *Moses and Aron* (Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet, 1974) thus equalizes its elements, flattens them out in visual space, and emphasizes their abstract interrelatedness', Barton Byg, *Landscapes of Resistance: The German Films of Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1995), p. 149.

[38] Elsaesser, *New German Cinema*, p. 110.

The aim of this contribution is, indeed, not to establish an individual primacy or reconsider critical evaluations. Irrespective of its importance in the history of film aesthetics, Fassbinder's work shows us, as a relevant case study, how a wider trend towards a "sensuous turn" in cultural production could be rooted in film production practices, in the social sharing of audio-visual technologies, and particularly in the birth of modern sound engineering.

The age of the intensification of audiovisual languages has indeed corresponded to a new conception of our listening experience. Since the 1950s, French musicology considered the production of sounds as the way to a technologically mediated relationship with the reality of things, as in the research of Schaeffer on concrete musical objects. Subsequently, the translation of Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible* in 1968 also opened up to the English-speaking world a phenomenology that imagined sound as a physical event, an almost organic process of positioning the subjective body in the world: the matrix of any embodied relation in Don Ihde's philosophical trajectory.[40] Vibration and movement, the time-line which gives life to film images, in Michel Chion's view.[41] At the same time, perception psychology could re-discover situatedness and object-relation, paving the way in Gibson's work for a subsequent ecological psychology of hearing.[42] Everyday sounds are complex and rich in redundant and complementary information, and from the 1970s on film sound engineers would have reproduced their whole resonating capability.

As a fact, together with stereophonic sound reproduction, multi-track recording and the introduction of a multi-layered spatiality in film destroyed a notable tradition of skepticism about audition's spatiality and objectivity, which had its highest point in 1959 with Strawson's famous discussion of sounds as pure experiences.[43] Modern film sound involves, on the contrary, experiencing or perceptually representing such spatial characteristics as direction and distance, and is phenomenologically linked to relational intelligence: through its spacial affordances, the soundscapes of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's late work showed to a wider audience how audition and the senses are concretely grounded in life experience and perception. And, finally, even more clearly than in other, contemporary examples, by placing the body at the very heart of his visual and auditory representation strategies, the German author influentially helped to move popular film and television into the age of emotional reflexivity. The present time.

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[39] Jane Shattuc, *Television, Tabloids, and Tears: Fassbinder and Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 163–91.

[40] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968); Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976).

[41] Cfr. Chion.

[42] James J. Gibson, *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966); Id., *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979); William W. Gaver, 'What in the World Do We Hear? An Ecological Approach to Auditory Source Perception', *Ecological Psychology*, 5 (1993), 1–29.

[43] Peter F. Strawson, *Individuals* (London and New York: Routledge, 1959).

# Popular Music on Screen and the Road to Brexit

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*Abstract*

This article traces some of the political and cultural implications of the use of popular music and popular musicians in British films of the 1960s and 1970s, demonstrating different, and sometimes incompatible, facets of the British psyche in relation to identity, independence, nationalism, nostalgia, and exoticism. These divergent perspectives seem to have emerged and ruptured in the 2016 Brexit vote, but are in fact deep-rooted and central to the British circumstance. Using Adler-Nissen *et al.*'s concept of the performativity of Brexit, which works both as a promise of a different future and to establish a specific past, various interrelationships between culture, identity politics, stardom, and music can be determined. These are explored through three general typologies — 'Discovering Europe', 'Defeating Europe', and 'Reappraising Home' — in order to demonstrate that the decision to leave the EU in 2016 was not a flash in the pan, but rather a long and protracted journey reflecting conflicted notions of freedom and accountability.

As part of an expansion from six to nine members states, the United Kingdom joined the European Union in January 1973. Just two years later in 1975, following legal provision provided by the Referendum Act, the UK's first nationwide referendum took place and determined that that UK would stay in the European Economic Community, or the Common Market as it was then known. 67% of voters supported the Government's campaign to remain. Jump forward 41 years to 2016 and 51.9% of the UK electorate (about 17.5 million people) voted to leave the European Union, eventually triggering Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty and enacting the Brexit process. The nature of the UK's relationship with the European Union had, apparently, split the country down the middle.

In this article, I argue that the Brexit division and the conflicted notions of identity that surround it is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, ideological debates about the "European question" assumed a central place in British political life from the early-1960s onwards with rival factions appearing in both Labour and

Conservative parties.[1] I focus on a pivotal historical period to trace some of the political and cultural implications of the use of popular music and popular musicians in British films of the 1960s and 1970s. Although studies of both cinema and popular music *as* political are numerous rarely is the use of popular music *in* cinema considered within socio-political frameworks.[2] For Street, the boundary between music and politics is 'largely illusionary' and he claims that 'music does not just provide a vehicle of political expression, it *is* that expression'.[3] Street also notes that in order to be political, cultural outputs have to be used collectively. I extend this idea and argue that there is an interactive dependency between society, the films it makes, and the way that popular music is used in them, even if this is not developed or intended to drive an overtly political mobilizing movement. Films are closely related to what people feel about the world around them, they demonstrate clear identity connections and also shape the contours of social change by imagining new boundaries, territories, and networks.

I hope to demonstrate some facets of the British psyche in relation to identity, independence, nationalism, nostalgia, and exoticism. In this sense, the various interrelationships between culture, identity politics, stardom, and music show that the decision to leave the EU in 2016 was not a flash in the pan, but a long and protracted journey reflecting oppositional notions of freedom and accountability. By exploring the road to Brexit various interrelationships between culture and music emerge showing how popular music in film reflected wider political deliberations. I propose to explore this through three general typologies which I define as 'Discovering Europe', 'Defeating Europe', and 'Reappraising Home'. These should not be understood as representative of a teleological political evolution but considered as interweaving parallel strands within which a range of films from the period could be analysed. Space does not permit a broader evaluation here and, instead, I examine a specific, provocative example of a film within each typology. I hope, nonetheless, to be able to demonstrate the potential for a framework that highlights the contrasting perspectives on the UK's relationship with Europe which have long been evident and did not simply splinter at the point of the Brexit referendum.

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[1] Anthony Forster, *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics: Opposition to Europe in the British Conservative and Labour Parties Since 1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

[2] See for example: Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Movies as Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Mike Wayne, *The Politics of Contemporary European Cinema: Histories, Borders, Disaporas* (Bristol: Intellect, 2002); Ian Peddie, *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); John Street, *Music and Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013); Yannis Tzioumakis and Claire Molloy, *The Routledge Companion to Cinema and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

[3] Street, p. 1.

## *Performing Freedom(s)*

The reaction to Brexit across Europe and in many parts of the UK was one of complete shock, but history tells us that it should not have been quite such a surprise. Brexit goes far beyond the wider phenomenon of a populist backlash against globalization.[4] The challenge of resolving Britain's constitutional tradition with the EU is a long-standing and deep-rooted aspect of the British mentality; this means that the Brexit result was, in many ways, inevitable, especially when unbalanced devolution had already poured fuel on the fire of an internal identity crisis. As Allen and others have observed, British governments have often been highly Europeanized but British politics has not, meaning that disputes over government structures and wider notions of resistance to overseas "intrusions" have been a constant battleground.[5]

For British people, questions of freedom and of the democratic right to elect and remove governments are, arguably, a preoccupation that is more forcefully determined than in other European countries, as Anthony Smith and others have identified.[6] Sheila Lawlor discusses a range of historic motives for this in her 2016 essay *Ruling the Ruler: Parliament, the People and Britain's Political Identity*. Here she cites the British Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, who, even in the 1930s evoked an image of inherited freedom passed on through generations. His focus was on the importance of parliamentary government as a symbol of resistance against power as well as the protection of ancient freedoms which he considered a birth right. This freedom, Baldwin argued, had been 'fought for from the *beginning of our history* […] the result of centuries of resistance to the power of the executive' (my italics).[7] Baldwin aimed to present British freedom in opposition to continental systems emerging in the interwar years and especially the authoritarian movements of fascism and communism. But his main aim was to highlight British independence: independence of the individual, independence of spirit, independence that continually challenged authority. Whether this perceived view was accurate is, of course, an entirely different question, but it is clear that Baldwin had touched on something appealing because Britain's engagement with mass politics, from the 20th century onwards, has been framed by a very particular form of popular scepticism. By choosing to characterize an independent British spirit, then, Baldwin was engaging in a speech act, a deliberate attempt to *make* (not just describe) a specific form of Britishness. These attitudes were amplified following the Second World War, where Gifford argues that Euroscepticism increasingly became a national movement for British exceptionalism.[8]

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[4] Craig Calhoun, 'Populism, Nationalism and Brexit', in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. by William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), pp. 56–76; Kevin O'Rourke (2016) 'Too Much Market, Too Little State: The Brexit Backlash Against Globalisation Has Been a Long Time Coming', *LSE Brexit Blog*, 19 August, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2016/08/19/too-much-market-too-little-state-the-brexit-backlash-against-globalisation-has-been-a-long-time-coming/> [accessed 3 March 2018].

[5] David Allen, 'The United Kingdom: A Europeanized Government in a Non-Europeanized Polity', in *The Institutions of the European Union*, ed. by Simon Bulmer and Christian Lequesne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 108–33; Helen Thompson, 'Inevitability and Contingency: The Political Economy of Brexit', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 19.3 (2017), 434–49.

[6] Anthony Smith, 'Set in the Silver Sea: English National Identity and European Integration', *Nations and Nationalism*, 12.3 (2006), 433–52.

[7] Stanley Baldwin, *This Torch of Freedom* (London, 1935/4th edn. 1937), p. 25.

Extending the concept of the speech act, Adler-Nissen *et al.*, following J. L. Austin and Judith Butler, argue that Brexit signifies far more than the technical complexities of the United Kingdom withdrawing from the European Union.[9] It works *performatively* both as a promise of a different future and to establish a specific past. As such, Britain's notion of freedom is also closely tied to nostalgia. I would argue that it reflects a fascinating example of what Svetlana Boym described as 'restorative nostalgia'. Restorative nostalgia stresses the idea of home and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home: it attempts to patch up collective memory gaps.[10] Restorative nostalgia presents itself as truth and tradition. Indeed, Boym has argued that restorative nostalgia 'appears to be a longing for a place but is actually a yearning for a different time […]. A rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress'.[11] Adler-Nissen also implicitly identifies the same point:

> the discourse of Brexit does not express some "true" nature of British identity, geopolitics or economy. Rather, it creates that which it seems to represent: namely, a post-Brexit Britain and post-Brexit world – and in doing so, it also constructs a particular past. Overall, understanding Brexit as performative assumes that the very language of Brexit does something politically.[12]

Considering Brexit as a performative act blanketed by restorative nostalgia, it becomes possible to see the usefulness of examining cultural texts such as films of the 1960s and 1970s. Film does not simply reflect or describe a given reality, it also constructs it. From this perspective, we may consider the representation of the Other, and the boundaries that demarcate inside and outside, domestic and foreign, leave and remain.

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[8] Chris Gifford, *The Making of Eurosceptic Britain: Identity and Economy in a Post-imperial State* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

[9] Rebecca Adler-Nissen, Charlotte Galpin, and Ben Rosamond, 'Performing Brexit: How a Post-Brexit World is Imagined Outside the United Kingdom', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 19.3 (2017), 573–91.

[10] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001) pp. 41–9.

[11] Boym, p. xv.

[12] Adler-Nissen, p. 575.

## *Discovering Europe*

In the early 1960s, British cinema was in transition. Of the former dominant studios, only Associated British at Elstree and Rank at Pinewood had survived the postwar era. The funding and infrastructural gap was partly filled by American studios which invested heavily in British films. A number of government-sponsored mechanisms attempted to animate the ailing domestic film industry and to draw people away from their television sets. These included the National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC); the Eady levy, a tax on exhibitors named after the Treasury official who set it up in 1954; and British Lion, a government-sponsored umbrella for film production and distribution.[13]

In this context, a film such as *Summer Holiday* (Peter Yates, 1963) is a productive case study, as it moves away from the socially-aware working-class new wave, *e.g. Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Karel Reisz, 1960), towards the increasingly confident mid-decade celebration of music and fashion in swinging London, *e.g. The Knack* (Richard Lester, 1965). *Summer Holiday* was made by Associated British at Elstree Studios and distributed by Warner-Pathé, and it consciously aped the Hollywood film musical. American Herbert Ross was brought in to choreograph and film the musical numbers and the dialogue scenes that surrounded them. *Summer Holiday* featured the artist Cliff Richard and it was primarily responsible for his transformation from rock star into family entertainer. A significant aspect of the film was its extended and integrated marketing campaign. *The Daily Cinema* identified it as 'one of the most ambitious and far-reaching exploitation campaigns planned for a British motion picture'.[14] It worked not only as publicity but also as a cross-promotional drive towards the youth market that embraced the British music, fashion, and travel industries. Two singles from the film were released before *Summer Holiday* reached cinemas, followed by an LP of the entire soundtrack. The women's costumes designed for the film were made available in a range of identical high street versions. An elaborate press book identified numerous strategies for marketing the film.[15] This type of marketing is usually attributed to the Hollywood "high concept" films of the 1980s, but the evidence regarding *Summer Holiday* suggests an earlier integrated marketing approach.[16]

The film's blunt narrative device is that the central characters are bus mechanics working for London Transport who decide, during a miserable, rainy lunch break, to convert a double-decker bus into to a mobile holiday home and drive across continental Europe, eventually ending up in Greece. It is a film that has often been thought of as charming and highly innocent. Melvyn Hayes, for example, refers to *Summer Holiday* as 'a family picture which you could take your granny to and no one would be offended'.[17] At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that the film also has a clear exoticist stance. According to Cliff Richard's biographer Steve Turner, 'the idea of filming Cliff in an exotic location was inspired by the boom in foreign travel in the early 1960s'.[18]

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[13] Margaret Dickinson and Sarah Street, *Cinema and State: The Film Industry and the British Government 1927–1984* (London: BFI, 1985).

[14] *The Daily Cinema*, Wednesday 9 January (1963), 6–8 (p. 6).

[15] Mathew Kerry, *The Holiday and British Film* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[16] Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

An early sequence presents the film's title song. It has a cheery, repetitive harmonic pattern (I-vi$^7$-ii$^7$-V$^9$) and features Richard's lilting voice in well-defined question and answer phrases. In stark contrast to the scenes in Britain — filmed in black and white and showing a downcast English beach — the scenes in France are bright and sunny, with happy people waving from the roadside. This is the promotion of foreign travel as a desirable leisure activity for young people, a reflection of the postwar affluence and higher disposable income that resulted in increased charter flights and opened the way to mass tourism in the UK. The song defines the journey abroad as both exotic and relaxing: we're going where the sun shines brightly and the sea is blue. Indeed, the film asserts its "touristic" subject position by expressing not only a desire for but the British *right to* a European summer holiday: 'everybody has a summer holiday, doing things they always wanted to.' Here the foreign holiday is presented as utopia.

Some of the French people are represented wearing berets. This could only be more ethnically essentialist if they also wore a string of onions round their neck while singing the Marseillaise. And there are also a range of unacceptably jingoistic comments such as: 'you know what they say about French drivers'. In his book *The Holiday and British Film* Matthew Kerry is right to highlight some of the problematic imperialist perspectives that the film presents. He discusses some of the blatantly racist and primitive representations of the former Yugoslavia, for example. The film also celebrates an icon of British culture, the red double-decker bus, increasingly imposing itself throughout Europe. Indeed, at the film's conclusion, Cliff Richard's enterprising spirit results in a message from London Transport saying he can go ahead with his idea of introducing two-hundred holiday buses to Europe.

In several important ways *Summer Holiday* seems to outline the kind of relationship Britain really wanted to have with Europe. It wanted to enjoy the exotic pleasures but also to keep them under control. It wanted access but with cultural distance; a connection without connecting, to savour without being reciprocally influenced, to visit Europe but also to enjoy home comforts, even if these were only represented by a London bus. This, of course, maps onto the stereotypical and tainted image of Brits abroad. Karen O'Reilly for example, in her ethnographic study of expat communities on the Costa del Sol reports how the British neither showed interest in the local way of life or of learning the local language.[19] So, in this sense, the innocence of *Summer Holiday* is only partial. It reaches out to Europe only at the surface level and it does so through a shallow, exoticist, and touristic engagement.

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[17] Howard Maxford, 'Call Sheet: *Summer Holiday*', *Film Review,* 549 (1996), 44–7 (p. 45).

[18] Steve Turner, *The Bachelor Boy* (London: Carlton Books, 2008), p. 102.

## *Defeating Europe*

At the outset of *The Italian Job* (Peter Collinson, 1969) there appears to be a similar touristic perspective. The song, 'On Days Like These', sung by Matt Monro, is influenced by the lyricism of Neapolitan Song and is designed to represent 1960s European "chic" as we see a car make its way through beautiful mountainous landscape. The song's lyricist, Don Black, referred to it as 'a gorgeous, sunny-tinted song'.[20] Black also explained that his sister (apparently a fluent Italian speaker), helped him translate the first few lines of text so that some of the last verse could be sung in Italian. However, both the translation and Matt Monro's pronunciation leave a lot to be desired. 'On days like these when skies are blue and fields are green' is translated as '*Questi giorni quando viene il bel sole*'.[21] Inaccurate syllabic stresses throughout, as well a curious French/Italian hybrid on the word *sole* (which is sung as *soleil*), are disrespectful: *Questi giorni quando vieni il bel soleil*. But as the function of the song is to be generically "foreign" and to present the hypnotic and attractive exoticism of Italy, the actual meaning of the words is clearly irrelevant to the filmmakers and the intended audience.

This song is then immediately undercut by an explosive murder and we gradually become aware of the movie's underlying structure and agenda. *The Italian Job* is not just a charming crime caper about a gold bullion robbery in Turin. The film's producer Michael Deely has freely admitted that *The Italian Job* is a Eurosceptic film. He stated that the film was 'about us kicking European ass'.[22] Indeed, in the scenes of planning, preparation, and execution *The Italian Job* conforms closely to the genre conventions of the war movie. Other critical commentators have also suggested that the film's subsequent cult status owes something to the symbolism of independence that it flaunts. Paul Elliott wrote:

> *The Italian Job* details a post-colonial Britain desperately renegotiating its place on a world stage. No longer was it the Empiric power it was in the nineteenth century nor was it the symbol of stoicism that it became during the Second Word War and it was certainly far from the apex of cultural cool that it had presented itself as five years earlier.[23]

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[19] Karen O'Reilly, *The British on the Costa del Sol* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

[20] Don Black, *The Making of* The Italian Job (Mathew Field and Lancelot Narayan, 2003).

[21] A literal translation could be 'In giornate come queste, quando i cieli sono azzurri e i prati verdi'.

[22] Michael Deely cited in York Memberry, 'Fans of Italian Job Angered by Remake of Caine Classic', *The Telegraph*, 14th April (2002), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/1390861/Fans-of-Italian-Job-angered-by-remake-of-Caine-classic.html> [accessed 12 March 2018].

[23] Paul Elliott, *Studying the British Crime Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 65.

If the film aims to reclaim or reinvigorate a sense of British identity, how does it go about it? The climactic scene is an extended chase where the thieves set up a traffic jam in Turin, but then escape with the gold bullion in red, white, and blue Mini-Coopers, humiliating both the Italian police and the Mafia in the process. Noel Coward, as the camp criminal mastermind, Mr. Bridger, celebrates from inside prison and this is cross-cut with the gang executing the final stages of their escape. The song that accompanies this, performed by the cast, is called 'Getta Bloomin' Move On'. It is punctuated by instrumental versions of Thomas Arne's patriotic hymn 'Rule Britannia' with scenes in the prison obviously drawn from the chanting of football terraces, with repeated cries of 'England' incorporated into the musical structure.

One other striking feature is that Quincy Jones' and Don Black's song uses Cockney rhyming slang. A Cockney is normally considered to be a person from London's East End but more broadly (and certainly in the late 1960s) it implied someone from a working-class background. Cockney rhyming slang has roots that go back to the 1840s but was reputedly used by prisoners to converse without their guards understanding what they were saying. The construction of rhyming slang normally involves replacing a common word with a phrase of two-or-more words, the last of which rhymes with the original word. The secondary rhyming word would then usually be omitted from the end of the phrase, which makes the meaning of the phrase elusive to anyone who is not in the know.

*Getta Bloomin' Move On*

This is the self-preservation society
This is the self-preservation society

Go wash your German bands, your boat race too
Comb your Barnet Fair we got a lot to do
Put on your Dickie Dirt and your Peckham Rye
Cause time's soon hurrying by

Get your skates on mate, get your skates on mate
No bib around your Gregory Peck today, eh?
Drop your plates of meat right up on the seat

This is the self-preservation society
This is the self-preservation society

In the song 'Getta Bloomin' Move On', *German bands* in the verse means hands, *boat race* means face. In Cockney rhyming slang you would say: "go wash your Germans and your boat" which would mean wash your hands and face. Dickie Dirt would mean shirt, Peckham Rye (which is an area in the borough of Southwark) means tie. You would say "put on your Dickie and your Peckham" which would mean put on your shirt and tie. In this song both the contexualizing primary word and secondary rhyming word are included.

This localized cockney rhyming slang is used as a clear nationalist symbol. Cockney is not explicitly deployed anywhere else in the film and the use of the song is delayed until this point where it celebrates ingenuity in defeating the unsuspecting enemy. In his seminal text *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson suggested that even though most members of a single nation do not know each other they can be brought together by the image of their communion.[24] This is one reason why displays of nationalism at sporting events, and indeed why national anthems, are so important. 'Getta Bloomin' Move On' is a classic example of an attempt to shape cultural nationalism. The music, with a unique defining local characteristic based on Cockney song in musical style and genre, is presented as cultural symbol of the whole Nation and is then pitted directly against an "Other". 'Getta Bloomin' Move On' is also, therefore, a direct structural response to the "Italianate" song that opens the film and is a striking assertion of British victory and dominance.

Normally, this kind of explicit cultural nationalism would be a form of resistance against a dominant Other. But what would have prompted this attitude in the late 1960s, beyond historic British geopolitical insularity? Northern Italy of the 1960s had, of course, transformed its economic fortunes thanks to what has been dubbed *il miracolo economico*, a prolonged period of strong economic growth and significant social change.[25] In the UK, on the other hand, there were several sterling crises between 1964 and 1969. In 1967, for example, the pound was devalued (by 14%) because of a trade deficit, a weak domestic economy, and pressure from external creditors. Some authors have suggested that the sterling crises were, in fact, decisive in forcing prime minister Harold Wilson towards the European Economic Community.[26] Within these broader contexts a film like *The Italian Job* is more than just a mild satire on the state of the nation in the late 1960s, as some commentators have suggested. It is, arguably, more akin to what Raymond Durgnat described as a 'mirror for England'.[27]

Don Black himself thought that the lyrics did not really mean anything and were just a random collection of rhyming slang. But the often-repeated line: 'This is the self-preservation society' seems significant in this respect. It clearly refers to the group of criminals engaged in a process of financial self-interest. As the song is also designed narratively to represent the British Nation, one also has to wonder why it was grasped by the British public with such enthusiasm. Paul Elliot interprets it in the following way:

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[24] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2016).

[25] Valerio Castronovo, *L'Italia del miracolo economico* (Roma: Editori Laterza, 2014).

[26] Helen Parr, 'A Question of Leadership: July 1966 and Harold Wilson's European Decision', *Contemporary British History*, 19:4 (2005), 437–58; Catherine Schenk, 'Sterling, International Monetary Reform and Britain's Applications to the EEC in the 1960s', *Contemporary European History*, 11.3 (2002), 345–69.

[27] Raymond Durgnat, *A Mirror for England: British Movies from Austerity to Affluence* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970).

> The subtext of *The Italian Job* seems to be, despite all of its red, white and blue flag waving, that Britain was fast becoming more self-preservation and less of a society. All of this is at odds with how the film has been reinvented and revisited in the popular arena, where is has come to stand for a form of nostalgic Britishness in TV commercials, pop videos and on the football terraces.[28]

However, I do not think the subtext Elliott refers to was particularly intended or is how this film has been widely received in the UK. Indeed, the afterlife of the song that Elliot alludes to highlights its continued cultural relevance as a staunch British symbol. It has been used in a British-only Martini V2 Vodka Advertisement from 1999, in adverts for the gas and electricity company EDF Energy ('The Smart Installation Society'), for Cuprinol, a company that creates wood-coating products ('The Wood Preservation Society'), and in perhaps the clearest example of its nationalist sentiment and function, for the Euro 2012 championships as the anthem for the English football team. *The Italian Job*, therefore, clearly attempts to assert a sense of British pride, even if its tongue is firmly in its cheek.

### *Reappraising Home*

Before looking at one specific example from the late 1970s, it is first useful to note that there are some recurrent tropes in British pop music films of the 1970s. The cultural context is significant. This was a fractious decade marked by economic decline. The 1973 oil crisis lead to a three-day working week. Despite a brief period of calm negotiated by the Labour Government of 1974, known as the "Social Contract", this did not prevent widespread strikes by public sector unions and a complete breakdown of the Government (both Labour and Conservative). The year 1978 was dubbed the "Winter of Discontent" and the UK was consistently referred to as the sick man of Europe.

Allen suggests that the response to growing national pessimism in the 1970s was to look backwards with both popular music in song and on film searching for 'greater innocence, simplicity and familiarity in two different ways: offering either the comfort of nostalgia, or the earnestness of "authenticity" in the roots of American blues and country or British folk.'[29] Allen's notion of a comforting look back, however, seems to understate a common trope of the period which is a high degree of critical revisionism or what Matthew Kerry refers to as 'grim nostalgia'.[30] For example, the films *That'll be The Day* (Claude Whatham, 1973) and *Stardust* (Michael Apted, 1974) show the rise and fall of a rock n'roll artist, Jim Maclaine (played by David Essex) in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Maclaine escapes home and school and runs away to the seaside, undertakes a series of depressing jobs, and engages in several scenes of unpleasant sex in holiday camp chalets. In one particularly disturbing scene Maclaine rapes a schoolgirl under a tree. His predatory partner in the film, astonishingly, is ex-Beatle Ringo Starr, and through the film's tawdry narrative, Kerry observes that Starr 'destroys any mystique he may have had in the previous decade as a Beatle'.[31] The sequel, *Stardust*, shows Maclaine rising to prominence as a rock artist, but abandoning his family and friends, and finally becoming a reclusive drug-addict in a castle in Spain. It is a painful and dark reappraisal that disintegrates classic rock mythology. In other bleak nostalgic films from this period we can also point to the rock-opera *Tommy* (Ken Russell, 1975) which reconsiders the 1950s in what Glynn calls a 'miserabilist mise en scène',[32] and *Quadrophenia* (Franc Roddam, 1979) which takes a social-realist perspective on the battle between mods and rockers of the early 1960s, exploring the importance of music in working-class identity formation. In these films, we can see Britain trying to come to terms with the rose-tinted idea of "swinging 60s" and the contrasting severe reality of the 1970s.

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[28] Elliot, p. 65.

[29] Dave Allen, 'British Graffiti: Popular Music and Film in the 1970s', in *British Film Culture in the 1970s: The Boundaries of Pleasure*, ed. by Sue Harper and Justin Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2013), pp. 99–111, Loc2155.

One of the most striking examples of this critical revisionism can be found in Derek Jarman's *Jubilee* (1978). The title refers to the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II in 1977. In this high-art film Queen Elizabeth I is transported from the 16th century forward in time to witness the shattered Britain of the 1970s. The episodic structure is heavily influenced by punk aesthetics and it provides a powerful vision of chaos, urban dystopia, and social disintegration. It featured several punk performers including Toyah Wilcox, Adam Ant and Sioxsie Sioux. Jarman called it 'a determined and often reckless analysis of the world which surrounded us'.[33] It was critically acclaimed, but it also outraged many members of the punk community who felt it misrepresented them. The fashion designer, Vivienne Westwood, was famously vicious about the film and made an open T-shirt to Jarman outlining her criticisms. She called it 'the most boring and therefore disgusting film' and accused Jarman of being 'a gay boy jerk[ing] off through the titillation of his masochistic tremblings'.[34] Jarman was certainly ambivalent about punk as an ideology and just two years earlier had described its instigators as '… petit bourgeois art students, who a few months ago were David

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[30] Kerry, p. 164.
[31] *Ivi*, p. 168.
[32] Stephen Glynn, *The British Pop Music Film: The Beatles and Beyond* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 172.
[33] Derek Jarman, *Dancing Ledge* (London: Quartet, 1984), p. 176.
[34] Vivienne Westwood, V&A Collections (1978), T.104-2002.

Bowie and Bryan Ferry look-alikes — who've read a little art history and adopted some Dadaist typography and bad manners, and who are now in the business of reproducing a fake street credibility'.[35] *Jubilee* therefore venerates punk's bold attack on the establishment, but is somewhat doubtful about its binary politics. An important scene that engages with some of these contradictions is when the powerful impresario, Borgia Ginz, introduces performer Amyl Nitrate as a possible UK entry for the Eurovision Song Contest. Her performance is a punk-rock re-arrangement of 'Rule Britannia' with hyperbolic melismas and agitated repetition of the word Britannia. Forward-momentum is maintained by the off-beat strumming of distorted guitars. Nitrate is dressed as a satirical version of the goddess Britannia complete with Corinthian helmet, trident, and a feathered fan which acts as a proxy for a shield. Britannia as the personification and emblem of British power and unity is undercut by the spirited musical performance as well as the inclusion of goose stepping and the superimposition of recordings of Hitler's speeches. Obviously, at one level this grotesque scene equates British patriotism with fascism, as the Sex Pistols had done with 'God Save the Queen', but Roland Wymer argues that: 'Although Amyl Nitrate's performance is a camp parody of patriotic sentiment, the look on her face is one of tragic intensity rather than that of an irreverent clown,' and he notes that the published script describes her as 'shellshocked' and her performance as a 'vision of disaster'.[36] In this sense, Wymer thinks the film helps to 'expose contradictions within punk itself' as much as to provide a critique on 1970s British culture.[37] Even in what is an extreme version of a representational strategy targeting concepts of nation and nationhood at a deeply troubled point in British recent history there is a conflicted and conflicting outlook.

## *Conclusion*

What I hope to have demonstrated is that the divergent opinions that seem to have ruptured in the Brexit vote in 2016 were evident long before. They are, in fact, a deep-rooted conflict that has been, over an extended period, an important characteristic of the British people and the British circumstance. By examining the use of music in filmic texts associated with British popular culture of the 1960s and 1970s we can see some of the ways that these issues have played out and fed back into society. The films highlighted here are, of course, very different in terms of budget scale, target audience demographic, style, genre, and so on. While they can be understood as interesting analytical examples of different aspects of the constantly shifting opinions on British relationships with

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[35] Derek Jarman cited in Simon Frith and Howard Horne, *Art Into Pop* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 20.

[36] Roland Wymer, *Derek Jarman* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 59.

[37] Wymer, p. 59.

Europe, they also represent a fascinating self-reflection on the internal challenges of reconciling the past with changing "youth" culture, on the desire to reach out beyond borders, and on the challenges of closing the drawbridge. If we accept the central thrust of the argument, then we should also see relevant examples of this kind of conflict in our current audiovisual environment. Is the spirit of *Summer Holiday* really so different from what is presented in the programme *Top Gear* (BBC, 2002–), or its sequel *The Grand Tour* (Amazon, 2016–), which consistently use music to emphasise the exotic as the presenters drive across various locations asserting a sense of mildly-jingoistic superiority? Is it not significant that a film like *Mamma Mia* (Phyllida Lloyd, 2008) is financed, developed, and made by a British production company, featuring an exoticist and, in narrative terms, weakly-justified pseudo-Greek location? Is the song 'Getta Bloomin' Move On' so very different from the climactic sequence in the first *Kingsman* movie (Matthew Vaughn, 2014), where the heads of the complicit elite explode in a "fireworks" display that is perfectly timed with Elgar's 'Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1'? How many Bond films assert the independence of British spirit, the absolute necessity of the maverick individual to solve the world's problems? Even when these films are critical of this kind of perspective they also present it as a clear phenomenon and as a site of celebration. I wonder, then, how we might come to re-evaluate these texts as well as earlier ones in the fullness of time and in light of the journey towards and away from Brexit?

At the end of *The Italian Job*, the gang of criminals have brilliantly managed to escape and are high on their success, but as they wend their way around the looping roads of the Swiss Alps the driver loses control of the bus and it is left teetering over a cliff edge as the stolen gold slides towards the rear doors. It is, quite literally, the film's cliff-hanger. To me this seems a surprisingly powerful metaphor for a pro-Brexit ideology. An audacious and maverick plan led by charismatic figures with the determination to assert free-spirited isolationism, but at the end future prosperity hangs over a precipice. For all the jubilation and comic misadventure there is also a harsh reality. As far as Brexit is concerned, however, the principal of self-determination, of independence, and of freedom is far more important for many than the risks and potential dangers. This independent character is simultaneously one of Britain's greatest strengths and one of its biggest weaknesses.

It is my personal view — not least as a someone with both Spanish and British heritage — that Brexit is a serious mistake, but the outcome of the 2016 vote should certainly not be a surprise. Britain was always divided on this issue. Brexit does not primarily represent an increasingly active or aggressive form of nationalism, nor even the decline or emergence of particular political movements. It reveals a fundamental identity conflict that, for better or worse, has long been central to the British imaginary.

# Beyond Cinema

# Un œil nouveau
# Le Ralenti scientifique à la construction de l'avant-garde

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*Abstract*

A long-standing and intimate link exists between avant-garde and scientific cinema. In the 1920s, in fact, the former contributed to the construction of the latter: on the one hand, by its systematic inclusion in film clubs and film societies screening programs; and on the other, by catalyzing the theoretical reflection on medium specificity because of the particular techniques it develops. In this essay I will examine the contribution of scientific slow motion to 1920s film theory, investigating how this technique conveys an epistemological shift in the concept of *revelation,* from the scientific observation of the invisible to the naked eye, to the deep understanding of previously unknown aspects of reality. Through the words of scholars and philosophers, as well as filmmakers and theorists (Louis Delluc, Germaine Dulac, Jean Epstein and Jean Tedesco, among others), I will discuss several concepts that marked the aesthetic theories of the time, such as *photogénie*, *cinéma pur*, and optical unconscious.

Les personnalités telles que Jean Painlevé — fondateur de l'Institut de Cinématographie Scientifique ainsi qu'artiste canonisé dans le panthéon surréaliste — ou Jan Cornelis Mol — cinéaste scientifique qui met en place le Bureau voor Wetenschappelijke Kinematografie, et qui est également le co-fondateur du cercle d'avant-garde hollandais Filmliga — ne sont que l'explicitation d'un lien intime, et bien plus ancien, entre le cinéma scientifique et l'avant-garde.[2] Le film

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[1] Je tiens à remercier vivement François Albera pour sa précieuse relecture de cet article.

[2] Pour une synthèse des questions liées à la périodisation des avant-gardes cinématographiques voir Claudine Eizykman « L'avanguardia come esperienza originaria » dans Paolo Bertetto et Sergio Toffetti (dir.), *Cinema d'avanguardia in Europa. Dalle origini al 1945*, Milano, Il Castoro, 1996, pp. 93–114. Sur l'articulation et la géographie de l'avant-garde cinématographique européenne et de ses clubs dans l'entre-deux-guerres voir l'excellente Malte Hagener, *Moving Forward, Looking Back : The European Avant-Garde and the Invention of Film Culture, 1919–1939*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2007. Le meilleur texte sur la géographie parisienne de ciné-clubs et de salles spécialisées reste Christophe Gauthier, *La Passion du Cinéma. Cinéphiles, ciné-clubs et salles spécialisées à Paris de 1920 à 1929*, Paris, AFRHC, 1999. Sur Jean Painlevé voir Andy Masaki

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scientifique a en effet contribué à construire, de manière effective, la théorie du cinéma aussi bien dans la *pratique* — par son inclusion systématique au sein de la programmation de salles spécialisées et de ciné-clubs, qui fleurissent en grand nombre tout au long de la deuxième moitié des années vingt[3] — qu'en catalysant la réflexion *théorique* sur la spécificité du medium, en raison des techniques qu'il développe, notamment le ralenti, l'accéléré, la microcinématographie, la radiocinématographie et les prises de vue sous-marines.[4]

En particulier, ralenti et accéléré sont comme les deux faces de Janus, basés sur le même principe de décomposition et de recomposition variables du mouvement. Indéfectiblement liés, à cette époque ils inondent la réflexion sur la spécificité du cinéma, en foudroyant les avant-gardes par la possibilité de reconfigurer le réel en travaillant d'abord sur le temps. On retrouve déjà le « cinéma *accéléré* » et le « cinéma *ralenti* » dans le poème de Blaise Cendrars illustré par Fernand Léger *La Fin du Monde filmée par l'ange Notre-Dame*, et on les retrouve aussi ailleurs : « Zeitlupe und Zeitraffer *»,*[5] « Ralenti et accéléré ».[6] Ensemble, ils deviennent des classiques dans leur complémentarité :

> Il y a des exemples aujourd'hui *classiques*, celui de la graine qui germe en quelques instants ; la tige pousse, s'allonge, le bouton fleurit, donne un fruit, puis rend la graine

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Bellows, Marina Mc Dougall, Brigitte Berg (dir.), *Science is Fiction : The Films of Jean Painlevé*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2000 ; Roxane Hamery, *Jean Painlevé, le cinéma au cœur de la vie*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009 et James Leo Cahill, *Zoological Surrealism : The Nonhuman Cinema of Jean Painlevé*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, à paraître en février 2019.

[3] Sur la diffusion des films scientifiques dans les salles spécialisées, je me permets de renvoyer le lecteur à mon article « Studios, Ligues, Societies : Programmer le film scientifique dans les salles d'avant-garde », *1895. Revue d'histoire du cinéma*, n° 79, 2016, pp. 32–49. De manière générale, à la réception avant-gardiste du cinéma scientifique et à son influence sur la théorie du cinéma des années vingt j'ai consacré la thèse de doctorat « Un'emozione puramente visuale. Film scientifici tra sperimentazione e avanguardia, 1904–1930 », Università Iuav di Venezia – Université Paris 8, 2017.

[4] Pour une introduction au cinéma scientifique (recherche, enseignement, vulgarisation) et à ses techniques voir Pierre Thévenard et Guy Tassel, *Le Cinéma scientifique français*, Paris, La Jeune Parque, 1948 ; Alexis Martinet (dir.), *Le Cinéma et la science*, Paris, CNRS, 1994 et Virgilio Tosi, *Il Cinema prima del cinema*, Milan, Il Castoro, 2007. Notamment sur le cinéma de vulgarisation scientifique au début du siècle voir Oliver Gaycken, *Devices of Curiosity : Early Cinema & Popular Science*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015 ; Timothy Boon, *Films of Fact : A History of Science in Documentary Films and Television*, London, Wallflower Press, 2008 ; Scott Curtis, *The Shape of Spectatorship : Art, Science, and Early Cinema in Germany*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2016 ; Thierry Lefebvre, « Scientia. Le cinéma de vulgarisation scientifique au début des années Dix », *Cinémathèque*, n° 4, automne 1993, pp. 84–91, et « De la science à l'avant-garde. Petit panorama » dans Alain Berthoz (dir.), *Images, science, mouvement. Autour de Marey*, Paris, L'Harmattan, Sémia, 2004, pp. 103–109.

[5] Dr. Karl Krüger, « Zeitlupe und Zeitraffen » dans Edgar Beyfuß et Arthur Kossowsky (dir.), *Das Kulturfilmbuch*, Berlin, Carl P. Chryseliuscher Verlag, 1924, pp. 186–193.

[6] Paul Sabon, « Ralenti et accéléré. Une visite à l'Institut Marey », *La Revue du Cinéma*, n° 10, mai 1930, p. 3. Sur l'accéléré scientifique et son influence sur la théorie du cinéma des années vingt, voir mon essai « L'accéléré dans la théorie des années vingt : 'Germination du blé… Cristallisation… Films documentaires et, surtout, films d'avant-garde' », *1895. Revue d'histoire du cinéma*, n° 87, à paraître en printemps 2019.

> primitive. Le cycle est fermé. Il y a la décomposition des mouvements, entre autres celle du galop d'un cheval, qui semble se déplacer dans un milieu semi-solide, dans un air visqueux.[7]

Dans ces pages nous approfondirons l'apport de la technique du ralenti, et de son origine scientifique, à la théorie du cinéma des années vingt.

## *Études de ralenti*

Depuis 1921 un spectre hante l'Europe : le spectre de l'intérêt généralisé pour les prises de vue « au dessus de l'allure normale »[8] des seize photogrammes par seconde, qui avance dans la presse spécialisée en ouvrant la voie à l'entrée du cinéma scientifique dans le débat théorique. Cette année-là, par exemple, *Cinémagazine* dédie deux longs articles au fonctionnement de l'*ultracinéma*, cette technique qui « nous permet de scruter l'inconnu et nous révèle ce que nos yeux sont impuissants à voir ».[9] Alors que la plaque photographique avait déjà été nommée par l'astronome Janssen « la véritable rétine du savant »,[10] Pierre Noguès de l'Institut Marey répète ici, dans une revue de cinéma pour le grand public, qu'aucune nuance du mouvement ne peut échapper à l'oeil mécanique de l'*ultracinéma*, puissant et objectif.

Entre 1922 et 1923 le débat sur « Notre troisième oeil. Le ralenti »[11] gagne du terrain dans les pages de *Cinéa.* Ce débat implique Lucien Bull d'abord avec un article de divulgation concernant « Les merveilles du ralenti », puis avec une explication détaillée du fonctionnement de sa machine de prise ultrarapide.[12]

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[7] Léon Pierre-Quint, « Signification du cinéma », *Les Cahiers du mois*, n° 16–17, 1925, p. 169.

[8] Georges Goyer, « Le cinéma au ralenti », *Cinémagazine*, n° 45, novembre 1921, p. 10. Sur les enjeux du passage de l'image fixe à l'image animée au tournant du siècle cf. François Albéra, Marta Braun, André Gaudreault (dir.), *Arrêt sur image, fragmentation du temps. Aux sources de la culture visuelle moderne*, Lausanne, Payot, 2002; André Gaudreault, Catherine Russell, Pierre Véronneau (dir.), *Le cinématographe, nouvelle technologie du XXe siècle – The Cinema, A New Technology for the 20th Century,* Lausanne, Payot, 2004; Laurent Guido et Olivier Lugon (dir.), *Fixe/Animé. Croisements de la photographie et du cinéma au XXe siècle*, Lausanne, L'Âge d'Homme, 2010.

[9] Pierre Desclaux, « L'ultracinéma et son inventeur. Pierre Noguès chef du laboratoire de Mécanique Animale de l'Institut Marey, nous explique comment il réalisa l'ultracinéma plus communément appelé 'Ralenti' », *Cinémagazine*, n° 37, 30 septembre 1921, p. 12. Sur les films en *ultracinéma* au CNC voir Pierrette Lemoigne, « L'ultra-cinématographie dans les films technologiques et scientifiques des Archives françaises du film (CNC) » dans Philippe Dériaz et Nicholas Schmidt (dir.), *Du film scientifique et technique – CinémAction*, n° 135, Condé-sur-Noireau, Charles Corlet, juin 2010, pp. 52–59.

[10] Jules Janssen, « Les méthodes en astronomie physique », *Moniteur*, vol. 22, n° 3, 1 février 1883, p. 23.

[11] Cf. Pierre Barbance, « Notre troisième oeil. Le ralenti », *Mon Ciné*, n° 15, 1 juin 1922, pp. 18–20.

[12] Lucien Bull, « Les merveilles du ralenti », *Cinéa*, n° 80, 1 décembre 1922, p. 6 et « Comment on filme les mouvements ultra-rapides », *Cinéa*, n° 84, 26 janvier 1923, p. 3. Voir aussi Lucien Bull, « Application de l'étincelle électrique à la chronophotographie des mouvements rapides », *Comptes rendus des séances à l'Académie des Sciences*, 21 mars 1904, pp. 755–57.

La nouveauté de l'invention de Bull est en effet structurale : pour augmenter le nombre de prises de vue par seconde, il suffit de suppléer à l'insuffisance du temps de pause laissé par l'action combinée des obturateurs mécaniques et de la lumière solaire, et d'avoir recours à une nouvelle source lumineuse, très rapide et dotée d'une « puissance photogénique » qui « dépasse dix fois celle du soleil » :[13] l'étincelle électrique. Au-delà de la signification étymologique du terme *photogénique* — « qui génère de la lumière » — il est certainement intéressant de remarquer comment la *puissance photogénique* de l'étincelle électrique du ralenti fait du chemin entre les pages que *Cinéa* dédie à la « forme » et au « nu » photogéniques, et entre les concours consacrés à la « robe » et même au « lecteur plus photogénique ».[14]

L'année suivante Jean Tedesco, devenu depuis peu le directeur du Vieux-Colombier, inaugure l'année éditoriale de *Cinéa-Ciné pour Tous* avec l'article programmatique « Ce que devrait être le cinéma de 1924 ? ». Il est surprenant de constater combien ces pages sont essentiellement concentrées à la révolution apportée par le ralenti au cinéma qui, à cette date, doit désormais trouver sa propre voie, se charger d'une propre éthique. Que doit-il être alors ?

> Précisément cette table nue et froide du chirurgien où toutes les réalités visibles seront *disséquées* sous le scalpel du metteur en scène de demain. Songez que nous appelons réalités visibles non seulement celles que voient nos yeux, mais celles aussi que *jamais n'ont perçu* les hommes et que seul a pu révéler et montrer *le concours merveilleux de l'objectif cinématographique et de l'étincelle électrique*. L'objectif, l'oeil précis qui retient l'image vertigineuse sur la pellicule ! L'étincelle, *puissance photogénique* dix fois plus grande que celle du soleil ![…]. Songez que nous entendons par le scalpel du metteur en scène *l'ensemble des moyens d'analyse vivants dont le cinéma scientifique nous a dotés*, depuis le ralenti.[15]

Le cinéma de 1924 doit disséquer la réalité, perceptible et imperceptible. Tedesco fait ici une opération radicale en faisant explicitement référence au rôle des techniques mises à jour par le cinéma scientifique pour accomplir cette mission. Il est alors possible de comprendre pourquoi dans ces années-là le ralenti, et son homologue l'accéléré, trouvent leur place au milieu des éléments grammaticaux d'un art en formation, se démarquant de leur milieu de naissance scientifique, tout en en conservant le pouvoir de révéler un invisible qui n'a plus seulement à voir avec les mouvements des pattes d'un cheval ou avec la façon dont un projectile traverse une bulle de savon. Dans le cadre d'une « standardisation des symboles », entre flous, fondus, iris et surimpressions, on voit que le ralenti poétique est utilisé « avec une signification purement symbolique […] pour exprimer certains états ».[16] Léon Moussinac est aussi de cet avis dans *Naissance du cinéma*, texte marquant la tentative de systématiser le savoir produit par ce qu'on a l'habitude d'appeler la « première avant-garde française » :[17]

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[13] Lucien Bull, « Comment on filme les mouvements ultra-rapides », op. cit., p. 3.

[14] Cf. par exemple les pages « Le nu photogénique », *Cinéa*, n° 69–70, 8 septembre 1922, p. 9 ; « Notre concours de la robe photogénique », *Cinéa*, n° 80, 1 décembre 1922, pp. 10–14 ou « Quels sont, parmi ces lecteurs de *Cinéa*, les plus photogéniques ? » *Cinéa*, n° 95, 1 juillet 1923, p. 19.

[15] Jean Tedesco, « Ce que devrait être le cinéma de 1924? », *Cinéa-Ciné pour tous*, n° 4, 1 janvier 1924, p. 5 [nous soulignons].

> Le *ralenti* qui fournit à la science de merveilleux moyens d'investigation, en rendant possible l'observation de phénomènes ou de mouvements jusqu'alors insaisissables par leur vitesse, donne au cinégraphiste un moyen mécanique qui, utilisé judicieusement, concourt avec force à l'expression d'un sentiment.[18]

Pour toutes ces raisons le ralenti est intégré dans la programmation de salles spécialisées et des conférences de ciné-clubs, là où la théorie du cinéma était en perpétuelle formulation, notamment depuis « Études de Ralenti », la conférence que Tedesco tint au Vieux-Colombier le 26 février 1926 dans le cadre du cycle *Création d'un monde par le cinéma*. À cette occasion, il montra les *Films au ralenti, cinématographies des mouvements ultra-rapides : le vol d'une libellule, l'éclatement d'une bulle de savon, la trajectoire d'une balle de revolver*[19] de Lucien Bull et il enverra ensuite personnellement ces mêmes films à la London Film Society — « un peu le Vieux-Colombier de là-bas »[20] — qui les inclura dans sa septième *performance* sous le titre de *Studies in Rapid Motion* (1902–24).[21] Quelles sont alors les propriétés de cette technique ?

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[16] Lionel Landry, « La standardisation des symboles », *Cinéa*, n° 83, 23 février 1923, p. 7.

[17] Sur la « première avant-garde française » les références sont : Henri Langlois [signé D.C.D], « L'avant-garde française », *L'âge du Cinéma*, n° 6, 1952, pp. 8–16; Nourredine Ghali, *L'avant-garde cinématographique en France dans les années Vingt. Idées, conceptions, théories*, Paris Expérimental, 1995 ; Ian Christie, « French Avant-Garde Film in the Twenties : From 'Specificity' to Surrealism » dans Phillip Drummond et al. (dir), *Film as Film : Formal Experiment in Film 1910–1975*, London, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979, pp. 37–46 ; Richard Abel, *French Cinema : The First Wave, 1915–1929*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2000 et *French Film Theory and Criticism*, vol. 1, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2010.

[18] Léon Moussinac, *Naissance du cinéma* [1925], Plan-de-la-Tour, Éditions d'Aujourd'hui, 1983, p. 32.

[19] Cf. le « Recueil factice d'articles de presse, de programmes et de documents concernant la direction du Vieux-Colombier par Jean Tedesco: saisons cinégraphiques 1924-1928 », Archives de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Richelieu, Arts du Spectacle, SR96/362. Sur les films de Bull je renvoie le lecteur à Thierry Lefebvre et Laurent Mannoni, « La collection des films de Lucien Bull (Cinémathèque Française) », *1895. Revue d'Histoire du Cinéma*, n° 18, septembre 1995, pp. 145–152.

[20] Jean Tedesco, « Études de ralenti », *Cinéa-Ciné pour tous*, n° 57, 15 mars 1926, p. 11.

[21] Cf. les *12e, 14e* et *20e performances* de la London Film Society (16 janvier 1927, 13 mars 1927 et 13 janvier 1928), repris dans *The Film Society Programmes, 1925–1939*, New York, Arno Press, 1972. Pour un aperçu sur la London Film Society voir Jamie Sexton, « The Film Society and the Creation of an Alternative Film Culture in Britain in the 1920s » dans Andrew Higson (dir.), *Young and Innocent ? The Cinema in Britain, 1896–1930*, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2002, pp. 291–320.

### *Il s'agissait de « disséquer » le mouvement*

En premier lieu le ralenti agite le débat théorique en raison de sa capacité à dépasser les limites imposées par la sensibilité rétinienne humaine. En effet, de même que l'oeil des scientifiques pionniers était diminué par le joug de ses propres limites — le travail d'Étienne-Jules Marey, une bataille pour « corriger l'imperfection de notre oeil »,[22] celui de Jean Comandon pour dépasser les « difficultés que nous avons dans l'acte du voir »[23] —, l'œil des années vingt — celui que le cinéma est l'un des premiers à théoriser, à mettre en œuvre, qui combat pour son affirmation — est également borgne, distrait, lent et peu performant. Mais de même que les scientifiques ont mené des années de recherche pour trouver des appareils qui neutralisent cette limite, l'œil des années vingt — cette « mauvaise vue »,[24] assujettie à ses « limites étroites »[25] — découvre en photographie et cinéma des alliés puissants et prothétiques.

L'idée qu'il y a dans la genèse du ralenti la nécessité de « disséquer le mouvement, de l'analyser »[26] pour le connaître dans chacune de ses nuances, revient souvent dans les pages des théoriciens de l'avant-garde, ce qui rattache fortement cette technique à sa matrice scientifique. Pour Juan Arroy, il « décompose et analyse les rythmes plastiques les plus insaisissables et les plus fugitifs » ;[27] Louis Delluc n'hésite pas non plus à en parler en qualité « d'analyses d'images », de « décomposition du rythme musculaire »[28] et Jean Tedesco, comme on l'a déjà vu, continue dans ce sens en dégageant linguistiquement l'idée de dissection : selon lui ce n'est plus seulement le mouvement scientifique qui peut être disséqué mais le réel entier qui, grâce à ce processus, peut être sondé dans toute sa profondeur.

Ainsi s'opère un tournant épistémologique allant de l'observation scientifique de l'imperceptible à la compréhension d'une vérité profonde et inconnue du monde. En sortant du champ étroitement scientifique, le ralenti se révèle en mesure de soulever le voile de Maya — « un coin du rideau qui nous cache le mystère de la vie »,[29] en réussissant à en capter ses « apparences les plus subtiles,

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[22] Étienne-Jules Marey, *La méthode graphique dans les sciences expérimentales et principalement en physiologie et en médecine*, Paris, 1878, p. XVII.

[23] Jean Comandon, « Cinématographie de microbes », *Dossier de la Société d'Encouragement pour l'industrie nationale*, Fonds Jean Comandon de Institut Pasteur, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, boîte JC2. Sur Jean Comandon et ses films voir Béatrice De Pastre et Thierry Lefebvre, *Filmer la science, comprendre la vie. Le cinéma de Jean Comandon*, Paris, CNC, 2012.

[24] Jean Epstein, « L'Intelligence d'une machine » [1946], repris dans *Écrits sur le cinéma*, vol. 1, Paris, Seghers, 1975–76, p. 261.

[25] László Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Photographie, Film* [1925], tr. Catherine Wermester, *Peinture Photographie Film et autres écrits sur la photographie,* Nîmes, Chambon, 1993, p. 68.

[26] Pierre Desclaux, « L'*ultracinéma* et son inventeur », op. cit., p. 10.

[27] Juan Arroy, « Danses et danseurs de cinéma », *Cinémagazine*, n° 48, 26 novembre 1926, p. 427.

[28] Louis Delluc, « Le cinéma, art populaire » [1921] repris dans *Écrits cinématographiques*, ed. par Pierre Lherminier, vol. 2, t. 2, Paris, Cinémathèque Française, 1990, p. 282.

[29] Pierre Desclaux, « L'*ultracinéma* et son inventeur », op. cit., p. 12.

les plus secrètes ».[30] Germaine Dulac se réfère certainement à ce passage quand elle précise que le cinéma serait arrivé à « photographier l'insaisissable » en spécifiant de faire référence à « l'insaisissable et non l'invisible », parce que l'invisible — « ce qui existe matériellement en dehors de notre perception visuelle » — le cinéma depuis longtemps le captait, utilisant des combinaisons techniques. L'*invisible* serait alors « ce que notre oeil ne peut voir » ; alors que l'*insaisissable* est « l'esprit dramatique qui émane du mouvement ».[31] Elle insiste aussi sur la détermination d'une différence entre ces deux concepts. Le ralenti est en mesure de les dévoiler tous les deux:

> *L'invisible*: quand le ralenti multipliant par sa vitesse le nombre des images, nous permet de décomposer un mouvement en ses moindres phases plastiques. *L'insaisissable*, quand il rend perceptibles des réactions morales et psychologiques imperceptibles.[32]

## *L'objectif lui-même*

Après le *topos* du pouvoir révélateur du cinéma, c'est au travers du ralenti qu'on entre dans le second grand thème de l'esthétique cinématographique des années vingt : la connaissance de l'invisible dévoilée par un dispositif automatique. Par rapport à la décennie précédente, ce thème permet d'effectuer un pas conceptuel important pour définir le cinéma en tant qu'art : de l'idée que le cinéma pouvait accéder au rang de septième art *en dépit de* sa base technique, on arrive à l'idée qu'il y parvient justement *en vertu* d'elle. Selon Jean Epstein notamment, le cinéma n'est pas seulement une machine automatique — *L'objectif lui-même* : c'est grâce à l'automatisme qu'il devient, « à l'improviste », une *machine philosophique*, dotée d'un « génie propre », qui produit de la philosophie et des concepts.[33]

Si déjà Marey « désirait déterminer l'équation personnelle de chacun [...] et a inventé pour cela des mécanismes destinés à décomposer photographiquement le mouvement »,[34] ce sont les mêmes *mécanismes* qui captent le mouvement en le fractionnant pour qu'il devienne désormais l'*objectif* des prises de vue à grande vitesse : « ce que notre œil ne peut percevoir, l'objectif doit l'enregistrer ».[35] Voici donc une triangulation étymologique qui lie automatisme, objectif et vérité intrinsèque au ralenti. De même que, à l'origine, la décomposition du mouvement par un dispositif automatique a été gage de rapprochement à la vérité, en dégageant les recherches scientifiques sur le mouvement de la possibilité de l'erreur humaine, dans les années vingt cette base technique libère le cinéma de l'anecdote, de l'intrigue et de tout ce qu'il a été contraint d'emprunter aux autres arts afin de se légitimer. Le cinéma peut ainsi sortir du champ scientifique pour entrer dans celui de l'art — sa force révélatrice issue justement du fractionnement analytique du mouvement : « si des appareils décomposent le mouvement pour explorer le domaine des infiniment petits dans la nature, c'est pour visuellement nous apprendre les drames et les beautés que notre œil, trop synthétique, ne perçoit pas », dit Germaine Dulac.[36]

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[30] Jean Tedesco, « Le Règne du Théâtre et la Dictature du Cinéma », op. cit., p. 10.

[31] Germaine Dulac, « L'action de l'avant-garde cinématographique » [1931], repris dans *Écrits sur le cinéma*, *1919–1937*, ed. par Prosper Hillairet, Paris, Paris Expérimental, 1994, p. 158.

[32] Ibidem [nous soulignons].

[33] Jean Epstein, « L'Intelligence d'une machine » [1946], op. cit., p. 286. Cf. aussi Jean Epstein, « L'objectif lui-même » [1926], repris dans *Écrits sur le cinéma*, op. cit., pp. 127–130. Pour une relecture de la pensée d'Epstein voir Laura Vichi, *Jean Epstein*, Milano, Il Castoro, 2003 ; Sarah Keller et Jason N. Paul (dir.), *Jean Epstein : Critical Essays and New Translations*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2012 ; Roxane Hamery et Éric Thouvenel (dir.), *Jean Epstein. Actualité et postérités*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016 ; Christophe Wall-Romana, *Jean Epstein : Corporeal Cinema and Film Philosophy*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2016.

[34] Pierre Desclaux, « L'*ultracinéma* et son inventeur », op. cit., p. 10.

## *Une esthétique insoupçonnée*

L'invisible maintenant porté à la vue cache en lui une beauté insoupçonnée qui revient continuellement dans les pages émerveillées de l'avant-garde : « le cinéma ralenti nous met aux portes d'une esthétique insoupçonnée ».[37] Si Lucien Bull avait déjà raconté « Les merveilles du ralenti », pour Marcel Defosse aussi les méduses au ralenti sont « merveilleuses ».[38] Les choses sont, en premier lieu, étonnamment plus belles que dans la réalité. Pour Dimitri Kirsanoff « le saut du cheval au ralenti est plus beau que ce saut naturel »,[39] alors que pour Tedesco cette technique permet de « jouir visuellement de nos muscles ». Ernst Bloch également, dans sa réflexion déterminante sur l'agrandissement et la réduction du temps et de l'espace, remarque qu' « avec le ralentisseur, les choses se disposent de manière plutôt agréable. La vie a un effet doux et pacifique, les boxeurs se caressent, le poteau atterrit comme une caresse ».[40] Tout, au ralenti, est extraordinairement gracieux, harmonieux : des animaux majestueux enseignent aux mortels tout ce qu'il y a à savoir sur le mouvement et les hommes ont « une grâce insoupçonnée ».[41] Pour Henri Fescourt, encore, « de l'ordre rendu visible à l'œil nu jaillira l'harmonie ».[42]

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[35] Ibidem.

[36] Germaine Dulac, « Musique du silence », *Cinégraphie*, n° 5, décembre 1928, p. 77. Sur le pouvoir révélateur du cinéma dans les années vingt voir Malcolm Turvey, *Doubting Vision : Film and the Revelationist Tradition*, Oxford–New York, Oxford University Press, 2008.

[37] Jean Tedesco, « Études de ralenti », op. cit., p. 12.

[38] Marcel Defosse, « Le Club du Cinéma de Bruxelles », *Cinéa-Ciné pour tous*, n° 84, 1 mai 1927, p. 15.

[39] Dimitri Kirsanoff, « Les problèmes de la photogénie », *Cinéa-Ciné pour tous*, n° 62, 1 juin 1926, p. 10.

[40] Ernst Bloch, « Verfremdungen II. Geographica », dans *Literarische Aufsätze, Gesamtausgabe*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt s/M., 1964, p. 201 (ma traduction).

Enfin, ce qui est révélé grâce au ralenti scientifique, c'est le rythme des choses. Et c'est ce rythme des choses qui est au centre de la réflexion esthétique et des débats théoriques sur le cinéma en France dans les années vingt. En ce sens, la caractéristique de cette technique est son « extraordinaire puissance de révélation rythmique »,[43] une sorte d' « eurythmie spontanée ».[44] Pour Dulac, simplement, « le ralenti, c'est du rythme ».[45]

### *La même substance que nos rêves*

Une fois rendu visible — en lui donnant la cadence — le rythme des choses et le mouvement du monde, le ralenti transfigure le réel en une espèce de réalité seconde, une sorte de vision onirique. Selon Kirsanoff cela a à voir avec le rêve ; pour Fescourt, « au ralenti nous sommes faits de la même substance que nos rêves ».[46]

Et comment bouge-t-on dans les rêves ? Tout le monde remarque que l'air dans lequel se déplacent les corps au ralenti est étrange. Comme déjà Bull disait que « tous les corps en mouvement », illuminés par la source de l'étincelle électrique « nous semblent au repos », « comme figés dans l'espace »,[47] ces corps aussi sont encerclés par une « écume légère et solennelle comme une neige interminable »,[48] et ils semblent nager dans un « milieu demi-solide, dans un air visqueux »,[49] où tout palpite fluidement, « avançant comme à travers une couche d'air résistant ».[50] Pour Bloch « les coureurs et les mêmes sauteurs semblent gager, ils sont comme l'eau, ils se déplacent avec plus de mollesse »,[51] alors que pour Epstein, en changeant le pourcentage de ralentissement, on régressera à un magma primordial, toujours plus visqueux :

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[41] Louis Delluc, « Le cinéma, art populaire », op. cit., p. 282.

[42] Henri Fescourt, « Opinions », *Cinégraphie*, n° 2, 15 octobre 1927, p. 40.

[43] Elie Faure, « La cinéplastique », *La Grande Revue*, CIV, n° 11, novembre 1920, pp. 26–27.

[44] René Schwob, *Une mélodie silencieuse*, Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1929, p. 233.

[45] Marcel Zahar et Daniel Burret, « Une heure chez Mme Dulac », *Cinéa-Ciné pour tous*, n° 63, 15 juin 1926, p. 14. Sur le rythme dans cette époque voir Laurent Guido, *L'âge du rythme. Cinéma, musicalité et culture du corps dans les théories françaises des années 1910–1930*, Lausanne, Payot Lausanne, 2007.

[46] Henri Fescourt, « Opinions », op. cit., p. 40. Cf. aussi Dimitri Kirsanoff, « Les problèmes de la photogénie », op. cit.

[47] Lucien Bull, « Comment on filme les mouvements ultra-rapides », op. cit., p. 3.

[48] Louis Delluc, « Le cinéma, art populaire », op. cit., p. 282.

[49] Léon Pierre-Quint, « Signification du cinéma », *Les Cahiers du mois*, n° 16–17, octobre 1925, p. 169.

[50] Dorothy M. Richardson, « Continous Performance : Slow Motion », *Close Up*, vol. 2, n° 6, juin 1928, p. 54.

[51] Ernst Bloch, « Verfremdungen II. Geographica », op. cit., p. 201.

> Tout l'homme n'est plus qu'un être de muscles lisses, nageant dans un *milieu dense*, où d'épais courants portent et façonnent toujours ce clair descendant des vieilles, faunes marines, des eaux mères. La régression va plus loin et dépasse le stade animal. […]. Plus ralentie encore, toute substance vive retourne à sa *viscosit*é *fondamentale*, laisse monter à sa surface sa *nature colloïdale foncière*. Enfin, quand il n'y a plus de mouvement visible dans un temps suffisamment étiré, l'homme devient *statue*, le vivant se confond avec l'*inerte*, l'univers involue en un désert de matière pure, sans trace d'esprit.[52]

Tout comme le physicien Ernst Mach avait déjà remarqué l'apparente rigidité des corps au ralenti,[53] et comme à Elie Faure ces derniers peuvent sembler des « statues en action »,[54] on retrouve également dans la prose de Jean Epstein un étrange phénomène par lequel, augmentant progressivement le ralentissement, ces corps sont dénaturés. C'est comme si la grâce qui les illuminait, en s'accumulant, changeait elle-même sa propre nature en devenant une chose « presque inhumaine »[55] et en faisant régresser les corps à un stade presque mortel où les règnes naturels se chevauchent sur la route de l'animisme.

### *Les choses étranges et mystérieuses*

Ces corps inertes, dénaturés, statuaires — « chevaux au galop qui semblent des bronzes rampants », « oiseaux qui semblent danser dans l'espace »[56] — sont perçus par l'oeil comme une « anomalie ».[57] Cela était déjà constaté par Hans Lehmann, scientifique et inventeur : « en regardant un mouvement humain ralenti […] on a du mal à reconnaître le mouvement réel ».[58] Une telle sensation est d'abord causée par le fait de percevoir que la technique est en train d'agir sur une loi qui a régulé le monde jusqu'au moment où la technique même la remplace par ses propres lois. Kirsanoff, cinéaste et théoricien, est du même avis dans un article sur les « problèmes de la photogénie ». Selon lui, cette forme de distanciation est due surtout au fait que le ralenti travaille sur l'espace-temps :

> Le ralenti est plus étrange, car les dimensions de son « mouvement-temps » ne sont pas les mêmes que les dimensions du mouvement-temps que nous connaissons.

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[52] Jean Epstein, « L'Intelligence d'une machine » [1946], op. cit., p. 288 [nous soulignons].

[53] Cf. Ernst Mach, *Connaissance et erreur*, Paris, Flammarion, 1906, pp. 161–162.

[54] Elie Faure, « La cinéplastique », op. cit., pp. 26–27.

[55] Paul Sabon, « Ralenti et accéléré. Une visite à l'Institut Marey », *La Revue du Cinéma*, n° 10, mai 1930, p. 4.

[56] Elie Faure, « La cinéplastique », op. cit., pp. 26–27.

[57] Dorothy M. Richardson, « Continous Performance », op. cit., p. 58.

[58] Hans Lehmann, « Die Zeitlupe » [1917], tr. angl. « Slow-Motion », dans Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, Michael J. Cowan (dir.), *The Promise of Cinema : German Film Theory, 1907–1933*, Oakland, University of California Press, 2016, p. 91.

> Et comme nous trouvons un attrait dans les choses étranges et mystérieuses, il nous semble que le saut du cheval au ralenti est plus beau que ce saut naturel.[59]

Mais il va plus loin : il affirme que ces sauts semblent plus beaux parce que « c'est tout le contraire qui aurait pu se produire », en soulignant ainsi un décalage que l'on retrouve encore dans les années trente : « ce sublime est inhumain. Le ralenti semble par son essence le contraire de l'émotion ».[60] *Le contraire*, une inversion logique qui présente des traits diaboliques depuis la fin du Moyen-âge ; ces chevaux ressemblent en effet à des « danseurs de ballets russes transformés en animaux à la suite d'une intervention diabolique ».[61] Comme on peut aisément le constater, cette question aboutira au tardif *Cinéma du diable* epsteinien et sa « mobilisation générale des formes »[62] par laquelle les cristaux bougent, les plantes agissent et les gestes humains se minéralisent.

### *C'est du grand art*

Il est donc désormais possible de dégager les différentes facettes d'un glissement conceptuel, comme on peut déjà le remarquer dans les pages que Louis Delluc dédie au ralenti :

> Ces essais, dont le seul poète est un opérateur photographe, ont souvent une étrange valeur picturale. L'artisan qui les compose est un créateur dans le genre des sculpteurs anonymes qui ouvraient les temples anciens ou les cathédrales du moyen âge. C'est ainsi que l'ouvrier ouvre le chemin de l'art.[63]

Si ces images, légères et nobles, semblent avoir été créées par un poète ; si celles, étranges et dénaturées, énumérées par Noguès, Epstein et Kirsanoff semblent avoir été créées par un diable ; si devant les mouvements des danseuses de l'Opéra, « nous sommes émus comme devant le chef-d'oeuvre d'un Maître »,[64] c'est qu'un triple glissement s'opère. Poètes, maîtres, sculpteurs, diables participent ainsi à la simple restitution de la réalité via un appareil de prise de vues, à la révélation d'éléments jusqu'ici inconnus, à la véritable création de quelque chose de différent. Corollaire de l'automatisme de la machine, voici le troisième grand thème qui traverse les années vingt *au ralenti* : il ne s'agit pas seulement de révéler quelque chose du réel, mais plutôt d'accepter que la nature du réel et la nature de la machine parlent ensemble une autre langue et créent ensemble autre chose. Si Sigfried Kracauer est en effet profondément frappé par la véritable création d'une « merveilleuse configuration des arts dévoilée par cette lenteur de limace à travers le temps »,[65] et si Walter Benjamin reviendra sur cette question dans sa notion d'*inconscient optique* — « il devient ainsi tangible que la nature qui parle à la caméra, est autre que celle qui parle aux yeux »[66] —, on ne peut que constater que les germes de la réflexion sur la nature de l'image cinématographique étaient déjà présents dans toute la pensée théorique de ces années-là au sujet du cinéma ralenti. Lucien Bull avait en effet déjà remarqué qu'un projectile illuminé par une étincelle électrique pouvait apparaître « à nos yeux absolument immobile », comme doté d'une nature différente. Kirsanoff reformule d'autre part consciemment cette idée : en parlant justement de ralenti et accéléré il dit que « chaque chose existant sur terre connaît *une autre existence sur l'écran*, existence qui est toute différente et autre que celle que nous connaissons ».[67] Tedesco, enfin, relie explicitement le dévoilement de l'inconnu à la création, en réaffirmant définitivement la dignité artistique du cinéma: dans « Études de Ralenti » il arrive à affirmer que le cinéma « crée de nouvelles formes » et que « ce que nos détracteurs appellent déformation des apparences par l'objectif nous l'appelons interprétation du monde ».[68]

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[59] Dimitri Kirsanoff, « Les problèmes de la photogénie », op. cit., p. 10 [nous soulignons].

[60] Paul Sabon, « Ralenti et accéléré », op. cit., p. 3.

[61] Pierre Desclaux, « L'*ultracinéma* et son inventeur », op. cit., p. 12.

[62] Jean Epstein, « Le Cinéma du diable » [1947], repris dans *Écrits sur le cinéma*, op. cit., p. 384.

[63] Louis Delluc, « Le cinéma, art populaire », op. cit., p. 282 [nous soulignons].

[64] Pierre Desclaux, « L'*ultracinéma* et son inventeur », op. cit., p. 12.

### *L'étincelle, puissance photogénique*

Étudier comment la révélation de l'invisible se démarque à l'époque de sa matrice scientifique revient à assister à une polarisation en deux tendances des discours sur le ralenti : une première qui se développe au sein du débat sur la *photogénie* et une seconde, extrêmement radicale, qui finira par reconnaître dans l'*ultracinéma* l'unique exemple de *cinéma pur*.

Au-delà de la « puissance photogénique » de l'étincelle électrique de *l'ultracinéma*, le lien direct entre le ralenti et le mot *photogénie* est établi en 1926 dans l'article de Kirsanoff sur « Les problèmes de la photogénie » à propos du pouvoir de révéler l'écart entre « les dimensions du mouvement-temps que nous connaissons dans la vie et celui que le cinéma nous révèle ». Mais avant cette date également : alors qu'Epstein avait essayé de définir la durée des moments de photogénie — très brève, une « valeur de l'ordre de la seconde » — il en indique comme échelle de mesure justement une « étincelle et une exception par à-coups » qui « impose un découpage mille fois plus minutieux que celui des meilleurs films ».[69] Selon Epstein, ensuite, la photogénie du ralenti se manifeste dans la capacité de cette technique d'accentuer les qualités et les défauts : « le ralenti intensifie les tics, intensifie les bruits. Un état d'âme décrit par la vitesse ».[70] Grâce à l'objectif ultrarapide, le ralenti jouit d'un pouvoir supplémentaire et presque animiste, en mesure de ratisser « les expressions les plus humaines de l'homme, chez qui il fait réapparaitre et dominer la vieille et sûre harmonie des gestes instinctifs ».[71] On peut déjà deviner ici la valeur morale dont est investi le ralenti, qui est pour Epstein en ligne directe avec l'évolution de son concept personnel de photogénie : « Qu'est-ce que la photogénie ? J'appellerai photogénique tout aspect des choses, des êtres et des âmes qui accroît sa qualité morale par la reproduction cinématographique ».[72] Voilà pourquoi il met ses espoirs dans le ralenti, doté du « pouvoir de séparation du sur-oeil mécanique et optique »,[73] d'un objectif en mesure de disséquer les sentiments et de montrer les instants qui les composent, comme les nuances singulières de l'effort d'une mouche pour prendre son envol, en fragmentant les mouvements, les gestes et les expressions en minuscules détails et en diagnostiquant les nuances des mouvements de l'âme.

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[65] Sigfried Kracauer à propos de *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* [*Force et Beauté*, 1925], *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 21 mai 1925 (ma traduction).

[66] Walter Benjamin, « L'Œuvre d'art à l'ère de la reproduction mécanisée », dans *Écrits français*, Paris, Gallimard, 1991, p. 163.

[67] Dimitri Kirsanoff, « Les problèmes de la photogénie », op. cit., p. 10 [nous soulignons].

[68] Jean Tedesco, « Études de ralenti », op. cit., p. 12.

[69] Jean Epstein, « Bonjour cinema » [1921], repris dans *Écrits sur le cinéma*, op. cit., pp. 93–94. Sur la photogénie dans la théorie du cinéma des années vingt voir aussi Chiara Tognolotti, *Al cuore dell'immagine. L'idea di fotogenia nel cinema europeo degli anni Venti*, Palermo, Edizioni della

### *Le seul film presque pur*

En parallèle, le ralenti est rapproché sémantiquement du cinéma pur, c'est-à-dire d'un cinéma qui ne doit pas emprunter aux autres arts son principal attrait. Pour René Clair on peut trouver la trace de cela dans les documentaires : plongeurs et parachutistes au *ralenti*, « c'est du cinéma pur! ».[74] Plus radicale encore, Germaine Dulac retient que

> Les données mêmes du cinéma pur, on pouvait les retrouver en certains documentaires scientifiques, ceux qui traitaient, par exemple, de la formation des cristaux, de la germination, de la croissance, de l'épanouissement des fleurs et des végétaux, de la trajectoire d'une balle, et de l'éclatement d'une bulle.[75]

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Battaglia, 2005.

[70] Jean Epstein, « Le mouvement créateur d'action » [1924], repris dans *Écrits sur le cinema*, op. cit., p. 50.

[71] Jean Epstein, « L'Intelligence d'une machine » [1946], op. cit., p. 290.

[72] Jean Epstein, « De quelques conditions de la photogénie » [1923], repris dans *Écrits sur le cinéma*, op. cit., p. 137.

[73] Jean Epstein, « L'âme au ralenti » [1928], repris dans *Écrits sur le cinéma*, op. cit., p. 191. Sur le ralenti dans la pensée de Jean Epstein voir notamment Ludovic Cortade, « 'The Microscope of Time' : Slow-motion in Jean Epstein's Writings » dans Sarah Keller et Jason N. Paul (dir.), *Jean Epstein : Critical Essays and New Translations*, op. cit., pp. 161–176.

[74] René Clair cité dans Jean Tedesco, « Pur cinéma », *Cinéa-Ciné pour tous*, n° 80, 1 mars 1927, p. 10.

[75] Germaine Dulac, *Le cinéma d'avant-garde* [1932], repris dans *Écrits sur le cinéma*, op. cit., p. 186.

L'écart définitif à ce sujet arrive cependant en 1929, opéré par le docteur Ramain, promoteur actif du ciné-club de Montpellier.[76] Pour lui le cinéma pur n'existe pas encore. Avant toute chose, s'il y a un scénario, il n'y a pas de film pur. Pas même la symphonie visuelle, si chère à Germaine Dulac, ne peut être considérée comme un film pur, ni « l'absence de *vedettes*, le montage, le rythme, la technique raffinée ou outrancière » faire des classiques de l'avant-garde des films purs. En ce qui concerne les documentaires, la position du docteur Ramain est encore plus audacieuse : « la vie n'a rien à voir avec un film pur ». On comprend alors que le problème est qu'aucun de ces films n'a apporté de modifications à notre vision rétinienne :

> Tout ce que ces films représentent NOTRE RETINE PEUT LE VOIR. Toute la formule du futur cinéma intégral est dans cette phrase : si nous pouvons voir NATURELLEMENT ce qu'enregistre l'objectif-œil mécanique, le film restera hors de l'absolu, ne sera jamais cette chimère nommée film pur.

Et pendant qu'on pense au pouvoir effectif de l'*ultracinéma* de dépasser les limites naturelles de notre sensibilité rétinienne, le « docteur » explicite le corollaire de telles prémisses :

> C'est pourquoi je considère comme le seul film presque pur existant actuellement La Trajectoire d'une balle de revolver de Lucien Bull. Bien plus que les essais de feu Viking Eggeling, de Walter Ruttmann ou d'Hans Richter, qui ne se sont pas affranchis des possibilités rétiniennes.[77]

## *Je l'ai appelé* Zeitlupe

Entrer à l'intérieur du temps avec une lentille : le paradoxe de Zénon n'a jamais été aussi vrai, Achille et sa tortue aussi loin, comme Epstein l'affirmait triomphalement dans *Quelques conditions de la photogénie*.[78] *Ralenti* correspond en allemand au mot *Zeitlupe* — lentille d'agrandissement du temps — telle que revendique de l'avoir appelée Hans Lehmann, un de ses inventeurs allemands.[79]

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[76] Sur le Docteur Ramain voir aussi Laurent Guido, « Le Dr Ramain, théoricien du musicalisme », *1895. Revue d'histoire du cinéma*, n° 38, octobre 2002, pp. 67–100 et François Albera, « Paul Ramain et Jean Epstein en correspondance », *1895. Revue d'histoire du cinéma*, n° 78, printemps 2016, pp. 104–129.

[77] Paul Ramain, « Sur le soi-disant 'film pur' », *Cinéa-Ciné pour tous*, n° 128, 1 mars 1929, pp. 7–8 (majuscules dans le texte).

[78] Jean Epstein, « Quelques conditions de la photogénie » [1924], repris dans *Écrits sur le cinema*, op. cit., p. 138. Sur le paradoxe de Zénon en rapport à la théorie du cinéma voir le sixième chapitre « Zeno's Paradox : The Emergence of Cinematic Time » de Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time : Modernity, Contingency, and the Archive*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2002, pp. 172–205.

[79] Hans Lehmann « Die Zeitlupe », op. cit., p. 91.

Si Marey avait par ailleurs déjà révélé cette propriété de sa méthode — « la chronographie est admirable ; véritable microscope du temps, elle montre que l'instant indivisible dont on parle souvent n'existe pas »[80] —, l'idée que le ralenti fait office de *véritable microscope du temps* se répand aussi parmi les voix de l'avant-garde. Selon le physicien Ernst Mach « l'opposition entre le ralentissement et l'accélération dans le temps est analogue à celle qui existe entre l'agrandissement et la réduction dans l'espace »,[81] et pour Bloch aussi le temps et l'espace peuvent être racontés ensemble, transversalement, en analysant « l'agrandissement de l'espace, contrairement à celui du temps ».[82] Cette caractéristique revient aussi chez Epstein — « le ralenti augmente le pouvoir de séparation, naturellement limité, des organes de vision […], il permet l'étalement des phénomènes dans la durée ; il constitue une sorte de microscope du temps ».[83] Son pouvoir de « séparation des sentiments, de grossissement dramatique »[84] apporte un nouveau registre à la dramaturgie, en ajoutant aussi une valeur à la microscopie des gestes. Pour ces diverses raisons Epstein se demandera : « Croyez-vous qu'un mensonge cinématographié au ralenti […] pourra échapper à la vérité ? ».[85] Quant est-il de Dziga Vertov ? Avait-il en tête cette capacité de regarder directement la vérité — la *kino-pravda*, le ciné-vérité — à travers son Ciné-Œil, quand il le définit comme un « microscope du temps » ?[86]

L'apothéose du courant qui situe le ralenti au carrefour de l'agrandissement spatial et temporel culmine enfin dans l'analyse que fait Walter Benjamin lorsqu'il élabore son concept d'inconscient optique :

> Sous la prise de vue à gros plan s'étend l'espace, sous le temps de pose se développe le mouvement. De même que dans l'agrandissement il s'agit bien moins de rendre simplement précis ce qui sans cela garderait un aspect vague que de mettre en évidence des formations structurelles entièrement nouvelles de la matière, il s'agit moins de rendre par le temps de pose des motifs de mouvement que de déceler plutôt dans ces

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[80] Étienne-Jules Marey, *La méthode graphique*, op. cit., p. XII. Sur le statut du photogramme et son rapport avec la *durée* bergsonienne cf. Maria Tortajada, « Le statut du photogramme et l'instant prégnant au moment de l'émergence du cinéma » dans Francesco Casetti, Jane Gaines, Valentina Re (dir.), *Dall'inizio alla fine. Teorie del cinema in prospettiva*, Udine, Forum, 2010, pp. 23–32 et Maria Tortajada, « L'instantané cinématographique. Relire Étienne-Jules Marey », *Cinémas. Revue d'études cinématographiques – Cinémas. Journal of Film Studies*, vol. 21, n° 1, 2010, pp. 131–152.

[81] Ernst Mach, *Connaissance et erreur*, op. cit., 162–163.

[82] Ernst Bloch, « Verfremdungen II. Geographica », op. cit., p. 203.

[83] Jean Epstein, « Le gros plan du son » [1947], repris dans *Écrits sur le cinéma*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 112.

[84] Jean Epstein, « Quelques notes sur Edgar Allan Poe et les images douées de vie » [1928], repris dans *Écrits sur le cinéma*, op. cit., p. 189.

[85] Jean Epstein, « Le cinématographe dans l'Archipel » [1928], repris dans *Écrits sur le cinéma*, op. cit., p. 200.

[86] Dziga Vertov, « Au sujet de la Kino-Pravda » [1934] et « Comment est né et s'est développé le Ciné-Œil »[1935] dans Irina Tcherneva, François Albera, Antonio Somaini (dir.), *Le Ciné-Œil de la révolution. Écrits sur le cinéma*, Dijon, Les Presses du Réel, 2018, pp. 463 et 514.

mouvements connus, au moyen du ralenti, des mouvements inconnus « qui, loin de représenter des ralentissements de mouvements rapides, font l'effet de mouvements singulièrement glissants, aériens, surnaturels ».[87]

Voici que dans le discours de Benjamin éclot une idée déjà apparue auparavant, mise en évidence inconsciemment par Bull, et consciemment par Tedesco et Kirsanoff : transfigurée par le travail du cinéma, la réalité parvient à dévoiler quelque chose d'elle-même de complètement nouveau, et les corps embrassent une seconde nature qui parle directement à la machine à prises de vue cinématographiques. Comme on le sait, Benjamin élabore ainsi une pensée radicale qui parvient à reconfigurer le rôle du *medium* lui-même, désormais considéré capable de connaître des lois invisibles qui régissent un espace situé au delà de notre perception, en croisant sa route avec celle de la psychanalyse naissante. C'est la caméra « avec tous ses moyens auxiliaires » qui « nous initie l'inconscient optique comme la psychanalyse l'inconscient pulsionnel ».[88] Il est intéressant de remarquer que, dans l'élaboration du concept d'*inconscient optique*, il semble bien que Benjamin soit parti de la chronophotographie et du ralentisseur, le dilatateur du temps.

### *Un oeil nouveau*

C'est enfin Hans Lehmann, le scientifique, qui introduit l'implication plus directe — et esthétiquement pertinente — du *Zeitlupe*, le *microscope de temps.* Il dit avoir nommé son invention *Zeitlupe* car « comme les instruments optiques, les lentilles et les microscopes, qui agrandissent les trois dimensions spatiales des objets physiques », elle « nous montre la quatrième dimension agrandie, c'est-à dire le *temps* dans lequel un objet accomplit un mouvement ».[89] Il est facile de deviner la portée esthétique de ces paroles : le ralenti qui — en dilatant le temps réel par rapport au temps diégétique — ouvrira la voie à un *découpage* au *millième de seconde*, rapidement suivi par l'accéléré dans la conquête de l'espace-temps. Une décennie après, en effet, Jean Tedesco reprendra ce concept dans son intégralité dans les pages de *Cinéa-Ciné pour tous*, reliant les milieux de la science et de la théorie du cinéma. En anticipant les conclusions, bien plus célèbres, de la longue réflexion epsteinienne visant à affirmer qu'« un tel pouvoir de séparation du sur-oeil mécanique et optique fait apparaître clairement la relativité du temps »,[90] le directeur du Vieux-Colombier confirme ainsi clairement l'ouverture d'une voie qui passe du ralenti à la relativité. Patron de la *durée*, le ralenti peut la suspendre comme il veut, en montrant les choses comme nous ne les avions jamais vues mais surtout en dépassant la limite de la bidimensionnalité à laquelle l'écran était condamné :

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[87] Walter Benjamin, « L'Œuvre d'art à l'ère de la reproduction mécanisée », op. cit., p. 163.

[88] Ibidem. Miriam Bratu Hansen consacre des pages très denses au concept benjaminien d'*inconscient optique* dans *Cinema and Experience : Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno*, Berkeley–Los Angeles–London, University of California Press, 2012, notamment le chap. 5 « Mistaking the Moon for a Ball », pp. 132–162.

[89] Hans Lehmann « Die Zeitlupe », op. cit., p. 91.

[90] Jean Epstein, *L'âme au ralenti* [1928], repris dans *Écrits sur le cinema*, op. cit., p. 191. À ce sujet

> [Le cinéma] est maitre de la Durée, qu'il a suspendu à sa volonté. Jamais n'avons-nous mieux illustré cette vérité que le temps n'est qu'une mesure. La seconde en paraissait autrefois la plus coutre fraction perceptible. La science calcule aujourd'hui par millièmes de seconde, seul le cinéma, *œuvre moderne*, a suivi cette évolution qui nous dépasse encore. Le millième de seconde lui est familier; l'objectif ne s'y trouve pas dépaysé et la rétine mouvante qui est la pellicule de celluloïd émulsionnée suit le mouvement. Au monde nouveau que l'esprit du siècle a découvert il fallait un œil nouveau: c'est l'appareil de prises de vues à grandes allures qui nous l'a donné.[91]

Que le cinéma soit en quelque sorte une mise en pratique de la théorie de la relativité, était une idée qui circulait déjà au début des années vingt[92] — pensons à Abel Gance qui estime que « la vertigineuse vision de la quatrième dimension de l'existence avec l'accéléré et le ralenti » a conféré au cinéma « la première place dans le langage international de demain », ou bien à Dziga Vertov lui-même, dont le célèbre Ciné-Œil est « théorie de la relativité à l'écran ».[93] Dans ce contexte s'inscrit l'intervention de Tedesco, dont le mérite est de détecter de manière assez précise le rôle spécifique de l'*ultracinéma* ainsi que la portée « philosophique »[94] du glissement du milieu strictement scientifique au milieu épistémologique induit par cette technique. Le ralenti a en effet ouvert la voie à la compréhension de la modernité du cinéma en faisant en sorte qu'il prenne la place qu'il méritait dans le Zeitgeist, l'esprit du siècle. Unique « œuvre moderne », en mesure d'arriver là où les autres arts sont obligés de s'arrêter, il tient tête à la science dans le calcul au millième de seconde — en réalité, Achille ne rejoindra jamais sa tortue.

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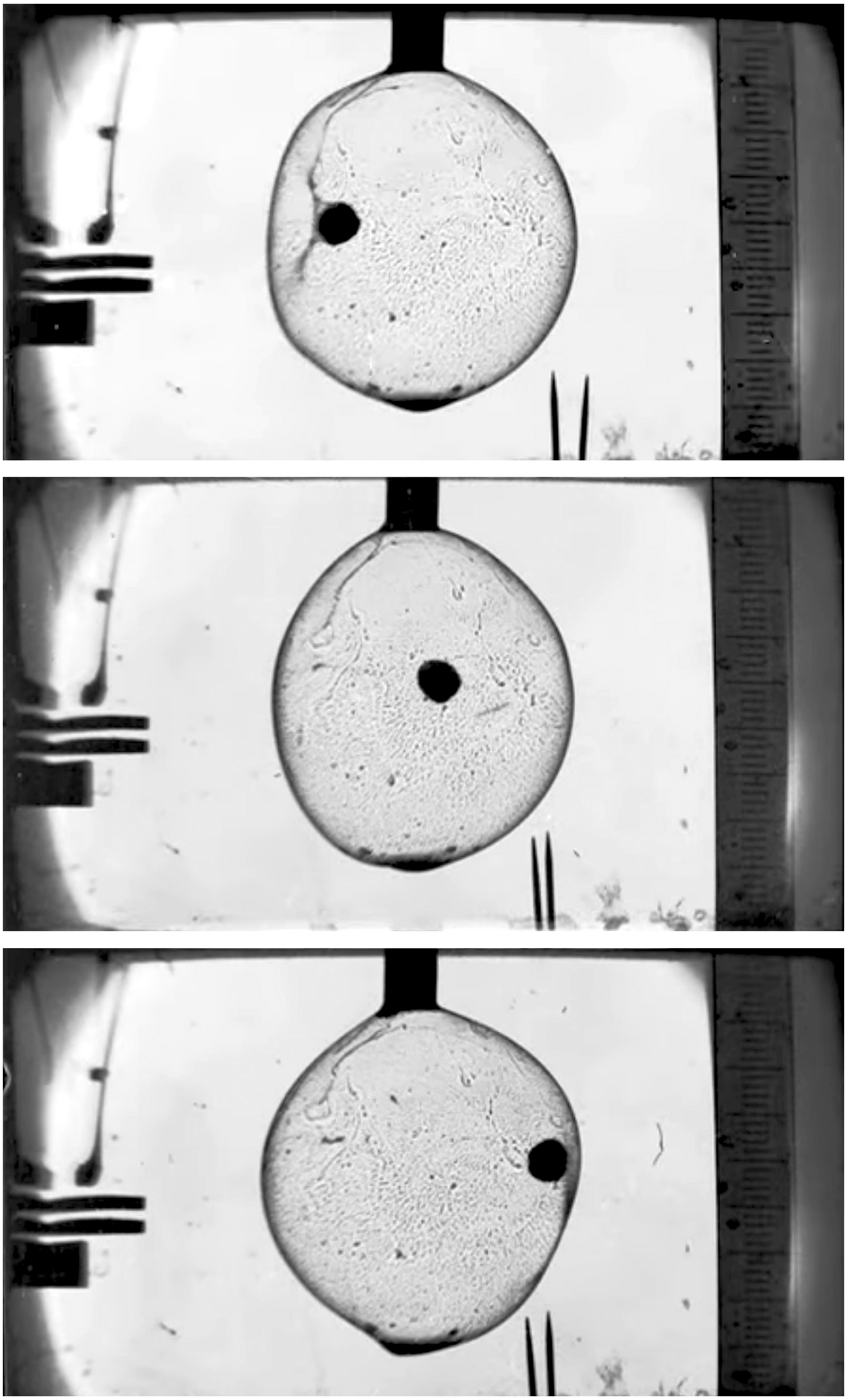
voir aussi Nicolas Thys, « De la physique relativiste dans les écrits de Jean Epstein. L'esthétique en miroir de l'histoire des sciences », *Alliage*, n° 71, décembre 2012, pp. 173-184 et Chiara Tognolotti, « Jean Epstein, 1946-1953. Ricostruzione di un cantiere intellettuale », Thèse de doctorat, Università di Firenze, 2002, notamment les pages 157–205.

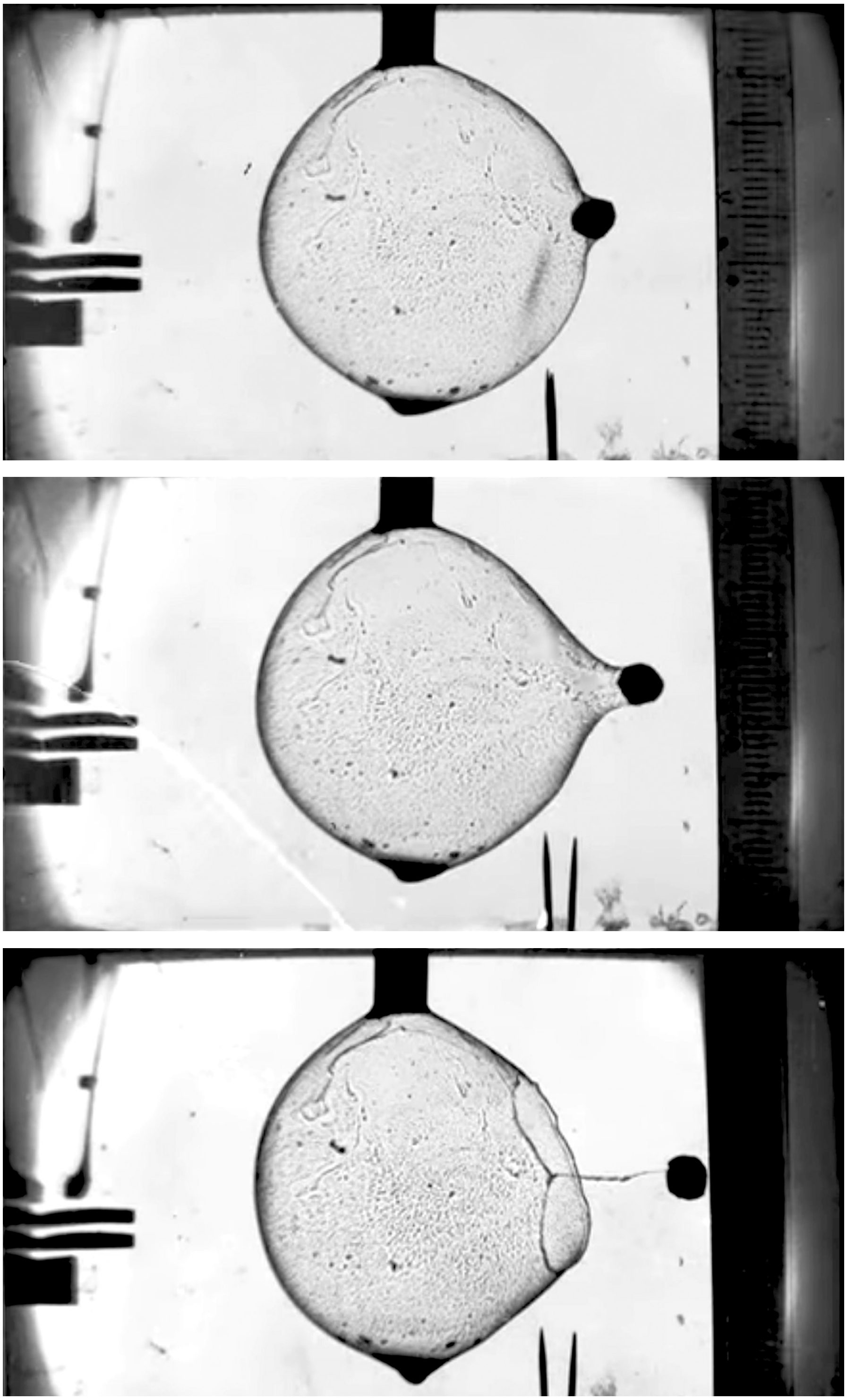
[91] Jean Tedesco, « Études de ralenti », op. cit., p. 12 [nous soulignons].

[92] Cf., par exemple, Jean-Francis Laglenne, « Le peintre au cinéma », *Cinéa*, n° 9, juillet 1921, p. 14 et Lionel Landry, « Einstein au cinéma », *Cinéa*, n° 71–72, septembre 1922, pp. 12–13. C'est intéressant de remarquer que le cinéaste scientifique Jean Comandon fait également référence à la théorie de la relativité dans « Les possibilités artistiques de la cinématographie », l'article écrit pour *Schémas*, la revue dirigée par Germaine Dulac (n° 1, février 1927, p. 78), qui constitue l'un des chevauchements les plus suggestifs entre les univers de la cinématographie scientifique et de l'avant-garde : « Depuis longtemps nous sommes donc maitres de l'espace. Pouvons-nous influer sur le temps ? (N'ayez crainte, nous ne voulons ni nous rappeler les vers du poète, ni discuter ici les formules d'Einstein) ».

[93] Dziga Vertov, « Nous. Variante du manifeste » [1922], dans Irina Tcherneva, François Albera, Antonio Somaini (dir.), *Le Ciné-Œil de la révolution*, op. cit., p. 107.

[94] Jean Tedesco, « Études de ralenti », op. cit., p. 12.





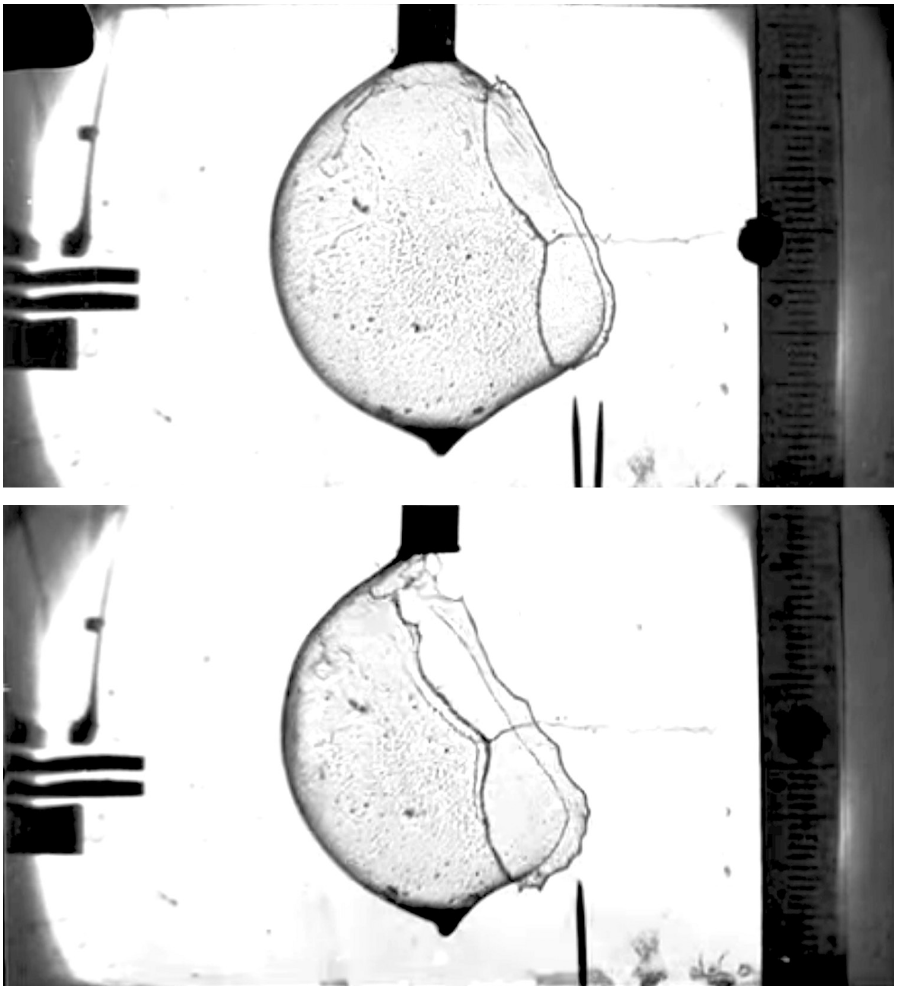
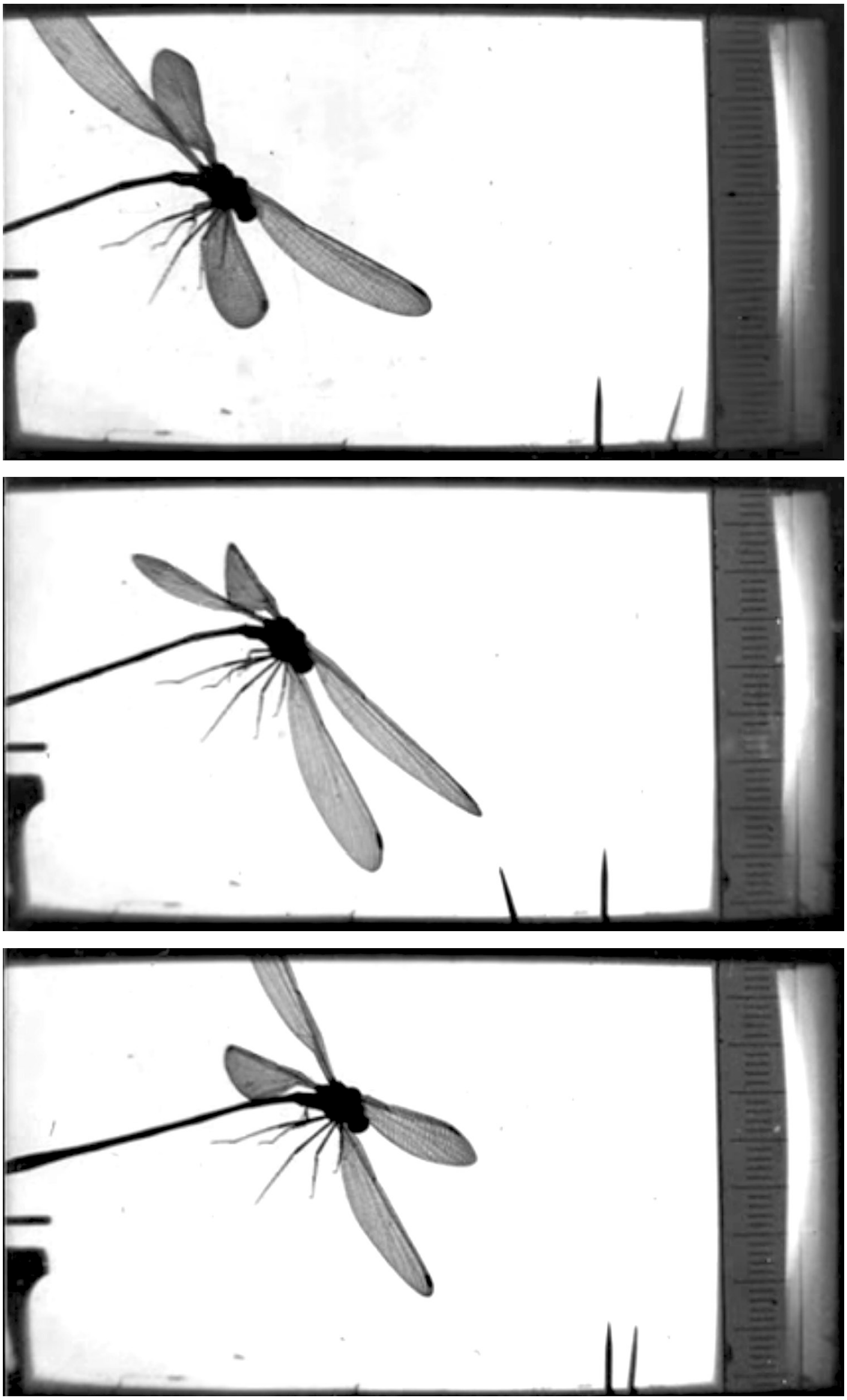
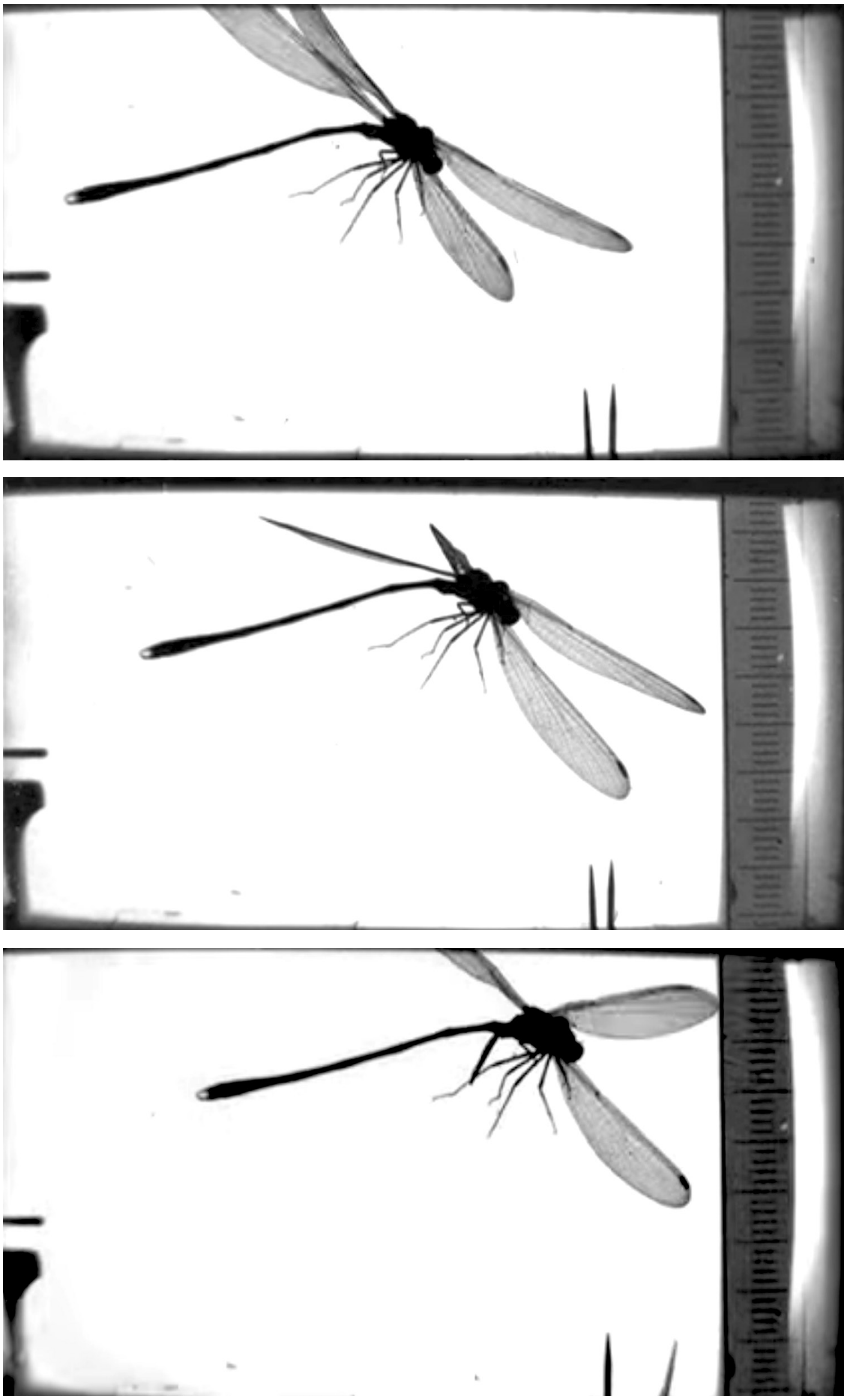


Fig.1: Lucien Bull, *Rupture d'une bulle de savon par un projectile*, Institut Marey, 1904 [?], droits réservés.





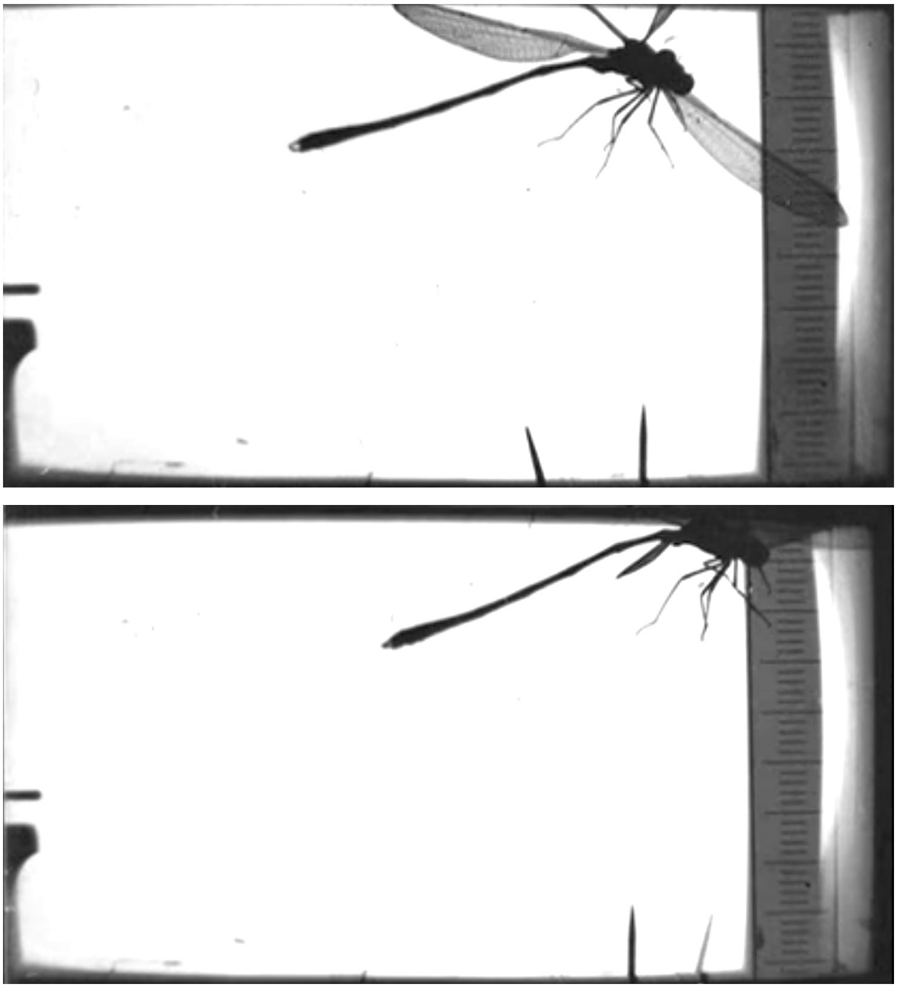


Fig. 2: Lucien Bull, *Vol de l'Agrion Puella*, Institut Marey, 1904 [?], droits réservés.

# The Surface of Modernity: Mario Schifano and Fabio Mauri between *Screens* and *Monochrome* Painting (1957–1969)

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*Abstract*

Between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, monochrome painting became a relevant tendency in Italy, crossing post-Spatialist and post-Informal practices. In the same years, the modernity of mass culture had overwhelmed a society which was mainly agricultural in a short time. As great symbols of this irreversible mutation, cinema and media image soon became a new lexicon for the research of many artists. By drawing on sources of that time intertwined with more recent theories on media and their relationship with modernity, this article analyses Fabio Mauri's 'screens' and Mario Schifano's 'monochromes' as an attempt of narrating the new 'society of spectacle' through the paradox of the absence of images. For both Rome-based artists, modernity seems at the same time something to reveal and to resist. If the former chooses a language that anticipates Pop grammar, the latter seems to look for a synthesis between new mass society and humanism. Both testify to the Italian way of the Post-War modernity.

'In 1960 the 1950s were 10 years old.'[1] Using this brief title for an article that sounds like a memoir, Fabio Mauri was able to look back and capture in just a few words the most defining characteristic of a decade that was so narrated that it became almost mythological. It's a question of genealogy: the 1960s were not merely, as historical debates often remind us, the precursor of the turbulent 1970s; the 1960s were also the successor of the 1950s, a decade of less loud yet irreversible rupture. The 1960s are the years of youth, the first years of rebellion and thirst for autonomy, the years of young ideas and actions, young bodies, customs, and visions. 'Everything went young in 1964', as Andy Warhol wrote.[2]

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[1] This is the title that Fabio Mauri chose for an article published in 1983 in which he recalled the 1960s Rome-based Avant-garde. F. Mauri, 'Nel 1960 gli anni '50 avevano 10 anni', *Flash Art*, 112 (1983), 38–42. The quotation is taken from the online version available on the magazine website: <http://www.flashartonline.it/article/nel-1960-gli anni-50-avevano-10-anni/> [accessed 27 March 2018]. (This one and all the quotations from Italian in this text, unless otherwise stated, are translated by the author).

[2] Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *Popism: The Warhol Sixties* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 87.

Yet in Italy something had already happened. The economic growth of the 1950s was so sudden that it is commonly described as explosive (the economic 'boom') and mystical (the economic 'miracle'). A new mass culture imposed itself on the country – which was still primarily agricultural – moving with the force of an 'anthropological mutation', as Pier Paolo Pasolini would later define it. While the 1950s introduced Italians to the first real experience of modernity, the 1960s became a sort of amusement park of well-being. With a delay of decades compared to other countries, where advanced capitalism had reached soaring heights well before the Second World War, Italy moved from housing with no heating, running water or electricity to houses with inevitably present refrigerators and televisions in less than a decade.[3] The excess of consumer society suddenly conquered the country, and cinema came to represent the fears and hopes of an entire generation that looked toward the American dream with the attentive eye of a spectator in front of the screen, as Steno's well-known comedy *An American in Rome* (*Un americano a Roma*, Steno, 1954) shows in a funny parody.[4] Cinecittà in Rome was reborn, and it became one of the most important and symbolic industries in the country. It did that together with fashion, an emerging star of the Italian economy, which sought to catch up with the well-established Parisian haute couture, between the décolleté and the slit skirt of unreachable divas. The wounds of the Second World War were being healed by the galloping horses of the cowboys and the curves of the cinemascope. Cinema was an irresistible ideological and economic space where Italy was playing with and against new mass society.[5]

In 1959, the *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani*, which had been suspended during the most dramatic phase of the Second World War, resumed its publications. 'The war is finally over',[6] the introduction written by Valentino Bompiani and Cesare

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[3] See Guido Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano. Culture, identità, trasformazioni tra anni Cinquanta e Sessanta* (Rome: Donzelli, 2005).

[4] Among the numerous bibliographical references on this theme, see Gian Piero Brunetta, 'Stati Uniti e Italia: uno sguardo telescopico', in *Storia del cinema italiano*, ed by Brunetta, 4 vols (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 2013), iii (*Dal Neorealismo al miracolo economico, 1945–1959*), pp. 152–177, and, more specifically on Steno's comedy, a recent study by Chiara De Santi, 'L'americanizzazione degli anni Cinquanta tra *Roman Holiday* e *Un americano a Roma*', *Cinema e Storia*, 5.1 (2016), 97–110.

[5] Although the advent of television and the shaping of a more complex media system was progressively changing the Italian media landscape, cinema still acts as a strong apparatus of dreams and imagery. For a specific analysis of cinema audience in Italy between 1950s and 1960s see Francesco Casetti and Mariagrazia Fanchi, 'Le funzioni sociali del cinema e dei media: dati statistici, ricerche sull'audience e storie di consumo', in *Spettatori: forme di consumo e pubblici in Italia, 1930–1960*, ed. by Mariagrazia Fanchi and Elena Mosconi (Rome: Fondazione Scuola Nazionale di Cinema, 2002), pp. 135–172.

[6] *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani 1959*, ed. by Valentino Bompiani and Cesare Zavattini (Milan: Bompiani, 1958), p. 145. *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani* begun to be published when Valentino Bompiani still worked within Mondadori Publishing. The intent was in the first place to return, by the lens of literature and its connections with visual arts, the litmus paper of contemporaneity. Both Cesare Zavattini and Bruno Munari already contributed to the publications in the '30s. The latter, at that time in his Dada-Futurist phase, realized mainly photographic inserts through

Zavattini proclaimed. Such a statement might seem strange, considering the fact that the war had been over for fifteen years by then, but it clearly demonstrates the amount of time that was necessary in order to recover from the trauma that it had caused. The first volume reproduced a series of collaborations that had been started already during the Fascist years — as Bruno Munari's cover testifies — but it was quite clear already that the Almanac was in need of a new vision. Fabio Mauri, who had just started working with the Milanese editor as head of the Roman editorial office, wrote:

> In 1959 Valentino Bompiani was wondering what to do with the old Literary Almanac [...] Something was circulating at that time in Rome that no longer tasted of the post-war period, an emancipation or a free zone for ideas and people [...] I gave a favourable opinion to Bompiani: the Almanac needed to be resumed. But how? By following, in my opinion, the new trend [...][7]

Nothing better then, for a volume that intended to celebrate the novelty of the new Post-War Italy, than a small Italian dictionary where one could find the terms which were 'among the most current' and, by constituting an 'essential instrument of collective life',[8] determined their meaning and value. 110 entries, therefore, for 110 editors: novelists, poets, philosophers, literary and film critics as well as photographers offer a snapshot of the new nation immersed in modernity. In its pages, Italians found the definition of 'automation', an 'ideology launched by capitalism for a better world',[9] 'festival', a product of the entertainment industry 'recorded by the faithful television set',[10] 'youth' — 'today's youngsters feel much more pro-European', choose 'immediately profitable careers', and yet 'they are sharper and less rhetorical; and physically healthier'[11] — "lotteries", 'the weekly mirage of fortune',[12] 'nature', which, as Calvino warns, 'is about to die',[13] killed by the abundance of love that men have for it. Only a short article is dedicated to the term 'cinema', which is interrogated about its nature as either an artistic or an industrial product, echoing a common debate of the bygone 1920s.

Yet it is precisely the cinema that still acts as a great apparatus of modernity. The photographer Pietro Donzelli chooses it to define, with a single shot, the term 'crowd',[14] the symbol par excellence of mass society (fig. 1). He does

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photomontage technique. The publication interrupted in 1943, in the middle of the war conflict. When it resumed, the historical contributors were still present, promoting the same experimental visual approach. Munari's polarized projections on the cover are an effective testimony of that.

[7] Fabio Mauri, 'L'Almanacco', in *Valentino Bompiani. Idee per la cultura*, ed. by Vincenzo Accame (Milan: Electa, 1989), p. 58.

[8] *Almanacco Letterario*, p. 145.

[9] Ivi, p. 149.

[10] Ivi, p. 174.

[11] Ivi, p. 180.

[12] Ivi, p. 191.

[13] Ivi, p. 197.

[14] Ivi, p. 183.

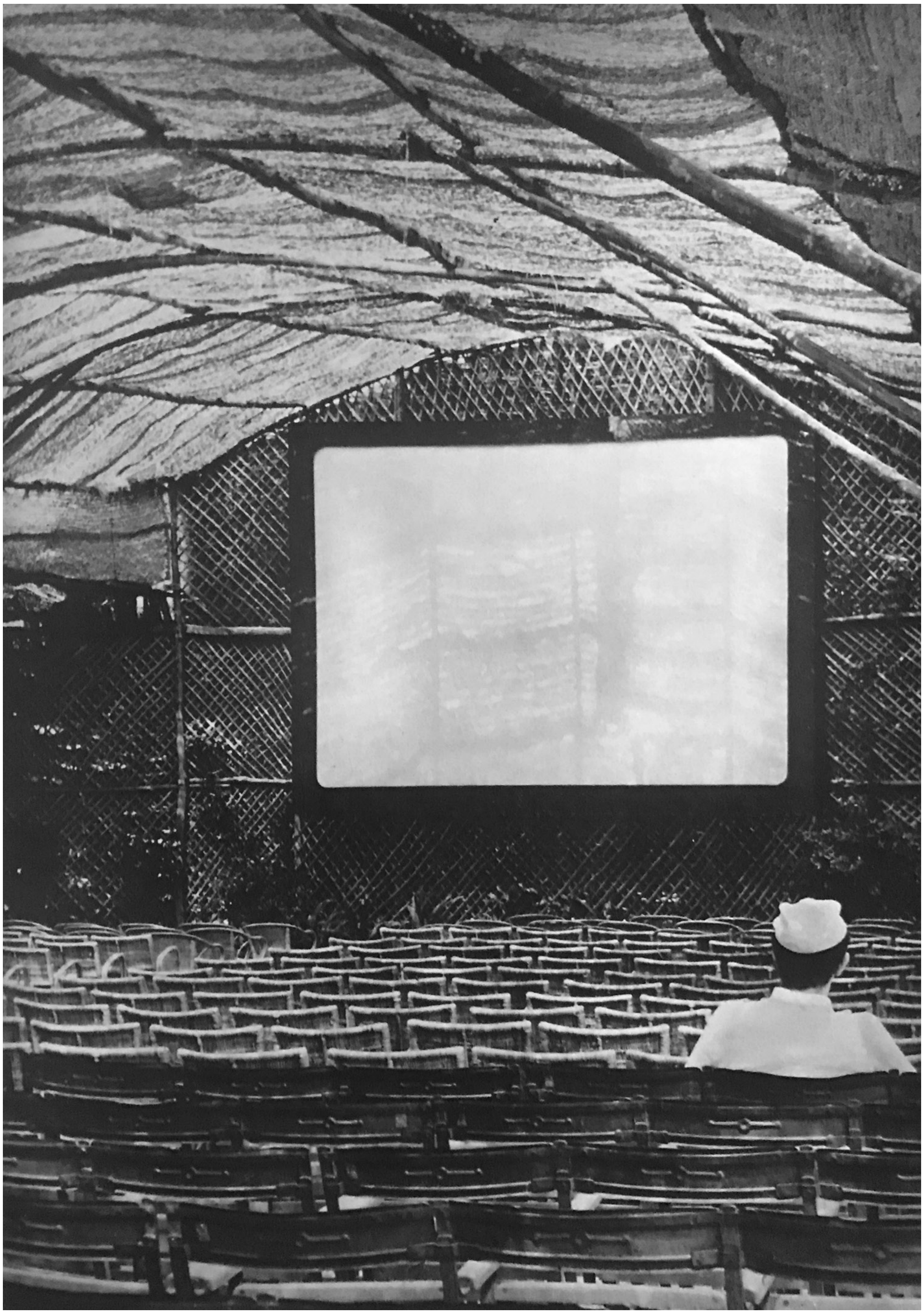

Fig. 1
Pietro Donzelli's shot illustrating the term 'crowd' on the *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani*.
Courtesy Renate Siebenhaar — Estate of Pietro Donzelli.

that through antiphrasis, showing us only one man, from behind, sitting in the middle of the empty stall in a summer movie theatre, bordered by a fence of reeds and bamboo.[15] Soft tarps guarantee coverage for the audience on a rainy night, one would suppose. At the centre of image, the empty screen returns no images except the faint shadows of the architectural skeleton, which cross the projection space and invade the frame. The phantom presences of a dissolving reality inside the rectangle of a screen without images acts, in fact, as a reality itself, as an experience of void for an overly-crowded society: 'Multitude-Solitude: these terms are equivalent, and are convertible by the active and fertile poet',[16] as Charles Baudelaire wrote in a little poem entitled, not by coincidence, *Les Foules* (*Crowds*).[17]

In the Italy of the economic boom, where for the first time the life of citizens is structured by the time of industrial labour and office work, cinema was still, before being overtaken by the spread of television, the privileged space for one's spare time, which for the first time in the history of Italy, was a mass phenomenon. As the social critic Nicola Chiaromonte reminds us, in a 1956 article in the journal he founded together with the novelist Ignazio Silone, *Tempo presente*, it is also

> an American art par excellence [...] because it corresponds to one of the most profound needs of mass civilization, which it reflects and serves: the need to automatically fill 'empty time' with a simulacrum of artificial time entirely similar to real time, yet substantially different. [...] For the inhabitant of the metropolis, whether poor or rich, worker or captain of industry, young or adult, 'empty time' is essentially the time that remains after one has finished their work, compulsory tasks and housework, and with which we do not know what to do; but we know that if we were to leave it empty, its weight would be intolerable.[18]

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[15] The cinema without images and without an audience returns to the photographic work of Pietro Donzelli, often devoted to illuminating the anachronisms of Italy's modernity. Among these *Cinema in Pila* (1954), which shows us the crumbling structure of a cinema set up with few objects of recovery in the poor and flooded lands of the mouth of the Po river. See Roberta Valtorta and Renate Siebenhaar, *Pietro Donzelli: terra senz'ombra: il Delta del Po negli anni Cinquanta* (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2017).

[16] Charles Baudelaire, 'Crowds', in *Little Poems in Prose*, ed. by Martin P. Starr (Chicago: The Teitan Press, 1995), p. 23.

[17] The French poet is re-evoked in those years in Italy as a theorist of modernity by the philosopher Élemire Zolla. See in particular *Eclissi dell'intellettuale* (Milan: Bompiani, 1959), pp. 29–43.

[18] Nicola Chiaromonte, 'Nota sul cinema americano', *Tempo presente*, 1.5 (August 1956), 383–385 (p. 385).

Fig. 2
Fabio Mauri, *Schermo-Disegno* [Screen-Drawing], 1957. Tempera on paper (70x100 cm).
Courtesy the Estate of Fabio Mauri and Hauser & Wirth.

### *The End is a Screen. Or an Icebox*

What would happen if the cinema screen returned nothing but itself? A simple, canvas rectangle, a lifeless monochrome surface, as in Pietro Donzelli's photograph? When Fabio Mauri, between 1957 and 1958, creates the first *Screen* (fig. 2) using only paper and tempera, it represents a modernist operation that dialogues with the then contemporary European and American monochrome practices but will also anticipates the future Pop inquiries. From a young age he gained an understanding of the new visual forms of the cultural industry through the American comics that his father's company imported to Italy and was thus perhaps the best suited artist to capture the dual nature of cinema: its symbolic dimension, a 'window where you have to see history' from a Renaissance perspective,[19] and its status as a mere object, interchangeable with an icebox. As he wrote himself, describing his works: 'the screen tense and empty, with no sign or colour [...] an icebox, a television, a screen? At least all three things together.'[20]

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[19] For a wide retrospective on the status of screen and its symbolic dimension see the recent study by Mauro Carbone, *Filosofia-schermi. Dal cinema alla rivoluzione digitale* (Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2016).

His monochrome, which seems to recall the white square on a black background by Malevič,[21] positions itself in a peculiar way with respect to the monochrome tendencies present in Italy in those years.[22] These involve particularly post-Spatialist and post-Informal practices: Pietro Manzoni's *achromes*, Enrico Castellani's surfaces, Agostino Bonalumi's picture-objects, Francesco Lo Savio's light-spaces and metals, Franco Angeli's veils, Mimmo Rotella's *retro d'affiches*, Salvatore Scarpitta's bandages. Still, the symbolic horizon adopted by Mauri is different, and it is not by chance that he is not included in *Azimuth* magazine, founded by the Milan-based artists Enrico Castellani and Piero Manzoni seeking European connections on monochrome tendencies. Mauri's *screens* seem in fact to act as the elementary form of the 'Society of the Spectacle'.[23] Yet, in presenting it in its nudity, as an object devoid of its function, the screen not returning any image acts also as a space of rupture, or to put it in the words of the Dutch philosopher Johan Huizinga, whose *Homo Ludens* was in circulation in Italy beginning in 1946, 'a spoilsport', or 'a player who trespasses against the rules'.[24] As Mauri himself will later write: 'a measurer of *topos*, the screen is the continuity of the small diaphragm between inside and outside. Discreet, it awaits the images, almost omitting to propose its own right [...] So, as the monochrome covers the world, the screen can smash it.'[25]

It's Emilio Villa, known to be 'the greatest dowser of Italian painting',[26] who would publish one of Mauri's first *screens* in the second issue of his magazine, *Appia antica,* in 1960. The writing 'The end', together with a painted 'X' that marks the canvas, recalls the wide and gestural brushstrokes typical of Informal Art. The reference, as is widely recognized, seems to be the Abstract Expressionism of Franz Kline, who had arrived in Rome two years earlier with the famous exhibition *The New American Painting*, organized by MoMA and exhibited in 8 European countries, and with a solo show at Plinio De Martiis'

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[20] *Fabio Mauri. Opere e azioni 1954–1994*, ed. by Carolyin Cristov-Bakargiev (Milan: Mondadori, 1994), p. 22.

[21] The reference to Malevič might be more than a modernist inspiration. The art historian Riccardo Venturi recalls the fact that many scholars 'now agree in recognizing the influence that the cinema screen has exerted on these aniconic paintings. These are not, or rather no longer work, as pictorial surfaces but as screens'. See Venturi, 'Il monocromo proiettato. Colore schermo esposizione', *Flash Art*, 319 (December 2014–January 2015). <http://www.flashartonline.it/article/il-monocromo-proiettato/> [Accessed 20 October 2018].

[22] On this point see, amongst the others, Adachiara Zevi, *Peripezie del dopoguerra nell'arte italiana* (Torino: Einaudi, 2008).

[23] In this sense, it also contrasts with some of the American contemporary monochrome tendencies. See Riccardo Venturi, *Black paintings: eclissi sul modernismo* (Milan: Electa, 2008).

[24] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (London: Routledge, 1949), p. 11.

[25] Fabio Mauri, 'La miserabilità dell'arte', in *Fabio Mauri. Opere e azioni*, p. 96.

[26] As defined by the poet and art critic Cesare Vivaldi. See *Fabio Mauri: 1959–1969*, ed. by Cesare Vivaldi (Milan: Tipografia Vallin, 1969), p. 3.

La Tartaruga gallery. Yet Mauri immediately looks for a gap, that literally erases, with a graphic sign, the Informal instance and initiates a tightly knit dialogue, or perhaps a conflict, with the present. 'To spy on the end, to expiate the end, to exorcise the end', writes Villa, who interprets Mauri's gesture as a resistance to the 'mechanical insolence that is raging today'.[27] A gesture of irritation, 'angry', adds the critic, which nevertheless fades in Mauri's subsequent production, where the sign, when it remains, is made into a serial form of graphic lettering where the screen-shape is replicated with different media, from screen printing to protruding canvases. Mauri will continue to create screens until the mid-1960s, before shifting the focus of his artistic research on cinema by exploring environments and happenings, from *Solid Light Cinema* of 1969 to a series of projections, including the famous 1971's performance done together with his friend Pier Paolo Pasolini at the GAM in Bologna.[28] The meta-media nature of the screen leads the artist to explore more closely the new television medium, therefore connecting with European and American TV experimentations,[29] with the media-happening *The Crying TV*, broadcasted by the RAI in 1972: in an alienating reversal of roles, the screen reacts emphatically in front of the viewer through a white monochrome space accompanied by the artist's crying voice that mercilessly returns to the inscription 'The end'.

Man has thus become an object that is interchangeable with the screen. In this osmotic process, the more he identifies with it, the more the screen is humanized and the more he is dehumanized. An intuition that Mauri had already had ten years before, in his series *Numberplate-Screen*s, which investigated the interstices of one of the most prominent phenomenon-symbols of Post-War modernity, where the myth of the automobile meets that of the cinema: the drive-in. An American practice, which emanated an irresistible sense of well-being upon its arrival in the Old World, in Italy the drive-in was also seen as a frivolous, expensive and rare form of entertainment, as we read in Irene Brin's caustic remarks: the drive-in 'has a worldly tone, it costs a lot, is infrequent'.[30] And yet, it remains the icon of technological triumph where human presence disappears and is dissolved in the sheet metal cabin of an automobile, annihilated in the numerical anonymity of a simple licence plate. And so, Mauri inserts the dark rectangles of the car plates under the rectangle of the screen, as if they were the *predella* of an old Medieval altarpiece. The plates almost seem like additional screens, perhaps those of a television, creating a mise en abyme in which, however, only the image of a frame is replicated. A void.

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[27] Emilio Villa, 'Fabio Mauri' in *Appia antica,* 2.2 (1960), 23–24 (p. 24).

[28] For a detailed analysis of Mauri's work *Solid Light Cinema* and its relationship with the contemporary Italian art and design scene see Riccardo Venturi, 'I Cinema a luce solida di Fabio Mauri', *Doppiozero*, 7 August 2015. <https://www.doppiozero.com/materiali/ars/i-cinema-luce-solida-di-fabio-mauri> [Accessed 20 October 2018].

[29] See on this point Marco Senaldi, 'Arte catodica. Dal dipinto allo schermo', in *TV 70: Francesco Vezzoli guarda la RAI*, ed. by Chiara Costa, Mario Mainetti, Francesco Vezzoli (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2017), pp. 499–506. Senaldi points out in this essay the pioneer role of Italian public television, which welcomed art experimentations as part of its broadcasting schedule, whereas in other countries artists were supported by cable television or art galleries.

[30] Irene Brin, *Dizionario del successo dell'insuccesso e dei luoghi comuni* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1986), p. 34.

As a new dematerialized cult, cinema soon became for Mauri an evanescent space: starting from 1962, the artist began to show fragmented images of divas emerging on the monochrome-screen, with the consistency of shadows or ghosts. An apparition, on the surface of the monochrome, which nevertheless reveals the ambiguous nature of the image. It was well known to the Greeks, for which *eidolon* ('image', but also 'lie') and *phasma* ('supernatural vision') share the same semantic field: they are *eidola* the dead souls that Odysseus meets in Hades, evanescent images that cannot be touched, so much so that when he tries to embrace his mother the Homeric hero will not succeed — 'three times she flew from my hands, like a shadow or a dream.'[31] For both there is, however, as the French philologist Jean-Pierre Vernant has noted,[32] the meaning of an image that is the double of a body that is elsewhere. Reality that is revealed in its absence. When Mauri inserts the evanescent bodies of Marylin or the Kessler twins' — and here television already inherits the characteristics of the cinematographic device in the creation of new divas — he confronts us with an experience that is not only that of the cult of a god, as Edgar Morin had already noted in 1957,[33] but also of a spectral vision. By participating in the evanescent substance of ghosts, stars act as intermittent images that create a slight ripple in the monochrome surface, which returns, continuously, to impose itself. Yet, in some cases, by exposing the grain of the image, which reveals the photographic printing technique (*The Scream,* 1963) as typical of Pop Art practices, Mauri forces us to look at the empty spaces inhabiting the stars' images, by so breaking their status of simulacrum.[34] If viewed from the perspective of seriality, his *screens* appear as a single work that stages at different degrees the 'film-specific rendering of phantom-like surface life'[35] indicated by Siegfried Kracauer. The spectrality of this surface thus blends with the experience of void, which is also, as the writing obsessively repeated by Mauri did not fail to underline, an experience of the end. These are the words used by Cesare Vivaldi to close his introductory text to *Crack*, a 1960 publication that gathered together the work of ten artists from the Roman avant-garde, included Mauri, reflecting on modern life: 'The white light of the earth has disappeared, we are broken, in the blackest black, towards a black blacker than all nights. The show is over. A new show is going to begin with the word: The End'.[36]

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[31] Homer, *Odissey,* ed. by Thomas W. Allen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1922), 11.213.

[32] See the collection of essays by Jean-Pierre Vernant, *L'immagine e il suo doppio. Dall'era dell'idolo all'alba dell'arte* (Milan: Mimesis, 2010).

[33] Edgar Morin, *Les Stars* (Bourges: Tardy, 1957). See also Cristina Jandelli, *Breve storia del divismo cinematografico* (Venice: Marsilio, 2007).

[34] On the relationship between the use of photographic image by Pop Art and the theories on media from Siegfried Kracauer to Marshall McLuhan see Antonio Somaini, '*Visual Meteorology*. Le diverse temperature delle immagini contemporanee', in *Fotografia e culture visuali del XXI secolo*, ed. by Enrico Menduni and Lorenzo Marmo (Rome: Roma TrE-press, 2018), pp. 31–52.

[35] Siegfried Kracauer, 'Hochstaplerfilme', *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 17 November 1923, now cited in Miriam B. Hansen, *Cinema & Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California University Press, 2011), p. 9.

## *The Screen of Humanism*

The various monochromes that appear in Mario Schifano's research, although creating a dialogue with those of Mauri, are of a different nature. The round form alludes to both cinema and TV screen. The screen is covered with wide and fast brushstrokes of industrial enamel which fill the canvas, drip over the edge and interrupt one another leaving parts that are uncovered, suspended. The gestuality, typical of Informal practice, persisted longer in Schifano's works, which were also exhibited for the first time by Emilio Villa in 1959. In the context of the dialectical relationship with Art Informel in Italy, the critic Maurizio Calvesi used the modernist metaphor of *tabula rasa* to describe Schifano's and Italian artists' monochromes as an empty space which cancels the past signs in order to make space for future ones.[37] Already in 1953 in the United States, Robert Rauschenberg implemented the metaphor of 'tabula rasa' through a literally *Erased De Kooning* and transformed one of De Kooning's paintings into a monochrome. Such an operation stood for a rupture, a breath, a white sheet ready for new narrations to come in Schifano's later artistic production. Schifano soon started working on a fragmented vision of the new landscape of modernity, in which highways (as in *Anemic Landscapes'* series) and advertisements (the Coca-Cola brand and Esso, the famous petroleum industry), come to make up the cinematic frames of the modern traveler. Like a true amateur, Schifano seems to record the fleeting visions of the experience of modernity, whose potential for the new is expressed as a landscape to discover.[38]

Unlike Mauri's works, Schifano's monochromes are a starting point for that bulimia of images, whose unstoppable vortex would remain an important feature of his works up until the end. However, the monochrome would remain a key element of his research, a sort of entry point and interpretive key that helps us understand his later development as a visual teller of modern life. It is this opening that allows the artist to undertake a privileged dialogue with cinema which, according to Schifano, is the only medium capable of narrating and drawing the shapes of modernity. It is not by coincidence that art critics, Schifano's contemporaries, tend to exploit the lexicon of cinema when commenting on Schifano's work:[39] Calvesi considers the colour backgrounds with rounded corners as a 'screen set to receive, or a video just switched on',[40] while Maurizio Fagiolo Dall'Arco called Schifano's eye 'a lens-eye'[41] and Alberto Boatto states that he perceives the reality 'as an image that enters randomly in an optical field'.[42]

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[36] *Crack*, ed. by Cesare Vivaldi (Milan: I Rachmaninoff, 1960), p. 5.

[37] See Maurizio Calvesi, 'Cronache e coordinate di un'avventura', in *Roma anni '60, al di là della pittura* (Rome: Carte Segrete, 1990), pp. 11–36.

[38] Precisely the opportunity to continue to produce monochromes instead of the subsequent paintings of 'new figuration' seems to break the relationship between Schifano and the art dealer Ileana Sonnabend, as we can read in Luca Ronchi, *Mario Schifano: una biografia* (Monza: Johan&Levi, 2010). The story is in fact controversial and is part of the turbulent adventures of the Italian art market in the Cold War. On this point see Michele Dantini, *Geopolitiche dell'arte: arte e critica d'arte italiana nel contesto internazionale, dalle neoavanguardie a oggi* (Milan: Christian Marinotti, 2012).

Certainly, by calling one of his rounded corners monochromes *Botticelli* Schifano accomplishes a double action: on the one hand he reminds us of the Italian visual tradition which at this point has been completely absorbed by the broader visual landscape, where advertisements and art works coexist in a world of media replicability, as a part of the 'city's spectacle',[43] on the other he makes the ability to observe that visual tradition impossible through a gesture of erasure/annihilation, of complete cancelation. *Botticelli* may allude to an idea of contemplative vision that is no longer possible with the velocity of cinematographic and TV images. While we are still able to grasp a few fragments of the Coca-Cola and Esso advertisements, replicated images born without an aura, of Botticelli's art we are left with nothing more than an empty space where the aura used to exist. Schifano's pictorial gesture, a coloured background with the mark of a palette knife that crosses the canvas, is thus the scream of a human experience which is going to fade out.

From this point of view, Schifano is very different from Andy Warhol, even though the two have often been compared. As the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard has underlined, Warhol produces simulacra in his art, images that have completely lost their connection with reality. In what is 'machinic metamorphosis',[44] the artist himself becomes a machine. Walter Benjamin reminds us that the automaton is the fundamental element of the modern experience, both in the industrial context in which human gesture is automated through the assembly line, but also in the seemingly more human urban setting, where the crowd is forced to move using fragmented, repeatable, controlled gestures. The Italian philosopher Élemire Zolla, in his essay of 1959 *The Eclipse of the Intellectual*, introduced the phenomenology of automatism, by contrasting the archetype of the warrior, typical of the pre-modern societies, with that of the gambler, who 'must learn to act not spontaneously, but automatically; he must not assimilate an art but master a technique. He must not invent solutions, but select automatically within a limited number of game possibilities'.[45] The transition towards the machine is fast. Warhol, who in 1963 claimed that he 'want[ed] to be a machine',[46] understood this very well. As Baudrillard notes, this is why the feminist activist Valerie Solanas shot that body that 'was never anything but a kind of hologram':[47] in order to seize what was left of the human, to test its materiality, 'to establish that blood could still flow from it'.[48]

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[39] The phenomenology of the gaze connected with the film experience is nevertheless present also in existentialist and phenomenological theory in those years. On this point see Francesco Casetti, *L'occhio del Novecento* (Milan: Bompiani, 2005), pp. 248–256.

[40] Calvesi, 'Cronache e coordinate', p. 14.

[41] *Mario Schifano*, ed. by Arturo Carlo Quintavalle (Parma: Istituto Nazionale dell'Università di Parma, 1974), p. 20.

[42] Alberto Boatto, 'Lo spazio dello spettacolo', in *Fuoco, Immagine, Acqua, Terra* (Rome: Galleria L'Attico, 1967).

[43] It's still Maurizio Calvesi who notes that Schifano refers, in his monochromes, to 'city's spectacle', by using industrial enamel typical, for example, of the pedestrian crossing. 'Cronache e coordinate', p. 16.

[44] Jean Baudrillard, 'Machinic Snobbery', in *The Perfect Crime*, trans. by Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1996), p. 76.

On the human nature of Schifano's body, which the novelist Goffredo Parise compared to 'a small puma whose power and jump are not suspected',[49] therefore emphasizing his wild nature more that any virtual inclination, no one had any doubts. For him, who was working in a moment in which Italy was trying to form its own identity, independent from the advanced economic-technological identity of America, humanism was an extremely important element. For Schifano and his colleagues, Botticelli, Raffaello, Leonardo, Michelangelo represented a genealogical alphabet,[50] whose presence in the eternal city was alive and significant, no matter how diluted in the media mishmash they might have been. At the end, was Neorealism, the form of cinema that made Post-War Italy famous all over the world, not also rooted in humanism?[51] Even the Italian economic debate was developed in accordance with a humanist vision, by introducing the social capitalism that Italo Calvino and Elio Vittorini had been trying to sketch in the *Menabò* journal,[52] and allowing Adriano Olivetti to create an enterprise based on a Leonardo-like vision, which combined science, technology and art.

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[45] Élemire Zolla, *Eclissi dell'intellettuale.* The quotation here is taken from the English translation: *The Eclipse of the Intellectual*, trans. by Raymond Rosenthal (New York, Funk & Wagnalls, 1969), p.69.

[46] The well-known statement is part of the interview with Gene Swenson for *Art News*, New York, November 1963. The text in now available online: <http://www.artnews.com/2007/11/01/top-ten-artnews-stories-the-first-word-on-pop/> [accessed 27 March 2018].

[47] 'Machine Snobbery', p. 78.

[48] Ivi, p. 79.

[49] Ronchi, p. 65.

[50] This is particularly evident in the so-called School of the Piazza del Popolo. As Calvesi, who coined the term at first, states: 'The School of the Piazza del Popolo, or rather the Roman Pop: these are the most frequent definitions even if, obviously, the second is odious to all concerned, as is any label that lumps things together and which is, in essence, inappropriate […]. Then Michelangelo, Leonardo, the panoramas of Rome, the symbols of Rome: this is, needless to say, a typically Italian repertory.' Maurizio Calvesi, *8 pittori romani* (Bologna: De Foscherari Gallery, 1967), now in *Roma anni '60*, p. 424.

[51] See on this point Gianni Scalia, 'Un vero umanesimo cinematografico', *Il Mulino*, 5 (1952), 344–349.

[52] See in particular the issue 4, 'Letteratura e industria', *Il Menabò della letteratura* (Torino: Einaudi, 1961).

Though it is only really in his feature-length films that Schifano explicitly expressed his love for the human[53] (who was under risk of extinction), one notes an intentional confrontation with a progressively de-humanized society even in his early works. Schifano's operation is not a machine metamorphosis. More than anything the artist engages in a tense struggle with the technologies and speeds of the mass society, in a way that takes on the form of an existential conflict. This was anticipated by a 1960's monochrome, *Aut Aut,* in which these two words, a clear reference to Søren Kierkegaard, stand out against a yellow background. The echo of existentialism in this work seems to evoke his friend, the painter and novelist, Alberto Moravia. In 1960, Moravia's novel, *Boredom,* was published. Dino, the main protagonist of the novel, defined boredom in the following way: 'boredom to me consists in a kind of insufficiency, or inadequacy, or lack of reality.'[54] A painter going through a crisis of creativity and suffering from apathy, Dino seems to be sick as a result of too much modernity, from a virtual dimension that thins and fades reality: 'the feeling of boredom originates for me in a sense of the absurdity of a reality which is insufficient, or anyhow unable, to convince me of its own effective existence.'[55] At the same time Moravia believed that 'alienation, the crisis of the relationship with reality, was the fundamental element of the modern world.'[56] The paradox of Schifano lays in the fact that the artist looks at cinema or video screens for both the causes and the remedy to this crisis: screen as a medium which both amplifies and erodes reality at the same time. By doing this, cinema creates an irresolvable contradiction. For Schifano cinema is thus a game, the stakes of which are the remnants of a life that has been rescued from its own transformation into spectacle. The screen becomes a space in which painting can let out its last battle cry[57] — sudden brushstrokes, violent gesture of painting, paint drippings that emphasizes its materiality — before being dissolved under the light of the projector.

A few years later the medium will suffer even greater injury, in the slashed and imageless screen that appears in a sequence of the 1969 film, *Human not Human.* In a deserted home movie-theatre a film is projected without spectators. As we soon realize that we're seeing images shot by the artist on the set of Jean-Luc

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[53] Not only did Schifano title his first feature film *Human, not human*, but also he declared, in an interview with the writer Enzo Siciliano: 'You see, painting, despite everything, cannot complete me. It is that men look more like cinema than painting: in a film they walk, eat, make love, just as it really happens; in painting they don't. In *Il Mondo,* 16 November 1972, now in *Mario Schifano,* ed. by Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, p. 53.

[54] Alberto Moravia, *Boredom*, trans. by William Weaver (New York: New York Review Books, 1960), p. 5.

[55] *Ibid.*

[56] Alberto Moravia, 'I miei problemi', *L'Espresso*, 26 May 1962, now in Moravia, *L'uomo come fine e altri saggi* (Milan: Bompiani, 1964), p. 379.

[57] It is maybe not a coincidence that in the seventies the artist, who at that time used to stay at home the whole day living with numerous televisions always switched-on, would start the series of *TV Landscapes*, where still frames withdrawn from TV flux would be painted as postcards from media-reality. Painting seems still an attempt to cast a human shadow on the virtualized reality.

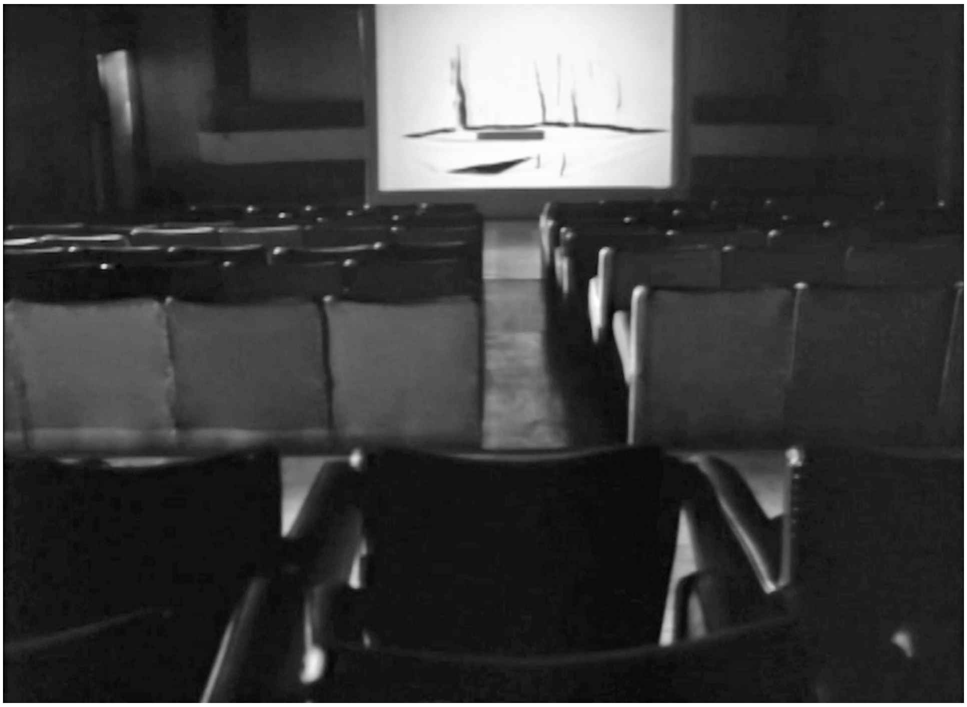

Fig. 3
Mario Schifano, still frame from *Umano non umano* [Human not human], 16mm and 35mm, colour, sound, 95', 1969. Courtesy of the Cineteca Nazionale di Roma.

Godard's *Week-end*, the hand of a kid begins slashing the canvas. Emptiness invades the images which continue to appear on the fragments of canvas, up until the end of the film-reel, until a white monochrome is the only thing that remains visible. There is no longer a monochrome-become-screen but a screen-become-monochrome. Torn and ripped, the image finds a synthesis between the refined modernism of Fontana's cuts and the desperate gesture of Rotella's tears, who loved to say that 'ripping posters from walls is the only revenge, the only protest against society'.

Also in Schifano's film, that gesture seems to take on strong undertones of revolt, in a year which act as a symbol of social change. In a wide-angle still shot, an empty screen and an empty stall stand out, accompanied by the sound track of a beating heart (fig. 3). Like in Donzelli's photograph, cinema without images and spectators becomes a lexicon for modernity. The screen as a surface to be rippled, a surface to be troubled.

# Reviews / Comptes-rendus

## Henry Adam Svec
## *American Folk Music as Tactical Media*
Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018, pp. 197

In a *Futurama* episode entitled 'Forty percent Leadbelly' (S07, E14, 2013) Bender the robot, one of the main charachters of Matt Groening's animated series, runs into Sylicon Red, a guitar-playing alien and a universal legend of folk music. Seeing the opportunity to become a renowned folk singer himself, he duplicates Sylicon's instrument with a 3d printer and starts performing under the stagename of Ramblin' Rodriguez. However, the audiences reject his songs for their lack of sincerity, and Sylicon Red warns him not to come back ''til you have lived a life worth singing about' — advice that Bender follows literally, producing a duplicate of himself to experience real-life adventures for him that he can easily turn into successful hits.

The episode can be easily interpreted as a science-fictional satire of an 'authenticity' issue that underlyies the whole folk discourse: Bender managing to counterfeit 'artistic integrity' suggests that 'being (and sounding) authentic' is not an inner quality for personal self-expression but a set of socially and culturally constructed conventions. As an alternative to this 'culturalist' view, one can take advantage of the lesson given by Henry Adam Svec's *American Folk Music as Tactical Media* to offer a different reading. After all, the reason Bender ends up artificially reproducing (and ultimately 'faking') authenticity is because he is trying to handle an ancient oral heritage in the only way artificial intelligence can: transcoding it in an amount of data and producing an original output that recombines that data. In this sense he does not act all that differently from any (human) ethnographer or folk revivalists: in fact, when the robot character wants to achieve a formula to write the perfect folk song he performs a computational analysis of 'all folk songs in the world' that strikingly resembles Alan Lomax's *Cantometrics* project, an interactive and dynamic database whose aim was precisely to dissect, measure and taxonomically classify singular performative motifs and musical elements from a world-wide ethnographic repertoire recorded on punch cards. The technological experiments undertaken by Lomax in the sixties are extensively studied in the first chapter of the book, strictly associated to cybernetics. Like Norbert Wiener before him, the ethnomusicologist resorted to computational machines to decode a system of networked relationships (folk music) and map repeated patterns of action (singing and dancing performances); like Bender the robot after him, he firmly believed that 'the truth of the folk was to be found alongside the (now digital) machine' (p. 44).

That 'folk and machine were often one and the same' (p. 108) is the provocative argument grounding the whole analysis of *American Folk as Tactical Media*. As the author admits in the introduction, his aim to search for 'resonances' between folk (revival) and media theory may at first seem counter-intuitive, since the former is usually presented as a pre-modern object 'in constitutive opposition' to technological innovation (p. 14). Svec's understanding of media, however, is not limited to means of mass communication, nor even to the presence of technical objects as such: coherently with the general aims of Amsterdam University Press' *Recursions* book-series (of which his volume is a part), he is interested in the study of cultural techniques, and how 'diagrams and dreams, models and maps' (p. 15) articulate the *real* that folk revivalists physically inhabit, and claim to sing about. The author's concern for the pragmatics of mediation becomes clearer when he gradually moves his attention from John and Alan Lomax's use of analogue and digital machines to other outstanding folk personalities. Indeed, the second chapter stems from Harold Innis' notion of time-biased media to explain how Pete Seeger used to disseminate the seeds of folk culture by using 'any channel necessary', as though a sort of a counter-broadcasting scattered all over the communicational eco system. The third chapter then argues against authorialist views on Bob Dylan's work and revisits his rock songs in a kittlerian/derridian fashion. According to the author, by taking the (in)famous 'electric turn', the songwriter did not simply trade his role as a spokesperson for a community with a more individualistically romantic idea of self-expression, but he became an inscription surface for the discourse networks of his time; the 'voice of a generation' that he had supposedly channelled through his earlier works was replaced with the non-human noises coming from material and infrastructural agencies. Throughout an admittedly rhapsodic and unsystematic overview of the folk revival, the reader learns that not only our historical awareness of musical heritage, but the way songs themselves were written and performed was always already 'plugged in', always already mediated.

This media-related perspective proves useful to offer fresh insights on often-debated topics (Dylan's song-writing being one example). However, this does not prevent Svec from addressing the troubled trope of authenticity: the whole second part of the book, and particularly the chapter entitled 'Another Authentic Folk Is Possible', draws on Marx's writings and radical critical theory in search of a non-essentialist formulation. While advocating for a critical and relational understanding of the concept, the author makes two crucial points: first, that authenticity is not a state of being but a process (meaning that 'true folkness' is not to be found in any naturally given *volk* but only in those people actively struggling to become one); second, no such a thing as the 'self' is conceivable outside intersubjective relationships and, consequently, no self-expression can possibly be valuable as 'innerly authentic' if taken in isolation from its social context. Such an overtly political reframing of authenticity paves the ground for further resonances between media theory and the folk revival. For instance, the notion of tactical media (originally formulated to describe digital activists' hit-and-run attacks) serves as a key for a 'folk-archaeological' approach to the old rituals of the Hootenanny, a series of open-mic musical parties organized by Woody Guthrie and the Almanac Singers in mid-40s America, whereby singers, activists, storytellers and listeners joined forces for a collective, democratically-minded performance. The reason for likening them to the politics of digital resistance is not only since they too create 'ephemeral communicational assemblages' for a 'multipoint-to-multipoint interaction' (p. 120), but also because 'there are weapons to be assembled out of the long American folk revival's tactical media toolbox' (p. 115) which could still be of some today's networked mediascape.

An already theoretically dense book, *American Folk as Tactical Media* makes its most compelling argument when it points its finger at the present. In Svec's line of reasoning, Steve Jobs' fetishization of Bob Dylan as a source of inspiration goes hand in hand with the cyber-optimistic view of digital produsage as a 'renewed vernacular culture': both, he argues, exemplify the strategical rebranding of 'the folk' displayed by digital corporations as a rhetorical surface for the exploitation of user data and free labour. Significantly, these discursive strategies tend to shift attention away from the media-channels themselves and emphasize instead the users' (authentic) individuality and the immediacy of their interactions. A new folk revival in the digital era could help us to dismantle these cognitive capitalistic rhetorics, so long as we grasp its inherently pragmatic and medial nature. To paraphrase Svec's conclusions, an authentic folk spirit is not to be preserved outside, but it must be *practiced* from *within* the mediascape in order to create communal outlets in already established networks. A task for 'machine-benders' indeed.

[Simone Dotto, Università degli Studi di Udine]

## *Format Matters. Theories, Histories, Practices*

Organisers: Alexandra Schneider, Marek Jancovic & Nicole Braida
Johannes Gutenberg Universität, Mainz (December 7-12, 2017)

Three months after the conference *Vom Medium zum Format* held at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum, the Johannes Gutenberg Universität of Mainz made with its conference *Format Matters. Theories, Histories, Practices*, a renewed and extensive contribution to the interdisciplinary formation of a format theory.

The opening talk by Ramon Lobato on web advertising formalization left the audience nostalgic of the 1990s and early 2000s Internet, exploring banner-adds of all shapes, colours and sizes, alongside with pop-ups and auto-playing audios/videos. The proliferation of these elements, which were part of the everyday-experience of the web-surfer, was symptomatic of a 'fragmented and unregulated' media industry. Lobato showed how the actions of the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB), whose mission is to 'clean up the adds', standardized the formats of the digital advertising, and made intrusive and invasive practices illegal. Here, the term 'format' mostly echoes procedures of 'standardization' and 'normalization' and is tied to institutional regulation and economic strategies. Taking up Sterne's invitation to study 'larger registers' of formats 'like infrastructures, international corporate consortia and whole technical systems',[1] Monika Dommann's talk tackled the emergence and the standardization of the global market in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, focusing on very specific agents of this process. One of her case studies was the freight bill. Analysing the format of the document, the format of the paper (its size and colour), the way it was folded and filled in (handwritten, printed or stamped), the way it framed the relation between the sender, the receiver and the carrier, Dommann showed to what extend the freight bill functioned as a format in itself, and how it contributed to the normalization and the regulation of transport operations and flows of goods. She demonstrated how the re-formation of the document accompanied the acceleration of goods and information exchanges. This idea echoes the argument made by Axel Volmar in his talk, that formats are not only the framing of information or the structuring of information (the appearance of media content), but also the (re)scaling of in-formation. The latter has to be understood as the growth or expansion, from media process to industry, of different media technologies and practices. It 'embodies the labour practices and workflows', and this is precisely what led Volmar to define format as 'media of cooperation'. Lori Emerson was interested in the structure of this 'cooperation', so to say. She understands format as the industrial or governmental production of standardized forms for media distribution and consumption. She used this rubric to include both hegemonic network such as the Internet and historically/materially alternative networks or infrastructure, such as Media Labs. Here, formats echo the protocols that rule standardized networks and infrastructures.

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[1] Jonathan Sterne, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format*, *Sign, Storage, Transmission* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 11.

The notion of protocol brings us back to a more classical definition of format as 'what specifies the protocols by which a medium will operate'.[2] Protocols related to communication, computational and digital media refer to processes of data en/decoding, transmission and compression. Wanda Strauven traced back and forth a genealogy of the GIF (Graphic Interchange Format), purposely wrongly pronounced with a hard G instead of 'jif' thus cutting short the huge internet debate and saving the audience from any misunderstanding with peanut-butters and cream-cleaners. Her main interest was the technological characteristic of the GIF as a lossless data compression format, and particularly its properties of loop and transparency, which were broadly used and distorted by net-artists. Referring to the work — among others — of Olia Lialina and especially her Dancing Girl GIF (1998), Strauven suggested that a format exceeds its own properties. Quoting Jonathan Sterne, 'format denotes a whole range of decisions that affect the look, feel, experience and workings of a medium.'[3] The GIF study proposed by Strauven showed how a bitmap image format introduced more than thirty years ago challenges our understanding of format, container and medium.

Johannes Gfeller looked at early forms of electro-chemical transmission of moving images, starting with the Nipkow Disk system, which was patented by Paul Nipkow in 1884. The Nipkow system was based on a rotating 'scanning disk', which had a spiral of holes organised in circular lines. Behind the disk was photo-sensitive material, which reacted to the light passing through the disk. The light was converted to an electric signal and transmitted to a distant receiver, where the incoming information was decoded to reform the picture. Gfeller of course saw this technology as belonging to the genealogy of television, another key medium in the histories and theories of format, which had its own panel with Florian Hoof and Markus Stauff. While Hoof's presentation dealt with live broadcasting formats of sporting events, considering format as a relational concept to infrastructure, Stauff looked at the sports' highlight not only as a televisual form or genre, but as a cross-media format that structures the diffusion processes in specific ways. Sports highlights are the result of both the formatting of sports practices and the formatting of their modes of observation.

Moving to the medium of film, Oliver Fahle and Elisa Linseisen took up the concept of format, and its definition by David Joselit as 'dynamic mechanism for aggregating content',[4] as a chance to re-think film historiography. Building on the case of the 2011 8K restored version of *Ben-Hur* (William Wyler, 1959), which integrates the material specificities of the original 65mm print, its scratches and fuzziness, Fahle and Linseisen identified a paradox. Format-specifications make it hard to understand cinema as a solid entity, but at the same time it is possible to identify cinema through its format varieties. 'The more film destabilizes itself as a medium through redefinition and flexibility in terms of format, the more it stabilizes itself.' This paradox leads them to elaborate on two contrary tendencies in film historiography. On the one hand, the need for film of historical persistence, and on the other the historical resistance of the format. These reflexions are linked to an ongoing research project initiated back in 2013 by Antonio Somaini and Francesco Casetti with their article 'The conflict between high definition and low definition in contemporary cinema',[5] and the international conference they organized the same year *High and Low Definition: Images, Sounds, Scenes, Media*. The forthcoming issue of the journal NECSUS on 'Resolutions' (also edited by Somaini and Casetti) will also expand the discussion about this 'double contrasting tendency: on the one hand a drive towards higher and higher degrees of definition and resolution of digital images, cameras and screens, and on the other the wide circulation of images in low definition and resolution, images that are blurred, grainy, pixelated and degraded in different ways'.[6]

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[2] Ivi, p. 8.

[3] Ivi, p. 7.

The last panel with Jennifer Horne and Kalani Michell concluded the conference with reflexive and introspective discussions on formats within Universities and academic institutions and practices. Horne tackled the University Library (at least in the American context of academia) and argued for a radical rethinking and reformatting of these 'agents of modern university'. In the context of the digital turn, she fears that the library 'no longer sees legacies formats as part its future', while access to all formats for teaching and researching is central to 'our collective critical freedom'. Kalani Michell closed the conference with a presentation on the monthly podcast Aca-Media, sponsored by *Cinema Journal*, the official journal of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS). The podcast was a response to the desire of expanding *Cinema Journal*, of opening it up to new formats. This transition from one medial form to another is also symptomatic of a discipline in transition (not to say in crisis). Recently SCMS members were invited to discuss about changing the name of the organisation's journal. Even though the name has indeed been changed for *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* (JCMS), in January 2018, at the time of the conference in December 2017 the discussion did not reach any consensus and was actually, Michell argued, overwhelmed by a certain frustration — the one of a disconnection 'between the organization, its journal, the efforts to expand its publication and its diverse body of members'.

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[4] David Joselit, *After Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 55.

[5] Francesco Casetti and Antonio Somaini, 'The Conflict between High Definition and Low Definition in Contemporary Cinema', *Convergence*, 19, 4 (November 1, 2013), pp. 415–22.

[6] Antonio Somaini and Francesco Casetti, 'NECSUS Spring 2018 #Resolution', [Call for Contributions], *NECSUS*, (2017) <https://necsus-ejms.org/necsus-spring-2018_resolution/> [accessed 4 July 2017].

As pointed out by Marek Jancovic in the introduction of the conference, looking at media culture through media formats open up an almost infinite number of 'engaging, provocative and fruitful questions with both historical value and contemporary urgency'. Hopefully, these questions will expand to the one of academia formats, and generate a discussion and rethinking of the way humanities build, formalize, display, transmit knowledge.

[Antoine Prévost-Balga, Goethe Universität Frankfurt-am-Main]

# FilmForum, XXV International Film Studies Conference
## *Exposing the Moving Image: The Cinematic Medium across World Fairs, Art Museums, and Cultural Exhibition*

Organisers: Diego Cavallotti, Simone Dotto, Andrea Mariani, Leonardo Quaresima, Simone Venturini
Gorizia/Udine/Pordenone (February 28th – March 7th 2018)

The Film Forum, organized by the University of Udine-Gorizia since 1996, made well known effort to find new horizons to rethink the approaches to moving images, within the three-year research project *A History of Cinema without Names*. As Leonardo Quaresima has argued, the original aim is to dealing with the unbalanced relations between the current *mediascape* and those theoretical perspectives that have grown increasingly over the years.[1] Therefore, the last three editions correspond to three different phases of work, from a sort of *pars destruens*, guided by an aim to overcome traditional notions such as 'authorship' and 'genre', to a comparison of various proposals about methods, subjects and interdisciplinary tools, and finally to achieve a collective theoretical model. On this basis, it is natural that the 2018 Film Forum, devoted to the cinematic medium across World Fairs, Art Museums and Cultural Exhibitions, picked a 'specific' subject, albeit many-sided, just to evaluate the practical applications of the resources provided by the previous editions. The conference's large amount of themes and issues has been deployed following broadly these research lines: a) carrying out a media archaeological study — from the beginning of the Universal Exposition experience to contemporary examples — which seeks to interrogate the turning point, discontinuity, prefiguration and resurgence throughout history of moving images apparatuses, screens and displays; b) pinpointing the intermedial exchanges within certain contexts — such as architectural space, cultural dimensions, social institution and 'atmospheres' — that are intersected by audio-visual flow; c) illuminating the role played by 'exposed moving images' in visual culture and how they work. Overall, interweaving the operative analysis of a given case with theoretical-methodological self-reflection seemed to be the prevailing tendency. In this review, we are going to trace a partial overview of the Film Forum program, touching some of the numerous topics tackled.

Mauro Carbone opened his lecture with a proposal for an anthropology of screens, in the wake of Hans Belting's anthropology of images, in order to link the past and present of screen life without any restrictions to contemporary age and teleological leanings. This provides an essential perspective, in Carbone's view, that can avoid the risks encountered by screenology,[2] as well as screen genealogy.[3] The first step for this task could be the adoption of the key-concept of *arché-screen* described in his essay *Philosophie-écran*:[4] a heuristic tool through which one can investigate, over the course of history, the various transmutations of human experiences of screens. These surfaces must be considered as 'objects' that show and conceal simultaneously — a setting that seems to recall the Heideggerian formulation of *alètheia* — and this ontological ambiguity (the coexistence of negative and positive screens) entails that if the shadow gains a status of proto-image, consequently the body can be seen as a proto-screen. Papers devoted to 'Skin and Exposition of Moving Images' moved in the same area, providing analysis of specific cases. Barbara Grespi illustrated the conceptual and cultural relationship between the tattoo and moving images, starting from demonstration of the way the skin of a living body turns into a motion surface for a picture, thanks to muscular activity. Assuming the tattoo as a display, she outlined the modern idea of the merging of image and screen, as well as the process of signification with which the body's visibility is underlined through these kinds of 'skin writings'. Sara Damiani adopted Jean-Luc Nancy's effective notion of *expeausition*[5] to explore visual and scientific imaginary about skins, from ancient ritual of flaying to contemporary transplant surgery, from anthropological to cinematographic examples. Approaching Alejandro Iñárritu's virtual reality installation *Carne Y Arena* (2017), Simona Pezzano focused the body perception inside an immersive experience that turns on a dialectic between haptic and optical stimulation and puts the 'visitor' (spect-actor?) in a sort of plenitude witness condition in respect of the political theme about immigrants and refugees.

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[1] Leonardo Quaresima, 'Names and Forms', in *A History of Cinema Without Names/2,* ed. by Diego Cavallotti, Simone Dotto, Leonardo Quaresima (Milano-Udine: Mimesis, 2017), pp. 261-273.

The role played by cinematic forms in botany and at the natural history museum was at the centre of Teresa Castro's talk, which shed light on a paradigm that seems to emerge from a series of scientific films — categorized as a Cinematic Herbaria — that aimed to reveal the imperceptible life of plants, especially through time-lapses and close-ups. Film such as F. Percy Smith's *The Birth of Flower* (1923) and Jean Comandon's *La Croissance des végétaux* (1929) have given different view of the 'taxidermic model' of early ethnographical cinema, as they used cinema to restore the movement of non-human lives, and, consequently, to show the medium's capacity to re-light so-called 'primitive' thought. Indeed, Cinematic Herbaria seems to undermine the dualism subject/object, a feature on which is based the taxidermic paradigm.

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[2] Erkki Huhtamo, 'Elements of Screenology: Toward an Archaeology of the Screen', in *ICONICS: International Studies of the Modern Image*, 7 (Tokyo: The Japan Society of Image Arts and Sciences, 2004), pp. 31-82.

[3] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), p. 99.

[4] See Mauro Carbone, *Philosophie-écran. Du cinéma à la révolution numérique* (Paris: Vrin, 2016).

[5] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus* (Paris: Éditions Métailié, 2000), pp. 31-34.

In the context of Multimedia Environment, Antonio Somaini offered a rich analysis of the unrealized project of László Moholy-Nagy *Raum der Gegenwart* (Room of Present), commissioned by Alexander Dorner in 1930 and set up only recently in two different exhibitions. It would have been 'the first multimedia museum space of the XX century', as well as the first occasion on which a 'permanent museum would have exhibited film excerpts and other technological media in combination with history of art'. Somaini demonstrated the intersections between several features of Moholy-Nagy's theoretical framework and Dorner's approach to museum displays, which flowed into *Raum der Gegenwart*. The former studied 'new vision', which emerged within 1920s 'optical culture', which was enable by technological innovations and worked on the concept of light as a medium; the latter developed an idea of 'atmosphere room', namely a way to create a different experience of space, which aims to sum up the tone, the emotional perception of a given epoch. Thus, argued Somaini, this unrealized project was based on the belief that the *Stimmung*, the atmosphere of present, was a dimension in which art forms were turning to the configuration of light, producing new types of dematerialization of concrete objects. Light dynamism had a relevant role also in Eline Grignard's presentation, on the modern sensibility expressed by electric shows, the coloured light plays of Loie Fuller's dance and early cinema at the 1900 Paris Universal Exposition. Drawing on the field of Media Atmospheres, Riccardo Venturi discussed 'steam' as a medium, lingering on Joan Brigham's and Stan VanDerBeek's installation performance *Steam Screens* (1979). He described how the medium of steam overturns the traditional audience approaches and the notion of art-as-object, adding, at the end of the talk, a brief genealogical overview on steam screens from figurative appearances on impressionist paintings to contemporary artist installation.

In the panel devoted to exhibiting cinema in museum complex *et similia*, Dominique Païni explained the planning and the ambitions of his latest exhibition, *Picasso-Godard-Collage(s)*, tacking again the main issues raised in his essay *Le temps exposé: Le Cinéma de la salle au musée* (2002). For him, the wide spectrum of applications offered by the Foucaultian notion of *analogie*[6] was essential to thinking through the juxtaposition of Godard and Picasso's works and, above all, advancing the hypothesis of the possibility to understand the latter through the former and vice versa. At the same time, Païni also followed the idea of collage, which he considers the most evident feature shared by the filmmaker and the artist, in order to enlighten not only their search for unusual relations and interest in multilayered images, but also to 'emulate' their practical creative processes.

*The Magic of Images: Hammershøi / Dreyer* and its considerably different arrangements, respectively at Ordrupgaard (Copenaghen) and CCCB (Barcelona) museums, was central to the presentation by Casper Tybjerg, who co-curated the exhibition. After having explained the influences of Hammershoi's paintings on some of Dreyer's films, he stressed the David Summers' concept of *facture* as a way to rethink some aspects of art and film history, as well as its strategies of exposition. With this view, he placed priority on the examination and reconstruction of concrete forms of 'making' rather than interpretation, in order to emphasize artistic and cultural production in a specific period. Hence, considering a film in terms of *facture* means seeing it as 'a record of its own having been made', namely to scrutinize the network of technology, industry, commerce and the artist will and agency.

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[6] Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les Choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris : Éditions Gallimard, 1966), pp. 36-38.

The topics chosen for the 2018 Film Forum turned out to be decisive dimensions through which to grasp the work of moving images on various levels — such as its interplay with epistemological, cultural and political contexts. They also helped to devise a visual culture map (embracing modernity and postmodernity) that sheds light on many recurrences of early cinematic forms in the current mediascape, and consequently rethink the 'origin'. This recalls some aspects of Benjamin's idea of origin:

> Origin [*Ursprung*], although an entirely historical category, has, nevertheless, nothing to do with genesis [*Entstehung*]. The term origin is not intended to describe the process by which the existent came into being, but rather to describe that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance. Origin is an eddy in the stream of becoming, and in its current it swallows the material involved in the process of genesis. […] Origin is not, therefore, discovered by the examination of actual findings, but it is related to their history and their subsequent development.[7]

[Diego Baratto, Università Iulm, Milano]

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[7] Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, trans. by John Osborne (New York: Verso Books, 1998), pp. 45-46.

# Projects & Abstracts

# (Re-)Formatting Life: Images of Torture from the Abu Ghraib Prison and the Guantánamo Bay Detention Camp

Rebecca Natascha Boguska / Ph.D. Thesis Project[1] M. A.,
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In the beginning of 2002, Navy Petty Officer Shane T. McCoy, who had been assigned to Combat Camera, an elite unit specializing in '[t]he acquisition and utilization of still and motion imagery in support of combat, information, humanitarian, special force, intelligence, reconnaissance, engineering, legal, public affairs, and other operations involving the Military Services',[2] shot a series of photographs depicting the arrival of the first detainees at Camp X-Ray in the Guantánamo Bay Detention Camp [GTMO]. The most prominent image, which will be well-known to many readers, is a high-angle shot depicting the detainees in orange jumpsuits and headgear kneeling in a yard surrounded by mesh and barbwire.

The men's gloved hands are tied together in front of them, restricting their movements. Their mouths are covered by masks, presumably to protect military personnel from contagion, a detail which simultaneously defines the detainees' bodies as abnormal and potentially dangerous. Moreover, the covering of the detainees' mouths points to the restriction of speech; the denial of formulating a request; the impossibility of complaining about how they are being treated. The detainees also wear blackened goggles and ear protectors, the former making it impossible for them to see what is happening to them and around them, the latter completely muting any sound produced around them. All these accessories are meant to discourage, confuse, and strip them of any remaining agency.[3]

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[1] Ph.D. Thesis supervised by Professor Dr. Vinzenz Hediger and Professor Dr. Juliane Rebentisch. For more information: boguska@em.uni-frankfurt.de

[2] Department of Defense, 'SUBJECT: Joint Combat Camera (COMCAM) Program', p. 2, <https://biotech.law.lsu.edu/blaw/dodd/corres/pdf/d50404_081302/d50404p.pdf > [accessed 2 October 2018].

[3] Couple of days after the publishing of McCoy's photograph, Donald Rumsfeld explained in a Department of Defense News Briefing that some of these accessories were actually used for the detainees' and soldiers' protection. See Donald Rumsfeld, 'Transcript: DoD News Briefing - Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen. Pace. Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld January 22, 2002', <http://archive.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2254> [accessed 2 October 2018].

The camera observes and shoots this scene from above.[4] Seeming to float in the air, it manages to capture not only the detainees and the military personnel 'processing' the detainees inside the cage and the detainees and military personnel observing the situation from the outside, but also the entire architecture in which this scene is taking place. The visual record of the location appears to be of equal importance to the depicted situation. On the one hand, it defines the potential interactions among the detainees as well as between the soldiers and the prisoners. On the other hand, the architecture becomes a structuring element of the photograph itself, influencing to a great degree the viewer's perception of the depicted situation. Moreover, the barbwire is a very prominent element of the photograph, it is positioned in the image's foreground, cutting the represented scene into smaller entities. Due to the perceived proximity of the wire to the viewer's eye, we, like the detainees, seem to be threatened by it. The silver, shiny, sharp razor wire seemingly endangers our eye and gaze and prompts us to look away.

This image, and the challenge it presents to the viewer, anticipates what was to come with regard to the visual images from GTMO.[5] On one hand, the photograph renders visible the ways the recognition[6] of the detainees had been intentionally denied. On the other, it prefigured and contributed to the U.S. Government's decision to introduce an institutionalized restraint in accessing visual images from GTMO. The restraint in accessing visual images and the strict procedures at GTMO raise questions about whether and in what manner these restrictions might be understood as mediated structural conditions facilitating the 'forgetfulness of recognition'[7] or the denial of recognition. Another question arising from this photograph is how actual forms of mediation, of making objects and subjects visible — for example the torture photographs from the Abu Ghraib prison — do not participate in the act of recognition, but rather support the process of reification.

One of the central claims of this project is that the tortured detainee is reduced to an existential minimum not only by the act of torture, but through its inscription in military records, as well as through the practices of image production, distribution and perception. Together, these factors limit his social possibilities, undo human agency, and seemingly format the apprehension of the affected person as a reified entity. Hence, the process of (re-)formation initiated by the analysed practices, documents and images in some cases result in both the tortured person's life not being apprehended as a life in the full sense and the tortured person being perceived as '[…] a living figure outside the norms of life […]'.[8] At the same time, these practices, documents and images can also encourage exactly the opposite; they might provide the spectator with a ground for recognizing the detainee. Hence, some of the media objects that had been produced at GTMO — for instance McCoy's photograph — and Abu Ghraib seem to be marked by a potential of shifting the spectators' perception in both directions. Whereas the 'frames' in which these media objects (re-) appear are highly relevant to these shifts of perception towards recognition or its forgetfulness.

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[4] In an interview McCoy said that he had put the digital camera on a stick and used a timer – the snapshot was seemingly taken without his involvement as an author, see Carol Rosenberg, 'Photos Echo Years Later', <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/guantanamo/article1928720.html> [accessed 4 December 2018].

[5] One can argue that another challenge for the spectator is that the viewer perspective coincides with the perspective of the soldiers, a view that the spectator might not be willing to take.

[6] In my PhD thesis I base the understanding of the term 'recognition' on Axel Honneth's distinction between 'cognition' and 'recognition': 'While by cognizing a person we mean an identification of him as an individual that can gradually be improved upon, by "recognizing" we refer to the expressive act through which this cognition is conferred with the positive meaning of an affirmation. In contrast to cognizing, which is a non-public, cognitive act, recognizing is dependent on media that express the fact that the other person is supposed to possess social "validity".' See Axel Honneth, 'Invisibility: On the Epistemology of "Recognition"', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*, 75 (2001), 111–126 (p. 115).

[7] See Axel Honneth, *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

In order to discuss the role of visual media in processes of recognition and in processes of reification understood as forgetfulness or denial of recognition with regards to the perception of the tortured men at GTMO and Abu Ghraib, the project analyses three interdependent bodies of material.

Firstly, it considers various documents e.g. legal memoranda which have contributed to the definition of torture within the George W. Bush administration. Furthermore, to cast light on how photographs from Abu Ghraib and their manner of publishing have been discussed within the U.S. Federal Court System, the project investigates the outcome of the lawsuit 'American Civil Liberties Union, et al., Plaintiffs v. Department of Defense, et al., Defendants'.[9] With regards to the production of images at GTMO, the project considers the regulation of this production by means of other 'administrative' and military procedures codified in documents such as the 'Camp Delta Standard Operating Procedures'.[10]

Secondly, the visual representations of torture from the Abu Ghraib prison and the Guantánamo Bay detention camp will be contrasted with juridical and journalistic discourses about these images. Therefore, this second level of analysis will concern not only the images themselves but also their press coverage. On this level the relationship between the juridical definition of torture and the nature of torture images, their production, distribution and perception, will be explored.

Thirdly, questions regarding the possibility of filmic activism towards these dominant representational schemes in the torture photographs will be discussed.

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[8] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London/New York: Verso, 2010), p. 8.

[9] Alvin K. Hellerstein, 'American Civil Liberties Union, et al., Plaintiffs – against – Department of Defense, et al., Defendants', <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/new-york/nysdce/1:2004cv04151/249459/582/> [accessed 2 October 2018].

[10] Joint Task Force Guantanamo, 'Camp Delta Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)', <https://file.wikileaks.org/file/gitmo-sop.pdf> [accessed 2 October 2018].

Some films have reflected on and counteracted against these schemes with a considerable reappraisal of the stories of the victims and the production circumstances of the photographs themselves. These efforts are to some degree influenced by the idea of dismantling the consequences of the reification process. Through the politically saturated filmic operations of reconstructing biographical information or of re-contextualizing diverse material, the apprehension of a life that has been lost or injured might be restored and the viewer will, to some extent, receive a revision of the discursive environment of the image.

# Representations of the Worlds of Contemporary Art on French Television from 1960 to 2013: From Media Representation to Mediation

Clémence de Montgolfier / Ph.D. Thesis Abstract[1]
Paris III Sorbonne-Nouvelle

This research in the field of Information-Communication Sciences has been conducted under the supervision of Professor François Jost at Paris III Sorbonne-Nouvelle and was presented on 29 November 2017. Its aim is to determine how French television has been representing the worlds of contemporary art from the 1960s to the present day, and to define the implications of this representation in regard to culture and the evolution of media in general. Here we define contemporary art through a historical and sociological approach in the field of visual arts, with the works of Catherine Millet, Philippe Dagen, Howard Becker and Raymonde Moulin.[2] The research is based on a semiological and pragmatic analysis of a corpus of archives of television programs about contemporary art. I used the methodology of François Jost,[3] taking into account their context of production and reception for each time period.

I observed a continuous decrease in the percentage of television programs about the arts in general, and contemporary art specifically. These programs are also relegated to less favourable hours of programming since the 1980s, being aired mainly late at night. Even though the volume of television programs in general has never ceased to increase since 1960, programs about contemporary art have been less and less visible.

Furthermore, the way that television tries to transmit the artistic experience has also evolved. Whereas the programs from 1960 to 1980 aimed to transmit the aesthetic experience of the artworks as seen from the field, with numerous close-ups and slow camera movements, the programs between 1980 and 2000 were more dialogical and hosted discussions between experts and artists in the television studio. Showing very few negative critiques, they fell under the discourse of cultural promotion and did not encourage the discussion of the contents of the artworks themselves. Rather, they often focused on emphasizing the role of public arts institutions. Since the 2000s, as the competition between the French public and private television sectors grew stronger with the launch of the Télévision Numérique Terrestre in 2005 and the rise of digital platforms, television shows about contemporary art have been taking on the entertaining forms of reality shows. This reality television of contemporary art, for example *Tous pour l'art!* (Arte, 2012), now proposes new frames of productions for artworks, created under the eyes of the camera, with specific constraints set up by the production team. Ideological contradictions arise between the cultural mediation mission, carried on by the Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française and later public channels, and those new narratives of competition that tend to celebrate individual success. Contemporary art then finds itself at the heart of conflicts regarding the definition of culture.

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[2] Catherine Millet, *L'art contemporain en France* (Paris: Flammarion, 2015); Philippe Dagen, *L'art dans le monde de 1960 à nos jours* (Paris: Editions Hazan, 2012); Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Raymonde Moulin, *L'artiste, l'institution et le marché* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009).

[3] François Jost, *Introduction à l'analyse de la télévision* (3e édition) (Paris: Ellipses Marketing, 2007).

First, the evolution of contemporary art on television since the 1960s in France shows important sociocultural issues. Its media coverage reveals a hegemonic world of art where sociocultural inequalities are legitimated and even sometimes celebrated. Only the most successful artists can benefit from high visibility, making precarious artists, women artists and non-white artists nearly invisible on television. The cultural legitimacy of this televised world of art is hierarchical: institutions and museums benefit from the largest amount of legitimacy, whereas the audience seems to be considered illegitimate in knowing and understanding contemporary art.

Another significant point is that the evolution of the notion of contemporary art in the programs follows the visions of the successive Ministries of Culture since 1959, in accordance with the missions of cultural decentralization in the 1960s, cultural development in the 1970s and later of cultural democracy since the 1980s that were carried on by each government over the years. Thus, a hegemonic institutional vision of contemporary art seems to perpetuate, with public channels and public policies aiming at the same cultural goals. Surprisingly however, few direct collaborations were found between the Ministries of Culture and the ORTF or later the public audiovisual sector to produce shows about art.

Second, the analysis has shown that television programs about contemporary art create different narratives about art as a way to connect with and appeal to an audience. Two main types of narratives can be recognized: first the programs promise an ideal of democratization of contemporary art through narratives of accessing knowledge, presenting itself as a source of emancipation and equality for the collective good. This comes into contradiction with the second type of narrative, which is competition-oriented and highlights the values of singularity, innovation and originality in the most recent programs influenced by reality television. It appears that the narratives of contemporary art on television follow both collective or individual purposes, and those two often impede each other.

Lastly, the audiovisual mediation of the artworks has evolved, over more than fifty years, from the filmed exhibition to a 'curatorial' television, where the programs organize exhibitions for television only, for example in *L'Exposition* *impossible* (France 2, 2004 to 2006). Public channels continue to claim their role of bringing the experience of the artworks to the audience together with knowledge about those works, but the artworks themselves are now rarely shown on camera, as programs are shorter and the editing increasingly faster than in previous decades. On the television set, the artworks seem to be used only to signify their own authenticity and originality rather than to be observed or discussed. Moreover, today, shows about contemporary art promise more immediacy — the promise of giving direct access to the artworks without any mediation — while multiplying the *dispositifs* of mediation. This multiplication of the frames of mediation of the artworks and of discourses about them — from channels, institutions, experts, mediators, journalists, television hosts — lessens the role of the audience who is supposed to receive those works but who is not invited to participate in this discourse.

It is within this impossibility to decide what their purpose is — to create a relationship between artworks and audiences, or to incite the audience to consume cultural products and participate in cultural promotion — that television programs about contemporary art cannot seem to hold their promises. In this way, this research opens not only many new questions for the arts on television in general, but also for the cultural role of French television today and the challenges it has to face.

# The Intellectual and Political Context of Brazilian *Cinema Novo*

Lilia Lustosa de Oliveira / Ph.D. Thesis Project[1]

Université de Lausanne

In the midst of the Cold War, a great many national cinemas — the majority of them in the shadow of the Hollywood industry — rebelled against the American aesthetic and economic model that was hindering the emergence of their own. In the countries of the socialist bloc, filmmakers rejected the dogma of socialist realism imposed in the Stalinist era and rediscovered the dynamism of 1920s Avant-gardes as well as Italian neorealism.

In Brazil, a former colony of Portugal, *Cinema Novo* was the name given to the equivalent movement. It emerged in the beginning of the 1960s during the presidency of Juscelino Kubitschek — known for his development policies and the construction of the new capital, Brasília. *Cinema Novo* defended the idea of a truly Brazilian cinema: decolonized, free from Hollywood's influences and from the imposition of (national or international) film industries. Inspired by similar European movements, the young Brazilian filmmakers — the *cinemanovistas* — fought for the freedom to create their own cinema, with their own aesthetics, telling their own stories, with their own resources, even if that meant producing 'poor' and 'ugly' films, as some critics would say.

Today recognized as Brazil's most important cinematic movement, *Cinema Novo* was also responsible for introducing Brazilian cinematography in the history of world cinema, in the context of new wave movements.

However, in order to achieve this status, future *cinemanovistas* had to walk a long path to see their dream of cultural decolonization legitimized both inside and outside Brazil. At that time, North American studios dominated the Brazilian film industry, especially with regard to distribution. The majority of the films screened in Brazilian theatres came from United States, and very few were national productions. Moreover, at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s, there were no formal film schools in Brazil and very little equipment was available for those who wanted to stay out of the studios system. Young filmmakers therefore had to learn alone, accepting the risks of shooting with old cameras, no lighting equipment, no dollies, no cranes, no *Nagras*. Their only help came from cine-club sessions and classes organized by art museums or churches, where the filmmakers were exposed to new techniques and trends.

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After the release of *Rio, 40 Graus* (1955), directed by Nelson Pereira dos Santos — a low-budget production with neorealist traits, shot in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro with non-professional actors (including favela residents) — those future filmmakers began to believe that it was possible to produce quality films outside the film industry. More importantly, they also recognized the need to unite and organize as a movement, in order to declare their independence from the national and international film industries.

A first step was, of course, to make cinema: good films, or at least, those capable of being legitimized as such by the Brazilian *intelligentsia* in the beginning of the 1960s. Soon, the aspiring *cinemanovistas* realized that the best strategy to reach intellectuals from Brazil was to have their movement first legitimized by the Europeans, since the Brazilian cultural elite was still very much 'colonized' — as stressed by the critic Paulo Emilio Sales Gomes in the article 'Uma situação colonial?', in 1960.[2] In this way, the Old Continent would be able to raise global awareness that Brazil was capable of producing its own films.

How did this happen? Which steps did the *cinemanovistas* take in order to have their movement legitimized by the 'first world' *intelligentsia*, and subsequently by the Brazilian one, in very early 1960s? How did they organize, and who helped them?

Even though nowadays there is a plenitude of research and books on *Cinema Novo*, facilitating the work of scholars interested in its films and its filmmakers, there are still some doubts, questions and conflicting information regarding the formation of this cinematic movement, its films and its chronological boundaries.

In almost all the literature about the history of Brazilian cinema to date, two short films are identified as the precursors of *Cinema Novo*: *Aruanda* (1960), directed by Linduarte Noronha, and *Arraial do Cabo* (1959), directed by Mario Carneiro and Paulo Cezar Saraceni. Some texts also cite *Couro de Gato* (1961) and/or two other short films, directed by Joaquim Pedro de Andrade: *O Poeta do Castelo* (1959) and *O Mestre de Apipucos* (1959). However, entering into the detail of the period when *Cinema Novo* was being generated, one realizes that there is a great amount of information still missing in this puzzle.

How did an ethnographical film such as *Arraial do Cabo* — produced with very low budget from the National Museum, directed by two amateurs — manage to travel around Europe, participating and earning prizes in some of its most important festivals? And what about the trajectory of *Aruanda,* a film produced with very little equipment by amateurs from a poor State of the Northeast of Brazil, with apparently no tradition on filmmaking? How did this documentary become the model, the reference for new Brazilian cinema, as stated by the critic

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[2] Paulo Emilio Sales Gomes, 'Uma situação colonial?', *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 19 November 1960, p. 5.

Jean-Claude Bernardet in a 1961 article in *O Estado de S. Paulo*,[3] one of the most important newspapers of the country? And, finally, why did Glauber Rocha, one of the main 'actors' of the future *Cinema Novo*, wait for the return of *Arraial do Cabo* to Brazil in order to finally launch the movement?[4]

The hypothesis defended in this thesis is that at the very beginning of the 1960s, thanks to actions that were half planned and half driven by the courage and willpower of some filmmakers and critics, there were two major circuits of Brazilian short films, within and outside the country. Together these enabled the construction of the discourses that enabled the legitimation of *Cinema Novo*. These two parallel and simultaneous movements were born at the same time but moved apart, each following its own path until they finally met in 1961, at the São Paulo Art Biennal. On that occasion they united under the name of *Cinema Novo*.

In order to prove this hypothesis, the thesis employs a traceability approach and methodology as an attempt to follow all the steps taken by *Aruanda* and *Arraial do Cabo* (1959), from their pre-production in late 1950s until their exhibition in the São Paulo Art Biennal in 1961. However, given that history cannot be understood as isolated in time and disconnected from what comes before and after, this study will move back and forward historically where necessary, focusing on the period of 1959-1961 — which here is labelled *Cinema Novo*'s 'pregnant moment', as a metaphor of Lessing's concept. I also analyse the circulation of the three films by Andrade mentioned above, though they are not the main focus of this research project.

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[3] Jean-Claude Bernardet, 'Dois documentários', *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 12 August 1961, p. 5.

[4] Glauber Rocha, 'Documentários: Arraial do Cabo e Aruanda', *Jornal do Brasil*, 6 August 1961, p. 4.

# Contributors / Collaborateurs

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