MIMESIS
INTERNATIONAL

Cinéma & Cie
International Film Studies Journal

vol. XV, no. 24, Spring 2015

CINÉMA&CIE

INTERNATIONAL FILM STUDIES JOURNAL

Archives in Human Pain. Circulation, Persistence, Migration

Edited by Alice Cati and Vicente Sánchez-Biosca

MIMESIS
INTERNATIONAL

Associazione culturale LENT

Cinéma & Cie is promoted by
International PhD Program "Art History and Audiovisual Studies"
(Università degli Studi di Udine, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3)
Dipartimento di Storia e Tutela dei Beni Culturali
Università degli Studi di Udine

Subscription to *Cinéma & Cie* (2 issues)

Single issue: 16 € / 12 £ / 18 $
Double issue: 20 € / 15 £ / 22 $
Yearly subscription: 30 € / 22 £ / 34 $

No shipping cost for Italy
Shipping cost for each issue:
EU: 10 € / 8 £ / 11 $
Rest of the world: 18 € / 13 £ / 20 $

Send orders to
commerciale@mimesisedizioni.it

Journal website
www.cinemaetcie.net

www.mimesisinternational.com
e-mail: info@mimesisinternational.com

isbn 9788869770463
issn 2035-5270

P.I. C.F. 02419370305

Cover image: Two-fold canvas painted by survivor Vann Nath representing Hout Bophana. This painting is currently in display at the Bophana Audiovisual Center (Phnom Penh). Reproduced by courtesy of Rithy Panh

Contents / Table des matières

Archives in Human Pain. Circulation, Persistence, Migration

New Studies

Archives in Human Pain.
Circulation, Persistence, Migration

Questioning the Images of Atrocity: An Introduction

Alice Cati, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Vicente Sánchez-Biosca, Universitat de València

Abstract

The images of atrocity, either analog or digital, are always the trace of an encounter between the gaze of a photographer or a cameraman and a human being suffering from the painful effects of man-made violence. The archive images resulting from such an encounter raise some inevitable questions: who took them and for what purpose? Is it possible to retrace the process that led to these shots? What do they hide behind what the eye can see? Owing to their defective nature and the changes they have endured throughout history, these images strongly contribute to shape collective memory by becoming real sites of memory for ethnic or national communities. Therefore, the archive of human pain, encompassing a wide range of public spaces – such as museums, monuments, artworks, memorials, human rights associations and so on – is a reservoir of images to stimulate grief or fuel action for social change. This introduction has two main aims: on the one hand, it investigates the circulation of such images within the visual sphere and their social or political uses; on the other hand, it provides the paths of research and the new findings extensively analysed in the contributions included in this volume.

The images of atrocity, either photochemical or digital, are always the trace of an encounter between the gaze of the holder of any visual registering device, and a human being suffering from the effect of natural catastrophes or man-made violence. In these painful representations, two gazes are presumed to share a brief instant, even though as sometimes happens they fail to meet. Then the instant frozen by the frame dramatically poses the major questions that semiologues, philosophers and intellectuals have considered since the 1930s as the essence of photography, namely: its status as a trace and the fatal certitude that we consume it once the intense feeling of presentness has already past. This is of course not the place to insist on these well known theses that range from Walter Benjamin to Roland Barthes, from Philippe Dubois to Susan Sontag, and other prominent names that constitute the canon of photography studies. Nonetheless, we may wonder if, at least in its extreme manifestations, as in the

subgenre of *images of impending death*, it is reasonable to establish a solid historical background rather than work in the realm of general principles.[1] It seems paradoxical to claim that the *hic et nunc* is the defining point of photography and neglect immediately afterwards the analysis of the precise circumstances in which a photograph has been produced. We do not question the pertinence of the classical definitions of photography, but to articulate them with the framework in which each one of them originated. As John Tagg put it in a canonical essay, *The Burden of Representation*, we need "not an alchemy but a history, outside which the existential essence of photography is empty…"[2]

In reality, the vast consumption of this genre of images both in old and new media inevitably triggered a torrent of questions that are as hard to avoid as difficult to fully answer. Some of them concern the close analysis of the form and content of such visual products: frame, camera angle, static or dynamic composition, texture and quality etc., while others affect their modality, that is, *the gaze with which the camera holder addressed the object of affliction as he or she captured it*. However uncertain this second aspect may be, it should be interrogated from the images themselves, since the political, ethical or human perspective adopted towards a theme is indelibly inscribed (but sometimes concealed) in the image itself. Consequently, instead of considering the attitude from a psychological or ideological point of view, we argue that the images contain and, to a greater or lesser degree, make explicit the intention with which they were engendered. This having been established, the analysis of their 'modality' cannot be reduced to textual aspects, but is constrained to taking into consideration the circumstances in which the apparatus registered the human suffering or its effects. Therefore, the historian seeking a response has to interrogate both aspects (textual and contextual) that are inextricably linked. Some of these questions may be: who took them and with what purpose? Is it possible to retrace the evolving of the events captured, their precedents and consequences that escape their recording? What do they hide beyond the limits of their scope, either placed off-screen or even and more precisely in the reverse-shot? What is the precise instant captured by the photograph in the longer sequence from which this fragment has been retrieved? Space and time are, as we realize, involved in our questioning.

The kind of issues raised by the enunciation of atrocity images may be deduced from the vast arsenal originated in World War II and its aftermath, the Shoah. In such a corpus the so-called *liberator images* can be opposed to others, which, according to Marianne Hirsch, could be termed *perpetrator images*.[3] The former group is represented by the photographs or footage taken by profession-

[1] Barbie Zelizer, *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 2010.
[2] John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays in Photographies and Histories*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1993, p. 3.
[3] Marianne Hirsch in different places. See Id., *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*, Columbia University Press, New York 2012.

als attached to the Red Army on their arrival in Majdanek or by the military-attached photographers and filmmakers or freelancers who entered Bergen Belsen or Buchenwald, respectively with the Brits or with the Americans. Consciously or unconsciously, all of them were bearing witness to events that had occurred out of the reach of the cameras. In this sense, these shots provide a window through which we contemplate the effects of the atrocities committed by the Germans by means of a rhetorical figure, metonymy, which consists of inferring the deed (the mass murder) by showing its effects (the emaciated bodies and corpses, the mass graves, the human experiments made by the Nazis etc.). Inasmuch as the recordings were intended for memory and education (a sort of 'pedagogy by horror'), technical choices were implemented to make the vision plausible for the target viewers. Among these visual strategies we might cite the co-presence of reporters (usually in the foreground) and carnage (in the background), the refusal to use montage, the preference for synchronous sound and especially witnesses' voices giving credit to what they have encountered...

As far as the *perpetrator images* are concerned, the Germans took photographs and filmed in the course of their campaigns in the Eastern front. Historians have even documented how Wehrmacht units and *Einsatzgruppen* consumed those images when operating in Russia. We would like to briefly mention a particular case.

In May 1942, a propaganda team disembarked in the Warsaw ghetto with the purpose of filming both staged scenes and improvised street views. The footage falls unequivocally into the above-mentioned category since its authors, sent by the Nazi Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, were part of the machinery of destruction. It would suffice to recall that running in parallel to the filming the SS were implementing the last details to the extermination camp of Treblinka, which was soon to become the destination of a considerable number of the ghetto inhabitants. The immortalization of the Eastern Jew through the image was connected with the project of his material destruction. Two months later, on 22 July 1942, the major deportations from the ghetto started. However, a hasty interpretation of this link must be eschewed, given the gaps between the murder and the production of the image. In this sense, the historian has to take into account the personal, spatial and temporal discrepancies between the act of killing and the act of filming. Neither the protagonists of the shooting nor the filmed victims were to coincide exactly with the protagonists of the annihilation, not to mention the time-lapse and the distance between the two scenes. Accordingly, far from being a phrase that excludes further explanation, the concept of *perpetrator image* demands an accurate scrutiny of the specific circumstances surrounding both the Warsaw filming and the Warsaw deportation. The work of the historian must go deeper in the specificities.

Yet, if the production of atrocity images raises such delicate issues and demands descending to the ground to examine the details, the analysis of their circulation increases the variants and difficulties. The social meaning of each image changes inevitably as it is incorporated into different chains of discourse, and nowadays this process has achieved an unprecedented relevance. More precisely,

meaning changes, first, when moving in the diachronic level, across time, under the form of appropriation, citation, re-editing, inversion, perversion, and so on; second, while these images migrate in the synchronic level, moving through the increasingly complex media system, from photography to cinema, from television to social networks, not to mention installations and museum or commemoration spaces. In other words, instead of remaining static, these images are extremely instable and rich in meaning and malleability. From propaganda to counter-propaganda, from exemplary purposes to memory effects, from denunciation aims to artistic redemption, the circulation, remediation and instability of the enunciation in which they appear prove that repetition always implies difference.

Yet, another aspect that these images have to face is their capacity of representing trauma. In the most recent years a new interest in Trauma Studies and Memory Studies has risen among scholars and the broader intellectual community alike. This new concern, which is undeniably shaped and inspired by a multifaceted range of sociocultural, geopolitical and historical developments, is twofold. On the one hand, it shows the increased relevance of social practices provided by institutions, such as archives, museums, memorials, web sites, installations, media products focused on the cultural specificity of wars, conflicts and instances of massacre, torture, and genocide. On the other hand, it encourages the in-depth examination of the concept of trauma – in the light of the effects in the "traumatized communities" – which has led to the acknowledgment of its importance within the interdisciplinary contemporary thought.

This special issue of *Cinéma & Cie* has placed greater emphasis on the centrality of human suffering in terms of private and shared experiences. Due to the pervasiveness of mass media, many conflicts occurring in the last decades have been witnessed and represented by means of photographic and filmic devices whose products circulate in different contexts and media outlets today. As a result, the essays in this journal deal with the issues of the politics of memory and mourning as well as the collective abuses consigned to oblivion and the annihilation of the past. The images of these traumatic events offer a specific opportunity to explore the strategies which societies have developed to represent themselves at national and international level. Therefore, crucial to this is the variety of media representations and cultural embodiments of human pain. By adopting a dynamic multidisciplinary approach and focusing on different case studies, the articles collected here complement each other and deal productively with works and critical frameworks borrowed from other disciplines and fields of research.

The main question that this collection of articles takes into account concerns – in Huyssen's words – the "universal trope for historical trauma,"[4] that is to say the Shoah as the icon of pain and suffering, by which other instances of geno-

[4] Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2003, pp. 13-14. See also Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, Blackwell, Cambridge (MA) 1994.

cide and horror are measured. By showing different aspects and effects of the mediatization of traumatic experiences in Western societies, several essays are concerned with the dark shadow of the Nazi Regime and the Holocaust.

In Barbara Grespi's essay, the concept of the ornamental and anaesthetic gaze – borrowed by Siegfrid Kracauer and Ernst Jünger – is introduced in order to examine the German postwar iconography. Exploiting literature, literary criticism, media archaeology and film studies, the article proposes an analysis of the terrifying representation of the German cities, completely devastated by air raids and reduced to rubble. Insightfully connecting the filmic representations of ruins in *Trümmerfilm* with the images of damaged marble statues, X-ray pictures of human skeletons, and, finally, aerial shots previously taken by the Nazis during the War and by the Allies afterwards, the author illustrates the ways in which trauma is represented more or less explicitly in German cinema and photography. Grespi particularly notices how the motifs of mineralization, mutilation of the body and transcription of the landscape or human figure into abstract signs correspond to the unconscious "affectless reaction" of the German people – consisting in considering themselves as victims of a catastrophe – along with their desire to forget the other German actions carried out during World War II.

Within the same, well-known theoretical framework regarding the representability or non-representability of the Holocaust, a *fil-rouge* can be traced between the Postwar iconography and the contemporary figurations and patterns applied to the Shoah as a *master narrative*[5] Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann's contribution provides a nuanced understanding of the creation of a fixed iconography and its reiterated use by which both the popular culture and the current mediated memory are deeply shaped. Bearing in mind the significant critical debate about the different stylistic and aesthetic strategies used by Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) and Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993), the essay draws parallels and finds connections among three mainstream fiction movies – *X-Men*, *The Pianist*, and *Everything is Illuminated* – in order to problematize the notion of cinematic archives. Following Genette's theory of transtextuality and Derrida's concept of archive, the author shows how fiction films assemble stereotypical images from archives (e.g. pictures of concentration camps), and use them as a model for cinematic productions aiming to create a repertoire of ready-made and recyclable imagery.

If in feature films the archive of human pain is made of copies of other images ("images of images"), which have definitely lost their referential address to the past, the use or reuse of proper archival images leads to the central reflection on the relationship between history and filmic devices. Taking Jem Cohen's essay

[5] According to Jeffrey J. Alexander, the representation of trauma depends on creating a convincing description of the traumatic event and its effects on the individual as well as the collective level. Moreover, four representations are necessary to construct a new master narrative: the nature of the pain, the nature of the victim, the relation of the trauma victim with the wider audience, the attribution of responsability, Jeffrey J. Alexander in *Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma*, in Id. et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2004, pp. 12-15.

films – *Buried in Light* (1994), and *Empire of Tin* (2007-2008) – as an effective case study and a key example of an *anachronic* approach to historical temporality, Maria Teresa Soldani considers images as multilayered temporal phenomena, fragments of time within which present, past, and future coexist. Particularly inspired by Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history, in *Buried in Light*, Cohen first explores the connection between private memory – based on his own travel experiences in Central Eastern Europe and his family's origins – and collective memory – shocked by the Shoah. This historical trauma is perceived as an irreversible rupture whose traces (i. e. archival material of Jewish persecution on the streets) are still present as contemporary geographical landmarks (symbolically represented by Auschwitz today) in spite of any impulse to forget. Later on by focusing on the discrepancy between the cyclic-progressive nature of the history of capitalism and the non-positivistic idea of "archive of pain," in *Empire of Tin* the collage of past and present documentary images (e.g. WWI and Ground Zero) as well as manipulated images of contemporary politicians aims to produce a collision or a collapse, in order to reveal hidden truths and stop catastrophes from being repeated again. Undoubtedly, such a dialectical way of thinking history and the history of images itself specifically engage with broad theoretical issues around the use and re-contextualization of visual traces of human suffering. Moreover, it is clear that the memory of the Holocaust can be seen as a transcultural and transhistorical device[6] because it has deeply affected the ways in which societies conceive and represent the political tragedy itself, including the most recent one: from the Argentinean Dirty War to the Rwandan Genocide, from the Bosnian war to the 9/11 attacks, just to mention a few of them.

Another area of consideration highlighted in this special issue of *Cinéma & Cie* regards the inadequacy of the visual archives to give full account of the past. Offering an in-depth analysis of Gerhard Richter's work *18.Oktober 1977* (1988), based on the photographs of moments in the lives and the tragic and suspicious deaths of four members of the Red Army Faction (RAF) during their imprisonment in Stuttgart, Luisella Farinotti highlights that the paintings cycle not only invites the observer to reflect upon the emerging unconscious fear of totalitarianism and state violence in Germany during the Seventies, but it also suggests that inside any documentary source, something remains ungraspable and undecipherable. Through the aesthetic choice of recycling, blurring and graining the pictures of the Baader-Meinhof Group's corpses, previously shot by the police and published in a weekly magazine, Richter transforms such images, which have imprinted themselves on the collective memory as obscene "crime scenes," into a *Pathosformel*,[7] an iconic formula of death and victimhood. By showing the hu-

[6] See Angela H. Gutchess, Maya Sieglel, *Memory Specifity Across Cultures,* in Aleida Assmann, Linda Shortt (eds.), *Memory and Political Change*, Palgrave Macmillan, London-New York 2012, pp. 201-215.

[7] Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante. Histoire de l'art et temps des fantôme selon Aby Warburg*, Editions de Minuit, Paris 2002.

man vulnerability of the dead terrorists – as the author argues – the artistic act of rewriting the pictures aims to restore the traumatic memory linked to an event that needs to be seen as it is, far from any political mystifications.

The idea that memory – even in its visual form – always deals with something that is lost, erased, or maybe never existed because no image has been produced to document harrowing scenes of human annihilation, is at the core of Sylvie Rollet's contribution. By analyzing two films, *The Missing Picture* (2013) by Rithy Panh and *Công Binh, la longue nuit indochinoise* (2013) by Lâm Lê, the author introduces the well-known concept of "missing image," considering not only the presence/absence dialectic, which represents the essence of the image, but also trying to find out what can be understood by the means of the image. In both films, the spectator is involved in an interesting hermeneutic work by mentally combining archive footages originally made to celebrate the totalitarian legacy (Khmer Rouge on the one hand, and colonial imperialism in Indochina, on the other) with oral testimonies, clay figures or traditional water puppets that help to explain and recreate the atrocities of the past. Such an intermedia strategy[8] tells the viewer how limited the moving images capacity of showing is, and it underlines that the real place to unveil the truth of the past dwells in the visual variance, that is to say the reverse-shot that can just be imagined.

As it can be noticed in the abovementioned essays, this special issue draws the attention to the historical evolution of the meaning and social practice inherent in an image, from its production to its most current uses. In particular, Alice Cati and Vicente Sánchez-Biosca engage with the *presentness of the past*, adopted as the starting point and the point of view itself from which the archival image should be examined and studied in order to deconstruct potentially aberrant decodings. Through the analysis of some significant works (Marcelo Brodsky's *Buena Memoria*, 1997, Gustavo Germano's *Ausenc'as*, 2006, Silvio Caiozzi's *Fernando ha vuelto*, 1998, Patricio Guzmán's *Nostalgia de la luz* -2012) concerning the politics of disappearance in Argentina and Chile, Cati works on some *desaparecidos*' family pictures, symbolically and socially perceived as the last relics of the vanished bodies. While the artistic re-contextualization of private images becomes a sort of burial gesture and a restorative act of memory, it cannot be overlooked that the denial of public grief at the present time influences the interpretation of the pictures as representations of victimhood. Thus, as the author of the essay suggests, when the peaceful, ordinary everyday life turns into the representation of a tragic destiny, a "backshadowing" hermeneutic device comes into play. The challenge for the contemporary cultural and media response does not lie in pathologizing the victim's hopes, but in acknowledging that they had a future before the tragedy occurred.

The photographic act, that is to say the original gesture witnessed/immortalized in the picture, is also the core of Sánchez-Biosca's article. By looking back

[8] Pietro Montani, *L'immaginazione intermediale. Perlustrare, rifigurare, testimoniare il mondo visibile*, Laterza, Bari 2010.

at the history of Tuol Sleng's photos, which were taken because it was imposed by the bureaucratic procedures of Khmer Rouge regime, the author argues that in the aftermath the reception of the pictures, influenced by different contexts (archives, museums, art galleries, films, editorial projects, legal scenes etc.), has transformed the social perception of the represented people from guilty subjects into innocent victims. According to the main theoretical references to the indexical nature of the analog image and visual memory as a performative act, the analysis goes beyond the re-mediation of an archive of human pain as a cultural phenomenon, in that it prominently shows the achievement of both a political and institutional scopic regime which affects the pictures within any cultural framework. Like a set of Chinese boxes, the Tuol Sleng archive has been scanned by heterogeneous gazes, in a never ending and transformative flow that is able to redefine the violent power of the images as well as the present in order to remove the oblivion of the genocide.

In conclusion, *Archives in Human Pain* does not aim to give an answer to all the questions from the past and recent debate about cultural trauma, media and painful heritage. However, we hope that the interdisciplinary approach adopted and proposed in these essays will open new research paths that can contribute to the studies about the relationship between difficult memory and images worldwide.

Lasting Remains: The Anesthetizing Gaze in German Postwar Cinema and Photography

Barbara Grespi, Università degli Studi di Bergamo

Abstract

The essay analyzes the traumatic dimension of the images of rubble produced by German cinema and photography in the aftermath of the Second World War. Drawing on Sebald's reflections on the inability of literature to bear witness to the atrocious experience of the bombings endured by millions of German citizens, this contribution proposes an analysis of the gaze employed in depicting the dramatic condition of the country. In particular, the refusal of the codes of realism and the impulse towards the scenographic portrayal of rubble and ruins, about which scholars largely agree, is here re-read not as evidence for an escape from reality, but as a re-emergence of an *ornamental* (Kracauer) and *anesthetizing* (Jünger) visual matrix typical of the aerial point of view and, so, typical of the attacker's gaze. This resurfacing is testified by two key figures engraved in the landscape of rubble: the skeleton in X-rays and the surface of abstract signs which cross-references the view from above; both strip the flesh from the body/landscape, so that the former is in some way included in the latter. As it coincides not only with the gaze that Germany suffered at the end of the war, but also with that imposed by the Nazis at its beginning, the aerial perspective and the corresponding affectless mode summarizes the specificity of the trauma that Germany underwent, rekindling the conflict of self-representation of the defeated country.

We are indebted to W.G. Sebald for bringing into focus the symptomatic collective amnesia that affected a devastated Germany in the aftermath of the Second World War. For more than fifty years, the trauma suffered by the German people as a result of the disastrous aerial bombing, which in the last stages of the conflict razed cities such as Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne and Dresden, was not discussed until Sebald raised the question in the influential Zurich lectures of 1998, exploring the absence in German culture of literary accounts able to bear witness to the experience of annihilation undergone by millions of people.[1] The German

* I would like to thank firstly Sara Damiani for sharing bibliographies, Valeria Dalle Donne (Cineteca di Bologna) and Pier Maria Bocchi for helping in finding movies, Maurizio Guerri for his

writer's views were much debated and in part criticized,[2] but today his main thesis proves to be undeniable and even logical. It is almost superfluous to point out that the national taboo, which was produced unconsciously, is intertwined with the need to remove the memory of other atrocious events that Germany was responsible for during the Nazi period. In what was probably a complicated mixture of feelings, the guilt for the crimes committed overlapped with the Germans' self-perception as victims of an unprecedented repression, causing the collapse of memory and a shared sense of time as oriented exclusively to the future.[3] Whit this unspeakable conflict of self-representation, added to the extremely dramatic nature of the events, the German experience of being bombed takes on the shape of a quintessential collective trauma. Trauma as "unclaimed experience," in Cathy Caruth's words, a catastrophic event characterised by "the oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival. These two stories [are] both incompatible and absolutely inextricable [...],"[4] but also trauma as horror which repeats itself without ever being fully lived through, without the possibility of being translated into images or words, without the consciousness of the unavoidable inner conflict it produces. And again Caruth asks in the wake of Freud: "Is trauma the encounter with death or the ongoing experience of having survived it?"[5]

I see no rubble…

The number of German people killed by the air raids is uncertain; estimates of mortalities range from 323.000 to 570.000,[6] and doctors' accounts report the most horrible causes of death: suffocation in the cellars, combustion in the firestorms, burial under the debris, dismemberment by explosions, liquefaction or petrifaction by the heat. The devastation of Germany produced a pile of rubble measuring several hundred million cubic meters, nearly thirty-eight cubic meters per inhabitant in the major cities. Life after the bombing was dehumanizing experience for a very long time, not unlike a return to the Stone Age, but in a

suggestions on Jünger, John Eaglesham for his help with the English version and Richard Davies for his final reading. A special thanks to Alessandra Violi for her inspiring research.

[1] Winfried Georg Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literature. Mit einem Essay zu Alfred Andersch*, Carl Hanser Verlag, München 1999 (Eng. ed. *On the Natural History of Destruction*, Random House, New York 2003).

[2] For the German reception of Sebald's book, see Susanne Vees Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt: Literature of Wartime Bombing in Germany*, De Gruyter, Berlin-New York 2003.

[3] See the seminal work of Karl Jaspers, *Die Schuldfrage* (1946), Piper, München 2012 (Eng. ed. *The Question of German Guilt*, Capricorn, New York 1961).

[4] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1996, p. 7.

[5] *Ibidem.*

[6] See Susanne Vees Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt*, cit.

devastatingly unhealthy landscape: everywhere the unending pyres of decaying corpses, among the rubble a proliferation of rats and flies, on the bodies the most disgusting parasitic fauna resurfaced from prehistoric times, the displaced in permanent transit, wandering around like ghosts unable to take in the tragedy surrounding them; as Alfred Döblin notoriously wrote, people sprang out from every crack, silent and barely visible, relentlessly walking on incomprehensible routes to incomprehensible destinations. In those days, doctors talked of "lethargy due to shock;" today, psychiatrists would diagnose acute post-traumatic stress disorder, whose flipside is hyperactivity, in this case the compulsive need to clean the streets, to clear away debris and to rebuild as fast as possible. German people were anaesthetizing their eyes in order to be able to bear not only the horrific slaughter of their fellow-citizens, which they could not avoid witnessing, but also the shock of their basically unjustifiable survival.

In Sebald's view, these gruesome images – which only now can we focus on after decades and thanks to the resurrection of some buried eye-witness accounts – remained unknown to the so-called *Trümmerliteratur*, misguidedly praised for its courageous realism, but in fact only able to draw upon all the clichés of the catastrophe genre, by reintroducing, one work after another, the same generic metaphors of destruction. Sebald's argument is accompanied by some photographs: the gutted Kammerstrasse; the postcard *Frankfurt yesterday and today*, which compares the view of the city reduced to rubble in 1947 and in dazzling condition in 1997; the image of German shoes falling to pieces inserted in an English reportage; the photograph of the first concert given by the Munich Philharmonic after the surrender. Although the writer does not develop an articulated line of thought about the contribution of those pictures, he assigns to them implicitly another role, as if they could bear witness also to realities inaccessible to consciousness, as if they could possess a capacity of expression of the unbearable much more powerful than words. But was it really like this? In this historical moment, were the images the true deposit of a trauma and the starting-point for future elaboration of grief?[7]

If we consider the images created by the Germans, both in cinema and in photography, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, we face a different, but equivalent, refusal of reality. The rubble which gives the name to the cinematic trend represents a great natural scenery, it is the object of a transfiguration which contemporary critics, significantly, did not recognize and which today on the contrary is widely noticed. Eric Rentschler recently illustrated one of the aspects of the filmic de-realization of rubble: its transformation into a psychic landscape, the conversion of historical fact into symbolic motif. According to Rentschler, the *Trümmerfilm* inserts itself into the general trend towards diverting the gaze, which, in literature, transformed a national history of violence into a "natural history of destruction," with the state of annihilation appearing

[7] Note that in Ulrich Baer's essay, photography is not only considered a place for, but also a form of, trauma. See Id., *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma*, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 2002.

as the outcome of the forces of nature rather than as the responsibility of certain human agents.[8] The choice of very vague titles, both in terms of space and time (*Somewhere in Berlin*, *Between Yesterday and Tomorrow, And the Sky above Us, In Those Days*) is the first clue of that drive to divert the gaze, the second one is the allegorical treatment of debris in a seminal movie such as *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (*Murderers Are among Us*, Wolfgang Staudte, 1946). Here the physical destruction of German cities equates repeatedly with the mental devastation of the protagonist, the doctor Hans Mertens, so that debris becomes an inner theatre that has little or nothing to do with reality.

> *Two sorts of ruins become intertwined: the rubble on the streets and the ruin in a returned soldier's mind, material damage and psychic torment both of which have both been caused by outside forces. Rubble, a signifier of destruction, assumes a mythic status within a vanquished nation's fantasy of reconstruction*.[9]

Moreover, the mythicization of rubble in the *Trümmerfilm* was also explained by critics in the recognition of the explicit references made to Expressionistic cinema. Besides lending to the scenery of devastation a general hallucinatory dimension, the quotation of that visual style connects post-war Germany to its glorious Weimar past, burying the intermediate period.[10] In fact, the use of strong light contrasts, the accentuation of shadows and the evident tilting of the shooting angles (as we see at the beginning of Staudte's movie) de-realize the ruins transforming them into a pure graphic sign, so that, in some sequences, the jagged shards of bombed buildings make us think of the stylized profile of Hostenwall, the mountain village depicted on the backdrop of *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, Robert Wiene, 1920). But *Die Mörder sind unter uns* is more often considered as a rewriting of *M – Eine Stadt such einen Mörder* (*M*, Fritz Lang, 1931), whose original title should have been *Mörder unter uns*.[11] According to Jaimey Fisher, the figure of the metropolitan flâneur resurfaces in Staudte's movie, re-codifying a central character of modern imaginary which in turn was rewritten in Expressionistic cinema. If the paedophile in *M* indeed revealed "the darker side of the flâneur,"[12] by offering a version of wandering alone in the city as connected to the impulse to kill and to mental illness, the reappearance of the anguished walks of a man in post-war Berlin indirectly reintroduces the theme of sin, shame and collective guilt.

[8] Eric Rentschler, *The Place of Rubble in the Trümmerfilm*, in Julia Hell, Andreas Schönle (eds.), *Ruins of Modernity*, Duke University Press, Durham-London 2010, pp. 418-438.
[9] *Ivi*, p. 438.
[10] See Thomas Brandlmeier, *Von Hitler zu Adenauer. Deutsche Trümmerfilme*, in Hilmar Hoffman, Walter Schobert (eds.), *Zwischen Gestern und Morgen. Westdeutscher Nachkriegsfilm 1945-1962*, Deutsches Filmmuseum, Frankfurt a.M. 1989.
[11] Jaimey Fisher, "Wandering in/to the Rubble-Film: Filmic Flânerie and the Exploded Panorama after 1945," in *The German Quarterly*, vol. 78, no. 4, Fall 2005, pp. 461-480.
[12] An intuition of Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary*, Routledge, New York 2000, p. 145.

The evident positioning of rubble in the realm of specifically cinematic imagery, has also suggested other analogies. Robert Shandley reads the *Trümmerfilm* as a modern Western, in which cities reduced to rubble represent a variation on the American desert, equally uninhabitable and wild, a land of conquest that needs to be civilized thanks to the contribution of every citizen, especially the women (the icon of hard-working *Trümmerfrau*).[13] Therefore rubble is a canyon to be crossed, and this affinity between the mythic landscape of the West and that of the historical Germany, both of them harsh and sublime, also entails identical themes, such as the same series of ethical imperatives: "the establishment of a moral order, confrontation of one's own shady past, and confrontation of evil within a community."[14] Furthermore, other scholars have noted a sort of gangster movie atmosphere in the rubble stories, and in particular the same phobia associated with urban spaces, so typical of that American genre, which in turn reveals an unfamiliar face in its two-way relation with *Trümmerfilm*.[15]

In the final analysis, it is worthy of notice that the multivalent transfiguration of rubble in post-war German cinema represents the most acute symptom of the trauma endured by the nation. It does not depend on the visionary and, more often than not, foreign view of later generations, but on the contrary it represents the immediate self-defensive gesture of people who lived through the disaster. Perhaps, to German eyes, rubble never appears as such. Its metamorphosis into *landscape* – exotic, savage, prehistoric – was immediate, its positioning in the realm of the image instantaneous. The account of Hans Erich Nossack – in Sebald's view the only writer of the time able to record plainly what he actually saw – includes a clear symptom of that early exercise in imagination. After his chance survival of Operation Gomorrha, which turned Hamburg into a hell on earth, Nossack feels the urgent need to set down immediately what he experienced, and in a crucial page of his *Der Untergang*, he describes his first impact with the destroyed city; the sea of rubble he faces already appears to be something else.

> *What we saw all around did not remind us in any way of what we had lost. Nothing to do with it. It was something else, it was strangeness itself, it was the essentially 'not possible.' In Northern Finland there are forests that are frozen solid. At home we had a paintings of one of them. But who still thinks of forests in those circumstances? It was not even the skeleton of a forest. Something is there, to be sure, even more than if it were only a skeleton, but what is the meaning of these signs and runes? Perhaps the inconceivable inversion of the concept 'forest'*?[16]

[13] Robert Shandley*, Coming Home Through Rubble Canyons*, in Id., *Rubble Films: German Cinema in the Shadow of the Third Reich,* Temple University Press, Philadelphia 2001, pp. 25-46.
[14] *Ivi*, p. 26.
[15] See Jennifer Fay, *Rubble Noir*, in William Rasch, Wilfried Wilms (eds.), *German Postwar Films: Life and Love in the Ruins*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2008, pp. 125-140.
[16] Hans Erich Nossack, *Der Untergang*, Kruger Verlag, Hamburg 1948 (Eng. ed. *The End: Hamburg 1943*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2004).

Nossack's words testify more to the national trauma than to a tragic state of things. They reveal the refusal to recognize the new German landscape. It is not Germany, wrote Nossack, it is Finland; it is not reality, it is a painting; it is not the world but its skeleton or its surface written in an ancient code to be deciphered.

…I see skeletons…

The image of petrification of living beings and the idea of landscape of signs, a writing in runes that can have a meaning, even an iconic one, only if it is decoded, represent two symptoms of the national trauma, which re-emerges also in the photo-cinematic representation of rubble.

The motif of mineralization, particularly evident in the obsession with statues in *Trümmerfotografie*, sublimates the horror of corpses charred by bombs and welded to the debris covering the city streets. Photographers such as Friedrich Seidenstücker, Herman Claasen, Herbert List, Hugo Schmöltz portray landscapes of stone where the laceration of bodies is transferred to damaged statues, amputated marble limbs, fallen heads and upturned busts. List takes pictures of a colossal charioteer lying like a dead body on the debris-strewn floor of the Technical University of Munich (*Man Leading Horse*, 1946), while in a more famous photo of the series he immortalizes a scene similar to a *forest frozen solid*, namely the plaster casts of the Academy of Art covered in ice (*Plaster Casts in the Academy I, Munich*, 1946) (fig. 1): on the floor of a gutted gallery the humanoid group turns its back on the spectator, striving to reach the light that filters through the doorframe; the mantle of snow welds together bodies and rubble, producing a single corporeal mass. Seidenstücker's pictures capture the figures of a maimed Neptune on the door of the destroyed castle, of Diana and Mercury – crippled "watchmen" of the Nationalgalerie – and of an endless series of remains in the classic style in Charlottenburg. It cannot be denied that this collection of mutilated statutes also possesses a certain majesty: the places of ancient splendor are still recognizable, the destruction of works of art seems not merely the eclipse of one country but rather a harm inflicted on civilization itself.[17] Nevertheless, the evocation of the injured body of Germany through the agony of statues is not yet a form of grieving. It maintains a strong hallucinatory component, the trace of a shock that makes these works much more interesting. In List's pictures of 1946 Munich, a Roman statue without head and arms at a

[17] The quest for grandeur in ruins, that is the need to foresee at the planning stage the way in which a building will collapse, in order to guarantee its symbolic strength even when damaged, had been one of the key concepts of the architecture of the Third Reich. See *Die Ruinenwerttheorie* (*The Theory of Ruin Value*) by Albert Speer, in Id., *Erinnerungen*, Verlag Ullstein, Frankfurt-Berlin 1969 (Eng. ed. *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs by Albert Speer*, Macmillan, New York 1976). On the transition from an aesthetic of ruins to an aesthetic of rubble in German cinema see also André Habib, "Ruines, décombres, chantiers, archives: l'évolution d'un figure dans le cinéma en Allemagne (1946-1993)," in *CINÉMAS*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2007, pp. 29-52.

second look appears to be a human body resting on a stack of bones. The statue is at the centre of a wall decorated symmetrically, reminding the scheme of the body in front, and, most importantly, it is placed on an ocean of white debris similar to limbs: fragments of columns, cylindrical stones, elongated stems. A skeleton in pieces, the skeleton that Nossack saw engraved on the landscape and that sometimes the *Trümmerfotografie* also discovers: in a photo by Hermann Claasen, the frail outline of Great St. Martin Church in Cologne takes on the Christ-like shape of an emaciated skeleton with arms silhouetted against the void (*Blick vom Alter Markt auf die Westseite*, 1946).

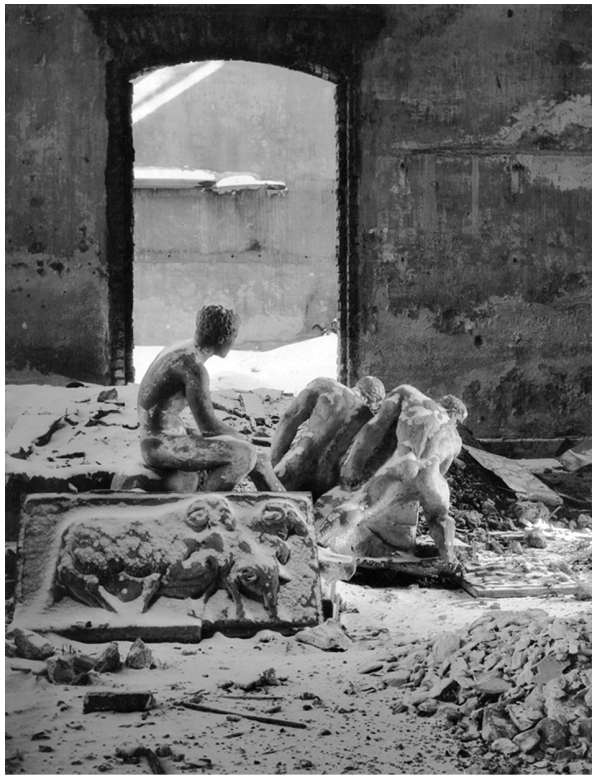

Fig. 1 – Herbert List, *Plaster Casts in the Academy I*, *Munich*, 1946.

In fact, it is the cinema that elaborates in depth the crucial image of the skeleton, itself a mineral body, even though this is not due to a replacement of flesh with stone, but to the consumption of the corpse, or as a result of a gaze that picks out the inner structure of the body. A traumatic figure that recalls the horror of death abstracting from its tangible manifestation, the skeleton appears like a watermark behind many cinematic representations of rubble. The framing of bombarded buildings against the light, so that the sun's rays filter through the many holes of what had been windows, renders the idea not so

much of a world in pieces but of a series of hollow staring eyes. In an episode of *In jenen Tagen* (*In Those Days*, Helmut Käutner, 1947), splinters of façades with eyes, miraculously left standing, suddenly appear behind the protagonist, thanks to a camera movement (fig. 2). But the protagonist is a car, which after many misadventures has been left empty, and in that moment starts again to tell its story; everything in that ghostly scenery possesses a voice and a body, the rattletrap vehicle, but also the skeleton-buildings behind it, with which it blends thanks to the dust and to its camouflage "suit" (actually, in the other episodes the animated car and the surrounding landscape were already one and the same thing since the rubble was often shown in reflection on the car's windscreen). Finally, in a sequence of *Die Mörder sind unter uns*, the equivalence between bones and rubble is so precise that it deserves a more detailed comment. Dr. Mertens eventually overcomes his neurosis by performing an operation on a child; he comes home, and even his home is getting better, it is less patched up, less messy, less bare. His partner Susanne, an ex-photographer and a survivor from a concentration camp, is setting the table. In the movie, the key moments of their love have always been framed by ruins, such as in the *plan sequence* of their first romantic walk, where the couple appears minuscule in extreme long shot and moves forward in the dark of the night, alongside the damaged structures of the building. But also at home the ruins, often visible through glassless window frames, always provide a striking background to their encounters. The house is an inner space, but also an outer space, as many bombarded buildings are; being without a frontage, they let us see what is happening inside the rooms. But that evening Susanne finds a remedy for that lack of intimacy. She creates makeshift windows by using the X-rays of Mertens' former patients. The couple sit down right under this new "glass wall," to which they turn their backs, and the landscape of their love becomes a map of the human body, the chart of a chest, of a foot, of a jaw (fig. 3). Mertens jokes about their situation, and points out the symptoms of the disease in each body, the sick body of the country, which he will obviously now heal.

Fig. 2 – *In jenen Tagen* (*In Those Days*, Helmut Kautner, 1947).

Fig. 3 – *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (*Murderers Are among Us*, Wolfgang Staudte, 1946).

But it is not only a question of symbolism. Certainly, the skeleton is also a metaphor that refers to the filleted body of Germany, and it connects with a skein of much more ancient associations: the anthropological connection between architectural and bodily structures, and the nineteenth-century analogy between the body and the city;[18] nevertheless, as it appears in its medical-scientific version, it represents most of all an image linked to the visual culture of that time in a very specific way. Photography of the inner structure of the body, which depends on the application of radiographic technology to the skin, represents the supreme expression of vision close-up, so close that it no longer has anything to do with the exterior appearance of the body. There is no flesh, no blood, no pain. Radiography shows only shapes, positions, connections. And as image-code, as a film-negative to be interpreted, the X-ray skeleton is both a surface of runes and a body of stone. It is the figure that summarizes the two traumatic dimensions of the German gaze, and at the same time it refers to a way of seeing strongly identified with the culture of war of that time.

X-rays are not a discovery of those years but are as old as the cinema itself: the first X-ray of a hand, his wife's, was created by the German Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen on the 22 December 1895, six days before the first public screening of the *cinématographe* Lumière.[19] But in the 1930s there was something new on the agenda: the experimentation with radiation not only for diagnostic purposes, but also with a therapeutic aim. It was then that scientists worked on the right dosage necessary not only to locate and identify cancer, but also to destroy it, not only for photographing malignant cells, but also for *bombarding* them.[20] It is a medical term that clearly reveals the hidden relation between radiotherapy and the military strategy of *area bombing*, between X-rays and aerial photography specifically used for target reconnaissance. This connection not only concerns the function of the two devices for producing images, but also the forms they create: in graphic terms, the extreme of close-up vision and the extreme of seeing

[18] See Alessandra Violi, *Il corpo nell'immaginario letterario*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2013. On the cross-connection of the imaginaries between medicine, literature and arts, see also her seminal work, Id., *Il teatro dei nervi. Fantasmi del moderno da Mesmer a Charcot*, Mondadori, Milano 2004 (first ed. 2002). On the metaphor of the city as rotting body see Noa Steimatsky, *Ruinous: Rossellini's Corpse-Cities*, in Id., *Italian Locations: Reinhabiting the Past in Postwar Cinema*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis-London 2008, pp. 41-78.

[19] See the pivotal Lisa Cartwright, *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis-London 1995. More recently, Monika Dommann analyzed in depth the introduction of X-rays into medical practice in German-speaking Switzerland during the first decades after 1895; she studied X-ray laboratories as well as the visual imagery they generated, and ultimately the changing technique of their medical interpretation. Particularly interesting is the questioning of the complex iconic status of X-rays, *shadow-images* instead of *reflected light-images*. See Monika Dommann, *Durchsicht, Einsicht, Vorsicht. Eine Geschichte der Röntgenstrahlen 1896-1963*, Chronos, Zürich 2003.

[20] James M. Slater, *From X-Rays to Ion Beams: A Short History of Radiation Therapy*, in Ute Linz (ed.), *Ion Beam Therapy: Fundamentals, Technology, Clinical Applications*, Springer Verlag, Berlin-Heidelberg 2012, pp. 3-16, http://www.springer.com/us/book/9783642214134, last visit 24 July 2014.

from afar are equivalent. In both cases the inside and the outside are inverted. And the print of a bone structure creates the same problems of decoding and 'diagnosis' as a map of shapes and lines corresponding to a landscape seen from the air. Consequently, the same traumatic gaze – a scientific way of looking, based on a radical manipulation of distances, even at an affective level, as we shall see – transfigures debris into skeletons or into abstract signs.

The interpretation of signs produced by aerial images represents the key problem of the war strategy of the time, so much so that during the war the armies set up specific divisions dedicated to image analysis, directed, in the case of the US army, by figures of the caliber of Edward Steichen and Beaumont Newhall.[21] In England, while *The Illustrated London News* published, in double-page articles, images of the series "Cologne before and after bombing," the military weekly *Evidence in Camera* regularly published aerial photos accompanied by precise explanations of how to interpret those figurative puzzles,[22] those translations of sensorial data into spatial 'calligraphy,' or, to use Nossack's word, those *runes*.

…I see runes

If the aerial view transforms the landscape into a written surface,[23] Nossack's runes represent a sort of 'negative' of the views produced by enemy photo-recognition: the point of view is certainly closer (the writer was standing inside a truck racing into Hamburg), but equally remote at an affective level, equally abstract and analytic. The view from above allows the de-sensitization of the subject, it produces a partial blindness which turns out to be functional both for the destroyers and, ultimately, for the victims.[24]

In the period between the wars, two German thinkers as acute as Siegfried Kracauer and Ernst Jünger discuss this unprecedented optical position (the latter drawing on his long military experience to arrive at his philosophy of the image). Kracauer connects the affectless character of the aerial images to their abstract quality, which depends on the imperative nature of vision from above,

[21] Denis Cosgrove, William L. Fox, *Photography and Flight*, Reaktion Books 2010, p. 55. On the topic see also Mark Dorrian, Frédéric Pousin (eds.), *Seeing From Above: The Aerial View in Visual Culture*, Tauris, London-New York 2013. For aerial photography in war and the mobilization of the gaze see Bernhard Siegert, "Luftwaffe Fotografie. Luftkrieg als Bildverarbeitungssystem 1911-1921," in *Fotogeschichte. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Fotografie*, vol. 12, 1992, pp. 41-54.
[22] In the remarkable research of Davide Deriu, *Picturing Ruinscapes: The Aerial Photograph as Image of Historical Trauma*, in Frances Guerin, Roger Hallas (eds.), *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture*, Wallflower Press, London 2007, pp. 189-203.
[23] See the idea of diagram in Mark Dorrian, "The Aerial View: Notes for a Cultural History," in *Strates*, vol. 13, 2007, http://strates.revues.org/5573, last visit 11 October 2014.
[24] "A German city was a hellish picture of flame, gunfire and searchlights, an unreal picture because we could not hear it or feel its breath. […] It's the distance and the blindness which enables you to do these things." A British pilot's report quoted in Peter Adey, Mark Whitehead, Alison J. Williams (eds.), *From Above: War, Violence and Verticality*, Hurst and Company, London 2013, p. 43.

which is capable of radically reconfiguring its object. That perspective introduces from outside an order and a rationality that does not belong to the phenomenon, lending it an *ornamental* character. "The ornament resembles aerial photographs of landscape and cities in that it does not emerge out of the interior of the given condition, but rather appears above them."[25] To stand above the phenomenon means to impose on it a shape, to see geometric symmetry where there is only chaos, to see organic structures where there are only isolated elements, to flatten the perception through non-existent equivalences (the ornament is in Kracauer's thinking the key concept of the philosophy of the surface – *Oberfläche*). But seeing from above also means adopting a viewpoint entirely removed from the ground, which increases the natural distance inherent in the medium. "Photography shows cities in aerial shot," Kracauer wrote, "brings crockets and figures down from the Gothic cathedrals. All spatial configurations are incorporated into the central archive in unusual combinations which distance them from human proximity."[26] While the ground-level views of a city are a photographic account of a historical and social context, the aerial views are "a machine of the real and agent of the surreal."[27] From above the city becomes an ideal, unreal and lifeless construction, incapable of arousing feelings of empathy.

Jünger examines this last aspect in depth, developing the idea of *anesthetizing vision* in the essay *On Pain*.[28] There, at the ideal meeting point of the three key factors of his philosophy of the image, namely, photography, war and modernity, he situates the experience of the aerial view. He wrote:

> *In photographs taken from above, the gigantic military parade, the regular squares and the human columns that move forward appear in perspective as magical figures whose hidden meaning is to exorcize pain. This kind of view possesses an immediate evidence; we feel the same sensation flying above a city where the regular perimeter of an old fortress is preserved amid the maze of streets*.[29]

Aerial photography exorcizes pain above all because it is a technique (the technique of war that is also the spectacle of war); indeed, beyond the specificity of a particular point of view, in Jünger, the modern individual is de-sensitized primarily by photography in itself, a technique that, because it is "external to the zone of sensibility," possesses a "telescopic" nature; for this reason, it lets us see things without asking us to experience them.[30] Consequently, keeping pain at dis-

[25] Siegfried Kracauer, "Das Ornament der Masse," in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 9 June 1927 (Eng. ed. *The Mass Ornament: Weimer Essays*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge [MA] 1995, p. 77).
[26] *Ivi*, p. 62.
[27] See Anthony Vidler, *Photourbanism*, in Gary Bridge, Sophie Watson (eds.), *Companion to the City*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2002, pp. 35-45.
[28] Ernst Jünger, *Über den Schmerz* (1934), in *Blätter und Steine*, Hanseatische Verlaganstalt, Hamburg 1941.
[29] *Ivi* (my translation from the Italian edition: Ernst Jünger, *Sul dolore*, in Id., *Foglie e pietre*, Adelphi, Milano 1997, p. 160).
[30] See Maurizio Guerri, *Anestesia*, in Id., *Ernst Jünger. Terrore e libertà*, Agenzia X, Milano 2007,

tance, photography develops also an aggressive nature, it becomes an instrument for the vivisection of reality. Jünger draws a parallel between photography and medicine, in particular the technique of anesthesia: just as a general anaesthetic removes physical pain – he writes – temporarily reducing the body to a corpse on which the surgeon can operate, so photography anesthetizes the gaze and exposes the corpse of the world to "scientific" examination.[31] Aerial photography – to whose concretely aggressive aims Jünger seems often to allude in *On Pain* – becomes in this way the most radical human instrument for "eradicating the zone of sensibility" in modern man, an instrument extremely close to the technology of medical gaze; the runes and the skeleton.

Significantly, it was a "scientist" of the objectivity of the camera, Auguste Sander, who was most interested in "runes" in German postwar photography. After the human catalogues he created in the 1920s and the 1930s, in postwar Germany Sander photographed the rubble of Cologne from above and with a scientific eye that recalls the town planner's or the cartographer's gaze: "Sander climbed up to the top of the cathedral towers and panned his camera like a surveyor doing topographic studies for a new city plan," a critic wrote in a newspaper article.[32]

But maybe it is even more interesting to find the presence of the "runes" in *Trümmerfilm*, which is to say, the appearance of abstract images that are equivalents of aerial views, both because they are framed at a distance and in movement, and because they share the same affective 'temperature.' The exploration of the destroyed city from a moving vehicle (a train, a car), a type of sequence that recurs in many movies, recalls the military act of photo-(and cine-)reconnaissance of a territory. The prototype is the visit to the centre of Berlin in a camera car in *Und über uns der Himmel* (*And the Sky above Us*, Josef von Báky 1947). Travelling in the car are a widow, an ex-entrepreneur and his son, back from the war with a highly symbolic neurosis: temporary blindness. Entering the city, they see rubble in subjective shot, framed by the edge of the windscreen. The frame creates distance, but the rubble seems too close and the car is moving fast; the buildings are reduced to a wrinkled mineral surface, full of holes, craters, cracks (fig. 4). The blind man asks: "Where are we now?" and the widow answers: "Potsdamerstrasse." At that point the rubble disappears, the street comes to life, bustling, congested and joyful. The memory of the city before the war takes the place of an unbearable present, to which they are blind even when their eyes can see.

pp. 129-184.

[31] See Maurizio Guerri, *Sguardo fotografico e seconda coscienza. Note a margine del saggio sul dolore di Jünger*, in Sandro Gorgone, Gabriele Guerra, (eds.), *L'eco delle immagini e il dominio della forma. Ernst e Friedrich Georg Jünger e la* visual culture, Mimesis, Milano 2014, pp. 165-177.

[32] From the review of a catalogue on Sander: Winfried Ranke (ed.), *Auguste Sander, die Zerstörung Kölns. Fotografien 1945-1946*, Mosel, München 1985. Quoted in Hermann Glaser, "Images of Two German Post-War States," in Klaus Honnef, Rolf Sachsse, Karin Thomas (eds.), *German Photography 1870-1970: Power of a Medium*, Dumont, Köln 1997, p. 120.

Fig. 4 – *Und über uns der Himmel* (*And the Sky Above Us*, Josef von Baky 1947).

In *Irgendwo in Berlin* (*Somewhere in Berlin*, Gerhard Lamprecht 1946), the rubble represents a stone labyrinth corresponding to the overturning of the aerial view of the city. The opening credits run over a map of central Berlin, an elementary view from above, but when the film starts the camera pans and tilts down a church steeple landing in an unnamed corner surrounded by gigantic ruins. Chasing a thief, from one path to another through the debris, we lose our bearings. We are on the surface of the moon, as against the precision of the map at the beginning. We are in a wholly uninhabitable outer space that is nevertheless capable of transforming itself into anything at all, here just as in other movies: a terrace on which to sunbathe (*Und über uns der Himmel*), a workstation such as the crater from which the girl from the hotel directs the bulldozer in *Zwischen Gestern und Morgen* (*Between Yesterday and Tomorrow*, Harald Braun, 1947), an immense playground, as in *Irgendwo in Berlin*. Here children play at war around the symbolic centre of the movie: the imposing saw-toothed remains of a building pitching jaggedly down to the ground, which will be the theatre of the key event of the story. For fun or for a dare, a boy climbs to the top, but on reaching the highest point, he loses his balance and falls down. Before the tragedy, a brick dislodges and slides away: we watch it crashing down, framed from above; in this elaborately-shot scene, the dust raised by the brick appears like a cloud looming over an area that seems much further away than it really is, and whose shape is too geometric and regular (fig. 5): this is almost an aerial shot, a photo-reconnaissance… we already know that something else will fall down there.

This sudden resurfacing of the aerial visual scheme is thus added to its more imprecise and generic presence in the other sequences we have described, where,

as we said, an *ornamental* and *anesthetized* gaze is adopted, even if the optical point of view on the rubble is not strictly from above.

In postwar German cinema and photography, therefore, the form of trauma survives without fully expressing itself and, as a visual matrix, it reactivates the memory of being seen from above, of being *X-rayed* and "transcribed" (fig. 6). This memory condenses all the conflictual dimensions of German trauma.

Fig. 5 – *Irgendwo in Berlin* (*Somewhere in Berlin*, Gerhard Lamprecht 1946).

Fig. 6 – *Diesel Motor Works*, Berlin August 6, 1944.

At a first level, the feeling of being seen from above, of being towered-over and dominated, awakens the feeling of being defeated by way of a sort of visual metaphor. At a second level, the aerial view rekindles the violent conflict of self-representation experienced by Germany at the end of the war: indeed this is not only a perspective imposed upon Nazi Germany in the last years of the war, but also a perspective inflicted by the Nazis on others at the beginning of the conflict. *Feuertaufe* (Hans Bertram, 1940) is a German propaganda documentary shot live and entirely from the aerial point of view by the pilots of the Luftwaffe during the attack on Poland; shortly afterwards, it was screened in Berlin. So, in German eyes there were also the images of an abstract Warsaw reduced to smoke and ashes, or the images of London devastated after seventy-six consecutive nights of the 'Blitz.' At a third and final level, the aerial view represents also a celebration of victory on the part of the Allied forces. In 1945, the Americans introduced the ambiguous genre of the *tourist sight*, a kind of documentary where the act of flying over the ruins of the German cities demonstrates on one hand compassion for the appalling conditions of the German populace, but on the other hand tries to turn the harsh reality into a spectacular panorama. With this gesture, they certified the damage inflicted and the appropriation of the territory; this meaning is clear in *Ein Tag im Juli* (*A Day in July*, 1945), a German production but with an American crew; here a long aerial sequence shows every scar inflicted on Berlin: the ruins of Kurfürstendamm, Unter den Linden, and the Brandenburger Tör. A few years later, the same gesture will not only attest the defeat of the enemy, but it will also "correct" his imagery: the aerial view of destroyed Berlin, coming into view through the clouds while the Americans come into land in *A Foreign Affair* (Billy Wilder, 1948), re-writes precisely the first sequence of *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*, Leni Riefensthal, 1935), in which, instead, the Nazi flags on the spires of Nuremberg appeared from behind the clouds.

The image of the city seen from above and reduced to geometrical forms, or at ground level after the bombing, when those abstractions have become reality, or rather, have become *lasting remains*, is so powerfully traumatic that it returns even after many decades. The view of Berlin in flames re-emerges at the climax of the first modern German horror film: *Rammbock* (Marvin Kren, 2010), significantly subtitled *Berlin Undead* and referenced by the tagline "Germany is dead." It is the story of a virus that transforms the inhabitants of the city into zombies, and forces them to hide in their homes or in the cellars thus recalling the state of emergency during the Allied bombing. At every stage the city is invisible, even though the radio describes what is happening in the streets; but at the end, when the tragedy reaches its culmination, the protagonist climbs onto the roof of a building so as to let us see the true horrific image: Berlin in flames, covered in smoke and blazing fires.

Preserving Memory or Fabricating the Past? How Films Constitute Cinematic Archives of the Holocaust

Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Abstract

The article discusses the filmic representation of the Holocaust within the framework of the archive. To what extent adopt films archival techniques and operations or constitute something like 'cinematic archives' of the Holocaust? Films can assemble footage from the archive and bring it in a specific order but they can also use it as model for cinematic recreations. Thus, the preservation of visual and non-visual traces in feature films is always transformative and sometimes even distorting. By repeating and circulating 'images of images' such films turn visual heritage into a pattern of visual icons and create a stock of usable imagery, which in reverse also leaves other memories and remnants to forgetting. Such technique of repetition is also the basis for the transtextual character of cinematic archives, which also interconnects the storage (the assembling of images) with the register (the references towards earlier cinematic representations). To describe the logic, operations and the impact of cinematic archives of the Holocaust the article reviews such films as *Schindler's List*, *X-Men*, *The Pianist* and *Everything Is Illuminated*, and discusses theoretical approaches by Gérard Genette and Jacques Derrida.

Once French filmmaker Claude Lanzmann noted that Steven Spielberg's attempt to make *Schindler's List* (USA 1993) meant in fact to fabricate archives.[1] With this statement Lanzmann indicated a crucial aspect of Spielberg's depiction of German businessman Oskar Schindler's evolution from a profiteer of anti-Jewish measures to a rescuer and caring friend of 'his' Jews. Actually *Schindler's List* constituted new archives on several levels and became a reservoir for imagining the Holocaust. On the one hand the film literally constituted a new archive and became the cornerstone of Spielberg's Shoah Foundation Institute and its unique collection of survivor's testimonies. On the other hand *Schindler's List* reused and created iconic images and stereotypical figurations to visualize

[1] Claude Lanzmann, *Ihr sollt nicht weinen. Einspruch gegen Schindlers Liste*, in Christoph Weiss (ed.), *"Der gute Deutsche." Dokumente zur Diskussion um Steven Spielbergs Schindlers Liste in Deutschland*, Rohrig Universitätsverlag, St. Imbert 1995, pp. 173-178, p. 175.

the Holocaust and offered certain familiar patterns to construct a narrative that eliminated its unease and disturbing challenges. Thus the film most influentially transformed the history of the Holocaust from an experience of destruction and death into a story of rescue and survival and offered certain patterns and formulas as well as iconic depictions for its future representation.[2]

According to Lawrence Baron films and stories about the Holocaust are drawing "on a rich source of previous movie plotlines and images,"[3] hence the well-known images of Nazism and the Holocaust are repeatedly represented in the media, in film and in television. This ongoing repetition creates a situation in which the circulating images also become a basic part of our mediated memory.[4] Thus media and memory can linked on several levels. Through the notion of post-memory Marianne Hirsch has emphasized the fact that photographs and other visual evidence of the Holocaust are blended into personal family stories. Within this "*structure* of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience" children of survivors refer to those images to illustrate experiences that their parents did not have communicated.[5] Hirsch and others also proved that the technique of post-memory became a striking device within the representation of the Holocaust, but also of other atrocities.[6] Furthermore relying on Pierre Nora's work on places of memory Alison Landsberg introduced the concept of 'prosthetic memory,' interpreting cinema as a technical tool to create sensual access to the past.[7] Thomas Elsaesser then pointed towards the "parapractic logic of Holocaust memory"[8] and related it to the "parapractic poetics"[9] of Holocaust cinema. I myself tired elsewhere to investigate particular narrative and stylistic operations of using and reusing iconic images and narrative patterns to visualize the Holocaust in feature films.[10]

[2] This tendency was already regarded and broadly discussed when the film was released. See: Miriam Hansen, "*Schindler's List* is not *Shoah*: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism and Public Memory," in *Critical Inquiry*, no. 22, Winter 1996, pp. 292-312; Lynn Rapaport, "Hollywood's Holocaust: *Schindler's List* and the Construction of Memory," in *Film & History*, no. 1, May 2002, pp. 55-65.

[3] Lawrence Baron, *Projecting the Holocaust into the Present: The Changing Focus of Contemporary Holocaust Cinema*, Lanham Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham 2005, p. 240.

[4] Anton Kaes, *History and Film: Public Memory in the Age of Electronic Dissemination*, in Bruce A. Murray, Christopher J. Wickham (eds.), *Framing the Past: The Historiography of German Cinema and Television*, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale 1992, pp. 308-323, p. 309.

[5] Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," in *Poetics Today,* no. 1, Spring 2008, p. 106.

[6] *Ibidem*. Elke Heckner, *Whose Trauma Is It? Identification and Secondary Witnessing in the Age of Postmemory*, in David Bathrick, Brad Prager, Michael Richardson (eds.), *Visualizing the Holocaust: Documents, Aesthetics, Memory*, Camden House, Rochester 2008, pp. 62-85.

[7] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York 2004.

[8] Thomas Elsaesser, *German Cinema: Terror and Trauma: Cultural Memory since 1945*, Routledge, London-New York 2014, p. 63.

[9] *Ivi*, p. 59.

[10] Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, *Geschichtsbilder im medialen Gedächtnis. Filmische Narrationen des Holocaust*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2011.

Those concepts proved increasingly helpful to review the cinematic depictions of the past in relation to the personal and inter-personal struggles of commemorating the Holocaust. Departing from approaches to understand the interconnection of 'cultural memory' and 'communicative memory'[11] those concepts emphasized the particular role media plays in this construction and transmission of 'Holocaust memory.'

In the following paper I will discuss the filmic representation of the Holocaust within a different framework: the logic of the archive. To what extend adopt films about the Holocaust archival techniques and operations or constitute something like 'cinematic archives' of the Holocaust? This slight change of perspective, compared to the memory-related discussion of Holocaust films, also departs from the concept of cultural and communicative memory and its distinction into 'Speichergedächtnis' (stored memory) and 'Funktionsgedächtnis' (functional memory).[12]

> *While the functional memory fulfills such important tasks as identity construction or the legitimization of an existing societal form, the stored memory is no less important. It serves as a 'reservoir for future functional memories,' 'as a resource for the renewal of cultural knowledge' […].*[13]

Films seem to interrelate both aspects. They constitute particular archives for imagining the past and recreate what was not recorded or preserved (stored memory), and they embed those images within a particular narrative (functional memory). In the following I want to discuss how far those films follow or even constitute a particular logic of cinematic archives. Besides the question how films use and reuse images from earlier films I am particularly interested in reviewing the impact of transtextual aesthetics, which might also provide a specific access to this 'stock' of images and patterns similar to the index of an archive.

The logic of cinematic archives

A film can adopt historic footage and assemble it in a specific order but it can also use archival material as model for cinematic recreations. While documentary films mostly use and reuse footage from public and private archives to illustrate the past feature films about the Holocaust also fill the gaps of missing images through imagination and re-enactments and thus provide 'new' images

[11] Jan Assmann, *Communicative and Cultural Memory*, in Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, De Gruyter, Berlin-New York 2008, pp. 109-118.
[12] Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann, *Das Gestern im Heute. Medien und soziales Gedächtnis*, in Klaus Merten et al. (eds.), *Die Wirklichkeit der Medien. Eine Einführung in die Kommunikationswissenschaften*, Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen 1994, pp. 114-140, p. 122-123.
[13] Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke-New York 2011, p. 36.

of the past. While documentary films mostly refer to witnesses whose words are supposed to 'revive' the past in the imagination of the spectators feature films can bring into shape non-visual evidence such as testimonies and thus create definitive images out of the imagination of the listeners or readers. Thus the preservation of visual and non-visual traces in feature films is always transformative and sometimes even distorting. By repeating and circulating 'images of images' such films turn visual heritage into a pattern of visual icons and create a stock of usable imagery, which in reverse also leaves other memories and remnants to forgetting.[14] Thus such cinematic archives of the Holocaust assemble images that circulate in popular culture and are especially mediated through films and television.

Cinematic archives occupy an ephemeral and virtual place, thus different from the 'archive film,' which is stored in a physical (film) archive. Film itself serves as storage room for the traces of the past. But while the film compilation out of archive footage at least in part makes visible the 'original material' and assembles the loose findings from the archives in a certain order feature films provide a different access towards the visual remnants of the past. They use the power of imagination to fill the gaps between the preserved images and often fabricate the content of a new (imaginary) archive. Furthermore they are sometimes pretend to gather definite images of the past ('as it really was') although these recreations are nevertheless fragmentary, unstable and in permanent transition.

How far then do feature films about the Holocaust constitute cinematic archives at all, especially when an archive, in the words of Jacques Derrida, has to "be deposited somewhere, on a stable substrate, and at the disposition of a legitimate hermeneutic authority."[15] One might argue that film could be seen as a 'stable substrate' but what about the place and the 'hermeneutic authority' that are mentioned. While the specific mobility and accessibility of film, in various media and at various places in different times, is part of the distinct logic of cinematic archives the 'hermeneutic authority' might be a specific dispositive, an alignment constituted by the film, its spectators and the social and political discourses that are framing it. Furthermore Derrida's notion of "consignation" might be of help. Next to the "functions of unification, of identification, of classification" consignation does not only mean "the act of assigning residence or of entrusting so as to put into reserve (to consign, to deposit), in a place and on a substrate, but here the act of *con*signing through *gathering together signs*."[16] The latter is of specific importance as cinematic archives can be mainly seen as doing such "gathering together signs," which they assemble within a specific order (or narrative) of the past:

[14] Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "Migrating Images: Iconic Images of the Holocaust and the Representation of War in Popular Film," in *Shofar*, no. 4, Summer 2010, pp. 86-103, p. 90.
[15] Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'archive*, Ed. Galilée, Paris 1995 (Eng. ed. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 1996, p. 3).
[16] *Ibidem*.

> Consignation *aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration. In an archive, there should not be any absolute dissociation, any heterogeneity or secret which could separate (*secernere*), or partition, in an absolute manner.*[17]

Similarly the cinematic archives of the Holocaust tend towards visibility, closeness and repetition, which Derrida marks as a fundamental technique of the archive.[18] Such technique of repetition is also the basis for the transtextual character of the cinematic archives, which also interconnects the storage (the assembling of images) with the register (the references towards earlier cinematic representations).

Departing from these assumptions two aspects that constitute the archive, the 'assembling mode' and the 'indexing mode,' are intertwined. I suppose that this is a very important notion of what I call cinematic archives. But, as Derrida highlights, there is "[n]o archive without outside,"[19] and that refers also to the destabilizing force of transtextuality. By adding a third mode – the tracing mode – I therefore also want to include those examples that implicitly or explicitly uncover their affinity to the archive.

The transtextual character of cinematic archives

In retrospective *Schindler's List* can be seen as one of the most influential attempts to approach the Holocaust through a specific composition of recreating, repeating and superposing images and elements from earlier films and photographic evidence. Thus Daniel R. Schwarz emphasized that "Spielberg's Holocaust images are generic crystallizing images borrowed from prior texts and films that become a reservoir of intertextual resources. In a way, Spielberg's film depends on evoking memories from our past knowledge of Holocaust texts […]."[20] In the following I want to illustrate the operations of cinematic archives by investigating the transtextual techniques within the film's composition that help to constitute a visual archive that superposes but also preserves earlier cinematic representations of the historic events. Thus we should take a closer look on the palimpsest character of such transtextual configuration of cinematic archives.

The French literary theorist Gérard Genette emphasizes that a palimpsest is characterized by transtextual operations, which relate a particular text (or in our case: film) in a manifest or secret way to another.[21] He describes five subtypes of transtextuality, which are useful to analyze the films that are discussed here. Intertextuality, the most common type, indicates the coexistence of two or more

[17] *Ibidem*.
[18] *Ivi*, p. 11.
[19] *Ibidem*.
[20] Daniel R. Schwarz, *Imagining the Holocaust*, St. Martins Griffin Press, New York 1999, p. 229.
[21] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes,* Le Seuil, Paris 1982, p. 9.

texts in another text, which constitutes an interchange of meanings and effects. The main techniques of intertextuality would be quotation and allusion.[22]

In *Schindler's List* we find intertextual allusion in the scenes from the evacuation of the Krakow ghetto, which mark a turning point in the transformation of the protagonist.[23] In this sequence recreations of historic images are embedded, such as of a historic photograph picturing suitcases and luggage scattered on a street after the brutal evacuation. Also the representation of camp Plaszow, to which the inhabitants of the ghetto were then transferred, is referring to well-known historic photographs. A famous image that depicts its topography from a bird's eye perspective serves, for example, as a warrant for the authentic reconstruction of the place. But *Schindler's List* puts the visual evidence in different order by changing its original intention, the documentation of the camp's efficient and orderly operation, to illustrate the commandant's almighty controlling gaze.

Besides such references to real time events Spielberg also imparts recreations of well-known iconic images that already became an integral part of the Holocaust's visual heritage. This includes, for example, the shots of female prisoners standing behind barbed wire, which is clearly based on a famous picture taken by American photographer Margret Bourke-White after the liberation of Buchenwald that is showing the former prisoners standing at the camp's fence.[24] By placing such recreations at the cornerstones of its narrative the film, seen under the aspect of the cinematic archive, makes it also possible to fill the gaps in-between those iconic images. For example the recreated photographs of abandoned suitcases during the evacuation of the Krakow ghetto frame the cinematic imagination of the events including point-of-view shots from the perspective of the Jewish inhabitants. Thus the fabrication of a cinematic archive encompasses the inclusion of recreated archive footage and photographs as well as the imaginary reconstruction of the events from which no images were preserved.

Within the other types mentioned by Genette, para-, archi-, and metatextuality, the concept of hypertextuality is of particular interest for our case. Hypertextuality describes the relation between a preceding hypotext and a subsequent hypertext, which superposes, modifies and transforms the former.

Schindler's List, seen as a hypertext, refers for instance to the Polish feature *Ostatni etap* (*The Last Stop,* Poland 1947) by former Auschwitz prisoner Wanda Jakubowska as a hypotextual film.[25] This film was already being planed

[22] *Ivi*, p. 10.

[23] Miriam Hansen has discussed this particular sequence in detail mainly focusing on its sound/image relation, but she did not mention its intertextual references to archive footage. See: Id., "*Schindler's List* is not *Shoah*: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism and Public Memory," cit., p. 304-305.

[24] Marianne Hirsch also refers to this motive in context of her studies on post-memory and shows for example how Art Spiegelman is using this picture to fill the gaps of his own 'family album,' see: Id., "The Generation of Postmemory," cit., p. 113.

[25] Stuart Liebman, "Pages from the Past: Wanda Jakubowska's *The Last Stop (Ostatni Etap)*," in

when Jakubowska was liberated from Ravensbrück concentration camp and shot shortly after on location in Auschwitz. It was based on her own memories from everyday life in the camp, and several of her fellow comrades participated in the filming. *Schindler's List* preserves Jakubowska's film for the future but at the same time absorbs it into its narrative what can foremost be seen in the depiction of the camps. In *Schindler's List* typical situations from *The Last Stop* are embedded, such as the wet and muddy ground, roll call scenes, yelling during raids and the bleak atmosphere.[26]

But *Schindler's List* does not only reuse elements from feature films. During the preparation Spielberg was researching particularly documentary films as source for the visual representation.[27] Thus obviously the film also restages a central sequence from Alain Resnais' *Nuit et Brouillard* (*Night and Fog*, France 1955) in which numerous suitcases, shoes, eyeglasses and other ownerless belongings are recorded by a tracking camera. What is particular striking in this insertion of the recreated sequence is that already *Night and Fog* had constituted an archive by collecting recently unseen and even unknown footage from different archives.[28]

Also the third hypotext, Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, constituted a new archive. Although Lanzmann avoided including any iconic and emblematic archive footage in his documentary film its collection of testimonies provides new access to the past and, as Thomas Elsaesser has emphasized, had already created "a different kind of archive."[29] By recreating testimonies from *Shoah* and imposing them into the narrative of his film Spielberg claims a definitely pictured past. This becomes obvious in a central sequence in *Schindler's List*, in which a group of women from Schindler's factory is accidentally transported to Auschwitz. In this sequence Spielberg shows three times and from different perspectives a young Polish boy indicating with a gesture of his hand the nearby death awaiting the deportees. This gesture is directly borrowed from *Shoah*. Thus the crystallized image in *Schindler's List* inverts Lanzmann's testimonial approach.

Thus the specificity of cinematic archives is that in contrast to other archival operations they are assembling the material within a new narrative order that is already providing a certain way of reading. Besides that they hide the origin of the collected material. It is already stored in a transformed, sometimes even distorted manner. Thus although providing the inventory for visual historical consciousness of popular culture such films constitute a kind of fabricated archives that are supposed to fill the gaps of the existing historical archives and replace its missing images.

East European Performance: Drama, Theatre, Film, no. 3, Fall 1996, pp. 56-63.

[26] Thomas Elsaesser, *German Cinema*, cit., p. 74.

[27] Hellmuth Karasek, "Die ganze Wahrheit schwarz auf Weiß. Regisseur Steven Spielberg über seinen Film *Schindlers Liste*," in *Der Spiegel*, February 21, 1994, pp. 183-186, p. 184.

[28] Sylvie Lindeperg, Nuit et Brouillard*: Un film dans l'histoire*, Edition Odile Jacob, Paris 2007. *Night and Fog* even includes two sequences from *The Last Stop* and matches them with documentary footage from the camps.

[29] Thomas Elsaesser, *German Cinema*, cit., p. 77.

The stock of cinematic archives

To describe the impact of such cinematic archives of the Holocaust the opening sequence of *X-Men* (USA 2000) deserves a closer look. This first part of a series about mutants with supernatural capabilities who are increasingly persecuted by their fellow 'normal' humans surprisingly starts somewhere in Poland in 1944. We witness the arrival and selection of Jewish prisoners in a camp. By using well known iconic images, metonymic motifs and stereotypical figurations the opening establishes the historic setting within minutes because the audience immediately knows how to understand these visual and narrative cues.

It starts with a particular setting and atmosphere. We picture muddy ground and rainy weather, a motif that constantly reappears in Holocaust movies.[30] The dull and gloomy mood is intended to enhance the impression of a strange and threatening place. Accordingly the following shot depicts a uniformed guard with a rifle that probably not by accident recalls a historic photograph taken at Camp Sachsenhausen from the overlooking perspective of a watchtower.

The next shot pictures a line of walking people on a gangway in-between barbered wire, another well-known motif that was already part of the film footage, which Polish and Soviet camera men shot quickly after the liberation in Majdanek and Auschwitz. It is followed by a series includes close ups of individual faces. First we see a man with a hat. Attached to his coat is the 'Yellow Star,' another iconic sign of the Holocaust. Then the camera pans towards a young boy and a woman. Mother and child are a prototypical figuration in films about the Holocaust as well as the separation of a Jewish family, which established already the main narrative conflict of the television series *Holocaust* (USA 1979).[31]

These shots are succeeded by a series of views that are explicitly indicated as point-of-view-shots of the boy. A close up of his face marks the following depictions of forced laborers in prisoners' clothes with tattooed numbers on the one hand as subjective perspective and on the other accentuates those images as iconic. The following tumultuous scenes include further familiar situations and figurations: the selection, the confrontation of prisoners and guarding soldiers, barking dogs, barbed wire. Within only a few minutes nearly the whole set of Holocaust images are triggered by relying on condensed information clusters and visual stereotypes.[32] Within the genre of an action film the historic event is invoked as a cinematic stereotype that – in the words of Lawrence Baron – "establishes more substantial connections to the Holocaust to clarify the motivations of its leading villain and draw parallels between it and contemporary prejudices."[33]

[30] Hanno Loewy, *Fiktion und Mimesis: Holocaust and Genre in Film*, in Margrit Frölich, Hanno Loewy, Heinz Steinert (eds.), *Lachen über Hitler – Auschwitz Gelächter*, Edition Text + Kritik, Munich 2003, pp. 37-64, p. 38.
[31] Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, *Geschichtsbilder im medialen Gedächtnis. Filmische Narrationen des Holocaust*, cit., p. 294.
[32] Anton Kaes, *History and Film: Public Memory in the Age of Electronic Dissemination*, cit., p. 315.
[33] Lawrence Baron, *Projecting the Holocaust into the Present: The Changing Focus of Contemporary*

Finally in a significant twist the ending of the opening sequence superimposes an emblematic image, the familiar depiction of the entrance gate of Auschwitz, with a fantastic substitute. Shaped by the supernatural power of the mutant the cross fading of this visual icon enables a change of perspectives: from historical reconstruction towards the fictional mode of popular culture. Only now also the 'outside' of the archive – the imaginary power of cinema – is addressed and we witness the destabilizing force of the transtextual structure of the cinematic archives.

Interestingly *X-Men* furthermore did not only rely on the visual material that was provided by earlier films dealing with the period of the Holocaust such as *Schindler's List*. The opening sequence of the first part became also a new intratextual archive on which the succeeding prequel *X-Men: First Class* (USA 2011) could exclusively rely.[34] This episode depicts the back-story of Magneto and opened with the very same arrangement of images like the first part. Shot by shot the prequel recreated the opening sequence of its predecessor from 2001 and thus used it as an archive for visualizing Magneto's trauma. Through this reference both films are also interconnected and *X-Men: First Class* is thus indexed as *X-Men*'s missing link.

The recording gaze of the cinematic archives

But although such cinematic archives are trans- and intratextually porous they nevertheless seem to correspond what Derrida addresses as the problem of the "concept of the archive": "To have a concept at one's disposal, to have assurances with regard to it, is to presuppose a closed heritage and the guarantee sealed, in some sense, by that heritage."[35] Thus turning back to the question of consignation we should not address the homogenous character of the archive but also the assembling of disparate material. This becomes notably challenging in case of cinematic archives of atrocities, because: "Without this evil, which is also archive fever, the desire and the disorder of the archive, there would be neither assignation nor consignation."[36]

The Pianist (UK, Poland, Germany 2002) by Polish-Jewish director Roman Polanski, who himself survived the Holocaust as a child, can be seen as such an archive of assignation due to its specific palimpsest character of assembling dif-

Holocaust Cinema, cit., p. 259. Magneto, the young boy Eric Lehnsherr in the opening sequence, represents those mutants who oppose the forced assimilation to 'normal' humans and insist on their difference and particularity. As suggested by the film's opening sequence Magneto's attitude is shaped by his family's separation and his camp experience.

[34] Although not explicitly relying on Holocaust references the latest prequel *X-Men: Days of Future Past* (2014) went even further by taking the *X-Men* films literally as archival source and directly cited images and sequences from its predecessors.

[35] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, cit., p. 33.

[36] *Ivi*, p. 81.

ferent references and sources. Only after he came across the testimony of Polish-Jewish pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman did Polanski find an adequate basis for such his film. Szpilman, who survived German occupation in the Warsaw ghetto and in hiding, wrote down his experiences immediately after the war and used for his testimony a very documentary and sober style. This style also affected Polanski's cinematic adaptation in *The Pianist*. Thus he focusses very much on presenting the events through the protagonist's eyes and avoids overdramatization.

Although Polanski abstains from blending any archive footage or historic photographs into the story line he allusively refers to those well-known images that the Nazis depicted in the Ghetto during spring 1942 in order to produce an anti-Semitic propaganda film. Some of these recreations illustrate the topography of the ghetto and the setting of the film; others present iconic places that are recalled from historic pictures such as the ghetto wall or the significant pedestrian's bridge that connected the two parts of the ghetto.

In his film Polanski tries to counter the ambiguity of these images by reversing their origin and imparting a more emphatic gaze that senses suffering and humiliation. Although therefore hiding the perpetrator's gaze in its recreations the film nevertheless makes visible the filming perpetrators and hints towards the fact that the ghetto was a place where the Germans created a reality according to their anti-Semitic phantasm. Thus *The Pianist* creates a cinematic archive from the visible memory of the ghetto by placing iconic perpetrator footage into a different order and reframes their original perspective.

But even more important is that Polanski changes the source of the witnessing gaze from the perpetrator's camera to his Jewish protagonist who is witnessing life in the ghetto, during the uprising and in wartime Warsaw. Thus the audience sees the events through the eyes of a witnessing victim. The visualization of this act of witnessing constitutes the dominant perspective of *The Pianist* and shapes its narrative form. Through this inversion Polanski thwarts the propagandistic intention of the original images and replaces it with a new look onto the well-known remnants of the past. Through this change of perspectives the film is able to detach oneself from the patterns that were inscribed in the original footage.

This can be demonstrated regarding the highly emotional sequence, in which Szpilman's family is deported from the ghetto. Because Szpilman was safeguarded by a Jewish policeman and is standing behind the barrier watching the deportation he literally changed sides. What he witnesses are indeed reenactments of popular icons of the Holocaust – film fragments that were supposedly shot at the boarding of a deportation train near Lublin, which appear in several documentary films about the Holocaust.[37]

Besides Szpilman's memories and the visual remnants of the Warsaw ghetto *The Pianist* adapts also a third source because Polanski sneaks into the film el-

[37] One of the first films that presented this material was *Night and Fog*. Resnais combined the footage from Poland showing an old man with two children at a platform and people who are helping others to enter the cattle cars with the famous archive film from the Dutch transit camp in Westerbork.

ements from his own memories of the time when he was in the Krakow ghetto and in hiding. Although he steps back behind Szpilman as main witness of the film's events Polanski creates a certain texture of memories and visible evidence from different sources.[38]

Such a symbolic moment, whose representation is shaped by the director's personal memory, is again the highly emotional deportation sequence. Introduced by the last gathering of the family this sequence visualizes the final separation of Szpilman and his relatives. But Szpilman's wondrous rescue is partly based on Polanski's own experiences. As a boy he was able to escape from the ghetto's collecting point with the help of a Polish policeman who ordered them after starting to run away that they should move slowly.[39] Polanski included this advice into the story line of his film.

Thus Polanski assembled with *The Pianist* a multilayered archive from different sources that preserved their traces and transformed them into a film. Through imparting these elements from the original testimony, his personal memories and the perpetrators' footage into a narrative that is structured by the visibility of witnessing, Polanski is on the one hand able to invert and adopt diverse sources. On the other hand he indirectly also provides a register to index and relate the traces to other archives.[40] That way the sources – Szpilman's testimony, the historic photographs and films as well as Polanski's personal memories – assemble and assign a specific picture from the past. In contrast to Spielberg's attempt of presupposing a 'closed heritage' and thus proclaiming a final archive, which overwrites its sources, *The Pianist* preserves, revitalizes and usurps diverse remnants of the past to make them accessible in the present. Therefore the film can be seen itself as a palimpsest of remembrance that opens access to engage the leftovers of the past.

The tracing mode of cinematic archives

As seen, transtextual operations and the recreation of iconic images are an important element of such palimpsest memories. This is also related to another operational mode of the archive, the transmission of transgenerational heritage. In his discussion of the Freudian dimension of the archive Derrida also addresses these "archival problems of oral narrative and public property, of mnemic traces,

[38] Kobi Kabalek, *Unheroic Heroes: Re-Viewing Roman Polanski's* The Pianist *(2002) in Germany and Israel*, in Vera Apfelthaler, Julia B. Köhne (eds.), *Gendered Memories: Transgressions in German and Israeli Film and Theater*, Turia + Kant, Vienna 2007, pp. 61-82, p. 63.

[39] Roman Polanski, *Roman Polanski von Roman Polanski*, Scherz Verlag, Munich-Vienna 1984, p. 15.

[40] A significant extension of Polanski's cinematic archive of the heritage from the Warsaw ghetto was for example provided by Yael Hersonski's documentary film *Geheimsache Ghettofilm* (*A Film Unfinished*, Israel-Germany 2010), which reviews and investigates the propaganda film from the ghetto.

of archaic and transgenerational heritage, and of everything that can happen to an 'impression' in these at once 'topic' (*topisch*) and 'genetic' (*genetisch*) processes."[41]

The last version of a cinematic archive combines the transgenerational dimension with the topic one. Furthermore it also proves the "everything that can happen" and thus emphasizes cinema's potential to create a different affective relation to the past by turning archiving and preservation into particular cinematic operations and a particular tracing mode of searching for traces in the present rather than reconstructing the past. In contrast to *Schindler's List* and *The Pianist* Liev Schreiber's *Everything Is Illuminated* (USA 2005) is situated in the present and follows the narrative of a journey. That changes the perspective from reconstructing the past to accessing it through memory with the help of leftovers and remnants that still remain. Schreiber's film is based on the successful novel with the same title by Jonathan Safran Foer but mostly refers to the basic plot of its pretext, the story *A Very Rigid Search*, which Foer had published in the *New Yorker* in 2001. This story was not only the nucleus of the later novel but also the outcome of a research trip without any result:

> *I found nothing but nothing, and in that nothing — a landscape of completely realized absence — nothing was to be found. […] I didn't know what questions to ask, or whom to ask, or the necessary names of people, places, and things. The nothing came as much from me as from what I encountered.*[42]

Thus Schreiber's film itself is already a multiple hypertext not only referring to its paratext, the novel, but also to its hidden pretext as a hypotext. The practices of the archive, collecting and storing, overlaying and superimposing, were already at work within the production process and thus shaped the film's composition. At the same time the experience of a quest without a result thwarts the idea of the complete archive, which would be able to preserve the past *in extenso*. While the protagonist of the film, Foer's own alter ego, represents the desire of collecting everything to avoid forgetting, the film itself presents the process of searching as precondition for imagining the past and refilling its gaps – not with definite images but with present experiences.

Therefore the film itself provides a cinematic map for the topography of an imaginary archive that even brings together different geographic spaces. This concept is already visualized in the opening sequence, which juxtaposes the material remnants of the past, from the collection of protagonist Jonathan Foer, with a map of the Ukraine and the voice over of the other protagonist, the Ukrainian tour guide Alexander, who states that he had thought that the past should be buried until he had met Jonathan.[43] From here on both characters represent two

[41] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, cit., p. 34.
[42] "A Conversation with Jonathan Safran Foer," in *Press Release* Everything Is Illuminated, http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/booksellers/press_release/pdf/everything_foer.pdf, p. 4, last visit 16 June 2014.
[43] Eric A. Goldman, *The American Jewish Story through Cinema*, University of Texas Press, Austin

dimensions of the archive, the archivist and collector Foer, and the historian and narrator Alexander. The topographic space of this archive is also split, not only geographically between the United States and the Ukraine, but also spatially between the vertical plain 'screen' of Foer's collection of manifold items that are stored in plastic bags and fixed on his room's wall on the one side and the horizontal deep space of the Ukrainian landscape that functions as a stage, on which the memories of the past evolve. The third spatial model of the archive is the small house in the midst of a field full with sunflowers, in which Lista, the last survivor of the Shtetl Trachimbrod lives, which Foer, Alexander and his grouchy grandfather are searching for. The walls of this house are filled with boxes full of remnants from the past, the equivalent to Jonathan's plastic bags at the wall. But while the latter recalls much more the model of a museum, which exhibits such leftovers and thus creates a particular narrative with a particular orderly sense, Lista's boxes in contrast are foremost preserving a lost world for an indefinite future. Thus Lista represents the archivist's function as a "keeper of memory."[44] She even enables access though her personal memories that extend the material remnants such as to a series of photographs, which she has taken from one of the boxes with the inscription "In Case." The fourth archival space is the deserted space of the former Shtetl, which was destroyed by the Germans who also killed the local Jewish population among them Augustine, Jonathan's grandfather's former wife. This place doesn't reveal anything. It represents the archive as a voided grave that finally buried the memory of those who lived and perished here. But the film takes this deserted place, the 'empty screen,' as a starting point for a cinematic evocation of memories through words and imagination. While Lista serves as a medium that reveals the past through narration Alexander's grandfather admits his longtime suppressed memories of these traumatic events, which he himself survived just by chance and only by leaving behind every remnant of his own Jewish past and identity. His memories are embedded into the film as imaginary flashbacks based on iconic signs and images such as the 'Yellow Star' or prototypical situations such as mass executions. But by assembling these floating memories likewise a puzzle little by little the film does not only express the challenges of such a fabrication of a suppressed and traumatic past and its fragmentary and palimpsest structure it also clearly marks it as an encounter between past and present and therefore as an archival operation. Thus the task of the film's journey is not so much the revelation of the past. It is much more the conscious fabrication of memory as a living ground for the future:

> *Jonathan and Alexander, Third Generation, both grandchildren of Trachimbrod, who live on opposite sides of an ocean, now share a common memory, their story, their Haggadah to be shared with their offspring.*[45]

2013, p. 188.
[44] *Ivi*, p. 167.
[45] *Ivi*, p. 200.

The narrative of the search thus is explicitly directed towards accessing the archive from an unrecoverable past. But this archive would not only be composed from documents and authentic material leftovers but also, as Eric A. Goldman's reference towards the Jewish Haggadah that retells the story of the Exodus from Egypt indicates, from story-telling and imagination.

Conclusion: the quest for the (future) archive

In this manner cinematic archives do not only lock the past in crystalized images and fabricate archives. Rather they can also create a vivid experience of the challenging impact of the past for our present life. Thus the archive is – as also Derrida emphasizes – always directed to the future:

> *It is not the question of a concept dealing with the past that might already be at our disposal or not at our disposal, an archivable concept of the archive. It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow.*[46]

All examples in this paper in a more or less explicit way implied this orientation towards the future. While Polanski assembled different sources to preserve a particular picture of the destruction of Warsaw and the Warsaw ghetto that culminated in the simulacrum-like dystopian image from the ruins of Warsaw, *X-Men* literally related the past experience of its villain Magneto to a future that finally has to deal with the heritage of intolerance and marginalization. It is obvious that *Everything Is Illuminated* constituted new encounters between the 'old' world in Europe and its offspring in the United States for an 'illuminated' future but even *Schindler's List* constituted the cornerstone for a future archive when leading to the establishing of the Visual History Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation.[47]

In addition to memory-related approaches the concept of the archive offers another model to describe different cinematic operations of visualizing and thus preserving the past. Such operations can also make visible their own operators and thus their specific logic of cinematic archives. Transtextual transmission is therefore a central operational tool. Either hiding sources or references behind iconic and crystallized images or offering access for reentering the past as a quest from the present the archive becomes a cinematic model. Its moving force (and authority) is the transmission of a still persisting past:

[46] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, cit., p. 36.
[47] For a discussion of the archive in context of video testimony collections see (though referring to Fortunoff Archive): Amit Pinchevski, *Archive, Media, Trauma*, in Motti Neiger, Oren Meyers, Eyal Zandberg (eds.), *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke-New York 2011, pp. 253-264.

Without the irrepressible […] force and authority of this transgenerational memory, the problems of which we speak would be dissolved and resolved in advance. There would no longer be any essential history of culture, there would no longer be any question of memory and of archive, […] and one would no longer even understand how an ancestor can speak within us, not what sense there might me in us to speak to him or her.[48]

By projecting the topography of the archive and its operations of archiving into the cinematic space cinematic archives are able to evoke a porous interspace for such (future) encounters and reencounters with the past.

[48] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, cit., pp. 35-36.

History and Progress in *Buried in Light* and *Empires of Tin*: The Archive of Pain in the Oeuvre of Jem Cohen

Maria Teresa Soldani, Università degli Studi di Firenze

Abstract

This paper explores the use of archival images in Jem Cohen's *Buried in Light* (*Central and Eastern Europe in Passing*, 1994), and *Evening's Civil Twilight* in *Empires of Tin* (2007-2008) in order to read the development of his reflections on history and memory. The archive is intended "in its concrete manifestation as a collection of audiovisual documents of the past and in its ontological dimension, indicating social and cultural processes of remembering and forgetting" (Noordegraaf, 2011). Strongly influenced by Walter Benjamin, Cohen conceives history not as a chronological line, but as a collection of traces (shots) mapped out by the documentary collagist (filmmaker) that simultaneously speaks about the past and the future in a layered present tense (editing). Mainly as an essay film form, his work is constructed by film fragments of places and people that build an unofficial history with a geographical form. Cohen calls such way of collecting shots "the archive of the feet" (2000). Starting with his first "historical" film/video, *This Is a History of New York* (*The Golden Dark Age of Reason*, 1987), the paper analyzes Cohen's conception of history and progress through the archive of human pain, and in relation to Benjamin's work.

Premise

Jem Cohen dedicates his work to film fragments of places and people in order to build a collective and unofficial history with a geographical form. He calls such a way of collecting shots "the archive of the feet."[1] Deeply inspired by Walter Benjamin, he conceives history not as a chronological line, but as a collection of traces (shots) mapped out by the documentary collagist (filmmaker) that simultaneously speaks about the past and the future in a layered present tense (editing). This paper analyzes Cohen's structure of montage in *Buried in Light* (*Central-Eastern Europe in Passing*, 1994) and *Evening's Civil Twilight in Em-*

[1] Rhys Graham, "Just Hold Still: A Conversation with Jem Cohen," in *Senses of Cinema*, http://sensesofcinema.com/2000/feature-articles/cohen-2, last visit 26 May 2014.

pires of Tin (2007-2008) in order to read his reflections on history and memory through the archive of pain. In these works he explored daily life, firstly with an act of remembrance on a collective historical event (the Holocaust), secondly with a re-enactment of collective as well as personal archival images (on WWI/ contemporary politics, and Ground Zero/Vienna, respectively). His artistic practice crosses photography, film and video, connecting street photography, city films, music and a later introduction of archival images. Archive is intended here: "in its concrete manifestation as a collection of audiovisual documents of the past and in its ontological dimension, indicating social and cultural processes of remembering and forgetting".[2]

A connection with Benjamin on such themes as temporality, history, and memory will be helpful to understand how Cohen developed a more complex (audio)vision of history.

Into the "dream world"

Cohen started his artistic path with a poetic reportage on Florida. After which he made a portrait of Austin's band Butthole Surfers (*Witness*, 1986) and an audiovisual-history of New York City (*This is a History of New York. The Golden Dark Age of Reason*, 1987). Such projects gave a strong imprint on the main themes of his oeuvre: a key interest in the quest for history from urban settlements; an attitude for portraying given by his familiar milieu in street photography; a sensitivity for music and its compositional tools raised in Washington-D.C. during the D.I.Y. movement. Since then, he self-defined his works as "film/ video" to give value to the way these were made: the shooting process with analog devices and film rolls (Super 8 and 16mm) and the editing process in video, using nonlinear systems.[3] He works as an archeologist (with old cameras and outdated formats) searching for meanings during the editing process (on video). Ranging between essay, documentary and experimental film, his oeuvre can be placed in the context of contemporary independent US filmmakers who move back and forth between personal and public spheres tracing a living history.

In *This is a History of New York* (Super 8 on video) Cohen investigated the details of the urban environment with his eye-camera to recollect an alternative history of the city that is visible on the streets. He captured it with the primitive grain of b/w Super 8 film. The result is a personal experience of the space with no explicit traces of the subject-maker (e.g., no first-person voice-over [V.O.]).

[2] Julia Noordegraaf, *Iterating Archival Footage and the Memory of War*, in Alessandro Bordina, Sonia Campanini, Andrea Mariani (eds.), *L'archivio/The Archive,* Proceedings of XVIII Convegno Internazionale di Studi sul Cinema/XVIII International Study Conference (Udine/Gorizia, 5-7 April 2011), Forum, Udine 2011, p. 265.

[3] Sandra Lischi, *Amber City*, in Josétxo Cerdàn, Gonzalo De Pedro (eds.), *Signal Fires. El cine de Jem Cohen/The Cinema of Jem Cohen*, Gobierno de Navarra, Dpto. de Cultura y Turismo – Institución Príncipe de Viana, Pamplona 2009, pp. 138-147.

This length of time is collapsed by the unity of place and by the choices on postproduction (Super 8 films reversed on tape, no-synch sounds, slow-motion and brightness/contrast tools). Rather, the montage division in the title cards follows a chronological succession (from Prehistory to The Space Age) in which a certain idea of progress in the US capitalistic society (a technical progress embodied by new machine-products) is criticized.[4] The soundtrack is a collage of sounds, pieces of music, and a street radio that shifts swiftly from station to station. Cohen edited almost 4 minutes of the above footage in *Talk about the passion* (1988), his first R.E.M. music video. In this way, he started to treat his own images as a collection of archival records.

Cohen declared to be influenced by several photographers (e.g., Eugene Atget, Helen Levitt, Leon Levinstein) as well as filmmakers (e.g., Jean Vigo, Chris Marker, John Cassavetes).[5] Besides them, the author who mostly influenced him was Walter Benjamin to whom *Lost Book Found* (1996) and *The Passage Clock* (*For Walter Benjamin*, 2008) were dedicated.[6]

Benjamin based his historical method on the concept of experience and the use of montage, as in *One-Way Street* and *The Arcades Project*.[7] He examined history from his contemporary, personal street-level viewpoint, shaping his writings through montage. A parallel can be drawn: as Benjamin collected texts, places, objects, Cohen collected films, places, objects, as a "collage artist."[8] An oeuvre assembled by personal fragments taken by the archive. They also share a key feature of the essay form, what Timothy Corrigan identifies as the ability to relate to experience, the "experience represented in the essay, the experience of representing a subject writing the essay, and the experience of a public receiving that essay."[9]

For Benjamin images have the potential to capture a glimpse of history through an "optical shock," so a diachronic meaning is bared underneath its surface. A dreamy/sleepy condition is essential to experience the city to find an image of truth – a monad – in the continuum.[10] Therefore photography and cinema are able to reveal this "optical unconscious," this history as history of images.[11] For

[4] Maria Teresa Soldani, *Intervista a Jem Cohen. New York, 7 novembre 2006*, in Id., *Naked City. Identità, indipendenza e ricerca nel cinema newyorchese*, Quaderni di CinemaSud/Edizioni Mephite, Avellino 2013, p. 188.
[5] E.g., Josétxo Cerdàn, Gonzalo De Pedro, *An Interview with Jem Cohen*, in Id. (eds.), *Signal Fires. El cine de Jem Cohen/The cinema of Jem Cohen*, cit., pp. 28-77; Maria Teresa Soldani, *Intervista a Jem Cohen*, cit., pp. 181, 183.
[6] Josétxo Cerdàn, Gonzalo De Pedro, *An Interview with Jem Cohen*, cit., pp. 47-48.
[7] Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 1982 (Eng. ed. *The Arcades Project*, N1,10, p. 458; N1a, 8, p. 460; N2, 6, p. 461).
[8] Maria Teresa Soldani, *Intervista a Jem Cohen*, cit., p. 186.
[9] Timothy Corrigan, "The Cinematic Essay: Genre on the Margins," in *Iris: A Journal of Theory on Image and Sound*, no. 19, Spring 1995, p. 87.
[10] Walter Benjamin, *Über den Begriff der Geschischte* in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 1989 (Eng. ed. *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, in Id., *Illuminations*, Schocken Book, New York 1968, pp. 262-263).
[11] Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 1955 (Eng. ed. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, in Id.,

Cohen something unconscious concerns the use of Super 8 with its "uncanny ability to feel like memory,"[12] because it was used in his house to capture and show private films.[13] In *This is a History of New York* a fragmented space is developed shot-by-shot in order to transform the visual shock into a "moral shock,"[14] where a "shot" can be conceived in Eisenstein's terms of a "montage cell":[15] "the montage is the means of unrolling an idea with the help of single shots," as well as "an idea that arises from the collision of independent shots–shots even opposite to one another."[16] An additional comparison with Eisenstein could make such a connection between history and montage clearer. Antonio Somaini refers to Eisenstein's considerations on "conflict montage as comparative activity," in the same years of Benjamin's reflections. The Russian director had "a conception of history of consciousness and culture as a process in which all epochs and 'layers' survive and are able, if necessary, of being reactivated in the present. […] A conception of cinema as a great 'synthetic' and 'total' art that is able to structure and activate all these temporal 'layers' internally."[17] Thus the cinematic form, in terms of writing and montage, was thought of as a "conflicting, polarized, and dynamic field" to express abstract ideas. However, even if Benjamin talked about montage as a conflicting juxtaposition of heterogeneous and discontinuous elements,[18] the starting point is inverted: for Benjamin, as well as Cohen, the search starts collecting images, then making a collage that suggests an (unfinished) idea. Perceptive shocks/shots as "bullets" on the spectators to reveal an "optical unconscious." For Cohen the montage is associative and proceeds for analogy and contrast to 'active" the spectator openly (Benjamin) and not ideologically (Eisenstein). In this process (shots-montage/montage-history) two visual elements are extremely significant: "close-ups" and "details" to dilate space; "slow motion" to dilate the movement.[19] To put it in Cohen's words they are "ephemeral records; […] part of a paradoxical search at the core of photography – the search for a permanent ghost."[20]

These expressive elements work in the tradition of US straight and street photography on portraits and landscapes' forms: projects such as *Americans* by Robert Frank, *American Photographs* by Walker Evans, and *New York* by William Klein. As Susan Sontag pointed out: "In America, the photographer is not simply

Illuminations, cit., pp. 236-237).
[12] Rhys Graham, "Just Hold Still: A Conversation with Jem Cohen," cit.
[13] Josétxo Cerdàn, Gonzalo De Pedro, *An Interview with Jem Cohen*, cit., p. 32.
[14] Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, cit., p. 238.
[15] Sergei Eisenstein, *The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram*, in Id., *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, Harcourt, New York 1949, p. 37.
[16] Sergei Eisenstein, *A Dialectic Approach to Film Form*, in Id., *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, cit., p. 49.
[17] Antonio Somaini, *Ejzenstejn*, Einaudi, Torino 2011, p. 66 (my translation).
[18] *Ivi*, pp. 41-44.
[19] Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, cit., p. 236.
[20] Jem Cohen, *Letter to Myself*, in Josétxo Cerdàn, Gonzalo De Pedro (eds.), *Signal Fires. El cine de Jem Cohen/The Cinema of Jem Cohen*, cit., p. 19.

the person who records the past but the one who invents it. As Berenice Abbott writes: "The photographer is the contemporary being par excellence; through his eyes the now becomes past."[21] Also the concept of "spatial" temporality in Cohen's oeuvre can be understood through Sontag's words on Benjamin's characteristic "to convert time in space": "Benjamin's recurrent themes are […] means of spatializing the world: for example, his notion of ideas and experience as ruins. To understand something is to understand its topography, to know how to chart it. And to know how to get lost."[22]

The "waking world": Buried in Light

> V.O.: Not to find one's way in a city may well be uninteresting and banal.
> It requires ignorance – nothing more.
> But to lose oneself in a city – as one loses oneself in a forest…
> Walter Benjamin, *A Berlin Chronicle in Buried in Light*[23]

Buried in Light (Super 8 on video and a video triptych installation) maps Cohen's travel among European cities: Berlin, Dresden, Kraków (and Auschwitz), Budapest, and Prague. It is divided by title cards with quotations, encyclopedic records, and lists in order to create intervals to reflect. Presented as "notes / and a wanderer's / phrasebook" (title sequence), the film/video constitutes a passage, and a personal path, "since the essayistic subject" – as Corrigan puts it – "is a self continually in a process of investigating and transforming itself."[24]

Buried in Light is Cohen's first work associating US with European historical and economic facts; his personal history as a man with a collective history of men; totalitarianism with capitalism. Even if one of the aspects is the search of his own Jewish origins, this is a personal travelogue and not a personal film.[25] It is the first autobiographical experience and coincides with the introduction of archival footage, from Yivo Institute. Here the shift is from experiencing one place by compressing the Great Ages of Man in a present tense (*This is a History of New York*) to mapping cities that have crucial historical events in common. Furthermore, while the first was shot with a subjective style that attempted to become objective, *Buried in Light* starts with a V.O.: a citation of Benjamin in Ger-

[21] Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, Rosetta Books, New York 2005 (1973), pp. 52-53.
[22] Susan Sontag, *Introduction*, in Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, Harcourt, New York 1968, p. 13.
[23] The transcript of *Buried in Light* was kindly provided through personal communication by Jem Cohen.
[24] Timothy Corrigan, *The Essay Film: From Montaigne, after Marker*, Oxford University Press, New York 2011, p. 104.
[25] Jem Cohen, *Central and Eastern Europe in Passing*, in Josétxo Cerdàn, Gonzalo De Pedro (eds.), *Signal Fires. El cine de Jem Cohen/The Cinema of Jem Cohen*, cit., p. 131.

man and in English. After that, the voice in German keeps on reading, fading out in the sound of the city. This way Cohen suggests that the voice is Benjamin, who is assuming a "guiding role" (highlighted in the end titles as the "signalman").

The film/video begins in Berlin and continues on the architectural scars of Dresden's cathedral. This section interestingly ends up with a famous photo of the destruction of the city during WWII taken from the top of the City Hall, in front of the iconic angel's statue. Cohen noted in his journal: "(another angel of history)."[26] He possibly refers to *Angelus Novus* by Paul Klee, a single picture that frames Benjamin's vision of history. The angel is the historian.[27] He just sees ruins because of the catastrophe and he wants to recollect them in order to give meaning to the bigger picture: he is trying to but he cannot, because a hurricane, symbolizing progress, is upon him. He does not want to look ahead, but only wants to recollect single fragments. This image clashes remembrances of ordinary people with those of scholars (media and family memories, memories of memories on war, Benjamin's reminiscences).

Alice Cati, in her thorough study on the images of memory, clarifies how human memory is essentially a visual process; hence, the photo-cinematographic media play a crucial role in the generation of contemporary memory. Because of such mutual connection, "films or film sequences" may function as "memory texts."[28] With "a highly distinctive organization of time" – Cati quotes Annette Kuhn – "[…] the memory text is typically a montage of vignettes, anecdotes, fragments, 'snapshots' and flashes that can generate a feeling of synchrony: remembered events seem to be outside any linear time frame or may refuse to be easily anchored to 'historical' time."[29] Through the language of film, memory is reassembled to be decoded by a set of socially shared rules; similarly, the cinematic apparatus is able to produce memory while developing codes. Cati quotes Russel Kilbourn: "[…] 'cinematic' memory in this sense at best supplements and at worst destroys 'natural,' human memory by naturalizing the technical and artificial, providing a seemingly 'universal' objective visual language for the representation of the subjective (re-experience) of the past."[30] The "trace" of the event, which is impressed chemically on films strips, becomes the connection between recorded images and their referent in the real world, establishing "two essential principles" shared by filmic images and memories: "inscription and temporality."[31]

[26] *Ivi*, p. 132.
[27] He wrote about "historical materialism" but his position was considered exceptional in respect to Marx's theories. E.g., Hannah Arendt, *Walter Benjamin: 1890-1940*, in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, cit., pp. 1-58; Paolo Pullega, *Nota 1991* in *L'opera d'arte nell'era della riproducibilità tecnica*, Einaudi, Torino 2000, pp. 163-184; Rolf Tiedemann, *Introduzione* in Walter Benjamin, *I passages di Parigi*, Einaudi, Torino 2007, pp. IX-XXXVI.
[28] Alice Cati, *Immagini della memoria. Teorie e pratiche del ricordo tra testimonianza, genealogia, documentari*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2013, pp. 47-56.
[29] Annette Kuhn, "Memory Texts and Memory Work: Performances of Memory in and with Visual Media," in *Memory Studies*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2010, pp. 298-313.
[30] Russel J. A. Kilbourn, *Cinema, Memory, Modernity: The Representation of Memory from the Art Film to Transnational Cinema*, Routledge, New York 2010, p. 6.
[31] Alice Cati, *Immagini della memoria*, cit., pp. 56-57 (my translation).

The section on Kraków is divided in two parts: "Part One: The City" and "Part Two: A Nearby Place." The first part alternates found footage on the Kraków ghetto during WWII and shots of Cohen in a hotel room during his travel. The archival material is introduced by an old picture of Krakow held in front of the camera. Immediately afterwards, there is a sequence dedicated to Auschwitz. The written name of the town is shot in German and pronounced by the filmmaker in Polish. This part is a first person narration and is dedicated to Primo Levi. As Laura Rascaroli pointed out, "reflectivity" and "subjectivity" as well as "the presence of the spectator" and "the structure of the dialogue"[32] are key elements in essay films. So in *Buried in Light* Cohen activates two processes of memory: the reassembling of his memory (travel in Central Eastern Europe and Auschwitz) through the remembrance of a universal, historical, traumatic event that has an autobiographical implication (his family's origins). Thus, the central Kraków section is so effective because Cohen is able to access "that" collective memory starting from a personal inquiry (even if implicit), which recall Paul Ricoeur's considerations about history and memory. Malin Wahlberg wrote on the connection between Ricoeur's account of "traces"[33] and a documentary made with archival images: "history is a science of traces, and it is the trace that 'orients the hunt, the quest, the search, the inquiry' […] the social realm of language and 'the trace' in terms of recollection – the intended action of remembrance."[34] Therefore Kraków ghetto and Auschwitz become the places of past and present reminiscences through archive footage and shooting of collected objects and photo portraits. As Didi-Huberman suggests, the photographic arts are capable of giving evidence to historical events in the continuum through the montage, which makes images dialectical.[35] So in the process of remembrance images are able to create a rupture.

After the Shoah, this rupture happened for historians and philosophers: Benjamin wrote his *Thesis on the Philosophy of History* in 1940 before committing suicide while escaping the Nazis; Fernand Braudel wrote his masterpiece on the Mediterranean history in a German imprisonment camp, recalling by heart every reference in his Parisian archive; at that time Adorno and Horkheimer were already in the US. The Shoah was a turning point, an irreversible event, a suspension of any previous conception of history, as well as a moment to re-think how to write it, its historiographic method and its function to society. Giorgio Agamben talks about a "blank gap" between the witness and his act of witnessing, starting from the analysis of Levi's words in *The Drowned and the Saved*.[36] Didi-Huberman reminds us that Jewish people in Auschwitz tried

[32] Laura Rascaroli, "The Essay Film: Problems, Definitions, Textual Commitments," in *Framework*, vol. 49, no. 2, Fall 2008, pp. 34-37.
[33] Paul Ricoeur, *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Seuil, Paris 2003.
[34] Malin Wahlberg, "Images, Traces, and Narrative Imagination: Documentary Approaches to Archive Memory," in *Cinéma & Cie*, vol. XI, no. 16-17, Spring 2008, pp. 39-42.
[35] Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images malgré tout*, Minuit, Paris 2003.
[36] Giorgio Agamben, *Quel che resta di Auschwitz. L'archivio e il testimone, Homo Sacer III,* Bollati

collecting proofs of the horrors "in spite of all": with intentional modality, carefully planned regardless of danger and death. Hence, each painful image is important to understand that "that" history is "our" history. Marianne Hirsch highlights that "the phenomenology of photography" is a crucial element for "postmemory," the memory of the second generation after those who witnessed trauma, which is based on "autobiographical readings."[37] She affirms:

> *[…] It is the technology of photography itself, and the belief in reference it engenders, that connects the Holocaust generation to the generation after. Photography's promise to offer an access to the event itself, and its easy assumption of iconic and symbolic power, makes it a uniquely powerful medium for the transmission of events that remain unimaginable.*[38]

In *Buried in Light* the archival material gives to the spectator the images of horrors on the streets: portraits of families, kids, women, men; the arrogance of the Nazis; violence, starving, death. After that, Auschwitz recalls other evidences (a past shown to us, a presence with us) and their loss (today, there, here for us). For Hirsch photos are "ghostly revenants from an irretrievably lost past world. They enable us, in the present, not only to see and to touch that past but also to try to reanimate it."[39] So Cohen gives evidence to "the drowned and the saved": a physical-chemical evidence through photography and cinema in filmstrips, and a lively-electronic evidence through video, accomplishing his "search for a permanent ghost." According to Didi-Huberman, an image does not resuscitate at all, but it redeems itself: it saves a knowledge reactivating memory of its time. So remembrance is redemption, and according to Cohen, it avoids every chance of disappearance. Sontag stated:

> *Remembering is an ethical act, has ethical value in and of itself. Memory is, achingly, the only relation we can have with the dead. So the belief that remembering is an ethical act is deep in our natures as humans, who know we are going to die, and who mourn those who in the normal course of things die before us – grandparents, parents, teachers, and older friends.*[40]

After the Polish section there are Budapest and Prague, with Kafka's grave and the Jewish cemetery. The montage proceeds as a line made by small openings to the history of the last two centuries not in a chronological order, making connection between totalitarianism and capitalism. Cohen finds the drift of communist regimes as well as the signs of a potential new capitalistic drift, creating

Boringhieri, Torino 1998.

[37] Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," in *Poetics Today*, no.1, Spring 2008, pp. 106-107.

[38] *Ivi*, pp. 107-108.

[39] *Ivi*, p. 115.

[40] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of the Others*, Picador, New York 2003, pp. 115-116.

'short-circuits' from Stalin to Walt Disney, from political regimes to business and corporations. The last sequence is a collage of images with the author's V.O.:

> *I've often heard Eastern Europe described as "gray and depressing." Now, it will become colorful, with fast food franchises and shopping malls. Change had to come: politically, environmentally, these countries were disaster areas. But I wonder if the people aren't waking up, yet again, to an imposed system, and a new set of disappearances?*

Finally, Cohen shot his image reflected on a mirror in a train coach, this way giving a personal twist to the end of his travel/passage. This reverberates Sontag's words on Benjamin: "his goal is to be a competent street-map reader who knows how to stray. And to locate himself, with imaginary maps. Elsewhere in *A Berlin Chronicle* Benjamin relates that for years he had played with the idea of mapping his life."[41] Such considerations on memory and mapping are in line with two concepts that may be detected in works reassembling archival images: firstly, the "mapping impulse" as the "art of connecting" and recollecting (Teresa Castro);[42] secondly the "displacement" of "meaning," "time" and "space" that occurs when this material is moved from the archive to the gallery (Julia Noordegraaf).[43] Both concepts assume the "archival impulse" that, according to Hal Foster's thesis, is present in contemporary arts.[44]

Empires of Tin is an extreme step in this direction: mapping, recollecting, recycling, and displacing memories because "historical understanding" is "an afterlife of that which is understood, whose pulse can still be felt in the present."[45]

Phantasmagoria: Empires of Tin

History is a daisy chain of lies
Humans love distortion
Public record is a poetic device
Blown away out of all proportion
Vic Chesnutt, *Distortion in Empires of Tin*

Empires of Tin (live and DVD) was a performance of 16mm and DV projections with music and readings, "something between a film and a concert."[46] It was com-

[41] Susan Sontag, *Introduction*, cit., p. 10.
[42] Teresa Castro, "Economies du Referent 3: 'The Mapping Impulse,' or the Cartographic Reason of Contemporary Images," in *Cinéma & Cie*, no. 10, Spring 2008, pp. 41-50.
[43] Julia Noordegraaf, "From the Archive to the Gallery: Displacing Colonial Footage in the Work of Fiona Tan," in *Cinéma & Cie*, no. 10, Spring 2008, pp. 105-113.
[44] Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," in *October*, no. 110, Fall 2004, pp. 3-22.
[45] Walter Benjamin, *Eduard Fuchs, der Sammler und der Historiker* in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 1989 (*Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian*, in Id., *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, cit., p. 352).
[46] Josétxo Cerdàn, Gonzalo De Pedro, *An Interview with Jem Cohen*, cit., pp. 52-53.

missioned by Viennale-Vienna International Film Festival to be an *unicum* and was built as a montage. It was played by Bobby Sommers as narrator and Vic Chesnutt, members of Silver Mt. Zion, Guy Picciotto, Dave Payant, T. Griffin, and Catherine McRae as musicians. It was "a documentary musical hallucination"[47] of re-edited historical (WWI, contemporary politicians) and individual (Ground Zero, Vienna) archival materials that "foregrounds landscape as the repository of memory and emotion":[48] a clash between empires as well as two types of archives. As Noordegraaf writes: "the archive serves as a site for developing alternative memories or reconstructing forgotten pasts. They achieve this by elaborating on the found image, object, and text and presenting them in a new form."[49]

It is useful to analyze this work by applying the principle of Eisenstein's vertical montage[50] because of its complex audio-visual [A/V] layers of narration: a first person narrator for Joseph Roth's excerpts from *Radetzky-March* and *The Capuchin Crypt* [A]; a re-elaborated Strauss' *Radetzky-Marsch* [A]; instrumental pieces with sounds [A]; Chesnutt's songs [A]; film/video containing photographs [V]; films from Cohen's archive [V]. The following movements/lines are developed: the readings that open and almost close the performance, in which songs and instrumentals are linked; each song creates loops – with its musematic and structural repetitions – and contains lyrics, as well as images and places that recur, while the instrumentals have a free-form.

The historical images of Kaiser Franz Joseph I and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as well as the images of war, slow down the montage of 16mm films shot in Vienna and New York today. They stage an effective association between the decline of that Empire with the actual US economic crisis. The flux has almost an arrest on the b/w still archival images of human pain and death of WWI, while narrator-Roth and songwriter Chesnutt are speechless. Only the voice on the radio and the instrumental music "talk," with their distortion. It reverberates Benjamin's words:

> *The idea of eternal recurrence conjures the phantasmagoria of happiness from the misery of the Founders Years. This doctrine is an attempt to reconcile mutually contradictory tendencies of desire: that of repetition and that of eternity.*[51]

> *The belief in progress – in an infinite perfectibility understood as an infinite ethical task – and the representation of eternal return are complementary. They are the indissoluble antinomies in the face of which the dialectical conception of historical time must be developed.*[52]

[47] *Ibidem*.
[48] Jem Cohen, *Director's Note on IFC Center Website*, http://www.ifccenter.com/films/empires-of-tin, last visit 30 Septermber 2014.
[49] Julia Noordegraaf, "From the Archive to the Gallery: Displacing Colonial Footage in the Work of Fiona Tan," cit., p. 108.
[50] Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, Harcourt, New York 1942, pp. 74-109.
[51] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, cit., D9, 2, pp. 116-117.
[52] *Ivi*, D10a, 5, p. 119.

> *The concept of progress must be grounded in the idea of catastrophe. That things are 'status quo' is the catastrophe. It is not an ever-present possibility but what in each case is given.*[53]

Having access to the photo-cinematographic media – as the milieu for experiencing our perception of world – it is possible to create a present tense where past and future collides in a revolutionary way. As Somaini highlighted commenting Benjamin, critical writing is able to oppose the capitalistic culture and its "sense of dreaming," as well as its "new mythology" marked by passages and fashion: from this perspective, its aim is "awakening, disenchantment, and demythicization."[54] In these terms the archive of pain becomes the lens for reading and knowing human history: it makes possible an alternative use of images to show hidden truths. For instance, a comparison between the two family dynasties, Habsburg-Lorraine and Bush, is made when Chesnutt sings these title cards in English as verses, which are alternated with b/w photos of politicians and generals filtered in red (e.g., Reagan, Bush Sr. and Jr., Putin):

Er ist nicht Satan
Er ist nur ein Vorstandsvorsitzender
Er ist nicht der Teufel
Er ist nur ein Kapitalist
Er ist nur schrecklich
Er ist kein Voodoo-Meister
Er ist nur ein Verschwörer
Er ist nicht Luzifer
Er ist nur ein Profiteur
Er ist nicht der Antichrist
Er ist nur ein Politiker
Er ist kein Dämon
Er ist kein Hexenmeister
Er ist nur ein Manipulateur
Er ist nur verkommen
Er ist nicht geheimnisvoll
Er ist nur finster
Er ist nicht menschlich
Er ist nur eine Marionette

In the performance's structure, the archive of pain can fully accomplish a non-positivistic idea of "progress" exacerbated by "eternal recurrence." Cohen represents this non-chronological and cyclic 20th century history, firstly tracing "a" history experienced in space and time by the self (first person V.O., personal archive, re-

[53] *Ivi*, N9a, 1, p. 473.
[54] Antonio Somaini, *Sezione VII. Architettura e città*, in Walter Benjamin, *Aura e Choc. Saggi sulla teoria dei media*, edited by Andrea Pinotti, Antonio Somaini, Einaudi, Torino 2012, p. 349 (my translation).

enactment of public archive), secondly using painful archival images (public images of WWI) inside a structure of montage that creates loops. The present is a passage in which time could be experienced in an awaken state of consciousness due to dialectical images and, as in the essay film, to conflicting ideas.[55] It establishes a dialectical temporality between shooting, when photographic time of the still collides with cinematic time of the reel, and editing, when cinematic time of reels collides with manipulated time of video. Music challenges them with the recurrences of the song-form, doubled by returning images. The last sequence recalls images of the first sequence, the Kaiser and the Imperial Palace in Vienna, accompanied by *Radetzky-Marsch*. The image shifts to a contemporary parade with military in front of the palace.

Conclusion

Buried in Light maps some crucial cities where terrible historical events of Western culture happened. The use of painful images of the Holocaust, underlined by an almost silent soundtrack, produces an arrest in the continuum, revealing this way an awakening moment of remembrance. Additionally, a comparison is made between yesterday's totalitarianism and tomorrow's capitalism, pointing to the risky "erasure" of "the uneasy layering of history, the disappearance of neighborhoods, of people, of memory."[56]

These elements are taken to an extreme in *Empires of Tin*, a phantasmagoria of documental traces (WWI and Ground Zero) and manipulated traces (contemporary politicians) representing human pain and the chain of eternal recurrence in Western societies. Personal and collective archives are mixed together in a temporality that allowed the simultaneous existence of the continuum through the flux of video and its arrest due to still photography. Images become passages from one to another in the video-medium that is the "*passeur*" between motion and stillness.[57] In these circles of narration, Roth and Chesnutt voice a personal point of view on facts (first-person omniscient narrator-Roth) and an inner voice on history (third-person super-omniscient interpreter-Chesnutt). Archival images of pain as ruptures of optical and moral shocks reveal hidden truths brought to consciousness in order to remember and to stop catastrophes (Benjamin).

> *The new, dialectical method of doing history presents itself as the art of experiencing the present as waking world, a world to which that dream we name the past refers in truth. To pass through and carry out what has been in remembering the dream! Therefore: remembering and awaking are most intimately related. Awakening is namely the dialectical, Copernican turn of remembrance*.[58]

[55] Noël Burch, *Theory of Film Practice*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1981, p. 162.
[56] Jem Cohen, *Central and Eastern Europe in Passing*, cit., p. 130.
[57] Raymond Bellour, *L'Entre-Images: photo, cinéma, vidéo*, La Différence, Paris 1990 (It. ed. *Fra le immagini. Fotografia, cinema, video*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 2007, pp. 6-7).
[58] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, cit., K1, 3, p. 389.

Empires of Tin is "a mode of inquiry, where initially unlikely juxtapositions create space – for the viewer's own questions, connections, and dark reveries,"[59] this way confirming the "subjective" position stated by Rascaroli: "the essayist allows the answers to emerge somewhere else, precisely in the position occupied by the embodied spectator. The meaning of the film is constructed via this dialogue. […] It is this subjective move, this speaking in the first person that mobilizes the subjectivity of the spectator."[60] Still, starting with "locating the self" (Sontag) this relationship becomes decisive to "map" (Castro) and "displace" (Noordegraaf).

Empires of Tin is "a free-wheeling, time-bending, historical essay"[61] made by recycling each format (film, video, photos) and type of archival material (historical/collective and personal/individual), as a found footage film,[62] and by using cinematic and video apparatus (camera, video editing, projection). An *unicum* that is possible to re-experience through the DVD format.

By doing this, Cohen accomplishes a new media history made by obsolete formats, photo-cinematographic and electronic media, private and public archives.

[59] Jem Cohen, *Director's Note*, cit.
[60] Laura Rascaroli, "The Essay Film: Problems, Definitions, Textual Commitments," cit., p. 36.
[61] Jem Cohen, *Director's Note*, cit.
[62] William C. Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films*, Anthology Film Archive, New York 1993.

*"Wir wollen uns mit den Bildern unseres Landes befassen":** Documents, Fetishes, Icons, Relics: the Reconstruction of the German Autumn as an Image

Luisella Farinotti, Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione IULM

Abstract

In *18.Oktober 1977* – a cycle of fifteen paintings about the German Autumn and the Baader-Meinhof Gang – Gerhard Richter deals with the trauma of terrorism confronting himself with the crystallized memory of the "crime scene" – specifically, the photos of the dead bodies in Stammheim taken by the police and then published in *Stern* – that he recomposes, giving us back an experience of blurred, vague, enigmatic vision, therefore forcing us to look in a different way and to *search* for what is hiding from our sight.

The work of Richter is a gesture of rewriting archival images that thus becomes an act of redemption. He opposes to the obscene visibility of the death showed in the photographs of the police – exhibited as proofs of guilt or exploited to satisfy a desire of revenge – the spectral vision of an elementary truth: death, even in the exceptional form of terroristic violence, represents a mysterious and utter horizon that no political gesture can recompose. It is exactly in the death, experienced as a common but unspeakable fate, that Richter finds the humanity of the terrorists, helping us to approach the comprehension of trauma.

> So-called "memorial-photography," which was popular in the United States in the nineteenth century, saw not life but death as the only motivation for capturing a person in a picture. We shy away from looking death in the face, so we mask its visage with an image of life. A dead person in a picture seems to us doubly dead.
>
> Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images*

18.Oktober 1977 is the title of a very well-known work by Gerhard Richter, realized in 1988 and now part of the MoMA collections in New York.[1] The

(Translated by Filippo Pennacchio. I would like to thank Pierluigi Ercole, Mara Logaldo and Marianne Harris for their final reading)

* "We want to concern ourselves with the images of our country." This is the statement expressed

work consists of a series of fifteen paintings of different sizes devoted to the Baader-Meinhof Gang – the group of terrorists belonging to the RAF (*Rote Armee Fraktion*) whose "urban guerrilla" actions dramatically marked the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1970s. In its referential neutrality, the title takes the viewer back to a specific historical context, to a day and a chain of events which are still very vivid in the German collective memory. This is the day in which Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Carl Raspe died in the top security prison of Stammheim, near Stuttgart. The dead bodies of the three RAF members were found just a few hours after the special troops of German police assaulted the Lufthansa airplane hijacked to Mogadishu by a group of Palestinian terrorists, who were claiming the liberation of their imprisoned German comrades. In turn, the assault – in which all the hijackers died, except for one woman, and that finally brought the release of all the hostages – preceded the execution of Hanns-Martin Schleyer, who was kidnapped in September by a commando of the Rote Armee Fraktion and whose body was found on October 19 in the trunk of a car in Mulhouse. Also Schleyer, who was the President of the *Bundesverband Deutschen Industrie* (the German Employers' Association) and head of the Daimler-Benz corporation, had been kidnapped to negotiate the release of the three RAF members.

Amidst this dramatic sequence of shocks, with its fatal twist of actions and reactions, where victims and executioners seemed to continually change roles, it is the alleged collective suicide in Stammheim which raises the most passionate reactions: the suspicion that a "state murder" has been committed seems to resurrect the ghost of Nazism, the traumatic unconscious of a "past that never passes away," as the police state-like practices of the federal government seem to prove.[2]

by the filmmakers involved in the collective film *Deutschland im Herbst* (*Germany in Autumn*, Fassbinder, Kluge, Reitz, Schlöndorff, Brustellin et al., 1978), shot after the events of October 1977; in Petra Kraus (ed.), *1977-1997. Deutschland im Herbst. Terrorismus im Film*, Filmzentrum, München 1997, p. 80.

[1] Exhibited for the first time in 1989 at the Museum Haus Esters in Krefeld, during the same year *18.Oktober 1977* was presented in Frankfurt, in London and in Rotterdam. The next year the whole series was exhibited in the USA and in Canada, before it was entrusted to the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt on a long-term loan, and it remained there until 2000. Right from the beginning Richter imposed some constraints: the work should not be split; furthermore, the whole series must be displayed only in museums, not in private art galleries. In 1995 he decided to sell it to MoMA in New York. This decision caused a controversy: Richter was accused of selling a part of German history. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported that the paintings represented the trauma of a still unresolved period of history and Richter, by selling them, removed a critical focus for the continued ideological struggle over German history and its memory (Eduard Beaucamp, "Exportiertes Trauma," in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 8 June 1995, p. 35). However, the decision to move *18.Oktober 1977* far from Germany and its ghosts is Richter's deliberate action: it expresses the will for a change of perspective, the attempt to escape an only historical and political interpretation of his work.

[2] On the morning of 18 October, Gudrun Ensslin was found hanging from the bars of her cell's window, while Baader and Raspe lay on the floor of their own cells, in a pool of blood, each with a gunshot in the head. It was alleged that Baader had shot himself in the back of his neck (three cartridge cases were found in his cell), while Raspe had used a 9-caliber gun. These circumstances,

Fig. 1 – Gerhard Richter at work for *18.Oktober 1977* (1988).

In the paroxysm of those days, a whole season of clashes and conflicts between state and terrorists seems to emerge. At the same time, though, an even more distant, but still painful and never healed, collective wound seems to re-open. In fact, the increasingly violent actions of the RAF find a counterpart in the authoritarian and repressive reaction of the institutions, which as early as 1968 had introduced measures and special laws as well as exceptional actions of prevention and control, thus fuelling a fear connected both to terrorists' actions and to the operations of the police.[3] The concern that democratic rights and individual

along with the quite unlikely presence of weapons in a maximum security prison have since then instilled many doubts and suspicions in the left-wing as well as in the moderate public opinion. In his now classic biography on the Baader-Meinhof Group, Stefan Aust suggests that it was a "coordinated" suicide, a political gesture of attack rather than surrender to the state. See Stefan Aust, *Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex*, Hoffmann & Campe Verlag, Hamburg 1985 (2008).

[3] The emergency laws of 1968 represent a reply to the protests of youths' movements and to the struggles against the Vietnam war and "capitalist imperialism." In 1972 the *Extremistenbeschluss* was launched, which prevented people suspected of sympathizing with the extreme left to access public employment; in 1974 the laws on anti-terrorism allowed the police to search, keep tabs, bug the telephones, and more generally to look into the private lives of German citizens. This strong reaction of the institutions, which struck also the "sympathizers" and involved from the beginning the police and military apparatus, solicits, due to its lack of proportions, a comparison with Nazi practices. As is known, the truest core of young people's protests in Germany is represented mainly by the historical-generational struggle. See Thomas Elsaesser, *German Cinema: Terror and Trauma: Cultural Memory since 1945*, Routledge, New York-Abingdon 2014, p. 122. The bibliography on the German Years of Lead is endless. Besides the study of Stefan Aust, the main texts used in this section are Margit Meyer, "The German October of 1977," in *New German Critique*, no. 13, Winter 1978, pp. 155-163; Wolfgang Kraushaar (ed.), *Die RAF und die*

freedom were in danger in the name of the State's own security dramatically increased; moreover, the threat that a real "emergency dictatorship" could be established – that is, a dictatorship not only based on control and supervision, but also supported by approval from the frightened majority of the population – forced the public opinion to judge the RAF "as an understandable if not justifiable, traumatized (over)reaction to the official Germany's lingering and latent Nazi legacy."[4]

This feeling of distrust and enduring emergency, a sort of defensive withdrawal tinged with paranoia, is well-suited to describe the "German collective malady," the block of a country hanging between repression and an excess of memory: a "country unable to mourn,"[5] prisoner of its own history whilst trying to escape it. As Miriam Hansen suggests,

> *the catastrophic concatenation of events provoked other reactions besides the aggravation of prevailing tendencies; it seems to have lifted, for a moment at least, the veil of historical amnesia which had protected the growth of German self-confidence since the early 1950s. Associations of the current events with "war," or "1945," were widespread, confirming […] the observation that such a moment of shock briefly illuminated the falsely integrated elements of German history as a fundamentally impossible relationship. It was the historicity of the whole situation – not only of the officially chronicled events of Mogadishu and Schleyer's death – that was perceived before all analysis. Confusion, along with feelings of grief, despair, powerlessness, overwhelmingly struck intellectuals from left to liberal.*[6]

It is into this setting, where time is experienced as catastrophe and where present and past collapse and trade their own meanings, that Gerhard Richter comes back eleven years later. In its pure evidence as a 'fact,' *18.Oktober 1977* suggests an historical order and represents an act of memory as well as a return to the past. However, this process has nothing to do with historical painting and its commemorative or celebratory intent – from whose rhetoric Richter seeks to distance himself, –[7] nor is it an example of political art. Richter's anti-ideological standing, as well as his hostility towards political dogmas and faiths, are well-known.[8] Furthermore, the fact that his work has been

Medien, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 2008.

[4] Thomas Elasesser, *German Cinema*, cit., p. 120.

[5] This formula is taken from the title of a now classic study on repression mechanisms in the Germany of the second postwar period: Alexander and Margarethe Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern. Grundingen kollektiven Verhaltnes*, Piper Verlag, München 1967.

[6] Miriam Hansen, "Cooperative Auteur Cinema and Oppositional Public Sphere: Alexander Kluge's contribution to *Germany in Autumn*," in *New German Critique*, no. 24-25, Fall-Winter 1981-82, p. 44.

[7] On the rejection of celebratory art see: Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Divided Memory and Post-Traditional Identity. Gerhard Richter's Work of Mourning," in *October*, no. 75, Winter 1996, pp. 61-82.

[8] The attack on ideology as a faith in a universal truth is one of the most important themes for Richter as a painter who grew up in the DDR. See Gerhard Richter, *Notes, 1988*, in Dietmar Elger,

realized several years after the historical events took place is it itself an act of distancing, as it shifts the attention from the militant action to more general considerations which transcend the historical details of the events portrayed. Since the first presentation of the *Oktober* cycle, Richter has underlined the "purely human"[9] urgency behind it, the "speechless emotion […] the almost forlorn attempt to give shape to feelings of compassion, grief and horror (as if the pictorial repetition of the events were a way of understanding those events, being able to live with them)."[10] "Dismay, pity, grief"[11] establish the horizon of the sorrow and explain the need for a return and a farewell, now finally possible after many years. Yet in this tragedy, in its specific determination, Richter discovers a more general condition which becomes the truest centre of his work: the fatal bond of hope and failure, courage and cruelty, faith and violence which marks the actions as well as the course of history and the sense of the self getting lost within an ideology, in the collective dream of a change and its tragic re-emergence in death.

> *The tremendous strength, the terrifying power that an idea has, which goes as far as death. That is the most impressive thing, to me, and the most inexplicable thing; that we produce ideas, which are almost always not only utterly wrong and nonsensical but above all dangerous. Wars of religion and the rest: it's fundamentally all about nothing, about pure blather – and we take it utterly seriously, fanatically, even unto death.*[12]

This sense of history as a senseless, cruel order is depicted in *18.Oktober 1977* starting from a series of concrete details, as in a brutal photographic recording of the events. The starting point for Richter's reconstruction is once again the pure factuality of a datum, as the extremely simple title which indicates a day – at the same time exceptional and ordinary – shows.

In the introductory notes for the first exhibition in Krefeld, in 1989, Richter uses these words to illustrate his work:

> *What I have painted. Three times Baader, shot. Three times Ensslin, hanged. Three times the head of the dead Meinhof after they cut her down. Once the dead Meins. Three times Ensslin, neutral (almost like pop stars). Then a big, unspecified burial – a cell dominated by a bookcase – a silent, grey, record player – a youthful portrait of Meinhof, sentimental, in a bourgeois way – twice the arrest of Meins, forced to surrender to the clenched power of the state. All the pictures are dull, grey, mostly very blurred, diffuse. Their presence is the horror and the hard-to-bear refusal to answer, to explain, to give an opinion. I'm not sure whether the pictures "ask" anything; they provoke contradiction through their hopelessness and desolation, their lack of parti-*

Hans Ulrich Obrist (eds.), *Gerhard Richter: Writings 1961-2007*, D.A.P., New York 2009, p. 200.
[9] Gerhard Richter, *Notes, 1989*, *ivi*, p. 213.
[10] Gerhard Richter, *Notes for a Press Conference, November-December 1988*, *ivi*, p. 202.
[11] Gerhard Richter, *Notes, 1989*, cit., p. 213.
[12] *Conversation with Jan Thorn Prikker on* 18.Oktober 1977, in Benjmin H.D. Buchloch et al. (eds), *Gerhard Richter: Atlas: The Reader*, Whitechapel Gallery, London 2012, pp. 20-21.

sanship.[13]

Although only half of the paintings show the dead terrorists, death is *the* central theme of the whole cycle and it defines its tone: that is, a general sense of failure and loss. The dead bodies painted by Richter not only represent the defeat of an idea, they also give evidence of its tragic foolishness.

The paintings showing the dead bodies of Ensslin and Baader – *Erhängte* (*Hanged*), *Erschlossene 1-2* (*Man Shot Down 1-2*) – are based on the photographs taken by the police in Stammheim when the bodies were found. The photos were published in *Stern* in October 1980.[14] The issue of 16 June 1976 of the same magazine contained the photos of Meinhof, who had hanged herself in Stammheim on 9 May of the same year.[15] These shocking photos function as a blueprint for the three pictures titled *Tote* (*Dead Person*), another "neutral," coldly objective title, as in the case of the other paintings in the series.[16]

If death has always been the object of artistic representation and the analogy between death and image is as old as the power of representation, the model Richter refers to and adopts in every detail is the cruel and pitiless gaze on the "crime scene." However, if "the photograph provokes horror, […] the painting – with the same motif – something more like grief,"[17] and doing so it radically alters our visual experience. As we will see in a moment, it is on the very thin boundary between obscenity and revelation that Richter sets his gaze as well as ours, giving to that specific vision of death the form of a farewell, showing "how the aesthetic form of a memorial work amounts to a strategy of forgetting."[18]

We shall start from here: it is in the desire to *re-animate*, at once and at the same time, the body and the image that we can find our way.

Finding the image

[13] Gerhard Richter, *Notes*, *1988*, cit., pp. 203-204. This list includes four paintings subsequently removed from the cycle. Among them, there is the painting which portrays the dead body of Holger Meins, who died in prison after a hunger strike in 1974.

[14] The photos were published after the investigations on the death of the three terrorists were reopened. See "Der Fall Stammheim," in *Stern*, 30 October 1980, pp. 24-25.

[15] The title summarizes in a symbolic date a series of events connected with the Baader-Meinhof Gang; those events occurred during many years: for example, the arrest of Baader and Meins on 1 June 1972, after a gunfire, or the suicide of Meinhof a year before. There is even a portrait of a young Meinhof, derived from a agency photo.

[16] Each painting has a title: *Jugendbildnis* (*Youth Portrait*); three canvases bearing the title *Tote* (*Dead Persons*); *Erhängte* (*Hanged*); *Gegenüberstellung 1-2-3* (*Confrontation 1-2-3*); *Erschlossener 1-2* (*Man Shot Down 1-2*); *Zelle* (*Cell*); *Plattenspieler* (*Record Player*); *Festnahme 1-2* (*Arrest 1-2*); *Beerdigung* (*Burial*).

[17] *Conversation with Jan Thorn Prikker on* 18.Oktober 1977, in Dietmar Elger, Hans Ulrich Obrist (eds.), *Gerhard Richter*, cit., p. 229.

[18] Gerhard Storck, *Ohne Titel (Gemischte Gefühle)*, in *Gerhard Richter:* 18.Oktober 1977, Walther König, Köln 1989, p. 13.

The paintings included in *Oktober* are all *Fotobilder*: each painting is obtained from a photographic model.[19] For years, Richter had been collecting a large amount of photographs on the Baader-Meinhof Gang: these were documentary photographs, including press photographs and pictures taken by the police. Private photos, taken from family albums, went hand in hand with the public images portraying the operations carried out by members of the RAF as well as with mug shots and rogues' galleries. Richter's examination of the photographs, mainly from newspapers' archives, is reflected in *Atlas* (sheets 470-479) – the vast work archive in which Richter has stored and organized all the materials he used –[20] and in a separate study album. He collected more than one hundred pictures related to the RAF in these two albums.

It is not merely an attempt at philological recovery nor an act of compulsive accumulation; this gesture, which is very frequent in contemporary art, is rather aimed at searching and reinterpreting existing materials. Here the action of archiving is very close to the Foucauldian idea of an "archaeology of the present." It resembles the order of a promise, rather than that of a return. Richter is interested in the presence of a ghost, in investigating our relationship with a "way of seeing," which is at the root of our gaze.

As Benjamin Buchloh writes, Richter "seems to consider photography and its various practices as a system of ideological domination, and more precisely, as one of the instruments with which collective anomie, amnesia and repression are socially inscribed."[21] It is after all the very ambiguous quality of the photographic image, which at the same time presents itself as a trace of documentary truth and ideological falsity, to define its testimonial value.

To Richter, photography is also a sort of figurative *ready-made* which gives him the chance of not losing the immediacy of what it represents as well as the opportunity of gaining a 'neutrality' of the gaze warranted by the obliteration of any expression of boasted artistry. For Richter, photography – in its most common, banal and mechanical form, such as the pictures contained in a family album or in a newspaper – is, literally, "almost nature,"[22] a "pure" image,

[19] "I'm not trying to imitate a photograph; I'm trying to make one": Gerhard Richter, *Extracts from Writings and Interviews 1962-2003*, in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh et al. (eds.), *Gerhard Richter: Atlas: The Reader*, cit., p. 14.

[20] The *Atlas* is a vast work in progress started in 1962 as a simple collection of iconographic material, including amateur photos, images taken from newspapers and magazines, advertisements, sketches and drawings; it is a sort of inventory of models that Richter collects for his pictorial activity. Since then the collection has evolved in an organic archive, revolving around themes and motives, which aims at accounting specific visual forms. This image-diary covering fifty years of activity is also a real cartography of the visual culture of an age. A sort of mix between collection and work, the *Atlas* is a huge archive of "visions" that, since 1972, has been exhibited all over the world following a spatial organisation rigorously decided by Richter himself. On the *Atlas* see Benjamin H.D. Buchloh et al. (eds.), *Gerhard Richter: Atlas: The Reader*, cit.

[21] Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Gerhard Richter's Atlas: The Anomic Archive*, *ivi*, p. 96.

[22] *Conversation with Jan Thorn Prikker on* 18.Oktober 1977, cit., p. 228.

immediate, free from any formal rules or figurative tradition, able to reveal the *appearance* of the world. This "communal vision" is the evidence of a "way of seeing": a shared, albeit obliviously, perceptive system. A primeval way of transcribing the past as well as a testimonial trace of the gaze, the photograph works as a document not only because it preserves a content, but also due to the form through which it describes the world. In the *Fotobilder*, Richter re-appropriates the immediacy associated with photography while exploring its modes of representation: and it is in the search of the *pure appearance* inside representation that he reveals "the image as image," thus showing how vision may be the expression of a dominant cultural order, a device for constructing the visibility of the world.

For the *Oktober* cycle, Richter had to deal with the common and shared image of terrorism, with the memory of the RAF built by images. It is therefore a confrontation with the *representation* of terrorists created by media over the years, a representation that the terrorists themselves have contributed to build up. The history of the RAF – as has been highlighted – is also the history of the images that the group has enacted, arranged and left behind.[23] The Baader-Meinhof Gang – a media phenomenon not only because of the interest of the press and television in presiding over public comprehension – operates in perfect awareness of the weight of its own image. The terrorists of the RAF very consciously evaluated media impact and exploited it in order to promote their actions. Indeed, they had grown up in the culture of the happening, of the avant-garde street theatre, of Fluxus performances and Situationist *dérives*, all forms that encouraged the insurrectionary and subversive use of images.[24] It was also on account of this communicative ability that the State and the police apparatus tried to control the RAF's public image, both through the complicity of tabloids and the conservative press, which organized whispering campaigns and resorted to every kind of manipulation and shock, underscoring the violence of the terrorists through the use of violent images, particularly through an overexposure of the images of the criminals.

[23] See Astrid Proll, *Hans und Grete. Bilder der RAF 1967-1977*, Steidl, Göttingen 1998. Elsaesser explains how the Baader-Meinhof Gang practices remind to the contemporary idea of terrorism as a "war of image," an idea which comes both from *images of martyrs*. Indeed, the terrorists showed great expertise in promoting themselves as victims during the detention; their condition was presented as akin to that of the prisoners of concentration camps, as if to underline a manifest continuity with Nazi practices. The hunger strikes and the suicide as political gestures confirm this kind of image. They were also images of *an extremely vital avant-garde*. The bank robberies, the police pursuits, the fast cars, the transgressions, the sexual freedom and the glamorous clothes all contribute to foster an imagination of youth and anarchism, a cool frame of outlaw eroticism that the cinema itself contributed to reinforce, in a sort of "mediatic circle." "In a genealogy of terrorism as a 'war of image,' […] the RAF can claim a well-deserved place – but so can its opponents. Taking 'propaganda by deed' to a new level, the RAF exploited the 'society of the spectacle' for their own ends, to the point where the images they produced or gave rise to, became the main objectives of their actions, with the actual victims the collateral but necessary props for a successful staging." Thomas Elsaesser, *German Cinema*, cit., p. 123.
[24] *Ibidem*.

The mug shots of the *Anarchistische Gewalttäter* (Anarchist Violent Criminals) appeared in every corner of the state, and the Wanted posters – which offered a reward for any report – were displayed in every post-office as well as in shop windows. Particularly the mug shots, which were extensively exhibited in the public space, operate as a device of identification, as they epitomize the commonplace image of guilt while regulating the identification of the criminal as a criminal, according to a scheme both of depersonalization and overdetermination.

> *In the case of the RAF, a reality predominantly without images was being overcompensated by a media-driven image-world, that […] counted, above all, on the shock-and-outrage factor of a preconditioned public sphere. […] The RAF was strategically conquered and lastingly occupied through its images. It was this appropriation of a language of images by very diverse (partly state) powers that has shaped today's over all perception of the RAF phenomenon*.[25]

Significantly, after the leaders of the RAF were arrested, the publication of their declarations and the images of the prisoners were banned, according to a strategy which seems not only to reinforce the isolation and the "sensory deprivation" of identity brought about by the detention, but also, in a more banal way, to prevent the promotion of terrorists as victims or martyrs of the system. It is not by chance that – as a form of political counter-information – the *Stammheimer* prepared a volume that also contains the self-shots taken with a Minox minicam secretly smuggled into the prison.[26] On the one hand these photographs, which show the terrorist alive and smiling despite the many hunger strikes, are another demonstration of their ability to act in spite of the prohibition, while on the other they suggest an act of re-appropriation of their own images (paradoxically, this occurred a few months before the terrorists' deaths, which have been interpreted as a gesture of re-appropriation of their own bodies).

As Richter says, "there is nothing private or individual about the RAF members; they are no more than the sensational public image that the media created of them."[27]

Hence, starting from the *reality* of these images and depending on their being established as a common mnemonic horizon, Richter builds up his rereading, with the aim to reconfigure its meaning, but also to redefine the limits and the possibilities of representation and of our vision.

The photographic matrix of the paintings that compose the *Oktober* cycle is acknowledged not only in the choice of black, white and grey as the only chromatic elements, but also in the faithful reproduction of the same compositional order

[25] Wolfgang Kraushaar, "Zwischen Popkultur, Politik und Zeitgeschichte," cit., *ivi*, pp. 127-128.
[26] The fact is analysed by Heiko Reusch, *Zur Vorstellung des Terroristen*, Tectum Verlag, Marburg 2008, pp. 24-27. The volume of the RAF, published before the German Autumn, is Rote Armee Fraktion, *Texte: der RAF*, Verlag Bo Cavefors, Malmö 1977.
[27] Gerhard Richter, *The Daily Practice of Painting*, cit. in Frances Guerin, Roger Hallas (eds.), *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture*, Wallflower Press, London-New York 2007, p. 121.

used in the press images: points of view, centres of focalization and different types of framing. At the same time, 'full evidence' of the photographs is denied through various forms of perceptive alteration. The shadings, *flous*, and large sections of grey that cover broad parts of the paintings actually make some of the figures difficult to detect. Hence this painting style aimed at "the detriment of the image or, at least, at the detriment of the object described"[28] hinders the very act of interpretation, for it forces us to look in a different way and grabs, as it were, the subjects portrayed away from our sight. Thus a distance is created which restores "une intimité aux personnes dépeintes et une universalité au thème primordial du cycle."[29]

The process of veiling the scenes is progressive and inversely proportional to our desire for looking. *Tote*, for example, shows three different versions of the same image portraying the dead body of Meinhof. The photo, published in *Stern*, shows a close up of half of the woman's face. The head, slightly reclined, is framed by short dark hair, which contrasts with the paleness of her face. The neck is marked by a clear black line: a deep wound, with no blood. The mouth is open; the eyes, half-closed, suggest the sense of a sudden meeting with death. The tension that can be perceived in her face and the position of her body, lying on a plain surface, remind us of a corpse placed on a dissecting table. Indeed, what this photograph seems to convey is nothing but the brutal recording of a death; in this, it is similar to a medical report. However, the three paintings that Richter creates starting from this model differ in size, arrangement of the subject portrayed and intensity of the blurring. The smaller the paintings, the more the human figure looks distant;[30] the position of the head is slightly different in each of the three paintings; and the background gets darker and darker. As a result, the figures become more and more blurred: while in the first painting the features of Meinhof's face are still recognisable, in the last one they are so blurred that they look totally vague and indistinct. The gradual disappearing of the subject, its transformation into a pure shadow, on the one hand suggests the sense of a loss connected to death, but on the other hand it drives us away from the facts in the direction of an "indistinct" and universal dimension of suffering for such a cruel death. From painting to painting then, Richter "also smoothes out the texture of her face and neck and darkens the background, thereby blurring the dividing line between life and death."[31] It is on this vague borderline between life and death that our sight vacillates, challenged by a deep sense of mystery and annihilation. Of the original photograph, with its claim of asserting a 'fact' in a shameless and objective way, only a spectral trace remains: the

[28] Interview with Robert Storr, 2001, in *Gerhard Richter la pratica quotidiana della pittura, 1962-2001*, cit., p. 223.
[29] Achim Borchardt-Hume, "Dreh dich nicht um." *Ne te retourne pas. Les peintures de Richter de la fin des années 1980*, in Mark Godfrey et al. (eds.), *Gerhard Richter. Panorama. Rétrospective*, Edition du Centre Pompidou, Paris 2012, p. 167.
[30] The size of the paintings is following the order of their exhibition: 62 cm. x 67 cm.; 62 cm. x 62 cm.; 35 cm. x 40 cm.
[31] Kaja Silverman, *Flesh of My Flesh*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2009, p. 194.

painting destabilizes the experience of vision, giving us back not the truth, but a standpoint for further research. This experience involves both the viewer, who is denied an unequivocal vision, and the artist, whose work may only consist in a series of attempts, of figural approximations, as the repetitions of the same image show. After all, "by means of the blurring of his paintings, he breaks down the symbiosis of reality and the past that exists in the photographs."[32] Death, first recorded as the administrative banality of a public event in the photographs of the police and then exhibited as a sort of spectacle in the press, in the *Fotobilder* finds again a dimension of blind and opaque effectiveness: a dimension of inscrutable mystery.

In *Erhängte*, the body of Ensslin hanging from the bars of her cell's window is almost invisible, placed as it is in a protected space, hidden in the grey background, and surrounded by a white, phantasmal light. Paradoxically, only from a certain distance we can perceive her profile and distinguish it in the web of screens and veils created by Richter (a cloth hanging on the left side similar to a big black stain, the grid structure of the bars from which the body is hanging, the hair that covers her face…). The image seems to melt, it literally 'dissolves,' denying us the possibility of violating the space of death. "Richter recoups Ensslin's 'privacy' when he safely sequesters the corpse behind the surface of the brushstroke, the blurred surface of the image."[33] If the photograph taken by the police works as a "proof of the crime," Richter's painting prevents us from identifying the body, assigning to the image the function of a cover, as if it could return a denied dignity to it. To the public exhibition of the dead body – an exhibition which satisfies a fantasy of hate and revenge,[34] or just a voyeuristic pleasure – the painting opposes the intrinsic impossibility to show death. Exposed in its tragic brutality, through the evident solitude of its subject, the vision of that body – a body with no comfort, lost in a desolate space – causes a feeling of compassion for that tragic end.

The threshold between the visible and the invisible also corresponds to the separation between public and private sphere, a separation that the terrorists, by choosing a political struggle, resolutely denied. It is exactly the connection of public and private, of life and History, that seems obscure and fatal to Richter: "the public posture of these people: nothing private, but the overriding, ideological motivation."[35] By 'obscuring' the public vision of their deaths, this division is restored and preserved in the paintings. After all, it is the elementary truth of death, not only as an experience that denies any chance of communion and is impossible to express but also as an event in which the subject (re)joins

[32] Armin Zweite, *Gerhard Richter's Album of Photographs, Collages and Sketches*, in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh et al. (eds.), *Gerhard Richter: Atlas: The Reader*, cit., p. 56.
[33] Frances Guerin, *The Grey Space Between: Gerhard Richter's* 18.Oktober 1977, in Frances Guerin, Roger Hallas (eds.), *The Image and the Witness*, cit., p. 118.
[34] On the paintings of Richter as transposition of a "fantasy of hate" see *Conversation with Jan Thorn Prikker on* 18.Oktober 1977, cit., pp. 20-22. About iconization and exposure of the "body of the enemy" see Giovanni De Luna, *Il corpo del nemico ucciso*, Einaudi, Torino 2006.
[35] *Ibidem*.

himself and his own history, which gives the *terrorists* their original quality as *human beings*. What Richter represents is a sort of paradoxical *redemption*: finding in death the common horizon of every existence, one that no political gesture can tame, Richter identifies in the dead body a naked humanity in all its evidence.

The paintings unveil the photographic act as *a relationship between visibility and concealment*, a relationship that is always the result of a 'vision,' thus unmasking the alleged objectivity of documents and traces of evidence, the memory crystallized in images.

Instead of resolving the ambiguities of the visible, Richter stresses them: by blurring the vision, he not only declares the incompleteness of the image, but also opens a gap in the alleged capacity of media images to give shape to experience. Nonetheless, something in the process *is* revealed: our own gaze and its crisis. Richter represents both photography and its off-screen: our will to see but also our eagerness to possess, the violence of our vision. In relation to this aspect, the use of *flou* and *sfumato*, by forcing us to focus on the painting in a different way, breaks off with our perceptive habits and, in the case of the photographs of the Baader-Meinhof Gang used as a model, breaks the crystallized form of the memory and trauma, opening the possibility for a new kind of understanding.

The same can be said about the representation of Baader's dead body, to whom the couple of paintings *Man Shot Down 1-2* are dedicated. In this case the difference between the two versions of the same image is overtly acknowledged. The passage from the one vision to the other forces us to change our way of looking, thus revealing the workings of representation and its weight in defining our experience. It is in the unnatural position of the body, lying down diagonally through the horizontal width of the canvas, the head tilted backwards and the left arm abandoned with no control that death is revealed. The body, still discernible in this painting, is surrounded by indefinite objects similar to flashes of light or black stains. In the first version, the richness of details upon which the photograph constructs its evidence (the gun, the cartridge cases, the exact position of the hand) has already disappeared. In the second painting, the point of view and the type of framing have changed: the body is more in the foreground, magnified yet more difficult to see because of the blurring effect. The distinction between the figure and the background is weakened, the body of Baader looks ethereal, immersed in a whitish glow. The experience of death literally becomes here an experience of loss and the dead body is a shapeless figure of an absent-present, the image of a passage towards 'nothingness.' The publication of the photos (close-ups) of Baader's dead body, his head surrounded by blood, gave rise to a scandal and a debate about the obscenity of the horror turned into a show. The image re-proposed in Richter's paintings is not there to denounce the cruel glance of the media, rather it invites us to look at death as a limit and a paradox, as a mysterious evidence which becomes even more obscure when, as in the case of the terrorists, it is bound to a political gesture.

Each of the paintings that belong to the *Oktober* cycle follows the same principle: blurring the vision, withdrawing the subject from its full decipherability. The

world we experience is a world of ghosts, dominated by grey, the colour that, since the 1960s, has been elected by Richter as "the only possible equivalent for indifference, non-commitment, absence of opinion, absence of shape […]. It has the capacity that no other colour has, to make 'nothing' visible."[36] Many years later, referring to the *Oktober* cycle, Richter would explain that

> *here the indifference of grey is charged with a new pathos. In the light of* 18.Oktober 1977*, when I see the Grey monochrome paintings I realise that, perhaps, and surely not entirely consciously, that was the only way for me to paint concentration camps. It is impossible to paint the misery of life, except, may be, in grey, to cover it.*[37]

This association with the representation of concentration camps is symptomatic of the impossibility of representation. The use of a very similar formal strategy indicates the common traumatic root of the works and the difficulty for Richter – particularly with regard to the Holocaust – to give a shape to trauma. It is a long research, started in the early 1960s, which finds in *Oktober* an ideal achievement. Therefore, this work seems to acquire a value which transcends the historical reality represented.

The aesthetic choice of an undefined, 'hazy' vision also reminds us of the form of the *image-lacune* theorized by Didi-Huberman: a place where the unveiling is inseparable from the inadequacy to show.

> *The* lacuna-image *is a* trace-image *and a* disappearance-image *at the same time. Something remains that is not the thing, but a scrap of its resemblance. Something – very little, a film – remains of a process of annihilation: that something, therefore, bears witness to a disappearance while simultaneously resisting it, since it becomes the opportunity of its possible remembrance. It is neither full presence, nor absolute absence. It is neither resurrection, nor death without remains. It is death insofar as it makes remains. It is a world proliferating with lacunae, with singular images which, placed together in a montage, will encourage readability, an effect of knowledge.*[38]

The very idea of montage as a juxtaposition of fragments that is able to reveal new meanings, provides further suggestions of how to interpret Richter's work. *Oktober* is a cycle, a series of paintings which cannot be split into parts. This formal configuration invites us to read the cycle privileging simultaneity rather than chronology. However, a 'narrative' order is not utterly excluded. Although there is no prearranged plan, *Jugendbildnis* is usually considered the first paint-

[36] Gerhard Richter, *From a Letter to Edy de Wilde*, *23 February 1975*, in Hans Ulrich Obrist (ed.), *The Daily Practice of Painting: Writings and Interviews 1962-1993*, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 1995, pp. 82-83.
[37] Interviewed by Gregorio Magnani, "Gerhard Richter: For Me It Is Absolutely Necessary that the Baader-Meinhof Is a Subject for Art," in *Flash Art*, no. 146, May-June 1989, pp. 94-97, p. 97. Richter is referring here to the big grey painting titled *Graue Bilder* and realized between 1972 and 1976.
[38] Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images malgré tout*, Les Editions de Minuit, Paris 2003 (Eng. ed. *Images in Spite All*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 2008, p. 167).

ing: it portrays the young Meinhof before she decided to devote herself to the armed struggle. This image, which "has the formal coordinates of the photographs published in high school yearbooks,"[39] shows a melancholic teenager, thus suggesting an horizon of possibilities later denied. The last painting of the cycle is *Beerdigung*, the big funeral painting. This conclusion underlines an existential and political path of loss and failure. We cannot reconstruct here the very long ordeal that preceded the authorization for the burial of the three terrorists in a cemetery of Stuttgart, after the refusal of many cities to enable the burial to take place. Let us just mention that the recognition of the right to be buried in a peaceful place, as well as the possibility to receive a funeral, caused a controversy, which prevented the mourning process from taking its course.

The argument concerning the burial, the refusal to erect a monument thus granting a "place of recollection," becomes the very centre of the political and cultural discussion of the German Autumn, with an intensity that seems to echo Antigone's tragic archetype. In this climate, the funerals, followed by thousands of political militants and by hundreds of photographers and television operators, turn into an incandescent farewell rite, resembling more a tribute paid to martyrs than a leave-taking. In the big painting (200 cm. x 320 cm.) that Richter dedicates to this event, the funeral procession and the crowd in the cemetery can be recognized as such only from a certain distance: if we get closer to the painting we can see only different shades of grey. There is no celebratory intent and no sense of an homage; we only perceive a path where the funeral procession and the crowd trace the final steps. It is a farewell, announced by all the images of death within the cycle.

Re-vision

18.Oktober 1977 belongs to an historical-memorial rereading of the years of terrorism where the reconsideration of terrorists as human beings prevails over their being seen as mere political subjects. This interpretation became a recurring one in the 1990s, when the problem seemed to concern, in particular, the legitimacy of representing dead bodies, as well as the pornographic quality of the vision of death and the cruelty inherent to images: a visual trauma, rather than an historical one.

However, Richter introduces a change compared with the many representations of terrorism that other media, and cinema above all, produced: he is the first one to show the scene of death removed from the "crime scene." A traumatic, political tangle (the suicide whose circumstances were never completely explained), the death of the terrorists of the Baader-Meinhof Group in fact remains for a long time an off-screen experience: it is suggested, evoked, denied, but never shown or represented in a fictional way. The first film to enter the prison and show the dead bodies is, in 2008, *Der Baader-Meinhof Complex* (Uli

[39] Kaja Silverman, *Flesh of My Flesh*, cit., p. 196.

Edel). This resistance to show the corpses is counterbalanced by the tendency to display, right from the beginning, the images of the bodies in the coffin, arranged for the funeral. This can be observed in the well-known image of Holger Meins who, after the hunger strike, looked like a skeleton – a real *figura Christi*, used as a fetishized image of political martyrdom; it can also be said about the dead body of Gudrun Ensslin, tenaciously claimed by her family, which was shown in *Deutschland im Herbst* as a sort of relic in movement. Conversely, Richter avoids any type of sanctification or heroic representation. Rather, he seems to rewrite the images of trauma, removing them from the spectacular and disciplining discourse of the media and revealing to us the *reality of death*, within the image. Richter dramatically reverses the image of the crime and exhorts us to look in this "commonplace," mysterious and banal, unimaginable and yet well-known, and to recognize something which belongs to us.

Private Images in Place of the Beloved Bodies: Relics Against the Politics of Disappearance

Alice Cati, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Abstract

By analyzing some case studies that develop in different ways the symbolic value of home pictures in terms of restorative burial, the article reflects on the relationship between photography and memory in response to the campaign of political repression and terror occurred in Argentina and Chile from the 1970s to the 1990s. In the last decades, several artists have based their works on the reuse and recontextualisation of private photos, aiming at denouncing the denial of burial. This study will firstly focus on two well-known projects by Argentinean photographers – Marcelo Brodsky's *Buena Memoria* (*Good Memory*, 1997) and Gustavo Germano's *Ausenc'as* (*Absences*, 2006) – which not only highlight the physical absence of the disappeared, but also translate the aesthetics of the family into a depiction of grief and violent past. Secondly, the study moves into the Chilean political arena: by examining some sequences from two documentaries – Silvio Caiozzi's *Fernando ha vuelto* (*Fernando Returns*, 1998) and Patricio Guzmán's *Nostalgia de la luz* (*Nostalgia for the light*, 2012) – it will demonstrate how it is possible to turn the natural assumption of "(private) images are relics" into "relics are (private) images." By using both social practices of memory and visual artistic operations, it is possible to notice on the one hand an aesthetic need to give real identity back to the victims; on the other hand, a practice of looking, which is specifically marked by postmemorial interpretations, and *backshadowing*.

In the aftermath of the military dictatorships in Latin America, many art works, including films, were produced in order to deal with the phenomenon of massive and forced disappearances. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, all the promises of modernization were tragically betrayed and repressed throughout the continent by subverted governmental authorities that led to the extrajudicial kidnapping and executions under the Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile, the Dirty War in Argentina, the military repression in Brazil, to name a few. The political ideals of social justice and equality, shared by the young generations during the 1960s, were quickly wiped out and methodically oppressed by the military rule, aiming at creating a climate of violence and pervasive threat of social persecution.

From different points of view and with different representational strategies,

several artists and filmmakers have made strong standpoints on this issue. On the one hand, the aestheticization of loss has represented the main creative force in dealing with a traumatic past. On the other, from a political perspective, those artistic responses have aimed at denouncing the denial of burial, which has been used as a means to extend the state of terror to the afterworld.

The annihilation and the funerary obstruction of the material body have led the victims' families to sublimate the private pictures of the beloved as privileged channels for their personal mourning. In other words, this common social practice has usually revealed the purpose of rehumanizing the victim before finding scattered remains, while the indexical nature of the photographic sign has intensified the relic value of a portrait that cannot be placed on the grave. Meeting the need of these people to reject the idea of their relatives' forced non-existence and to fill the empty space left by their death, the essay will analyze some case studies[1] that develop in different ways the symbolic value of the private photographs in terms of restorative burial.

Firstly, this study will focus on two significant projects by Argentinean photographers – Marcelo Brodsky's *Buena Memoria* (*Good Memory*, 1997) and Gustavo Germano's *Ausenc'as* (*Absences*, 2006) – which not only highlight the physical absence of the disappeared, but also translate the aesthetics of the family into a depiction of grief and violent past. Secondly, the study will move into the Chilean political arena: by analyzing some sequences – Silvio Caiozzi's *Fernando ha vuelto* (*Fernando Returns*, 1998) and Patricio Guzmán's *Nostalgia de la luz* (*Nostalgia for the Light*, 2012) – the essay will demonstrate how it is possible to turn the natural assumption of "(private) images are relics" into "relics are (private) images." The films show not only how private images are physically used as a sort of dowsing rods during the search for body fragments, but also how the practices of exhumation may offer an uncanny representation of these two intertwining and complementary ways of visualizing the emanation of the referent, that is to say, of the irreplaceable, beloved body. Thus, the filmic representation becomes a burial gesture in order to dispose the missing people in their lacking physicality and at the same time assign a position to those who still live. Facing a broader theoretical debate about visual culture, memory and postmemory related to specific

[1] The four case studies are well-known within the cultural debate about the visual practices connected to Argentinean and Chilean post-dictatorships. From a methodological point of view, the selected works have been chosen with the purpose of highlighting the transnational nature of the political trauma that has affected Latin America since the 1970s. Moreover, they were produced in different historical periods: on the one hand, Brodsky's and Caiozzi's projects represent acts of memory much closer to the crash of the military dictatorship; on the other hand, Germano's and Guzmán's ones testify a persistent lack of restorative justice in the present. Finally, according to the previous literature, it is possible to reflect on two different, but coexisting, social practices of re-use of private images in public spaces. Brodsky's and Germano's works need to be related to the visual and performance practices that deal with disappearance and engendered by the cooperation of human rights organizations (Madres y Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, H.I.J.O.S, etc.) and artists since 1983. Whereas Chilean documentaries, specifically Caiozzi's one, must be read in the light of actions and discourses of the Comisión Nacional de la Verdad y la Reconciliación.

politics of memory in Argentina and Chile,[2] such case studies show the intimate connection between photography and trauma, as well as the subjective turn as an ideological and conceptual reconstruction of the past based on the privatization of memories and juridical testimonies.[3]

A hindsight glance at pictures from the past

In 1996, twenty years after the coup d'état in Argentina, Marcelo Brodsky began his photographic essay *Buena Memoria*,[4] in which he meditated on the collective memory from a private perspective. To carry out this project, the photographer drew on emotional memory and the purity of childhood in order to denounce the human tragedy occurred during the years of the Dirty War.

The title 'Buena Memoria' alludes both to the personal memories brought back through the photographic shots, which render present an absent past, and to the fact that having a good memory means remembering people, events and things so that they do not fade into forgetfulness.

Through the reuse of private images, previously stuck into his teenage photo album, Marcelo Brodsky created a visual space where the memories of the disappeared symbolically intertwined personal and social needs of recovery. Most of the pictures had been taken and gathered by the artist since 1968, when he was fourteen and had just begun his photographic practice.

In a specific part of the project, a selection of fifteen pictures taken from the family album depicts the artist's brother, Fernando Rubén, as a main subject, kidnapped in 1979 at the age of twenty-two. The series *Nando, mi hermano* starts and comes to an end with black and white snapshots of Nando where he is either alone or looks like a ghostly presence. In the key image of the series, *Fernando en la pieza*, one of the first pictures Brodsky had shot in his life, Nando is in the room he shared with his brother, sitting on the bed, but his face appears blurry and shapeless. Taken with the underexposure of a Euming, an old camera Marcelo's father gave to him, the subject was still and motionless for one minute. The fact that in the picture Nando seems to have lost his face features may be interpreted as a sort of premonition of future events, an uncanny sign of a tragic destiny.

Photography with its ability to freeze a point in time is a perfect tool that can

[2] See Nelly Richard, *Crítica de la memoria*, Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, Santiago de Chile 2010; Ludmila Da Silva Catela, Mariana Giordano, Elizabeth Jelin (eds.), *Fotografía e identidad. Captura por la cámara-devolución por la memoria*, Nueva Trilce, Buenos Aires 2010; Gabriel Gatti, *Identidades desaparecidas. Peleas por el sentido en los mundos de la desaparición forzada*, Prometeo Libros, Buenos Aires 2012.

[3] Beatriz Sarlo, *Tiempo Pasado: Cultura de la Memoria y Giro Subjetivo: Una Discusión*, Siglo Veintiuno Editores, Buenos Aires 2005, pp. 21-22.

[4] The photographic series can be accessed in the web exhibition at http://www.marcelobrodsky.com/intro.html, last visit 1 December 2014.

be used to connect the past with the bodily reality of the photographed subjects. According to Roland Barthes, by looking at a photograph we cannot deny that the "thing has been there."[5] As such, the picture of Nando attests to the physical existence of a person, whose body literally vanished, and as it usually happens, it helps people think about the present in light of the past.

Although the image shows a concluded, past event, it is boundlessly accessible through interpretation and recontextualisation, and thus becomes a changeable and not a fixed reference point. A dialectic is involved between the factual source and its re-appropriation in the present; in other words the future events directly influence the reading of the past. Re-displaying Nando's old pictures acknowledges not only the incommensurability between the meaning of the image in the past and the one it holds now, but also the possibility to carry a message of death into the future.

In this section of the exhibition there is another picture, a crystallized vision explicitly read by Marcelo Brodsky as a "portent of later events."[6] In *Fernando en la fiesta*, Nando was photographed during a family party, where adults and children were spending time together. However, in that precise moment, the line of sight that connects the pictured subject and the observer is interrupted: whilst Nando appears with his eyes closed, the people next to him are looking the other way:

> *The backs of the guests remind me a little of the way people turn their backs on what was happening around them during the worst years of the military dictatorship. There also seems to be a generation gap: the grown-ups ignore the children, represented by Fernando, and look the other way.*[7]

It is possible to imagine that the nostalgic desires shape the current act of viewing, because it is clearly settled on the discrepancy between what the viewer knows and what the subject of the image cannot have known. That is the reason why, as far as the work of postmemorial interpretation is concerned, Marianne Hirsch assumes that "the picture's indexicality is more performative – based on the viewer's needs and desires – than factual."[8] Moreover, in front of every "picture from before," the vectorial temporality typically displayed in the family album collapses. The representation of a lifetime is marked by the natural growing of children or the unfolding rituals of the social space, but the recollection of traumatic events, such as disease and death, are left in the blank space between the images. Thus, if the picture was taken to preserve

[5] Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire. Notes sur la photographie*, Ed. Gallimard, Paris 1980 (Eng. ed. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Hill and Wang, New York 1981).
[6] Nerea Arruti, "Tracing the Past: Marcelo Brodsky's Photography as Memory Art," in *Paragraph*, vol. 30, no. 1, March 2007, pp. 101-120.
[7] http://www.marcelobrodsky.com/intro.html, last visit 1 December 2014.
[8] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*, Columbia University Press, New York 2012, p. 61.

the memory of a precious and intimate experience, by trying to immortalize the originality of an instant (the projection of the past onto the future), the emotional involvement in seeing a lost happiness actually activates an opposite reaction: the projection of the future onto the past.[9]

From a personal point of view, Marcelo Brodsky delves into heterogeneous time plans to analyze the dynamic layering of time, intrinsically related to the mourning process of a death without a body. It can also be noticed that the restorative looking is constructed by unveiling a subjectivity that permeates the single images taken into account as well as the whole visual project. Personal memory, by working in an articulated way through an artistic expression, triggers the process of collective memory. Following Brodsky, the viewers are perfectly aware that these pictures play a part in both private time and the time of history. This temporal intertwining produces the collapse of the conventional time frames, which surfaces in conventional historicizing of the dictatorship. Instead of the common concept of linearity and chronological progression, an emotional connection to the past signals that the temporal dimension is porous: not only does the very moment of the past penetrate into the present, but also the very moment of the future penetrates into the past.

Reframing the private absence

The migration of the original private image into a new one, affected by the superimposition of heterogeneous projections, shows how the familial structures of mediation and representation increasingly favor the transgenerational relationships. As Marianne Hirsch points out:

> *Familial structures of mediation and representation facilitate the affiliative acts of postgeneration. The idiom of family can become an accessible lingua franca easing identification and projection across distance and difference. This explains the pervasiveness of family pictures and family narratives as artistic media in the aftermath of trauma.*[10]

Private images are not only affective memories of personal experiences, but they are also conventional representations, through which the family is perceived from the outside. The family snapshot is the image through which family members imagine themselves, and can be recognized by others.[11] In this sense, a person can easily imagine to be in the pictures of other people and share their

[9] Nelly Richard (ed.), *Políticas y estéticas de la memoria*, Editorial Un Cuarto Propio, Santiago de Chile 2000, p. 166.
[10] *Ivi*, p. 39. See also, Nelly Richard, *Fracturas de la memoria. Arte y pensamiento crítico*, Siglo XXI, Buenos Aires 2007.
[11] Luisella Farinotti, "Fuori di sé. Identità e immagine," in *Comunicazioni Sociali*, (special issue on *L'impulso autoetnografico. Radicamento e riflessività nell'era intermediale*, ed. by Alice Cati and Glenda Franchin) no. 3, 2012, p. 450.

aspirations and desires they secretly harbour. Thus, the recovery process of those who have been lost appears particularly effective when the past is re-enacted in the present by means of private images.

A literal re-enactment of past family experiences is presented in Gustavo Germano's visual project, *Ausenc'as*, inaugurated on 26 February 2008 at the Centro Cultural Recoleta in Buenos Aires.[12] The photographic exhibit displays fourteen sets of two pictures, where an old family picture from the 1970s is placed next to a new one shot more than thirty years later with the same people, décor and conditions as the originals. However, the viewers immediately face the empty space left by the vanished body. Even the title of the exhibition alludes to the idea of erasure by removing the stem in the letter 'i' of the word 'ausencias'.

Ordinary moments as well as extraordinary rituals are eternalized by the original pictures that still spread their poignancy in the present. Their euphoric and crystalline atmospheres deeply move the observer, whose gaze is suddenly magnetized by the palpable void of the second picture put beside the former one.[13] Every sign is methodically rearranged and every scene is artificially re-staged, except for the fact that someone is not there anymore.

Germano captures absence by re-photographing families, including his own, prior to and following the disappearance of one or more loved ones. For instance, for the recreation of the photograph of his own family, he chose a portrait of himself with his brothers – Guillermo, Diego and Eduardo.

The picture was taken in a photographic studio, during a journey from the province of Entre Rios in Argentina to Uruguay, its neighboring country. While the family was crossing the international border, the Argentinian police officially requested a picture of the four brothers. Except for the fact that Eduardo is missing, the grown-up men carefully performed their old picture in the new one. Also here, three temporal levels are interconnected: firstly, the original picture congeals forever a moment in time; secondly, it is allowed to look at it in present time; thirdly, such an image projects itself into the future by reiterating its message forever. In other words, a weird tension influences the reading of the signs of the past: why shouldn't Germano's photo be interpreted as a memory of the future? Is it really possible to disregard the latent gaze of the main enunciator/addresser, the Argentina military control that ruled the private/family life before and after the atrocity?

Moreover, making the absence of the body visible, another element stands out: the passage of time and the traumatic interruption of the natural and progressive continuity of life. Actually, the ghostly presence of the disappeared is

[12] The group-photograph can be accessed in the web exhibition at http://www.gustavogermano.com/#ausencias, last visit 1 December 2014. The project has also been developed in two other series: *Ausencias – Brazil* and *Distancias*, devoted to displaced people.

[13] Celina Van Dembroucke, "The Absence Made Visible: The Case of *Ausenc'as*, Gustavo Germano's Photographic Exhibition," in *InTensions Journal*, no. 4, Fall 2010, http://www.yorku.ca/intent/issue4/articles/pdfs/celinavandembrouckearticle.pdf, last visit 1 December 2014.

not in a condition of invisibility, that is to say, someone or something that is present but not visible. On the contrary, it might be said that the proper aesthetic dimension of the disappeared body is that of a-visibility. After being defeated by the violent politics of forced disappearance, the victims are the *sans-traces*, because for them there is not even an inscription on their tombs that could be the only traces left after their death.[14]

For example, in the last diptych of the series, the picture of two young parents, who are showing their few-months old baby to an amateur photographer/addressee, is followed by the portrait of a thirty-year-old woman deprived of her parental care. Leaning on her knees on the same bed where her parents sat, Laura Cecilia Mendez Oliva looks at the camera, in order to evoke that nothing can replace the material emptiness of the bedroom, which symbolizes the most intimate space in the house. Birth and death are put side by side, although the latter cannot be honored by a decorous inscription in the social space.

The very uncanny effect of Germano's photographic project is produced not only by giving prominence to the empty spot that results from reshooting the same pictures, but also by depicting a spectral community which overlaps into the political community of the living.

Moving from a personal experience, represented by the private image of the four Germano brothers, the author is interested in reaching the grief and the mourning process both at a personal and collective level. Because of its serial visual and narrative structures, *Ausenc'as* stands for a symbolic palimpsest of memory, where the intrafamilial relationships (the transmission of memories among the members of the same familial group) open up to the intergenerational and transgenerational exchanges (the transmission of memories among different generations and different social contexts).

A "warm" piece of evidence

In the range of the visual expressions devoted to cultural trauma, we can find many documentary films that aim to witness human suffering inflicted by state terror. The operations of borrowing and recontextualizing private images drew the attention to documenting the victims' physical existence, since the light emanating from the body had chemically affected the photographic film. If that unique analogical shot had been impressed by the individual and irreplaceable body, there are still irrefutable proofs and tools that can be used to ensure resistance to oblivion and contradict national attempts to seclude the country. Similarly, representing a material connection with the past, family pictures turn into relics both at a symbolical and ritual level: under conditions of disappearance, when there is no physical body to mourn, any image of the beloved is considered as an object

[14] Jean Louis Déotte, *La Falsification par les disparus*, in Alain Brossat, Jean Louis Déotte (eds.), *La Mort dissoute. Disparition et spectralité*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2002, p. 228.

of credence, a fetish that bears the traces of the missing person. Reflecting on the concept of index, it is not surprising to find documentary works that enlighten the strong relation between photographic signs and human remnants.

For instance, in the documentary *Fernando ha vuelto* the Chilean filmmaker Silvio Caiozzi filmed the dramatic identification of Fernando de la Cruz Olivares Mori's skeleton by the team of forensic experts and members of the Instituto Médico Legal, namely the coroner's office in Santiago.

Spectators are asked to participate in the dramatic experience of the relatives of a detained person, who later disappeared, and whose corpse finally returned home. The film documents the family process of bereavement, in particular of Fernando's widow, Agave Diaz, to ritualize an unnatural mourning. Following the development of the four chapters of the film (*The Identification, The Wait, The Return*, and *The Goodbye*), we become aware of the fact that the exhumed remains of the victim need to be identified, seen, described and assessed before giving him a respectable burial. Thus, only the recovery of the relics is able to interrupt and put an end to the state of superimposition of life onto death and indeterminacy that conditions the fate of any disappeared person, as long as he/she is still missing and, as a consequence, not proven dead. Nevertheless, as Hito Steyerl explains, "Being subject to observation provokes the second death of the victim: the one that ends its state of limbo."[15] During the investigation conducted by Patricia Hernàndez, a forensic medical doctor, and Isabel Rebecco, a forensic anthropologist, on Fernando's bones, the documentary assigns a specific ethical role to the spectator, because by watching the film he/she is included in the process of observation, which is going to declare the person dead. It is as if a kind of eye-witnessing is provided, as a final support not only to the belief that the person has died, but also to attest the countless injuries he/she received at the hands of his torturers.

Probably, the crucial sequence of the film concerns the moment when Hernández describes in great detail the methodology employed to identify Fernando's skeleton that needs to be superimposed with Fernando's private portraits. While some shocking documents are shown to the camera, the spectator is forced to watch a macabre montage of Fernando as a living being over images of his skeleton. In other words, four pictures are glued on a sheet, highlighting a development of the somatic features as a result of the juxtaposition of a private image and a picture of the victim's skull. Inscriptions of the anthropometric measurements point out the good match between the two figures, or the entanglement of death and life. For instance, by using the split screen filming technique in a frame, a sweeping motion from left to right of the dividing line turns a wedding picture into a depiction of death. Slowly, Fernando's profile becomes a skull and Agave, by his side in the snapshot, progressively disappears. Although more wedding pictures appear

[15] Hito Steyerl, "Missing People: Entanglement, Superimposition, and Exhumation as Sites of Indeterminacy," in *E-Flux Journal*, no. 30, October 2012, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/missing-people-entanglement-superposition-and-exhumation-as-sites-of-indeterminacy, last visit 1 December 2014.

a few minutes later with the clear purpose of re-humanizing the victim[16] and making the spectators familiarize with Fernando's semblance,[17] it is impossible to look at Fernando's portrait without thinking of him as a "soon-to-become-victim" of a waiting atrocity. In this sense, the reuse of family memories seems to emphasize a state of vulnerability, as if intimate life naturally relied on ephemeral happiness and fleeting plenitude, because an overwhelming catastrophe is always forthcoming.

On the contrary, a sort of strength stems from the factual evidence of bones and the related images of all the remains. By providing a direct contact with Fernando, the irrefutable proof of his death[18] engenders a restorative effect in those who have suffered the loss of the vanished body. Instead of distancing and abjection, Fernando's widow felt the warmness of the bones. In a moving sequence, she picks them up and makes the skeleton part of the family's ritual of mourning. It is a gesture of familiarity and closeness as a response to the outrage and acts of denial perpetrated by the military. Later she declared: "I had to touch them, but I also had to give them warmth."[19]

Once identified, the remains of the missing person can return to his/her siblings and be buried again, allowing the bones recover their former dignity. Although, at the beginning, Fernando's family photographs and the close-ups of his skull could not be integrated smoothly, but such a photographic superimposition challenges the spectators to accept the entanglement between death and life.

The documentary ends with the preparation of the funeral and the ceremony at a public cemetery, where the burial is attended by Fernando's relatives and a crowd of political activists. Without forgetting that many of the disappeared remain nameless, Caiozzi makes the victims (Fernando, but also his relatives Agave, Fernando's mother and his son) both recognizable and representative in order to stand in the family as a prime site of affliction as well as of social recovery.

Collecting fragments of matter

According to Michel de Certeau, burying a dead person has a symbolic meaning that reassesses his/her place in history. By marking the boundary between present and past, societies try to reshape the horizon of possibilities for those

[16] See Tomás Crowder-Taraborrelli, "Exhumations and double disappearance: Silvio Caiozzi's *Fernando ha vuelto* and *¿Fernando ha vuelto a desaparecer?*," in *Social Identities*, vol. 19, no. 3-4, p. 393.
[17] See Macarena Gòmez-Barris, *Where Memory Dwells: Culture and State Violence in Chile*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 2009, p. 113.
[18] As Caiozzi's second documentary *¿Fernando ha vuelto a desaparecer?* (2006) clarifies, Fernando's corpse had been re-exhumed in order to conduct a second survey on his identity. Because of the new forensic analysis, the family suffered a double disappearance of their beloved relative.
[19] Macarena Gòmez-Barris, *Where Memory Dwells*, cit., p. 111.

who are living.[20] In other words, inserting the person as an ancestor, means revising familial genealogies as well as national ones.[21]

Since the indeterminacy of remains universalizes family relations, any political hindrance to victims' identification is an interruption of the genealogical order. Literally mixed up with dust and heterogeneous fragments, the corpses are only nameless and faceless human remnants in the mass graves dug by the military forces.

To unfold this issue, the last documentary of Patricio Guzmán, *Nostalgia de la luz* follows a group of women in search of human remains scattered around the desert lands of Chile.

The Atacama Desert of Chile, 10,000 feet above sea level, is considered the driest place on Earth. It is a place where archeologists search for traces of humanity's past collecting human remnants kept intact by the fiery rays of the sun, from pre-Columbian mummies to explorers and miners, to the bones of political prisoners disappeared during Pinochet's dictatorship. At the same time, Atacama Desert's sky is so translucent that it allows astronomers to see the movement of stars and constellations very clearly by means of dozens of high-tech telescopes. Whilst the astronomers scan the skies looking for clues to the history of the universe, at the foot of the observatories a group of women is still digging for bone fragments of their relatives who vanished during the repressive dictatorship.

Recurrently in *Nostalgia de la luz*, the filmmaker wanders around the sterile, rocky, desolate ground of the Atacama Desert with his camera. In one of these scenes, associated with Vicky Saavedra's testimony, the camera lingers on a black and white frame plongée portrait of her disappeared brother. The woman tells the viewer that a few teeth and bits of bones are all what is left of her beloved relative. Furthermore, the archeologists found only one foot, which was still in his shoe. Again the camera moves toward José's photograph, showing the smooth surface and sharpness of the image as opposed to the parched and fissured soil underneath it. Bleached by the dazzling light of the sun, the young man semblance is increasingly losing his recognizability. This close-up symbolically represents the dialectic between the whole and the fragment.

The aesthetic strategy of recontextualizing private images is employed in two more sequences of Guzmán's documentary, but they engage different practices of memory. Toward the end, the director assigns Valentina Rodriguez, the daughter of detained and disappeared parents, to unveil the deep meaning of the film. As an astronomer, she has learnt to give another dimension to pain, absence and loss. What happened to her parents can take on a new meaning if we consider the universe as an vast site of energy and recyclable matter. Thus, celestial bodies and human bones are materially, temporally and visually connected. While she is speaking of her own experience, some private pictures are shown as they are put into a frame and displayed in the domestic space. Wedding pictures of her par-

[20] Michel de Certeau, *L'Ecriture de l'histoire*, Gallimard, Paris 1975.
[21] Eviatar Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives: Genealogy, Identity, and Community*, Oxford University Press, New York 2012, p. 10.

ents, black and white portraits of a smiling Valentina when she was a child, snapshots of her grandparents, the real fulcrum of her life, are intertwining like ties of a genealogical lineage. In spite of the tearing pain they suffered, the family aims to perpetuate their values through the bright memories that the pictures document.

The long sequence ends with a cross-fading of two scenes, which apparently cannot be compared: on the one hand, Valentina is seen while she is lulling her newborn baby to sleep; on the other hand, there is a huge mosaic made of thousands private, brownish-yellowish photographs of disappeared people. Because of the passing of time, these photographic images have faded, and some of them are completely illegible. Rather than bearing the traces of memory, they are now affected by the flow of time, so that the corroded patina which covers them represents an index of oblivion and amnesia. Placed side by side on the memorial wall, the pictures look like small tiles of a mosaic; or the pixels of a screen. As well as the fragments of a body.

As a result, the spectator is forced to reckon that together with those women who handled the desert matter to collect human remains, he/she might be looking for a past that is impossible to find. The indeterminacy of these human remains is part of their essence, and their essence defines their indeterminacy. The deterioration of the images is not a deficiency, but an additional layer of information, which is about the *mise en forme* of the ghostly presence. This shape shows how the image is observed, treated or ignored in the present, along with the clashes of time frames.

The metaphorical image of the Shakespearean pearl diver, described by Hannah Arendt in the portrait dedicated to Walter Benjamin, is suitable to define the endless action of collecting the remains of the remains.[22] Like all relics, private pictures might be imagined as those living eyes and living bones that the sea had changed into pearls and corals. Consequently, any precious fragment defies with its uniqueness any systematic classification and, at the same time, represents a break in the chronological order of time. The collector – who collects his fragments and scraps from the debris of the past – sacrifices the present to invoke the shades of the departed. Not only are memory and forgetfulness perfectly entangled, but also the work of juxtaposing heterogeneous fragments entails both interconnection and disjunction of incommensurable temporalities.

Conclusion

In Chile and Argentina, photographs have been used as a political vehicle to denounce state cruelties. From the very beginning family pictures such as portraits, snapshots, cut frames or blow-up details represented a practical way of finding people, as well as an undeniable proof of the material existence of those people who had either vanished or been executed. Even today, for example, so-

[22] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, A Harvest/HBJ Book, San Diego-New York-London 1955, pp. 199-200.

cial practices of traumatic memory are mediated by the huge placards displaying the enlarged images of the *desaparecidos*' faces, carried around public spaces by the *Madres* and *Abuelas* of the Plaza de Mayo.

Thus, by looking at both social practices of memory and visual artistic operations, it is possible to notice an aesthetic need to give real identity back to the victims. Through private pictures it is possible to turn the spectral condition – the state violence imposed on them – into a visible and recognizable body with a personal and emotional history.

Nelly Richard explains that the connection between photography and ghostly presence is sturdier than ever in the case of pictures of the disappeared. The images remind us that the missing were there and are no longer, suspended between life and death.[23] Typically copied from analogue photos, the grainy images of the disappeared, as well as the missing people themselves, seem frozen in the past or, as she puts it, in the continuous present of a suspended death.

At the same time, images taken in the private sphere urge the viewer to focus on the fate of singular individuals who metonymically stand for all the other victims. The uniqueness of the beloved body is reflected on the uniqueness of the relics left after his/her death. Unfortunately, in too many cases, the relics the disappeared leave behind are only their own private pictures. The photos show the victims in a state of innocence, a vulnerable pose which designates a unique and unrepeatable moment of life in safety.[24]

For this reason, those images are being looked at as if they were marked at a formal level by backshadowing. What's more, the denial of a public grief in the present influences the perception of the past and its representations. Hence, any euphoric home picture may be seen paradoxically as a gloomy foreboding, influencing the perception of time and therefore leading to the consciousness of the irreparable loss. This device of "retroactive foreshadowing," as Michael André Bernstein introduced it, highlights the latent vulnerability of the represented subjects, as if their painful destiny had already been written out.[25] By warning about the risk of the "illusion rétrospective de fatalité," Paul Ricoeur suggests that being aware of the fact that people in the past formulated hopes, desires, projects, fears and expectations means breaking up historical determinism, in order to reintroduce contingency in history.[26] Although human actions had unwanted consequences, people in the past imagined a possible future. From the philosopher's point of view, the gap between the present and the past looks like a "cemetery of shattered promises."[27] Therefore, a proper restorative action both

[23] Nelly Richard, *Políticas y estéticas de la memoria*, cit., p. 166.
[24] *Ivi*, p. 168.
[25] See Michael André Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History,* University of California Press, Los Angeles-London 1994 and Id., "Victims-in-Waiting: Backshadowing and the Representation of European Jewry," in *New Literary History*, vol. 29, no. 4, 1998, pp. 625-651; see Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, cit., p. 63.
[26] Paul Ricoeur, *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Seuil, Paris 2000, p. 497.
[27] *Ibidem*.

at a political and social level should reanimate and revive those shattered promises. If societies pathologize victims' hopes defining them as mere willful delusions, they risk obliterating permanently the horizon of possibilities which the disappeared envisaged for their present lives.

Therefore, it is important to recognize that private pictures not only bear traces of happiness or simple openness to life, but also that they are not images of victimhood. Injuries belong more to the observers and the current need of claiming the right of burial rather than to the smiling or thoughtful expressions shot in the images. As Richard suggests, the migration of home pictures from a private to a public and mediatic domain transforms the testimonial value (*consignación/insistencia*) of photographic trace into an act of political protest (*no-resignatión/resistencia*).[28]

However, in the mourning process, home pictures show that individual life is deeply intertwined with or, better to say, carved in other people's stories. Ricoeur says that the story of a person's life does not belong totally to him/herself. Birth, childhood and even death are stages of life that cannot be told in first person, because the memory of them is lost or because they are inherently incommunicable as they belong to others more than to the subject himself or herself. Consequently, if personal history cannot assume a closed narrative structure, any fragments of life can be placed as segments of a larger scale framework.

As it has been shown with regard to relics in the strict sense, both the distinctiveness and the representativeness of private pictures universalize family relations. Social communities aim to restore familial bonds as a necessary step to renew political connectedness. Where mortality, as opposed to Arendtian "natality," has been for a long time the central category of political thought, neither individual existence could have been preserved nor real conditions for remembrance could have been created.[29] The capacity of beginning something new is inherent in all living beings, as long as they belong to the visible world. The attempt to begin something new from the (represented) past, and despite that past, is indicative of an ethical perspective to hand down the meaning of any forced disappearance.

[28] Nelly Richard, *Políticas y estéticas de la memoria*, cit., pp. 171-172.
[29] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1958, p. 9.

Malgré tout… l'image manque

Sylvie Rollet, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3

Abstract

Facing the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, *The Missing Picture* (2013) by Rithy Panh is an intimate meditation on the limits and the power of cinema. The same query drives *Công Binh, la longue nuit indochinoise* (2013), the documentary essay that Lâm Lê dedicated to worker-soldiers recruited by force in French Indochina to serve as slave labor in France during World War II. Both films make extensive use of so called "archive images": totalitarian propaganda films, photographs, and documents originating from the colonial administration, as well as newsreels, etc. These archives corroborate the fantasy of all powers: that of a mass of faceless bodies. There are only two reverse shots possible for false image of the Khmer Rouge: either the shots made by Rithy Panh – tiny colored clay figurines, representing in miniature the formerly murdered missing bodies; or, in Lâm Lê's movie, interrupting the sequences of oral testimonies and archive images, the choreographed scenes and a water puppet show which transpose the distress of families who stayed in Vietnam and were left without news for years. What is at stake in the rhapsodic construction of the two films is not the giving of an image where it is missing, but encouraging viewers to encounter a work of imaginary elaboration.

Dans un volume consacré à la persistance des images enregistrées et aux diverses modalités de leur reprise voire de leur recyclage, il pourrait sembler incongru de prétendre que toujours, malgré tout[1], l'image « manque ».

C'est pourtant ce qu'affirme le titre du dernier film-essai de Rithy Panh, *L'Image manquante* (Cambodge-France 2013). Ce n'est pas, tant s'en faut, un documentaire de plus (ni même le plus autobiographique), s'ajoutant à ceux qu'a déjà consacrés le cinéaste à la période des Khmers rouges au Cambodge[2], mais plutôt

[1] Mon propos se situe ici non en contradiction, mais bien dans le prolongement de l'ouvrage de Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images malgré tout*, Minuit, Paris 2003.

[2] Dans l'ordre chronologique : *Site 2 – Aux abords des frontières* (1989) ; *Cambodge, entre guerre et paix* (1991) ; *Bophana, une tragédie cambodgienne* (1996) ; *S21, La machine de mort Khmère rouge* (2003) ; *Duch, le maître des forges de l'enfer* (2011).

une méditation intime sur les limites et la puissance du cinéma. La même interrogation parcourt *Công Binh, la longue nuit indochinoise* (France 2013), le film que Lâm Lê consacre aux ouvriers-soldats recrutés de force en Indochine, pour servir de main d'œuvre esclave en métropole durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Pourtant, ce ne sont pas *les* image*s* préexistantes qui manquent. Les deux cinéastes en font d'ailleurs un usage abondant : films de propagande des Khmers rouges, pour Rithy Panh ; archives photographiques de l'administration coloniale, portraits de groupes publiés dans la presse[3], extraits des actualités filmées, etc., pour Lâm Lê.

Si ni l'un ni l'autre ne dédaignent ces traces d'un passé contrefait, façonné à son usage par le pouvoir totalitaire ou colonial, du moins n'en font-ils pas ce qu'on pourrait appeler une « lecture critique », à la manière de Harun Farocki dans *Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges* (*Images du monde et inscription de la guerre*, Allemagne 1988), par exemple. Chez les deux cinéastes, l' « image manquante » est certes supposée faire enfin surgir le contrechamp des images d'archives ; mais celles-ci forment également quelque chose comme un contrepoint musical au sein de l'écriture filmique. Les deux films sont, en effet, fondés sur une oscillation dont l'enjeu peut être éclairé par les propos de Giorgio Agamben : le cinéma permettrait de « ramene[r] les images dans la patrie du geste ». En effet, précise-t-il,

> *toute image est animée d'une polarité antinomique : elle est d'une part réification et annulation d'un geste (il s'agit alors de l'*imago *comme masque de cire mortuaire ou comme symbole), dont elle conserve d'autre part la* dynamis *intacte. […] Car toujours, en toute image, est à l'œuvre une sorte de* ligatio*, un pouvoir paralysant qu'il faut exorciser ; et c'est comme si de toute l'histoire de l'art s'élevait un appel muet à rendre l'image à la liberté du geste*[4].

Cette lutte contre le pouvoir mortifère de l'image-masque passe par le cinéma qui, « ayant pour centre le geste et non l'image, […] appartient essentiellement à l'ordre éthique et politique (et non pas simplement à l'ordre esthétique) »[5]. C'est, me semble-t-il, tout l'enjeu de cette « œuvre de combat » qu'est *L'Image manquante*.

L'envers de l'image : la signature de la Catastrophe

Ce que le titre du film semble affirmer comme une certitude – parmi toutes les images en circulation, il en manquerait *une* – le commentaire à la première personne, porté par la voix off qui accompagne les images, se charge de le transformer en question : quel manque cette image unique viendrait-elle combler ? À quoi

[3] Certaines de ces photographies ont été conservées par les familles des Công Binh restés en France et patiemment rassemblées et mises en ligne par Joël Pham. Voir : http://www.travailleurs-indochinois.org, dernier accès 1 Décembre 2014.
[4] Giorgio Agamben, *Note sul gesto*, dans Id., *Mezzi senza fine. Note sulla politica*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2008 (éd. fr. *Notes sur le geste* , dans Id., *Moyens sans fin*, Payot & Rivages, Paris 1995, p. 66.
[5] *Ivi*, p. 67.

donnerait-elle une visibilité ? Progressant par tâtonnements, le commentaire élude successivement les diverses possibilités. « La déportation de Phnom Penh est une image manquante », dit la voix. Il pourrait donc s'agir de rendre visibles des événements que les opérateurs Khmers rouges ont soigneusement évité de filmer. Mais lorsqu'il s'agit des exécutions en masse, le commentaire rectifie : « Si je trouvais cette image, je ne pourrais pas la montrer. Et puis que montre une image de mort ? ». Il ne s'agit pas davantage de l'image de ses proches, morts de faim et d'épuisement : « Ces images ne sont pas manquantes. Elles sont en moi », dit la voix qui ajoute d'ailleurs, un peu plus tard : « Je ne cherche pas une image des miens, je voudrais les toucher ». La quête du cinéaste pourrait alors se conclure sur cet ultime commentaire : « Bien sûr, je n'ai pas trouvé l'image manquante. Je l'ai cherchée, en vain ».

Si le film ne s'achève pas là, c'est qu'un déplacement s'est lentement opéré de l' « image manquante » à ce qui ne peut trouver à se loger *dans* l'image, mais n'est accessible qu'*à travers* elle : à l'opposé de l' « image-fétiche »[6], l' « image manquante » se définirait par le manque qui la creuse et vers lequel elle doit se borner à *faire signe*. C'est alors seulement qu'elle peut « nous cherche[r] », comme le laissent entendre les derniers mots du film.

Afin de percevoir la puissance imageante du manque, il convient de mesurer l'écart qui sépare le dernier film de Rithy Panh de ses deux documentaires précédents. *S21, La machine de mort Khmère rouge* (Cambodge-France 2003) et *Duch, le maître des forges de l'enfer* (France 2011) sont, comme *L'Image manquante*, consacrés à la rupture catastrophique qui a entraîné la mise à mort d'un quart de la population cambodgienne entre 1975 et 1979. La spécificité du génocide cambodgien vient de ce que la « purification » sociale planifiée par les Khmers rouges ne visait pas à « détruire un groupe ethnique, racial ou religieux » constitué comme tel, mais à instituer une ligne de démarcation au sein même de la société cambodgienne, entre, d'un côté, les paysans, incarnation de la pureté originelle de la « race khmère », et de l'autre, les éléments corrompus – intellectuels, commerçants et citadins en général –, à rééduquer voire à exterminer. En outre, en accumulant des milliers de « confessions », extorquées aux prisonniers du centre de détention, les Khmers rouges ont voulu littéralement changer la mémoire de leurs victimes. C'est pourquoi le projet de Rithy Panh dans *S21*, puis dans *Duch,* est d'abord de recomposer une contre-mémoire de l'événement génocidaire. Mais comment rendre perceptible cette ligne de fracture invisible – la césure proprement constitutive de l'« événement catastrophique » – qui a permis aux bourreaux de cesser de voir leurs victimes comme des êtres humains ? Comment saisir ce que ni les clichés d'identification des victimes, ni même les photographies des morts sous la torture n'ont pu enregistrer : l'imaginaire de leurs bourreaux ?

Cet imaginaire n'est pas de l'ordre de ce que peut fixer la photographie. Il faut le saisir dans son mouvement, sa dynamique : le processus constitutif du lien d'humanité mais aussi de sa rupture. Aussi l'« image manquante » ne peut-elle se

[6] À l' « image-fétiche », Georges Didi-Huberman oppose ainsi l' « image-déchirure ». Voir Id., *Images malgré tout*, cit., p. 104. Voir également Id., *Devant l'image*, Minuit, Paris 1990, pp. 169-269.

former que de manière fugitive au travers des gestes, des mimiques, des attitudes des anciens gardiens de S-21. Car dans le temps du témoignage cohabitent les traits d'humanité qu'est en train de reconquérir le témoin et la machine à tuer qu'il est encore. Ce va-et-vient, cette incertitude sont flagrants dans les gestes comme dans les intonations de l'ancien tortionnaire Prak Khan ou du gardien Peuv[7]. Entre humanité et déshumanisation, la ligne de fracture devient visible dans l'intervalle qui sépare, chez eux, le dire et le dit, le corps et la parole.

Là où les photographies d'archives n'attestaient qu'un « ça a été », l'enregistrement de ce qu'on peut appeler la « mémoire gestuelle », inscrite à même le corps des témoins, révèle un « ça dure encore ». D'où le choix de Rithy Panh, dans *Duch*, de laisser le spectateur seul face à l'ancien tortionnaire[8], qui occupe tout le cadre et dont jamais les propos ne sont contredits tandis qu'il décrit posément son itinéraire, la sincérité de son engagement, son caractère méthodique dans le « travail ». Ce qui frappe, alors, c'est le ton mesuré, la diction lente, le port de tête hautain, la raideur du buste : son maintien et sa maîtrise de la parole attestent la longue expérience des interrogatoires d'un homme de « métier ». Son demi-sourire de satisfaction trahit d'ailleurs la certitude qu'il a de diriger l'entretien. Mais, soudain, il s'enflamme en évoquant ses talents de formateur et en mimant les instructions qu'il donnait à ses subordonnés, comme agi, à son insu, par la puissance intacte du plaisir qu'il prenait autrefois à l'exercice de son pouvoir : le passé reprend, de lui-même, possession du corps de l'ancien tortionnaire. Apparaît ainsi en un éclair la temporalité paradoxale de la Catastrophe : un passé qui ne « passe » pas, un passé toujours présent.

Parce que *S21* et *Duch* privilégient cette « scène corporelle » de la mémoire – ce qu'on pourrait appeler une mémoire « sans sujet » – on perçoit le renversement qui s'opère dans *L'Image manquante* : portés par une parole et par une voix étrangères[9], les souvenirs intimes du cinéaste dessinent bien la présence d'un sujet, mais d'un sujet *in absentia*, foyer d'une mémoire sans corps.

À une exception près sur laquelle je reviendrai, le film est d'ailleurs presque totalement dépourvu de « corps vivants ». Alternent essentiellement deux types d'images : d'une part, des plans tournés par le cinéaste ; d'autre part, des extraits de films réalisés par les Khmers rouges. Les premiers cadrent des figurines d'argile colorées, représentant en miniature les corps d'antan disparus, dans une série de scènes scandant les étapes de la « purification » sociale organisée par le pouvoir totalitaire. Parmi ces citadins victimes de la déportation, affamés et contraints à

[7] Je développe cette analyse dans Sylvie Rollet, *Une Éthique du regard : le cinéma face à la Catastrophe, d'Alain Resnais à Rithy Panh*, Hermann, Paris 2011, pp. 215-243, auquel je me permets de renvoyer.
[8] Les entretiens du cinéaste avec l'ancien directeur du centre de détention S-21 ont été réalisés durant la période où Duch attendait en détention l'ouverture de son procès devant les C.E.T.C. (Chambres Extraordinaires au sein des Tribunaux Cambodgiens), juridiction hybride composée de magistrats cambodgiens et internationaux.
[9] Le cinéaste a confié l'écriture de cette méditation intime à Christophe Bataille, déjà coauteur de *L'Élimination* (Grasset, Paris 2011), ouvrage dans lequel Rithy Panh fait le récit de ses souvenirs de l'époque khmère rouge. Quant à la voix off, elle est confiée à des comédiens différents selon la version linguistique du film.

des travaux harassants, les proches du cinéaste vont mourir un à un. Les naïves figurines, émouvantes par leur petitesse qui leur donne l'allure de jouets d'enfant (fig. 1), constituent le seul contrechamp des scènes de propagande filmées en noir et blanc par les Khmers rouges. Ceux-ci voulaient propager l'image d'un peuple innombrable qui, de ses seules mains, était capable de creuser des canaux et des barrages, de couvrir le pays de rizières, en un mot de bâtir un monde nouveau (fig. 2). Ces scènes orchestrées pour être filmées ne « mentent » pas : elles font pire encore. En effet, comme l'a montré Jean-Luc Nancy, l'effectuation de l'image dans le réel, donc la négation de son statut d'image, définit précisément l'idéologie totalitaire[10] : la représentation s'y confond avec le réel auquel elle se substitue. C'est cet écrasement mortifère que vient nous rappeler la compression latérale qui anamorphose les plans de propagande repris par Rithy Panh.

Fig. 1 – *L'Image manquante* (Rithy Panh, 2013).

Fig. 2 – *L'Image manquante* (Rithy Panh, 2013).

[10] Jean-Luc Nancy, « La Représentation interdite », dans Id., *Au fond des images*, Galilée, Paris 2003, pp. 57-98.

Se dressent ainsi, face à face, les corps figés des figurines – auxquelles ni la couleur, ni la posture habilement saisie par le sculpteur ne peuvent rendre vie – et les corps amaigris par la famine et l'épuisement, émaciés par le format, vampirisés par l'idéologie totalitaire. Seule la voix ici est vivante, qui décrit ce à quoi aucune forme visible ne peut être donnée. Vivante ou plutôt « survivante », comme « désaffectée » par la diction distanciée adoptée par le comédien auquel a été confié le récit des souvenirs intimes du cinéaste. Cette voix sans corps, rebelle à l'identification (dans les deux sens du terme), transforme le commentaire en récitation, comme si le texte n'appartenait en propre à personne. On a ainsi l'impression persistante d'avoir affaire à un récit qui ne nous parviendrait qu'en traduction, résonnant d'une voix et d'une langue originales intraduisibles. Comme le montre Marc Nichanian, cette « outre-langue » est la seule qui puisse faire entendre quelque chose du « deuil catastrophique »[11], c'est-à-dire du deuil aux prises avec son impossibilité même. On songe alors aux propos d'Agamben dans *Ce qui reste d'Auschwitz* : « Témoigner revient à se placer, au sein de sa propre langue, dans la position de ceux qui l'ont perdue, à s'installer dans une langue vivante comme si elle était morte »[12]. Ce qui témoigne, en effet, ici de la Catastrophe, ce ne sont ni les corps, réduits à une effigie – d'argile ou de celluloïd –, ni le récit qui compose le commentaire, mais la voix « traductrice » de l'acteur. À travers sa diction « déportée », se forme fugitivement non une *image* de la Catastrophe, mais sa *signature* : la sombre énergie d'une force d'effacement toujours active.

De l'image au geste qui l'invente

A priori rien ne permet de rapprocher la réflexion de Rithy Panh dans *L'Image manquante* et l'entreprise de Lâm Lê dans *Công Binh, la longue nuit indochinoise*. Certes, ils sont tous deux originaires de l'ancien empire colonial français d'Indochine, leur œuvre étant profondément marquée par leur double appartenance culturelle. Mais les ressemblances entre leurs parcours semblent s'arrêter là. Bien que Rithy Panh ait réalisé plusieurs films de fiction[13], il est avant tout connu pour son abondante œuvre documentaire consacré au régime des Khmers rouges et au Cambodge contemporain. Lâm Lê, lui, est un cinéaste rare. Très tôt reconnu par Serge Daney[14] (qui se trompait rarement) pour l'originalité de son premier long métrage de fiction, *Poussière d'empire*

[11] Marc Nichanian, « Témoigner et traduire (de Hölderlin à Primo Levi) », dans *Lignes*, n° 23-24, octobre 2007, pp. 209-243.
[12] Giorgio Agamben, *Quel che resta di Auschwitz. L'archivio e il testimone. Homo Sacer III*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 1998 (éd. fr. *Ce qui reste d'Auschwitz*, Payot & Rivages, Paris 1999, p. 212).
[13] *Les Gens de la rizière* (1994), *Un Soir après la guerre* (1998), *Que la barque se brise, que la jonque s'entrouvre* (2001), *Un Barrage contre le Pacifique* (2008), *Gibier d'élevage* (2011).
[14] *Libération*, 7 octobre 1983, réédité dans Serge Daney, *Ciné journal*, vol. 2, Petite bibliothèque des Cahiers du cinéma, Paris 1998, pp. 50-56.

(1983), il a mis plus de trente ans à achever sa « trilogie coloniale »[15]. Plus étonnant encore, *Công Binh*, le troisième volet du triptyque, lui fait quitter la fiction. Du moins en apparence, car le film s'écarte tout autant des canons du documentaire classique.

Certes, il s'agit pour le cinéaste de dévoiler un pan oublié de l'histoire de la colonisation française. Mû par le souci de l'exactitude historique, le film s'appuie donc sur de multiples sources et associe aux archives écrites ou visuelles de l'administration coloniale le témoignage des Công Binh encore vivants, en France comme au Vietnam. L'enjeu historique apparaît également dans le choix d'une structure suivant la chronologie des événements, depuis la déclaration de la Seconde Guerre mondiale jusqu'à l'indépendance du Vietnam.

Ce qui dérange cet ordonnancement somme toute classique, c'est la présence de scènes théâtralisées, voire chorégraphiées, et d'un spectacle de marionnettes sur l'eau[16]. Les premières figurent, en silence et de manière stylisée, les gestes, mouvements, postures des travailleurs esclaves déportés en terre lointaine. Le film s'ouvre sur l'une d'entre elles : une chorégraphie de pieds nus, prêts à aller affronter la morsure du sel dans les salines camarguaises ou à s'enfoncer dans la boue des rizières (fig. 3). Le spectacle de marionnettes, lui, transpose le désarroi des familles restées au pays et laissées sans nouvelles durant de longues années. D'emblée apparaît la fêlure qui brise la magie de ces scènes nocturnes : l'harmonie cosmique d'une eau sombre parcourue de lentes ondulations est soudain rompue par les mouvements brusques, les gesticulations maladroites des figurines articulées, mimant l'effroi ou la douleur (fig. 4). Les interrogations anxieuses ou les lamentations que ponctuent ces gestes à la raideur empesée sont elles-mêmes énoncées de manière emphatique par les acteurs qui prêtent leurs voix aux personnages. De manière similaire, l'émotion que font naître les témoignages des anciens Cong Binh est brutalement interrompue par la lecture monocorde des textes de Franz Fanon ou d'Aimé Césaire. Dans cet ensemble, les clichés photographiques et les films tirés des archives ne semblent ni faire l'objet d'une contestation plus forte, ni jouir d'une quelconque prérogative : ils ajoutent seulement leur voix à la composition chorale du film.

[15] Trilogie composée de deux fictions, *Poussière d'empire* et *20 nuits et un jour de pluie* (2005) et d'un essai documentaire, *Công Binh, la longue nuit indochinoise* (2013).

[16] Les "rối nước" (marionnettes sur l'eau) sont une forme d'art originale apparue au Vietnam au XX^{ème} siècle. Le spectacle prend place sur un étang, avec des marionnettes hautes d'un quarantaine de centimètres, actionnées par un mécanisme complexe de poulies et de tiges de bois, sans fils apparents. Les spectacles représentent des scènes du quotidien accompagnées de chants et de musique, principalement constituée de percussions (tambours et gongs) et de quelques instruments populaires (vièle à deux cordes, flûte traversière en bambou). Le spectacle présenté dans le film suit, lui, un scénario original de Lâm Lê.

Fig. 3 – *Công Binh, la longue nuit indochinoise* (Lâm Lê, 2013).

Fig. 4 – *Công Binh, la longue nuit indochinoise* (Lâm Lê, 2013).

Cette construction rhapsodique, qui joue de la répétition et de l'arrêt, en fragmentant les séquences de témoignage entrecoupées d'images d'archives, de plans sur le spectacle de marionnettes et de scènes théâtralisées, recouvre de fait la structure chronologique des événements historiques. La « longue nuit indochinoise », trou noir d'une histoire oubliée, ne peut plus dès lors constituer qu'un point de fuite vers lequel tendent, sans l'atteindre, toutes les formes de représentation. Le film semble ici épouser les principes compositionnels du théâtre épique brechtien, mais il évoque plus encore la réflexion sur la puissance de répétition et d'arrêt propre au montage cinématographique, développée par Agamben. « Ensemble », dit-il, « la répétition et l'arrêt réalisent la tâche messianique du cinéma »[17]. Celui-ci aurait donc une mission de « sauvetage » dont le philosophe précise les modalités et le contenu dans les dernières lignes du texte :

[17] Giorgio Agamben, « Le Cinéma de Guy Debord », dans Id., *Image et mémoire. Écrits sur l'image,*

> *L'image qui a été travaillée par la répétition et l'arrêt est un moyen, un* medium*, qui ne disparaît pas dans ce qu'il nous donne à voir. […] L'image exposée en tant que telle n'est plus image de rien. […* Elle*] laisse apparaître le « sans-image ». […] C'est [là] que se jouent toute l'éthique et toute la politique du cinéma*[18].

Le « sans-image » ou, comme le précise Agamben, « l'être image de l'image », c'est le travail d'élaboration imaginaire auquel se livre tout spectateur, soit le contrechamp invisible de toute image. Faute d'en donner une représentation, du moins peut-on en indiquer la provenance. C'est le sens du plan sur lequel s'achève le film de Lâm Lê – l'assemblée des spectateurs au bord du lac où vient d'être donnée la représentation des marionnettes sur l'eau – ultime renversement, annoncé par les multiples ruptures de ton, de lieu, de modalité représentative qui fissurent le discours filmique. C'est qu'il ne s'agit pas, pour le cinéaste, de *projeter* une image de l'histoire de la colonisation, mais de *réfléchir* (sur) le « lieu » de production des images historiques. Ce « lieu » qui n'en est pas un, seule la langue a le pouvoir de le désigner. C'est le « vous » auquel s'adresse l'ultime commentaire de *L'Image manquante* : « cette image manquante, maintenant je vous la donne, pour qu'elle ne cesse pas de vous chercher. » Quant au cinéma, il ne peut donner à saisir ce hors-cadre inaccessible que par figures. C'est le sens, du contrechamp sur les spectateurs, chez Lâm Lê, et de deux gestes minuscules, chez Rithy Panh.

Il s'agit des rares moments où, dans *L'Image manquante*, apparaissent enfin des corps vivants : les mains du sculpteur de figurines, qui incise la glaise (fig. 5), et celles de l'enfant accroupi qui, à la fin du film, creuse la terre en quête de quelque trésor. Ces gestes d'inventeurs portent en eux l'écho lointain du plan sur lequel *S21* se suspend plus qu'il ne s'achève : Vann Nath, le peintre survivant, fouillant les débris et la poussière accumulés dans l'ancienne prison. Mais ils forment aussi le contrepoint des gestes las des hommes transformés en machine à creuser, sous l'effet de la peur – à l'époque des Khmers rouges – ou de la misère – à l'ère du capitalisme libéral. La dictature qu'exercent les pouvoirs sur les corps est sans fin, comme le montrent les plans extraits de *La Terre des âmes errantes*, tournés par Rithy Panh sur le chantier d'Alcatel et repris dans *L'Image manquante*. Ces images de domination sont aussi des images dominantes, tant elles corroborent le fantasme de tous les pouvoirs : celui d'une masse de corps sans visage, d'un « peuple de sable et de pieds nus », comme le dit le commentaire.

C'est pourquoi la tâche historique et politique du cinéma est d'opposer à ces représentations qui réifient les corps, la dynamique imprévisible d'un geste d'homme inventant son destin. Cette inventivité gestuelle a son pendant chez Lâm Lê : le regard malicieux des Cong Binh du film, dont le rire éclate face aux contradictions des puissants et à leur propre naïveté d'opprimés (fig. 6). Le geste créateur d'images et le rire disent, l'un et l'autre, la *puissance représentative* dont dispose chaque homme. Dans la charge dynamique de ces éclats

la danse et le cinéma, Hoëbeke, Paris 1998, p. 67.
[18] *Ivi*, pp. 75-76.

fragmentaires – qui jamais ne forment un « tableau » – s'accomplit peut-être la dimension « messianique » qu'Agamben attribue au cinéma, face aux images qui paralysent la pensée et l'action.

Fig. 5 – *L'Image manquante* (Rithy Panh, 2013).

Fig. 6 – *Công Binh, la longue nuit indochinoise* (Lâm Lê, 2013).

Perpetrator Images, Perpetrator Artifacts: The Nomad Archives of Tuol Sleng (S-21)

Vicente Sánchez-Biosca, Universitat de València

Abstract

This essay examines the production and circulation of the *mug shots* of the detainees generated by the Khmer Rouge machinery at the centre of torture S-21 (Phnom Penh). When they were taken, these images played a key role in the process of identifying, repressing and killing those considered enemies during the regime of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979). Yet, since the collapse of the Khmer Rouge, these photographs have been used to denounce their creators as if the pictures had kept no trace of their original intention and were reversible. With this purpose they have migrated from museums and art galleries to the stage, from illustrated books to the cinema and from the Internet to the criminal court devoted to judge the former KR leaders. I argue that the stories of the phenomena must be told in close relationship: firstly, the deciphering of the archive of *mug shots*, that is, the discovery of the negatives, the extraction of new prints, and their availability; secondly, the circulation through different public spaces and media; thirdly, the changes in the geopolitical context in such a controversial region for the international equilibrium. Although these three levels do not evolve into a mechanical dependence, they are intricately interrelated and prove the advantages of articulating technological, semiotic, and political uses of an archive that concentrates within it humain pain experienced at the very core of the 20th century.

Victims under the eye of the enemy

Visiting former prisons, commemorative museums and memorial centres has familiarized human catastrophe tourists with galleries, exhibition spaces and walls populated by faces from bust photographs or close-ups of victims, some face-on, others in profile. Such mosaics suggest a special synthesis of the singular and the collective: if the accumulation of faces underlines the statistically monstrous dimensions of the crime which such places recall, then each image asks us to take each man or woman as individuals. As we pass through lobbies, corridors and halls decorated with photos we waver between embracing the horrific body of images (where each victim is reduced to the almost imperceptible) and

submitting ourselves to the shock of wide-open human eyes observing us from a fateful moment suspended in time.

However, this balance does not last long in these exhibitions and the individual gives way to the collective as none of the faces has the physical proportions to hold our attention on its own. As a result, the museums' double strategy ends up favouring the immense nature of the crime in detriment to personal tragedy, maybe fearing a tendency towards the anecdotic; emphasizing the numbers involved highlights the murderous condition of the executioners. In any case, we are dealing with unknown victims, and even if their condition does not depend on sheer numbers, this increases our consciousness of the suffering of each individual... while letting them as distinct natures to fade into the absolute.

The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh (Cambodia) was conceived in this way from the outset, the government of the Vietnamese occupation in 1979 striving to denounce the crimes of the Khmer Rouge (1975-1979). A former school converted into a secret detention and torture centre under the direct control of the security police (Santebal), its cells were intended for the 'traitors' of the regime. While the country closed itself off completely from the outside world due to economic failures of the regime and new international threats, conspiracy paranoia took over the leaders and Tuol Sleng (known as S-21) became one of the vital centers of the repression.

This said, the gaze with which all these human beings contemplate us comes not from their victimhood; on the contrary, their condition is pervaded by their status as traitors. It is this which was being registered by the camera. In effect, when they lifted their eyes to the camera and this framed them, they were guilty. We are then surprised by the ease with which, without changing the contents in the frame, our perception of these people is transformed into its opposite. How is it possible to ignore the steady bureaucratic eye which created these photos? The scene itself is, however, well documented historically: the prisoner, transported by truck, thrown by the captors into a place where the blindfold covering the face was pulled off in order to take the snapshot. Our hypothesis is that this brief moment of the photographic shot must have left a trace on the photo itself. No matter how insufficient this may be, we must reflect on the original impulse which brought the archive into being, the eye which engendered it.

In other words, these photographs belong to a particular genre of images that Marianne Hirsch has termed 'perpetrator images,'[1] such as those scenes shot by Joseph Goebbels' teams in the Warsaw Ghetto in May 1942 and the photos of Abu Ghraib which so shook American and international public opinion in 2004, or the most recent videos of the beheading of hostages issued by ISIS militants. So with this in mind, what characterizes a perpetrator image? What differentiates aspects of the *mug shots* exhibited in Tuol Sleng?

[1] See Marianne Hirsch's last version of this concept in *Nazi Photographs in Post-Holocaust Art*, in Id., *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*, Columbia University Press, New York 2008, pp. 127-152.

The perpetrator images, according to Marianne Hirsch's standard definition, are photographic, cinematographic images or those in any other format, taken by those who commit criminal acts against humans. In this sense, such images may be considered part of the mechanism of destruction, embodying the point of view of the perpetrators of the crime or their accomplices during or after carrying out the violent act against their victims. Intended for the consumption within the group participating in the crime, this circle might be extended to those who share the same ideology or even to the authorities which ordered the act. In any case, the act of dissemination generally confirms the pride of the authors (of the photographs, or the acts, or both) concerning the actions carried out, in such a way that these images have something of the traditional *photo-trophy.* However, on their public dissemination, be this by infiltration, from the *hubris* of the persecutors or an aggressive propagandist approach, as in the case of the ISIS militants, the images find themselves under a different light from the point of view of the historian and for a possible reclamation of collective memory. Thus they are subjected to rigorous analysis, remembering that the taking of the snapshots is an action separate from the act of violence itself, even if, of course, being closely related to it. Correspondingly, these disturbing perpetrator images take on a variety of different forms according to their production, sphere of circulation and the recovery strategies used for other purposes taking place at a distance from the original act.

In this way, the challenges and risks that the consumption of these images suppose come from the physical identification of the executioner and their accomplices they bring about. However, occupying the same physical space of someone does not mean sharing the same feelings or ideology. From this we can infer the importance of some questions: did the perpetrators of the criminal act themselves take the images? Were they intended for propaganda? Which photos or shots were taken following orders and which were arbitrarily taken by the operators? These distinctions, even when apparently about detail, take on a great relevance and may only be answered taking into account precise historical knowledge (if this exists), following photographic study traditions that insist on, although with different terminology and aims, from Walter Benjamin or Roland Barthes, to Philippe Dubois or Susan Sontag, the *indexical* aspect of the photo, that is to say, the registering of an indelible record of an instant or, if we prefer, of the adherence to this. Even having gone over these images with a scalpel with the skill of a surgeon these perpetrator images still retain an inextricable darkness, even maybe as dark as the feelings they inspire.

What is sure is that the circulation of these images in the media, their absorption by memorial museums and webpages, tend to produce a wide range of reactions which go from perverse voyeurism to empathy and analysis. Their use for recuperation of memory thus requires from those who use them an awareness of the mechanisms of rewriting, from the spatial changes (installations, museums, theatre stage) to the incorporation of historical settings equivalent to what philologists would call *critical apparatus* (spatial-temporal coordinates, descriptions, identification of character), taking into account the distancing introduced in the texture of the

photos or films themselves (editing, zoom, colouring, overprinting outlines within the photo or running time, freeze frames, slow motion...) that draw attention to aspects which may have otherwise gone unseen. Each one of these appropriations supposes a different gesture of expression, which leads to not only a modification in the conditions of existence of the original archive, but also a dialogue with previous uses, given that these images widely circulate in the media universe and they have often become icons of human suffering in the collective imagination.

Enemies: the founding eye

When they were taken, these perpetrator photos were identifying a fearsome enemy, presumed (later confessed, under torture) spies for the KGB or the CIA (or both at the same time), saboteurs of the revolution or infiltrators in the party. The Khmer Rouge imagination turned S-21 into a prison for high-level communist cadres fallen into disgrace.[2] Along with these a large number of detainees were also executed there (including old people, children and women) whose own destinies had fallen into the web of the conspiracy. One could say that S-21 is the most authentic expression of the Khmer Rouge world view and most probably the only efficient one: their zeal in uncovering, documenting, repressing and exterminating their opponents. To understand this requires penetrating the logic and functioning of such archiving zeal from the point of view of the authors. Which leads us to formulate certain questions: how did the taking of the photos function? In which order were the events recorded? What was the motive behind the documenting of the image of the detainee, bearing in mind that they were to be executed? Why were the records stored? Which other documents make up the criminal archive? On not finding any answers to these questions we are at a loss as to any alternative use for these images.

What we do know is that the prisoners of S-21 had already been condemned to death on their arrival. The *photographic act*, to borrow Philippe Dubois' expression,[3] formed a part of a sequence of actions in a fixed order of inextricable causality: detention, transportation, blindfolded at night with hands tied behind the back, to this enclosure in a deserted city; checking-in through the inscription of the name, measurement and the assignation of a number which was generally placed on the detainee's chest; the snapshot during which the blindfold would be briefly exposed to blinding light; then came transport, shackled with bars, to a communal cell which would be only left for periodical interrogations. The length of these varied according to the importance of the prisoner and his or her resistance, but were meticulously supervised by the director of the prison, Kaing Guek Eav (alias Duch), who scrupulously noted down instructions which

[2] David Chandler, *Voices from S-21: Terror and History in Pol Pot's Secret Prison*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1999.
[3] Philippe Dubois, *L'Acte photographique*, Labor, Bruxelles 1983.

would lead to a *satisfactory* confession; this once achieved, his tiny handwriting would decide the moment of 'elimination' which normally took place in the Killing Fields of Choeung Ek.[4]

In conclusion, the *photographic act* was inserted into a calculated chain of events which could not be broken without threatening the power of the Khmer Rouge, as the logic of the leaders and bureaucracy insisted they were dealing with agents of sedition. Seen in this way, the photographs obtained were not documenting suspects or accused, but the guilty. Soon after, these same photographic prints were cropped and cut into a small format to be stapled onto the file made up of the criminal biography of the subject in question. Archiving and storing the files of the traitors was a way of writing the history of the revolution in Democratic Kampuchea.

Second look: pathos and trauma

In January 1979 Vietnamese Seventh Division forces entered Phnom Penh finding an apocalyptic scene in their path, recorded by both the photographic and cinematographic cameras of the war reporter Ho Van Thay and his team. The situation had become more complicated since 1977-1978; the Vietnamese-Cambodian war had been set off by the splitting up of the communist block (Vietnam was allied to the USSR while the Khmer Rouge counted on Chinese support). Once the Vietnamese victory had been assured, the occupying forces poured all their zeal into proving that the crimes committed by the Democratic Kampuchea had been the work of sadistic Cambodian leaders, who they compared to Nazism and not Communism. This is why, on 25 January 1979, communist journalists from different countries were invited to Tuol Sleng by the recently formed Popular Republic of Kampuchea; the celebrated East German documentary makers Walter Heynowski and Gerhard Scheumann even received support to film *Kampuchea – Sterben und Auferstehen* (*Kampuchea, Death and Rebirth*, 1980) and *Die Angkar* (1981), which included some of Tho Van Thay's images. The Vietnamese strategy consisted of displaying an improvised archive of objects, fetishes and representations (kinds of *objets trouvés* of the barbarism) with which they hoped to present the Khmer Rouge as a gang of criminals who had committed genocide on their own people. For this, the new government went for a strategy of offending the eye and scandalizing the spirit. Their most repellent result was the Museum of Genocidal Crimes, which opened in 1980.[5]

The task of setting up the museum was entrusted to Mai Lam, the director of

[4] Elimination (*kamtech* o *komtech* in khmer, according to transcriptions) means not only to destroy but also to make disappear any trace of the existence of the being (Christopher Bataille, Rithy Panh, *L'Elimination,* Grasset, Paris 2011, p. 135).

[5] Until July 1979, the Cambodian population was not admitted to Tuol Sleng, so that at the beginning of the occupation the Vietnamese strategy was to point to the international socialist press (Cuba, East Germany...).

the Museum of American War Crimes in Ho Chi Minh City (1975), although the Cambodian survivor Ung Pech was formally appointed director. Even after having visited Auschwitz in search of inspiration, Lam's formula was much more visceral, that is: a chamber of horrors. The museum went for putting the accent on the collective, using the details to reinforce the macabre aspects (the exhibition of torture instruments, the metal beds on which they had found prisoners soaked in their own blood, some enlarged photos of victims...). Rather than promoting understanding, the museum had been designed to elicit feelings. Because of this design we find, even today, a near absence of informative materials. The spectator was required to relive the experience in a sort of re-enactment of the trauma, where the horror was staged and cognitive functions ignored.[6] However, other strategies were also put into practice. In 1980 the painter and survivor Vann Nath was contracted with the task of "documenting" scenes enacted in the place graphically.[7] His works describing the horrors of S-21, conceived surprisingly in a naive style, were incorporated into the museum; the following year the same was carried out with the sculptor Bou Meng.

At that time the international horizon was full of highly complex overlapping between diplomatic, humanitarian efforts and associations. The defeated Khmer Rouge, scattered in the jungle, were still recognised by the United Nations and the US as the legitimate government of the country, while Vietnam was still considered as illegal occupation forces. The situation did not get any clearer in the years after the Vietnamese withdrawal in 1989 either: the Paris agreements of 1991 opted for a rhetoric of national reconciliation which recommended prudence with respect to the crimes of the Democratic Kampuchea, while the term genocide remained banned from diplomatic forums. However, other lines of actions were being initiated: in 1982 pro human rights activists David Hawk and Gregory Stanton searched for evidence with the aim of prosecuting the leaders of the Khmer Rouge, founding the Cambodian Genocide Project, while Hawk did the same with the Cambodian Documentation Commission. These activities went on to generate a new way of contemplating the beings photographed by the Khmer Rouge machinery. The ominous archive would take up attention once more.

Images, biographies, narratives

Deep within international diplomacy, with the hope of bringing the leaders of the Khmer Rouge to trial, activists, university projects and private initiatives

[6] Patrizia Violi, *Il visitatore come testimone. Il Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide Crimes a Phnom Penh*, in Maria Pia Pozzato (ed.), *Testi e memoria. Semiotica e costruzione politica dei fatti*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2010, p. 38.
[7] Vann Nath, *A Cambodian Prison Portrait: One Year in the Khmer Rouge's S-21*, White Lotus, Bangkok 1998, p. 100.

started to go about a conscientious gathering together of documents. In 1988 the Cornell University's Microfilming Project, with Judy Ledgerwood and the librarian John Badgley, proposed the setting up of an inventory of the huge amount of existing evidence in S-21, found then to be in an abandoned state. In September 1989 they were authorised to microfilm the abundant available documentation in Tuol Sleng.[8] In 1994 Yale University, under the initiative of Ben Kiernan, established the Cambodia Genocide Program. This opened a local operations centre in Phnom Penh in 1995: the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam). These initiatives found themselves swimming against the tide: threats to stifle the running of Tuol Sleng grew, while the documents not only deteriorated but even went missing; the 1991 Paris agreements and resulting creation of the United Nations Transitional Authorities in Cambodia (UNTAC, 1992-1993) inclined towards putting off any analysis of the genocide until the last of the Khmer Rouge abandoned arms; this would not happen until 1998.

It was in this uncertain atmosphere that the photographers Chris Riley and Douglas Niven proposed cleaning, cataloguing and obtaining new prints of the negatives found in the Tuol Sleng storeroom. For this they founded the Photo Archive Group in 1993. After three years of work, new possibilities of establishing the identity of the victims came into view. These could be individually developed through a series of narrative, museum, literary and cinematic resources on an international scale, freeing representation from the scene of the crime and trauma themselves. As this new horizon opened up, one point – the symbolically charged Tuol Sleng archive – slowly became the focus of attention. To explore each photo, to peel the life-cut-short away from each face and evaluate differences with respect to the others: these were the new tasks. Among the broad range of strategies, one particularly began to gain in definition: to invert the collectivisation of the suffering which had been imposed by the echoing walls of S-21. This gave the victims a fleeting breath of life: calling to us from the half-light of the exhibition space, from the page or from the shadows flickering in a film. The first attempt – bursting into museums and art galleries – posed a moral dilemma: where are the limits of art dealing with human suffering?[9] The second – cinematic narration – aspired to reconstruct the fabric of life which the Khmer Rouge had ripped apart. Two points of view (museum or cinematic), but with a common denominator: to name, represent, and then re-evaluate a period which at that time found itself excluded from the textbooks, out of reach of the courts and even a public expression of mourning.

One of these ways of looking (the third on our list) finds its origins in the

[8] An excellent account of this work from an archivist perspective can be found in the recent book by Michelle Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory, and the Photographic Record in Cambodia*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 2014. See as well Michelle Q. Hamers, *Do Nothing, Sit Still, and Wait for My Orders: The Role of Photography in the Archive Practices, Historiography, and Memory of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979*, MA thesis, Universiteit Leiden, March 2011.

[9] Thierry De Duve, "Art in the Face of Radical Evil," in *October,* no. 125, 2008, pp. 3-23.

above mentioned Photo Archive Group. The return of the negatives allowed for the reappearance of what had once gone unnoticed: the differences between the original shot and the clipped document photo on the detainee's file, which eliminated the *background noise* of the setting.[10] A photograph removed from the archive, exhibited in an art gallery, sheds new light: some of the prison exteriors give the lie to the idea that all the photos were taken in the laboratory-room, a background detail, such as a baby's arm invading the lower edge of the photo, reveal that the women were photographed with their offspring, a second detainee bound to the one being photographed documents how the prisoners where tied up... all these details of the *staging,* that go beyond the face being portrayed, enrich our knowledge of the *hic et nunc* in which the identification was carried out. To observe single details means inspecting them as a historical source and the photos serve as a window into the darkness of the structure of death ruling in Tuol Sleng. The human faces then became phantoms projected in the half-light of Gallery Three of the MoMA or in the centre of the Rencontres Photographiques d'Arles.[11] Here each unit, in amplified form and isolated setting, could be scrutinized in not only an irreducible state, but also enveloped in an aesthetic aura. The dissonance was excruciating and some have condemned the curator's lack of sensitivity in showing victims not only from their executioners' point of view but also as anonymous beings.

A very special book came out in 1996, whose[12] title was taken from the Roland Joffé film: *The Killing Fields* (1984). The authors were Riley and Niven themselves.[13] Using the excellent prints obtained, the book invited us to lose ourselves in contemplation of the faces of the victims which filled the pages. The book opened and closed with blocks of plain black, which suggested entering a dark tunnel. This effect aimed at prolonging the hypnotic contemplation of the prints, but in the intimacy of the text. Sitting before these countenances the meditations of Susan Sontag acquired their full potential: "These Cambodian women and men of all ages, including many children, photographed from a few feet away, usually in half figure, are – as in Titian's *The Flaying of Marsyas,* where Apollo's

[10] Despite the fact that original prints were on display on the walls of Tuol Sleng, the quality of the new prints obtained by Niven and Riley allowed for the examination of data which had not been given attention before.

[11] The MoMa exhibition, titled *Photographs of S-21*, took place between 15 May and 30 September 1997 and was consisted of 22 enlarged *mugshots* taken from the 6x6 negatives. Although at that time the photographer Nhem Ein was well known in European circles, the captions indicated 'photographer unknown.' In June of the same year, the Rencontres Photographiques d'Arles presented *S-21: 100 Portraits* curated by Christian Caujolle. A symptom of the effect produced by the MoMA exhibition is the piece by the French-American playwright Filloux, *Photographs of S-21* (1998), in which two of the photos in the exhibition are brought to life one night, http://playscripts.com/play.php3?payid=220, last visit 1 December 2014.

[12] Christopher Riley, David Niven, *The Killing Fields*, The Twin Palms, Santa Fe 1996.

[13] In these years the military presence of the Khmer Rouge disappeared preceded by the farcical trial of Pol Pot by Ta Mok 'the butcher' (July 1997); the ill dictator was interviewed by the journalist Nate Thayer and Pol Pot died and was cremated the following year.

knife is eternally about to descend – forever looking at death, forever about to be murdered, forever wronged. And the viewer is in the same position as the lackey behind the camera; the experience is sickening."[14]

However, this confrontation also has its counterpart: the abstraction, the separation from the source, the removal of the image from its accompanying documentation which also sealed the fate of the observed subject (confessions, notes, biography, sometimes other photos…). What was lacking in this new purely visual even aesthetic setting of the archive was the documented context, which the projects of Cornell, Yale and CD-Cam had been trying to articulate over these years. In the experience proposed by this catalogue-like book as in the exhibitions, the photo is alone: our gaze suspends the person as the *photographic act* suspended it in former times, separating it not only from the sequence of its destruction but also tearing it away from the theatre of its torture. The result is painful, but also transcendent.

Bophana as a human counterfigure

In 1996 the filmmaker Rithy Panh released *Bophana: A Cambodian Tragedy.* This was the first production shot in Cambodia to cover the 1975-1979 period. Panh, a survivor emigrated to France whose family had perished in the labour camps, analysed the Khmer Rouge universe in relation to the civil war it followed (1970-1975) and its memory projection. For this he chose as a heroine a figure he had found in the US writer Elizabeth Becker's account.[15] When sifting through the S-21 documents, she came across a criminal confession... made up of love letters. In her letters the central figure – Bophana – takes on the imaginary identity of a character from the khmer version of Ramayana, Seda, describing the revolutionary society in the allegorical form of the catastrophes evoked in the epic poem.

Bophana was born and raised in the bosom of a family of highly educated academics. At the outbreak of the civil war in 1970, living isolated, she is raped by the soldiers of the forces of Lol Nol, has a child and works for the NGO Catholic Relief Services. She later marries a cousin, at that time a Buddhist monk, who her father had previously come to the aid of. On the fall of Phnom Penh to the Khmer Rouge on 17 April 1975, Bophana flees the capital, while her husband Ly Sitha joins the party under the name of Seth. The two continue as lovers with fleeting unhappy meetings as the party does not permit living together. A falsified travel pass found by the Angkar leadership among Ly Sitha's papers becomes indisputable evidence when Sitha's protector – the minister for trade Koy Thuon – falls into disgrace during an internal purge. On the 19 September 1976, Seth is held in S-21, tortured and officially 'destroyed' on the 18 March 1977; Bophana is ar-

[14] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York 2003, p. 61.
[15] Elizabeth Becker, *Bophana*, Cambodia Daily Press, Phnom Penh 2010.

rested on 12 October 1976 and eliminated on the same day as her lover; each one cannot be aware of the presence of the other in the torture centre.

The film starts with Panh filming Bophana's uncle in the corridors of S-21 as he is seeking to identify from the mosaic of faces his niece's plain and dignified image, before which he relives the memory of her farewell in a Phnom Penh in the grips of panic. From here, the film goes in flashback to this face in a country scene in which the beautiful silhouette of a young girl cycles along a river. The reading of love letters, the chronicle of her loneliness, the persecution and intrigue make this highly educated and fragile being into the emblem of old-fashioned values of the Cambodian spirit which the Khmer Rouge are to wipe out.

Panh captures Bophana's subtle features with his camera as traced by the painter Vann Nath in contrast to the criminal record file which relates the details of her arrest and death. Bophana is for the filmmaker the distillation of Cambodia's sensitive and learned spirit; the very hateful class which the new leaders denominate as 'new people' and whom they must destroy.[16] In short, the image of Bophana is redeemed by the filmmaker; her story having been transposed to a tragic register (Ramayana's), her voice incarnates the Democratic Kampuchea's most hated word, relationship or custom: love – a bourgeois emotion which must be eradicated all cost.

The eye of the law

The final move of the Tuol Sleng archive of faces is that of the staging of the legal process. With the setting up of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) hopes become reality: to put the Khmer Rouge leaders on trial. This was the result of a long process littered with obstacles, whose success was due to the persistent investigation carried out by the DC-Cam. The first case started in 2009 against Duch, the director of S-21, arrested ten years previously, after being identified by the photographer Nic Dunlop. The trial represented an unheard-of event in Cambodian life from the dark period and consisted of a public act of recognition of the victims and an effort to translate juridical action into an instrument of reflection and, in the long term, of national reconciliation.[17]

Without abandoning the old structures nor letting go of the archive strategies discussed above, the victims of S-21 became the basis for a prosecution, with the voices of the survivors and witnesses in support. What is more, the road taken ending in the courts, permeates other spaces which would serve as a sounding box for the accusing voices. While the *mugshots* were passed between the hands of

[16] In contrast to the *old people* (the illiterate country people), the *new people* were the irretrievable remains of capitalism to be wiped out implacably by the revolutionary base. This "social class" was made up of teachers, doctors, nurses, engineers and educated people in general.

[17] The following cases are yet to be settled, however the hopes of an effective sentence is limited. Ta Mok died in prison in June 2006, before the court was set up; Ieng Thirith was declared insane in September 2012; Ieng Sary died while actually on trial on 14 March 2013. Only Kieu Samphan and Nuon Chea, who plead innocent, are the last important leading figures awaiting trial.

families, of those involved in the process and around press offices, they were disseminated on a large scale in the media. One image synthesises this last mutation of the *mugshots*: the one in which some of these photos pass through the hands of the then director of the prison while he interprets them in silence. Caught deliberately by the camera, this meeting of eyes becomes in itself a radical metamorphosis in the functional gaze; Duch, who had once contemplated the files in order to determine the sequence of the interrogations and executions, finds himself before them nearly three decades later. What has dissolved in this time is the fact that they are no longer regarded as enemies, but as victims, his victims. That Duch has pronounced the *mea culpa* in public, asking forgiveness from the victims (whether or not this be sincere) carries with it a change in the social structures clustered around the courts. One could say that with this final mutation all the gazes, eyes, looks that had taken place rekindle a palimpsest of memories, revealing itself for an instant and then immediately fading away: gazes within gazes.

The trial of Duch became a sewer into which illustrious minds drawn: the French anthropologist François Bizot, who had been a detainee in 1973 then only to be incomprehensibly liberated;[18] the filmmaker Rithy Panh, whose film *S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003) revolved around all-present, but physically absent, demigod figure of Duch;[19] François Roux, the lawyer who accepted the challenge of defending this tyrant under the condition that he should plead guilty.[20] It was assumed that Duch, as had Adolf Eichmann half a century before, would question us from the shifting frontier that separates, and unites, humanity by its absence. Under Duch's steady bureaucratic eye of yesterday and in the eyes of the accusation today, the archive of faces exercises its power and closes the circle before the same central figure.

Artefacts, representations, icons

The *mugshots* of Tuol Sleng are among the very few objects surviving the time of destruction.[21] These meaning-charged objects make up a nomad archive, one in continuous migration, decomposition and re-composition. Each unit represents a semiotic object whose figuration code we may analyze (scale, angle, proportion, shutter speed...). In the way they have been gathered, the archive offers

[18] François Bizot, *Le Silence du bourreau*, Flammarion, Paris 2011.
[19] Christopher Bataille, Rithy Panh, *L'Elimination*, cit.
[20] See the film *Le Khmer rouge et le non-violent* (Bernard Mangiante, France 2011).
[21] Rachel Hughes, "The abject artefacts of memory: photographs from Cambodia's genocide," in *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2003, pp. 23-44. In reality, memorial museums allow us to combine analysis of photos, a characteristic of art museums, with their consideration as objects, which brings into play the traditions of history and anthropology museums. Also this museum operation doesn't always come with the analysis. See: Paul Williams, *Photographic Memory: Images from Calamitous Histories* in Id., *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*, Berg, New York 2007, chapter 3.

us an insight into how the Khmer Rouge conceived (that is, looked on) their enemies. But this representation is not enough; a second level takes shape within them: the unrepeatable meeting of gazes, where the object of the photograph shows in a gesture his or her reaction to the gaze of the one who is doing the archiving. In this sense the act of photographing has something of a *performative act* about it; more than describe an enemy, it brings this about; more than opening a file on the detainee, it is "trial by camera" (in photographer Nic Dunlop's words).[22] The photo takes us back to the moment, but draws everything that happened afterwards into its orbit. Rarely has Roland Barthes' idea that all photos intone the sentence "he's going to die" imposed itself with so much force.

But however, these photos-as-archive are also objects. They deteriorate in a cupboard for years, the negatives are rescued to generate new beautiful prints, more eloquent in detail; then they are enlarged to the desired scale and framed, they make the rounds of museums and galleries, letting themselves be stoked like relics and, in a disturbing infection, they pass from hand to hand between the executioners themselves. They are the remains of 'bare life,'[23] that, although they may become ghostly when they are projected in a funeral cortege,[24] they often take shape, fill the spaces, behave like traces of the past, call to us as a society to recognize them as a material archive.

In a passage from *Shoah* (Claude Lanzmann, 1985), the historian Raul Hilberg takes in his hands a simple yellowing sheet of paper: it is a route plan (*Fahrplanordnung*) of a death train. In this there are the precise times, station names, number of wagons. The historian calculates the distances carefully, projecting them in his mind's eye on to the imaginary deportation map, to read the hidden codes that hide the crime, as with this railway which, after leaving its load, returns empty. Hilberg not only interprets the document, but also fill the omissions and makes its silences speak. What fascinated him about this sheet of paper was its condition of being original, of which there must be as many copies as there were bureaucrats implicated in the order. As the genuine object that it was, it had been in the hands of a responsible officer who, due to the sheet, was able to carry out his task. Rather than a mere piece of paper, this sheet was a *performative document*: it does not relate the extermination; it produces it. To hold it in your hands is to put yourself in the place of the perpetrators, follow their mental processes, take from them, even if too late, this weapon of destruction. That is to turn it into an archive, but a burning and shape-shifting archive.

[22] Nic Dunlop, *The Lost Executioner: A Journey to the Heart of the Killing Fields*, Walker & Company, New York 2006, p. 148.

[23] In the original way in which Giorgio Agamben takes up to Greek traditon (*haplós*), as one of the bases of Western metaphysics, the essence of being. See Giorgio Agamben, *Quel che resta di Auschwitz. L'archivio e il testimone. Homo Sacer III*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 1998 (Eng. ed. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1998, p. 182).

[24] See, for example, the slideshow used in the project by Yale University: http://cgp.research.yale.edu/cgp/cts/cts_slideshow.jsp, last visit 15 March 2014. A different strategy can be found in a selection of photos from an unknown origin on the Tuol Sleng webpage: http://www.tuolsleng.com/photographs.php, last visit 20 April 2014.

The photos of Tuol Sleng make up a precarious archive that has been deconstructed and put back together, that has migrated through various different media and circulated around many social spaces. They are the material vestiges pulled from the dark world of the Khmer Rouge, objects manufactured by these: clipped, contemplated, commented, inventoried, handled. In this still-to-be domesticated and anesthetized archive, we find traces of the fear and the fury of those who produced and those who suffered them. An archive, when all is said and done, that will never go to sleep.

Fig. 1 – Torture cell at building A of Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. Iron bed as found by the Vietnamese forces when they entered Phnom Penh, 7 January 1979. Photo by the author, October 2014.

Fig. 2 – Front gate of S-21 extermination center, now condemned. Photo by the author, October 2014.

Fig. 3 – Chum Mey, one of the two survivors of S-21 that are still alive. Chum Mey sells his memoirs by the front gate of Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. Photo by the author, October 2014.

Fig. 4 – Exhibition room at Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum with panels of faces as taken by the Khmer Rouge photographic unit. Photo by the author, October 2014.

New Studies

Melodrama, Identity, and Community in *Forbrydelsen*

Ilaria A. De Pascalis, Università degli Studi Roma Tre

Abstract

The Danish television series *Forbrydelsen* is representative of the successful intertwining of local narratives with transnational media within the scenario of contemporary Nordic Noir. This paper considers the series' stylistic and production values to show how a "medium-concept" narrative, with its hybridization of genres, portrays highly debated social issues and raises a nationwide public discourse on them. The mingling of genres (melodrama and *noir*, sensational and crime fiction, and so on) produces a complex narrative that revolves around the wounded body and psyche of the female detective. The melodramatic mode of representation generates a dystopic vision of the contemporary world, visually depicting violent clashes between the individual and the agents of power, and the morally ambiguous compromises such clashes create for the nation.

The television drama has increasingly attracted audiences and actively contributed in defining this medium's contemporary aesthetics and narrative scenarios. The television series is one of its most popular products, globally establishing the standard for hegemonic narratives and fantasies. It is able to cross the boundaries usually defined by national markets and travel along new cultural flows. This essay will consider the specific case of the Danish series *Forbrydelsen/The Killing* (DR, 2007-), whose success will be considered as representative of the necessary intertwining of local narratives and transnational media. As a product of Danish public service broadcasting, it has to address relevant issues for a lively national discourse, e.g. the intertwining of political and economic powers, gendered positions and trajectories, the opposition between justice and revenge, etc. Its stylistic choices, complex narrative, and problematic representation of the main character, Sarah Lund (Sofie Gråbøl), will therefore be analyzed, as these elements propose a specific interpretation of Danish public discourse and are part of Nordic Noir as a whole, contributing to its global impact.

This brand, known by various names across Europe (*Nordicana*, *Scando-noir*,

Polar Polaire, *Schwedenkrimi*, etc.),[1] is deeply related to the prevailing narratives and aesthetics of American *film noir*, from its birth in the 1940s up to its recent iterations in film and television. In *Forbrydelsen*, this relationship is particularly evident in the choices of location and lightning, with its preference for urban landscapes immersed in rainy autumn weather and the dominance of blue and gray light. However, Nordic Noir can also be considered in light of some reflections on classical Hollywood *noirs* and *gangster films*.[2]

An important renovation in the Nordic iteration of *noir* is the significance accorded the female body as the melodramatic expression of pathos, evincing a specific declination of the sensational. These narratives are grounded on the intensified representation of bodily experiences, with specific attention to gendered violence.[3] Beyond *Forbrydelsen*, consider Lisbeth Salander (Noomi Rapace) in the *Millennium* trilogy (Niels Arden Oplev and Daniel Alfredson, 2009) or Katrine Ries Jensen (Laura Bach) in *Der som dræber/Those Who Kill* (TV2, 2011), both of whom react to several physical and mental traumas; likewise, there is the detached, challenging behavior of Saga Norén (Sofia Helin) in *Bröen/Broen* (DR-SVT, 2011-). These characters participate in the creation of complex genre relations, where detection is disturbed by intense private emotions, sexual desire distracts women from their investigations, and the thriller genre superimposes to narratives of familial grief.

Contemporary narratives intertwine the genres mixing with a multiplication of storylines and the extension of narrative arcs; sometimes, they even spread throughout the wide transmedia environment dominating the entertainment industries. However, they still reach most of their users by the means of the traditional television broadcasting, therefore negotiating their complexities with audiences still accustomed to the use of conventional narrative genres and forms. In particular, they play with audience expectations of thrillers, polarizing the central contradiction between institutions and individuals, and emphasizing the private suffering caused by the blindness of social organizations. The main female characters in these series are associated with national institutions, either by trying to escape from their control (Lisbeth) or actually belonging to them (Katrine, Saga, and Sarah are policewomen); as such, their bodies become expressions of the transit between public and private discourse in Denmark. While the characters are rooted in a specific location, they are also part of the cultural

[1] Olof Hedling, "Notes on Nordic Noir as European Popular Culture," in *Frames Cinema Journal*, *MondoPop: Rethinking Genre Beyond Hollywood*, no. 6, 2014, pp. 201-214, http://framescinemajournal.com/article/notes-on-nordic-noir-as-european-popular-culture/, last visit 5 February 2015.
[2] For example, Nestingen analyzes the transition from social bonds to individualism in Nordic public discourse as a transgression of the law, using Robert Warshow's 1948 analysis of the *gangster film*; Andrew Nestingen, *Crime and Fantasy in Scandinavia: Fiction, Film, and Social Change*, University of Washington Press, Seattle 2008, pp. 79-80.
[3] For the relations of melodrama and sensationalism in visual narrative, see Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts*, Columbia University Press, New York 2001.

flow dominating the global scenario, especially considering that all of them have counterparts in the adaptations of these series produced in the United States.[4]

Transnational impact and trans-genre narrative

The migration of these stories across the Atlantic comprises a strong argument in favor of a global interpretation of their narrative and stylistic issues. That said, I wish to focus on the intra-European circulation of the 'original' series, produced in the context of a "small nation,"[5] yet disseminated in many other markets with different economic impacts in each case. Comprising a shift from the idea of an international market to a transnational dissemination of content, these series serve as examples of certain changes in the global media economy that have emerged in recent years.[6]

In the case of the Nordic Noirs, the television series are intended for transnational markets from the very beginning: they are often coproduced by several European companies and are part of the wider distribution of popular products all over Europe. For instance, *Forbrydelsen* is produced by the Danish DR, with the participation of the Swedish SVT, German ZDF, and Norwegian NRK. This transnational economic effort creates a wide network, which allows the series to be sold to many other countries. Moreover, the convergence of different narrative and production traditions stimulates the creation of stories that can attract different audiences and engage them at various levels. The proliferation of characters and of their possible relations can be read through this lens, as it enlarges the possibilities for identification and emotional involvement. Great importance is accorded to diegetic expansion, generating wide "story worlds" that replicate the multiplicity of the audience's everyday experiences.[7] The intertwining of different genres in particular produces an investment in a metadiegetic, transmedia universe, where the "constellated communities" theorized by Altman[8] for film genres are increasingly part of a circuit revolving around multiple interests.

[4] In the US versions, Lisbeth Salander is interpreted by Rooney Mara in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (David Fincher, 2011); Katrine becomes Catherine Jensen (Chloë Sevigny), a member of the Pittsburgh Police Department in *Those Who Kill* (Fox, 2014-); Saga translates as Sonya Cross (Diane Kruger) in *The Bridge* (FX, 2013-), set on the US-Mexico border; and Mireille Enos plays Sarah Linden, a Seattle police detective in *The Killing* (AMC, 2011-). *The Bridge* was also adapted as *The Tunnel* in 2013, a coproduction between Canal+ in France and Sky Atlantic in the UK, set in Folkestone and Calais, with the French actress Clémence Poésy playing the detective Elise Wasserman.

[5] The definition of Denmark as a "small nation" in terms of its film and media production has been developed by Mette Hjort, *Small Nation, Global Cinema: The New Danish Cinema*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis-London 2005.

[6] Jean K. Chalaby, "From Internationalization to Transnationalization," in *Global Media and Communication*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2005, p. 30.

[7] Jeffrey Sconce, *What If? Charting Television's New Textual Boundaries*, in Lynn Spigel, Jan Olsson (eds.), *Television after TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, Duke University Press, Durham-London 2004, pp. 93-112.

[8] Constellated communities "cohere only through repeated acts of imagination;" Rick Altman, *Film/Genre*, BFI, London 1999, p. 161.

Such a complexity of interests and narrative scenarios was part of the concept of *Forbrydelsen* from the beginning. It had to not only respond to global changes in television storytelling but also adapt to DR "dogma." The Danish broadcaster relies on the idea that its duty is to tell "stories that are not only entertaining but which also contain larger ethical and social connotations."[9] The main crime story in each season of *Forbrydelsen* is therefore mingled with political drama, the grief of the victims' families, the roles and responsibilities of state institutions, economic crisis, and so forth. Each storyline is geographically and culturally situated, addressing an issue considered sensitive in Danish public discourse; however, these issues are also part of a wider discursive formation, shaping the transnational cultural citizenship generated by contemporary global media.[10]

Crime fiction is particularly apt to respond to the interfacing between genres as conceptual categories and the circulation of public discourses they produce.[11] It originated in modern, urban societies as an instrument to correctly interpret the world and organize its chaos;[12] however, it also presents the possibility of delving into 'immoral' behaviors since it continuously depicts the violation of laws and norms.[13] The Nordic variant of *noir* is always attentive to the social and political implications of crime narratives, highlighting the complex consequences of each act, whether publicly allowed or prohibited.[14] The DR's "double storytelling" rule is part of a wider set of genre norms and conventions that tries to depict the multiplicity of everyday life.

This "double storytelling" played an active role in the development of *Forbrydelsen*, as its creator, Søren Sveistrup, completely rethought his original concept of a miniseries in eight episodes about the murder of a young girl. He extended the storylines to produce a longer series with more narrative paths, inspired by the idea of the butterfly effect in chaos theory as a diegetic structure for a "tale of destinies."[15] The thriller is, therefore, just one of several genres used

[9] Eva Novrup Redvall, "'Dogmas' for Television Drama: The Ideas of 'One Vision,' 'Double Storytelling,' 'Crossover,' and 'Producer's Choice' in Drama Series from the Danish Public Service Broadcaster DR," in *Journal of Popular Television*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2013, p. 230.
[10] Joke Hermes, *Re-Reading Popular Culture*, Blackwell, Oxford 2005.
[11] Jason Mittell, *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*, Routledge, New York-London 2004, pp. 12-13.
[12] Katrín Jakobsdóttir, *Meaningless Icelanders: Icelandic Crime Fiction and Nationality*, in Andrew Nestingen, Paula Arvas (eds.), *Scandinavian Crime Fiction*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff 2011, p. 48.
[13] Torben Grodal, "Crime Fiction and Moral Emotions: How Context Lures the Moral Attitudes of Viewers and Readers," in *Northern Lights*, vol. 9, 2011, pp. 144-145. The readability of the world granted by crime fiction has been pivotal for the Italian media studies debate on contemporary television narrative; see the round table "La nuova serialità televisiva. Tavola rotonda sulle nuove forme di serialità televisiva e sulla questione di un nuovo approccio critico," in *Cinergie*, no. 13, March 2007, pp. 4-5.
[14] Barry Forshaw, *Death in a Cold Climate: A Guide to Scandinavian Crime Fiction*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2012.
[15] Eva Novrup Redvall, "'Dogmas' for Television Drama: The Ideas of 'One Vision,' 'Double Storytelling,' 'Crossover,' and 'Producer's Choice' in Drama Series from the Danish Public Service Broadcaster DR," cit., p. 230.

to construct the narrative path of the series. Suspense, the detection and pursuit of the villain, and the "dialectical relationship and the contrast between the calm and collected exterior and the underlying abyss of calculation and instinct"[16] are only portions of a wider plot. Political drama and melodrama, with their specific affective qualities, also play significant roles in audience engagement.

Narrative complexities: echoing Twin Peaks

With its wide narrative arc, it took a whole year and 20 episodes to discover the killer of Nanna Birk Larsen in the first season of *Forbrydelsen* (originally aired January to March, and then September to November 2007). The second and third seasons consisted of 10 episodes each, aired in Denmark from September to November in 2009 and 2012, respectively. The ability to trace the consequences of characters' actions within an extended temporal arc, not limited to a one-hour episode, produces, on the one hand, a narrative anchored by emotional peaks or situations; on the other, it permits the development of multifaceted characters constructed through tortuous affective paths.[17]

This kind of narrative structure, along with the murder of a teenager, which constitutes the starting point of the series, echoes one of the first complex television narratives: *Twin Peaks*, the two-season television serial created by David Lynch and Mark Frost, originally broadcast from April 1990 to June 1991. The show can be defined as a *serial* rather than a series: a series is characterized by self-contained episodes while a serial creates an ongoing narrative, often connected by cliffhangers at the end of each episode.[18] In contemporary television, however, the distinction between series and serial is increasingly blurred: in the proliferation of storylines with complex narratives, each can be quickly eradicated, completely transformed, or even renewed after being considered exhausted, thus maintaining the "ecological" health of the narrative world.[19]

The connection between *Forbrydelsen* and *Twin Peaks* also includes the "Nordic" setting, as the latter was set in cold, rainy Washington State in the United States. Moreover, *Forbrydelsen*'s advertising campaign was initially based on the question, "Who killed Nanna Birk Larsen?" echoing *Twin Peaks*'s "Who killed

[16] Gunhild Agger, "Nordic Noir on Television: *The Killing I-III*," in *Cinéma&Cie*, vol. 12, no. 19, Fall 2012, p. 42.

[17] Regarding multilayered narrative in the television serial and the revolution introduced by *Twin Peaks*, see Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in Film and Television*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge-London 2003, p. 133.

[18] John Ellis, *Visible Fictions. Cinema, Television, Video*, Routledge, London 1982, quoted in Veronica Innocenti, Guglielmo Pescatore (eds.), *Le nuove forme della serialità televisiva. Storia, linguaggio, temi*, Archetipolibri, Bologna 2008, p. 18.

[19] For an introduction to "ecology" in media studies, see Claudio Bisoni, Veronica Innocenti, Guglielmo Pescatore, *Il concetto di ecosistema e i media studies: un'introduzione*, in Claudio Bisoni, Veronica Innocenti (eds.), *Media Mutations. Gli ecosistemi narrativi nello scenario mediale contemporaneo. Spazi, modelli, usi sociali*, Mucchi, Bologna 2013, pp. 11-26.

Laura Palmer?" Finally, the closing credits of each episode of *Forbrydelsen* made an explicit visual reference to *Twin Peaks* by zooming out from a closeup of the murdered girl, replicating the famous snapshot of Laura Palmer. In *Twin Peaks*, however, the camera's starting point for the closing credits was a framed picture of the teenager as prom queen; in *Forbrydelsen*, there is just an unframed, unsaturated closeup of Nanna fading in from the black. In this way, the Danish thriller emphasizes the lack — or at least the weakening — of social and cultural codes. At the same time, the murder is completely rooted in the phenomenal, physical world, unlike the metaphysical, mysterious developments of *Twin Peaks*.

One of the main differences between the two shows concerns their respective production contexts: *Twin Peaks* is an "authorial" product from the early 1990s that was later labeled "quality television,"[20] while *Forbrydelsen* is explicitly part of the "medium-concept" style proposed by Andrew Nestingen for contemporary Nordic Noir. In his definition, these filmic and television products "use the dramaturgical structures and continuity style of genre film and the excess characteristic of the art film;" moreover, such excess is used to direct the audience's attention toward "extrafilmic, sometimes politically significant, issues."[21] In this sense, great importance is attached to the resonances between visual style and narrative themes. For example, the inability to see clearly through rain and mud becomes a metaphor for the inability to sort innocence from guilt, truth from falsehood. Moreover, the truth about the murders, eventually discovered by Sarah Lund, is always shattering, elusive, and ambiguous.

As with previous complex narratives, the multiplicity of issues, themes, and questions raised by the narrative of *Forbrydelsen* is controlled through visual and stylistic homogeneity. In this sense, *Twin Peaks* was one of the first series to mingle soap opera-like parallel storylines and the sensationalism of bodily excess with other, more "respectable" genres — such as *noir*, crime, and American gothic — creating a sense of unity through highly competent camerawork, editing, and music.[22] *Forbrydelsen*, however, is one prominent product among many

[20] For the author as a "brand label of quality and exclusivity," see Janet McCabe, Kim Akass, *Introduction*, in Id., *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, I.B. Tauris, London-New York 2007, p. 10. On a similar note, see also Máire Messenger Davies, *Quality and Creativity in TV: The Work of Television Storytellers*, in the same anthology, pp. 171-184. Thompson goes as far as considering *Twin Peaks* "art television": Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in Film and Television*, cit., pp. 106-140.

[21] Andrew Nestingen, *Crime and Fantasy in Scandinavia: Fiction, Film, and Social Change*, cit., p. 73. For the idea of "medium concept," see also Pia Majbritt Jensen, Anne Marit Waade, "Nordic Noir Challenging 'The Language of Advantage': Setting, Light, and Language as Production Values in Danish Television Series," in *Journal of Popular Television*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2013, pp. 259-265.

[22] For such a wide definition of "quality television," see Sarah Cadwell, *Is Quality Television Any Good? Generic Distinctions, Evaluations and the Troubling Matter of Critical Judgement*, in Janet McCabe, Kim Akass (eds.), *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, cit., p. 26. For the multiplicity of narrative genres proposed by *Twin Peaks*, see the special issue dedicated to the serial in *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 4, Fall 1993.

in an ongoing sharing of complex narratives that has taken place between the United States and Europe over the last 15-20 years. The "Søren Sveistrup thriller," therefore, uses crime fiction conventions, an authorial mood established by DR dogma regarding the "one vision,"[23] and mixed genres, all of which accounts for much of the series' worldwide success.[24]

Between melodrama and detection: prolific hybridizations

The moral ambiguity of the contemporary world, the inexplicableness of its cultural patterns, and the ongoing battle between legality and illegality are at the core of *Forbrydelsen*'s narratives and investigations. They find an original expression in the stylistic dual focus that characterizes the series. On the one hand, there is a logical path concerning the solving of the crime, in line with the visual conventions of *noir*; on the other, the series is punctuated by emotional eruptions, which openly menace the detection process and lead to visual excess. One example of this dialectic occurs in the middle of the first season: a possible breakdown in the investigation results in the horrific and prolonged beating of the suspect (a Muslim teacher), conducted at the beginning of episode 9 by Nanna's father, Theis, and his friend Vagn (the actual murderer). Much of this episode is dedicated to the terrible act and its consequences for the Birk Larsens, even though this situation will have no further role in the detection.

The emotional outburst leading Nanna's father toward revenge is just one of many affective peaks punctuating the narrative, also expressed through the trajectory of Sarah Lund's character. Over the course of the three seasons, she repeatedly becomes obsessed with certain clues and suspects, much like other detectives in the crime fiction tradition. However, she is repeatedly proven wrong, and her errors have terrible consequences (e.g., the murder of her partner Meyer in the first season, the alleged murder of little Emilie in the third). Within her body, we find the representation of state institutions (she is a trained detective), the inappropriateness of her emerging desires (she is often involved with married or otherwise problematic men), and her refusal to recognize feelings and emotions lurking just beneath the surface. In this sense, Sarah is representative of many other Nordic detectives, with a dark outcome produced by the dystopic, neoliberal setting of contemporary Denmark.[25]

The dialectic Sarah embodies — between the logic of detection and the power

[23] Eva Novrup Redvall, "'Dogmas' for Television Drama," cit. The credit "A Søren Sveistrup's thriller" appears at the beginning of each episode.

[24] *Forbrydelsen* has been aired in many countries — Germany, Japan, UK, Australia, Poland, Brazil, and others. Most data about its broadcasting are available on the English Wikipedia page dedicated to the series: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Killing_(Danish_TV_series), last visit 16 February 2015.

[25] Karen Klitgaard Povlsen, *Gender and Geography in Contemporary Scandinavian Television Crime Fiction*, in Andrew Nestingen, Paula Arvas (eds.), *Scandinavian Crime Fiction*, cit., pp. 89-99.

of emotion — weakens as the series progresses in favor of sensational and melodramatic outbursts. This trajectory is expressed through the lighting style of the series: Sarah is often framed using backlights, which seem to create strong contrasts between light and shadow while actually blurring the boundaries between visible and invisible. Backlighting is especially used during emotional moments (affective confrontations between characters, hunting for the killer in dangerous settings, etc.), underlining the illegibility of the characters' motives and trajectories. Sarah displays incoherent behavior in both her private and professional life: in the first season, the audience never learns why she is obsessed with the case to the point that she renounces her fiancé and then her son. In the same way, we never completely understand her motives for pursuing some clues and not others, what her mental associations are, or what deduction processes lead her to repeatedly pursue the wrong men (at least six times in the first ten episodes). In the end, we can no longer completely trust her abilities as a detective or her capacity to read the world at large. Such doubt is confirmed at the end of the third season when Sarah transforms from detective to avenger, from police officer to executioner.

The dominance of melodramatic rhetoric in *Forbrydelsen* replicates, in the context of 21st century television, the emergence of melodramatic imagination in the theater and novels of the 18th century. For Peter Brooks, the excess pathos and moral radicalization of such novels and theatre gave new shape to spiritual values, which had become fragmented and desacralized in the modern world. "The melodramatic mode," he writes, "exists to locate and to articulate the moral occult."[26] However, in the 18th century the clashing of moral forces translated into a radicalization of the possible positions and an "incessant struggle against enemies […] branded as villains, suborners of morality."[27] In contemporary society, the changed paradigm denies the possibility of a unique interpretation of the world, and the transcendent struggle between good and evil cannot take place. Goodness is nowhere to be found — in neither the family nor the state — in a world dominated by neoliberal greed and individualistic desires, and crime fiction is the perfect expression of such a dystopia.

The prevalence of a "hyperbolic mode"[28] of representation — dark shots, the heavy use of blue filters, frantic camera movement, labyrinthine settings — visually translates the impossibility of attaining a definitive truth, and flourishing emotions dominate the characters. At the narrative level, the melodramatic flavor affects the investment in multiple storylines, sometimes only weakly related to the murder. As Melanie Kohnen notes in her analysis of the first season of the American version (whose plot is pretty similar to that of the Danish version), *The Killing* "prioritizes melodramatic moments over constructing a linear narrative

[26] Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*, Yale University Press, New Haven-London 1976, p. 5.
[27] *Ivi*, p. 15.
[28] *Ivi*, p. 9.

that leads to a definite ending, i.e. the revelation of Rosie's murderer."[29] Moreover, the deferred solution — evident in the longer first season — demonstrates that *The Killing*'s (and *Forbrydelsen*'s) narrative is strictly related to the delayed rhythm of the soap opera.[30]

With its melodramatic mode, *Forbrydelsen* participates in the ongoing disruption of the dichotomy between "primetime soap," made for a female audience and "marked by stylistic excess and trashy sensibility," and "quality drama," masculine in focus and appeal and considered "serious, socially engaged, and more aesthetically mature," as noted by Jason Mittell.[31] Contemporary television serials are generated through a constant hybridization of these oppositions and foster strong emotional engagement, yet they still present "characters as social and political actors, as players within a larger scheme, not just as emotional individuals."[32] Interestingly, Mittell suggests that *The Killing* (the American version) actually fails to maintain the audience's interest in the proliferating storylines and characters. He believes that not revealing the murderer's identity in the season finale fails to meet the expectations created by the paratextual promotion surrounding the suggestive question, "Who Killed Rosie Larsen?"[33]

The wounded body of the nation

However, in the Danish broadcast of *Forbrydelsen*, there was only a minor drop in viewership between the end of the first half of the first season in March and its reprise in September, which recovered after few episodes.[34] This shows that the audience found the multiple storylines absorbing and participated in the characters' emotions as well as the public discourse surrounding the events. The series assigns great importance to the preservation of social structures and the

[29] Melanie E. S. Kohnen, "'This Was Just a Melodramatic Crapfest:' American TV Critics' Reception of *The Killing*," in *Journal of Popular Television*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2013, p. 271.
[30] Kristen Warner, Lisa Schmidt, "Reconsidering *The Killing* as Feminine Narrative Form," in *Flow*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2011, http://flowtv.org/2011/07/reconsidering-the-killing/, last visit 15 February 2015.
[31] Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling*, New York University Press, New York 2015. A draft for peer review is available at http://mcpress.mediacommons.org/complextelevision/, last visit 16 February 2015. My quotes are from the chapter "Serial Melodrama," par. 22.
[32] Sarah Cadwell, *Is Quality Television Any Good? Generic Distinctions, Evaluations and the Troubling Matter of Critical Judgement*, cit., p. 27.
[33] Jason Mittell, "Killing Surprises," in *Just TV*, 20 June 2011, https://justtv.wordpress.com/2011/06/20/killing-surprises/, last visit 15 February 2015.
[34] Episode 10 had 1,678,000 viewers for its first airing in March 2007; episode 11 (aired on 23 September) only had 1,371,000, but the number constantly grew during the second part of the season, reaching 2,107,000 viewers for the season finale on 29 November. Data collected by TNS Gallup and published on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Killing_(Danish_TV_series)#Episodes_and_ratings, last visit 16 February 2015.

private and public articulation of communities (i.e., the family on the one side and governments and institutions on the other). The relevance attached to emotion, and its role in community construction, produces a collective reflection on morality and ethics, reproducing Brooks' paradigm for melodramatic imagination. According to Nestingen, in Nordic Noir "we often find an individual officer whose depiction thematizes, dramatizes and heightens the conflicts in the novel, soliciting moral judgement about the characters and the conflicts narrated" because "melodramatic narration well suits the project of contesting the morality of the welfare state's transformation under neoliberalism."[35]

The series' stylistic excess and the melodramatic body of the main character are used as instruments to portray the problems produced by neoliberalism and globalization in the social-democratic Northern countries. The wounds on the officer's body are inflicted on the body of the Nation.[36] This is particularly evident in the finale of the second season when the (deviant) agent of the army secret service almost kills Sarah Lund, after they had been in love and partners in the investigation for many episodes. The representative of the national military power thus tries to eradicate its civil counterpart, and to concentrate all the decision power in the hands of the army. Finally, in the third season, it is Sarah who loses control of her body. She is sexually and romantically involved with another officer (already married), and in the last episode she executes the killer because he will never be prosecuted. Her character becomes increasingly involved with her obsessions, and the frantic effort to solve the crime becomes a failed attempt to unravel her own tortured emotions.

Her hunt for the killers in each season translates visually into a constant and almost pointless movement across Copenhagen and its neighborhoods. As the series proceeds, the opposition is no longer between the family home and the palaces of power, as could be supposed in the first episodes. Quite the opposite, *Forbrydelsen* represents "the collapse and even lack of homes and the invalidation of the families."[37] The intertwining of police procedural with political thriller and melodrama produces an opposition between the body of the detective and the city, between her emotions and the network of lies and intrigue enveloping those in charge of the city (or even the nation). Even if the mayor or prime minister are not actually involved in the murders, they — and all other politicians and economic tycoons — are morally responsible for the ambiguous compromises and are always guilty of unethical behavior.

At both a visual and narrative level, *Forbrydelsen* strictly links public and private. While it makes evident the "nationalization of the domestic and the do-

[35] Andrew Nestingen, *Unnecessary Officers: Realism, Melodrama and Scandinavian Crime Fiction in Transition*, in Andrew Nestingen, Paula Arvas (eds.), *Scandinavian Crime Fiction*, cit., p. 172.
[36] For the body in melodrama, see Peter Brooks, *Melodrama, Body, Revolution*, in Jacqueline S. Bratton, Jim Cook, Christine Gledhill (eds.), *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen*, BFI, London 1994, pp. 11-24.
[37] Gunhild Agger, "Emotion, Gender, and Genre: Investigating *The Killing*," in *Northern Lights*, vol. 9, 2011, p. 120.

mestication of the national" that is at stake with television,[38] it also shows its perverted aspects. The DR interprets its "public service" mission not as a national pacifier, but as an instrument to produce lively public debate on problematic issues involving every aspect of contemporary power relations — from actual politics to economic globalization, from crime to gender issues, and so on.[39] The ambiguity of the public scene is aptly expressed by *Forbrydelsen*'s multiple settings, each precisely located on the city map. The creative use of locations produces a specific "combination of a precision in place, and a symbolic loading of space,"[40] which conveys the constant relations between the private-particular and the public-universal already individuated in the representation of Sarah's body and in the broader visual melodrama.

In conclusion, every level of *Forbrydelsen* is involved in a complex hybridization of narrative genres and modes of representation, creating a multilayered visualization of contemporary communities in Copenhagen. The main character burdens herself with the most tragic obsessions crossing the global society, and her body becomes a synecdoche for the whole nation, put in constant danger by other representatives of power, who are more or less deviant. The melodramatic mode of representation produces, therefore, a visualization of the moral and cultural clashes that dominate both public and private spaces, and the solutions to the crimes are always problematic and uncertain. *Forbrydelsen*'s success across several countries is attributable to its ability to relate visual complexity and excess with a multilayered narrative, the individual with the community, and the local with the global.

[38] David Morley, *At Home with Television*, in Lynn Spigel, Jan Olsson (eds.), *Television after TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, cit., p. 312.
[39] See the 2013 statement from DR cultural director Morten Hesseldahl concerning the political drama *Borgen*: "And yes, of course it is great that DR's dramas have ambitions to influence the Danes. Influence them to participate in the public debates. Influence them to engage with society's challenges. Influence them to think for themselves by putting relevant issues on the agenda. This has certainly always been our ambition. And not to provide glossy entertainment;" quoted in Tobias Hochscherf, Heidi Philipsen, "Speaking for and to the Nation? *Borgen* and the Cultural Viability of Public Service Broadcasting in Denmark and Germany," in *Journal of Popular Television*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2013, p. 247.
[40] Gunhild Agger, "*The Killing*: Urban Topographies of a Crime," in *Journal of Popular Television*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2013, p. 236.

The Museum as a Cinematic Space: The Display of Moving Images in History Museums

Elisa Mandelli, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

Abstract

In the last decades moving images have become a common feature not only in art or film museums, but also in a wide range of institutions devoted to the conservation and transmission of memory. This paper focuses on the role of audio-visuals in the exhibition design of contemporary history and memory museums. Starting from a classification of the different kinds of audio-visuals used in these institutions, I will analyze not only "literal" presence of audio-visuals in exhibitions, but also the ways in which the museum dispositive can incorporate elements of the cinematic dispositive. I will show how, on the one hand, exhibitions can be structured according to cinematic principles such as montage and sequentiality and, on the other hand, how the configuration of museums space can be deeply influenced by the "classic" cinematic dispositive and its components (screen, dark room, projection, sitting spectator).

Cinema in the museum

The pervasiveness of cinema and moving images in exhibition spaces is no longer a novelty. Museums and art galleries are filled with video loops, film installations and projections, and an impressive amount of scholarly attention has been devoted to the investigation of such phenomena.

Considering this complex scenario in its entirety, we can identify at least two major modes of disseminating moving images in museums. A first group includes cinema as an exhibition object, as a form of technology or art. This category comprises both cinema equipment shown in science and technology or film museums,[1] and film-related materials (photographs, posters, costumes or projections) displayed in exhibits of, for example, the relations between art and cinema or the work of specific film directors. The latter are now common in cinema museums as

[1] Such exhibits can be found at the Museo del cinema in Turin or at the Cinémathéque française in Paris, for example.

well as in art galleries.[2] Cinema has been displayed in these contexts since the first decades of the 20th century: in 1922, for instance, the inventor Will Day lent five hundred items from his collection of cinematic apparatus to the London Science Museum.[3] The Museum exhibited Day's equipment until 1959, when the items were purchased by Henry Langlois, director of the Cinémathèque Française.[4] It was also in the 1920s that intellectuals such as Ricciotto Canudo, Léon Moussinac and Robert Mallet-Stevens organized pioneering exhibitions that aimed at legitimizing cinema as an art form, such as those that took place in Paris at the *Salon d'Automne* (1921, 1922 and 1923) and at the Musée Galliera (1924), where the exhibition *L'Art dans le cinéma français* included enlarged frames, set photographs and costumes, and was accompanied by film screenings and lectures.[5]

The second group of cinema-related exhibitions includes contemporary art installations involving the use of films and moving images. The foremost examples of this category are cinematic installations created by artists or filmmakers (the boundaries between which are sometimes very blurry),[6] which have been permeating museums and art galleries for at least twenty years. In this great number of works, cinema provides an almost unlimited source of iconographic material as well as of narrative techniques,[7] but it is also a means of comparison – or even a point of reference – of its modes of production and reception.[8] We can addi-

[2] One of the most well-know exhibitions is Dominique Païni, Guy Cogeval (eds.), *Hitchcock et l'Art: coïncidences fatales*, Centre Pompidou-Mazzotta, Paris-Milan 2000 (this refers to the catalogue of the exhibition, which ran 6 June-24 September 2001 at the Centre Pompidou).

[3] Some institutional collections of cinematic equipment were established before Will Day's donation, for example at the Prague National Technology Museum, in 1908-1911. See Alison Trope, "Le Cinéma Pour Le Cinéma: Making Museums of the Moving Image," in *The Moving Image*, vol. 1, no. 1, Spring 2001, pp. 29-67. However, the museum was not the first site where cinematic machines were exhibited: several items had been displayed at International Exhibitions and commercial fairs since the 1890s. For a brief overview, see François Albera, *Exposé, le cinéma s'expose*, in Olivier Lugon (ed.), *Exposition et médias: photographie, cinéma, télévision*, L'Age de l'Homme, Lausanne 2012, pp. 182-183.

[4] On Will Day's collection, see *1895: bulletin de l'Association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma*, *The Will Day Historical Collection of Cinematograph & Moving Picture Equipment* (edited by Michelle Aubert, Laurent Mannoni, David Robinson), special issue, October 1997.

[5] On these exhibitions, see Christophe Gauthier, *La Passion du cinéma: cinéphiles, ciné-clubs et salles spécialisées à Paris de 1920 à 1929*, AFRHC/École des chartes, Paris 1999, pp. 72-79.

[6] Such as Chantal Akerman, Tacita Dean, Stan Douglas, Harun Faroki, Douglas Gordon, Pierre Huygue, William Kentridge, Christian Marclay, Steve McQueen, Shirin Neshat, to mention only a few.

[7] Among the vast, related bibliography, see the three issues of *Cinema&Cie. International Film Studies Journal* devoted to "Cinema and Contemporary Visual Arts," edited by Philippe Dubois (no. 8, Fall 2006; no. 10, Spring 2008; no. 12, Spring 2009), as well as collection of essays such as Alice Autelitano (ed.), *The Cinematic Experience. Film, Contemporary Art, Museum*, Udine, Campanotto, 2010; Philippe Dubois, Frédéric Monvoisin, Elena Biserna (eds.), *Extended Cinema. Le cinéma gagne du terrain*, Udine, Campanotto, 2010; Francesco Federici, Cosetta Saba (eds.), *Cinéma: immersivité, surface, exposition*, Campanotto Editore, Udine 2013 and Id. (eds.), *Cinema and Art as Archive: Form, Medium, Memory*, Mimesis International, Milano 2014. See also Tanya Leighton (ed.), *Art and Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, Tate/Afterall, London 2008.

[8] These issues are explored in depth in Maeve Connolly, *The Place of Artists' Cinema: Space, Site and Screen*, Intellect, Chicago 2009. An investigation of the connections between cinema and mu-

tionally identify within this group a broad series of large-scale collective exhibitions, frequently curated by artists or art critics, that relate more directly to the relationship between art and cinema. They often bear historical overviews of the growing presence of moving images in museums and galleries, starting with the avant-garde film and the use of video to document artistic performances in the 1960s and 1970s.[9] These exhibitions differ significantly in their scope and approach and adopt a specific component of the cinematic apparatus (projection, for example) as the starting point to explore the migrations of images among various media and artistic domains.[10] Finally, the multifaceted interactions between cinema and contemporary art also include exhibitions curated by filmmakers, such as Agnes Varda's *L'Ile et elle*,[11] a site of fertile intersections between the director's installations and her cinematic universe, and Jean-Luc Godard's *Voyage(s) en utopie*,[12] which explores a complex web of issues including the question of cinema's integration in the exhibition space.

As I have suggested, scholars have investigated these connections extensively. However, the field still lacks a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the dissemination of moving images in museums, and the role of cinema in museology and exhibition design still remains neglected in academic research. In the contemporary landscape, moving images are widespread not only in film museums and art galleries, but are in fact exhibited more and more frequently in a wide range of institutions such as science, natural history or ethnographic museums, as well as in history museums, where video installations, projections and screens occupy the domain traditionally inhabited by artifacts and artworks. Within these settings, films and audio-visuals are not displayed as works of art, but rather as tools for contextualization, explanation or visitor engagement. However, their role is far from being merely instrumental, and they deeply affect the strategies of museum exhibitions and the meanings they convey.

In this article I will focus specifically on several contemporary museums of 19th century history, and I will analyze the use of film and moving images in their galleries.

seum space can also be found in Miriam De Rosa, *Cinema e postmedia. I territori del filmico nel contemporaneo*, postmedia books, Milano 2013 (particularly chapter 5, pp. 127-150). A further, recent important contribution to the field of cinema and contemporary art is found in Erika Balsom's *Exhibiting Cinema*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2013.

[9] See for example Matthias Michalka (ed.), *X-Screen: Film Installation and Actions in the 1960s and 1970s*, Walther König, Köln 2004 (catalogue of the exhibition held at the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, 13 December 2003 - 29 February 2004).

[10] See for example Christine Van Assche, Catherine David, Raymond Bellour (eds.), *Passages de l'image. Films, vidéos, images de synthèse*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris 1990 (catalogue of the exhibition held at the Centre Georges Pompidou, 19 September - 18 November 1990); Philippe-Alain Michaud (ed.), *Le Mouvement des images*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris 2006 (catalogue of the exhibition held at the Centre Pompidou, 9 April 2006 - 29 January 2007).

[11] VV. AA., *Agnès Varda*. L'Ile et elle. *Regards sur l'exposition*, Fondation Cartier, Paris, 2006 (catalogue of the exhibition held at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, 18 June – 1 October 2006).

[12] *Voyage(s) en utopie. JLG,1946-1966. A la recherche d'un théorème perdu*, exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, 11 May - 14 August 2006.

Moving images and exhibition design

When considering museums, it is necessary to take into account the complexity of the levels on which they communicate their content. Visitors walk through galleries following a narrative that is articulated in objects, artworks, labels, audio-visuals, as well as by their arrangement in space. Studying the meaning of museums from a semiotic perspective, Manar Hammad has proposed the distinction between architecture, objects and installation.[13] According to Hammad, each aspect is constituted by a composite set of elements (including the arrangement of the rooms in the building, exhibited items, lighting solutions, multimedia and interactive devices, etc.), and is strictly related to the other levels: objects are inscribed in the exhibition, which is in turn included in the architecture,[14] and all of them are organized in order to communicate a unitary sense. Furthermore, as Patrizia Violi has stated, material configurations should be related to a set of practices, uses, and functions. In other words,

> *[the]* model visitor *is generally taken to be an interpretive strategy embedded in the museum itself, according to assumption that each space also inscribes in its own form of representation a particular pathway guiding its reception by the public, as well as both explicit and implicit instructions regarding how it is to be used and interpreted by its visitors.*[15]

In this paper I will consider the museum as a dispositive: an aggregation of heterogeneous elements, which include material and technological components, textual modes and forms of spectatorship.[16] Drawing on these premises, I will propose a classification of the different kinds of audio-visuals used in history and memory museums, considering how their installation influences their meaning. I will discuss not only the types of contents of the audio-visual texts, but also their arrangement in space and their relations with other items, with museum

[13] See Manar Hammad, *Il museo della Centrale Montemartini a Roma. Un'analisi semiotica*, in Isabella Pezzini, Pierluigi Cervelli (eds.), *Scene del consumo: dallo shopping al museo*, Meltemi, Roma 2006. For a semiotic analysis of the museum, see also Santos Zunzunegui, *Metamorfosis de la mirada. Museo y semiótica*, Cátedra, Madrid 2003 (It. ed. *Metamorfosi dello sguardo. Musei e semiotica*, Nuova Cultura, Roma 2011).

[14] Manar Hammad, *Il museo della Centrale Montemartini*, cit., pp. 270-275.

[15] Patrizia Violi, "Spectacularizing Trauma: The Experientialist Visitor of Memory Museums," in *Versus. Quaderni di studi semiotici*, no. 119, July-December 2014, p. 52. Violi further develops these issues in *Paesaggi della memoria. Il trauma, lo spazio, la storia*, Bompiani, Milano 2014.

[16] See François Albera, Maria Tortajada (eds.), *Cinema Beyond Film: Media Epistemology in the Modern Era*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2010, pp. 25-44. In recent years, the notion of "dispositive" has gained a renewed centrality in film and media studies; though it is impossible to provide an exhaustive bibliography here, cf. in particular André Gaudreault, Catherine Russell, Pierre Véronneau (eds.), *The Cinema, A New Technology for the 20th Century*, Payot Lausanne, Lausanne 2004; François Albera, Maria Tortajada (eds.), *Ciné-Dispositifs*, L'Age de l'Homme, Lausanne 2011 (Eng. ed. *Cine-dispositives: Essays in Epistemology Across Media*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2015).

architecture and with visitors. The case studies I discuss in this section are selected from European and US museums, in order to illustrate the main categories of moving images in exhibitions. Moreover, they are representative of a pervasive contemporary museological trend, which we can define as the "delivering of experiences."[17] To quote again Patrizia Violi, it is possible to identify

> *an action performed by the museum in order to affect visitors, evoking a strong emotional involvement on their part, by focusing on their* pathemic *experience. Memory museums thus appear to foresee and construct an* experientialist visitor, *i.e. a visitor that will, first and foremost, "have an experience" during his visit, rather than being informed, by acquiring more knowledge of past events, which was the principal underlying idea behind traditional museums.*[18]

In the following analysis, I will show how contemporary history and memory museums[19] extensively draw upon films and audio-visuals to fabricate such "experientially oriented encounters"[20] with their visitors.

Archival footage

Archival footage is one of the most common kinds of filmic material used in history museums. Insofar as it is strictly related to the role of cinema in the documentation of historical events,[21] this use of film performs a similar function to that of museums in general – the conservation and transmission of memory[22] – and more specifically to history museums, which "display historical artifacts, or even reproductions or representations of artifacts, in the formal effort to teach about the past"[23].

[17] See Hilde Hein, *The Museum in Transition: A Philosophical Perspective*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C. 2000; Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York 2004.
[18] Patrizia Violi, "Spectacularizing Trauma," cit., p. 53. See also Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums and the Objectification of Suffering*, in Janet C. Marstine (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics*, Routledge, London-New York 2011, pp. 222-223.
[19] In this paper I use the definition "memory museums" to refer to a wide range of museums that present past events through the paradigm of memory. See Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills 2013, p. 16.
[20] *Ivi*, p. 1.
[21] This function has been attributed to cinema since 1898, since the Polish pioneer cinematographer Boleslas Matuszewski claimed that "animated photography" was "a new source of history," which "will give a direct view of the past". Boleslas Matuszewski, *Une nouvelle source de l'histoire (Création d'un dépôt de cinématographie historique)*, Paris 1989 (Eng. trans. "A New Source of History," in *Film History*, vol. 7, no. 3, Autumn 1995, pp. 322, 323).
[22] ICOM's definition of museum states: "A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment". ICOM, "Museum Definition" (2007), http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition/, last visit 6 April 2015.
[23] Warren Leon, Roy Rosenzweig, *Introduction*, in Id. (eds.), *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana 1989, p. xiv.

The display of archival film footage can introduce a great degree of ambiguity between the (supposed) transparency of images and a high level of mediation in the construction of the museum discourse. A particularly representative case in this regard is the Churchill Museum in London, which uses a large amount of audio-visual footage and interactive devices.[24] In this museum, films, photographs, text, graphics, and audio recordings have the same value as objects in the transmission of historical knowledge, and are combined to create a coherent narrative about Churchill's life. The exhibition is largely based on 4:3-ratio, black-and-white silent film footage, which has been digitized and is projected on screens and monitors of different sizes. As noted by John Pickford, one of the exhibition's designers, this footage has undergone processes such as re-shaping, colorization and cropping. What is at stake here is thus not limited to the possible changes constitutively imposed by digitization; designers moreover deliberately edited film footage to give it a new appearance and a new meaning. Furthermore, throughout the whole exhibition,

> *a visual language was developed that is recognisably mid-20th century in character, consciously evoking the period in which Churchill was alive. […] all screens were coordinated to have a mid-20th century, paper-heavy feel; a virtual analogue recalling a pre-digital age dominated by paperwork, filing cabinets, folders, maps, telephones and busy working desks – the stuff of Churchill's life. Content on the screen was treated as real; papers, photos held the attributes of the real thing.*[25]

The "visual style" applied to the whole display contributes to the distancing of the archival images from our time to underline the fact that they were filmed in the past. The exhibition exploits a vast range of digital and up-to-date technologies, but at the same time its visual style is arranged to seem as dated as possible, to fulfil visitors' expectations about the atmosphere of Churchill's age.

The recreation of the tone and style of a historical period (revisited to make it more comprehensible to present visitors) proves to be as important as the information provided itself. To make this point is not to question the accuracy, richness and completeness of the historical sources used by the museum; rather, I am claiming that the emphasis here is more on an overall "experience" of the atmosphere of Churchill's era, as well as on the emotions engendered by objects and videos. A case in point is the evaluative report about Churchill museum's visitors in which the MHM agency emphatically states: "Visitors come to the Churchill Museum hoping to learn. They are not disappointed. But something more extraordinary happens. Eighty percent report profoundly emotional and spiritual experiences."[26]

[24] The museum has nearly eighty AV installations, including slide shows and projections of film footage, interactive videos, pictograms and animated maps.
[25] John Pickford, "Making the Churchill Museum," http://www.cassonmann.co.uk/publications/making-the-churchill-museum, last visit 7 March 2015.
[26] Morris Hargreaves McIntyre Ltd (MHM), *Summative Evaluation of the Churchill Museum*, London 2005, p. 3.

Filmed testimonies

The second kinds of audio-visual materials that we find in history museums are *filmed testimonies*, which include interviews with witnesses of historical events, wars or atrocities. Witnesses represents not only, as Shoshana Felman has argued, "a crucial mode of our relation to events of our time,"[27] but are also key figures in museums devoted to history and memory, which tend to privilege the stories of common people over authoritative and (presumed) objective historical narratives. Indeed, museums increasingly incorporate testimonial accounts in their communication strategies and exhibition policies so as to foster the development of a deeply emotional relation between the visitors and the institutions.

One of the most common cinematic figures of the filmed testimony is the so-called "talking head": a seated individual that speaks looking at an off-camera listener, positioned slightly to the left and below the lens. A noteworthy example of a video testimonies' display is the Museum of Resistance in Turin, in Italy, where close-ups of eye-witnesses of fascist occupation are shown on glass screens, where visitors are reflected, in a sort of face-to-face conversation with them. Yet, as Alice Cati has stated, the "reciprocity of gaze" between the two subjects remains unattainable: following Derrida's theory about the cinematic technique of the eye-line, she compares the gaze of the testimony to the gaze of a ghost "that not only monitors us, but also watches over us."[28] However, the use of glass in the display produces an overlap between the faces of the witnesses and the visitors, reinforcing viewer engagement and emphatic response.

Documentary films

In history museums we also find actual *documentary films*, which are more structured and often combine archival footage with filmed testimonies. They have different lengths and can be located at the end of museums' exhibitions or embedded in displays, alongside objects and artifacts. Sometimes the films are shown in purpose-built projections rooms, such as the cinema at the *Historial Charles De Gaulle* in Paris, where the five-screen documentary *Charles De Gaulle* (Olivier L. Brunet, 2005-2008) is projected. The 20-minute film gives a somewhat bombastic portrait of the statesman, through a montage of archival film and photographs. The museum's cinema hall, which has the elliptical shape of a reversed dome, is placed at the very core of the building, and hosts up to 250 spectators, whom are almost surrounded by the giant screens. The architectural

[27] Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, Routledge, New York 1992, p. 5.

[28] Alice Cati, *Displaying Memories. Studio Azzurro and the Turn to Audiovisual Museum*, in Philippe Dubois, Frédéric Monvoisin, Elena Biserna (eds.), *Extended Cinema. Le cinéma gagne du terrain*, Campanotto, Udine 2010, p. 79. Cati further explores these issues in *Immagini della memoria. Teorie e pratiche del ricordo tra testimonianza, genealogia, documentari*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2013. Patrizia Violi also discusses similar issues drawing on Derrida: see *Paesaggi della memoria*, cit., p. 139.

magniloquence of the projection space thus accentuates the rhetorical tone of the movie, emphasizing the celebratory character of the discourse.

Video reconstructions

The final category is that of *video reconstructions* of historical events, characters or periods: actors recount or act out scenes relating to museum themes and collections. These means of narrating history can be associated, on the one hand, to the conventions of documentary films, and on the other, to practices such as museum theatre, as well as to forms of display such as mannequins, life groups and dioramas.

The In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres (Belgium) makes extensive use of fictional testimonial videos. Actors play the parts of witnesses who lived through World War I and were involved in the armed conflict in different capacities: soldiers, a priest, a doctor and a nurse. Their testimonies, although written by curators, are based on verified historical sources: visitors are not asked to believe that they are watching authentic footage, but rather to trust in the exactness of the narrated facts, granted by the museum's authority. The images of the characters are projected on glass screens, which make them similar to ghosts that return from the past. Moreover, reflections of the Gothic windows of the building on the vitrines emphasize the transparency and immateriality of the figures. This solution accentuates the "tension between the authenticity signalled by the 'genre' of the video testimony and the fact that these are only simulations of testimony."[29] Further, it engenders in visitors an involvement that is first of all emotional and empathetic.

The exhibition as a cinematic space

In the previous sections, I have outlined the "literal" presence of audio-visuals in museums. Here, I will focus on a different (albeit related) aspect, discussing how the museum dispositive can incorporate elements of the cinematic dispositive. In other words, I will show how, on the one hand, exhibitions can be structured according to cinematic principles such as montage and sequentiality and, on the other hand, the configuration of museum architecture and/or exhibition design can be deeply influenced by the "classic" cinematic dispositive and its components (the screen, the dark room, projection, seated spectators).

A walk through (moving) images: the Trento tunnels

To investigate the link between the museum and the cinematic dispositive, we should consider the broader question of the relationship between cinema

[29] Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, cit., p. 101.

and architecture. It was during the 1920s and 1930s that a strong connection between film and architectonic space came into place, both in theory and practice. Sergei Eisenstein's well-known essay *Montage and Architecture* constitutes a pivotal attempt to ground theoretically the intersections between cinema and architecture. Starting from Auguste Choisy's description of the positioning of buildings on the Acropolis of Athens, as related to the variable point of view of a walking observer, Eisenstein postulates a link between montage and the composition of an architectural ensemble, from the perspective of a moving spectator.[30] Eisenstein considered sequentiality and montage as the two essential conditions of film as a medium and used them as a grid for the appreciation of other arts.[31] His notion of "cinematism," a series of structural proprieties that are independent from any medium,[32] allowed him to underline the temporal dimension inscribed in architecture as well as in painting.

Moreover, during the 1920s, as Olivier Lugon has explained, exponents of the avant-garde also established a strong link between cinematic dispositive and the exhibition.[33] Experimenting with innovative ways of arranging objects, they conceived a series of displays that were deeply influenced by the dynamism and mobility of cinema. As Lugon writes,

> *What designers envied most about film was the possibility of controlling a sequence of images, of imposing on the visitor a planned progression of pictures, impressions and information. Hence the following challenge: how to extend this principle of unfolding to a three-dimensional space […]?*[34]

Drawing on these approaches,[35] we can understand how contemporary museums play with the temporal and dynamic dimension of perception in a way that closely recalls filmic language.

One of the most remarkable examples of this process are the so called "Trento tunnels", in the city of Trento, in north-east Italy. These are two former highway tunnels that have been reconverted into a history museum. They are painted in different colours and have different functions: one with walls that are entirely black, which hosts large and evocative installations; the other white, which provides facilities for meetings, temporary exhibitions, and educational activities.[36]

[30] Sergei M. Eisenstein, *El Greco y el cine*, quoted in Yve-Alain Bois, "Introduction to Montage and Architecture," in *Assemblage*, no. 10, December 1989, p. 111.
[31] *Ivi*, p. 112.
[32] François Albera, *Introduction*, in Sergei M. Eisenstein, *Cinématisme: peinture et cinéma* (1980), Editions Complexe, Bruxelles 2009, p. 12.
[33] Olivier Lugon, *Dynamic Paths of Thought: Exhibition Design, Photography and Circulation in the Work of Herbert Bayer*, in François Albera, Maria Tortajada (eds.), *Cinema Beyond Film*, cit., pp. 117-144.
[34] *Ivi*, p. 131.
[35] On the relationships between cinema, architecture and exhibition, see also Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*: *Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film*, Verso, New York 2002.
[36] See Studio Terragni et al., *Tunnel REvision: Le Gallerie di Piedicastello = The Trento Tunnels*,

Here I will focus on the black tunnel and on a temporary exhibition on the First World War held in 2008, *Trentins and the Great War, 1914-1918* (19 August – 21 December 2008). Fifty video projections were displayed on the whole exhibition surface: on the curved walls of the tunnel, as well as on the floor (fig. 1). The images included documents from a local archive, slide-shows of period photographs, and clips from Luca Comerio's documentary films shot during the war. The images were distorted to adapt to the curved walls of the tunnel, creating an immersive and emotional atmosphere which was enhanced by a soundtrack composed of recorded voices that read period letters and diaries. Loudspeakers were installed on the ceiling, each of which diffused different voices: in this way, the soundtrack changed as visitors advanced.

Fig. 1 – Trento Tunnels: the "black tunnel" (2008) *(Photo by Pier Luigi Faggion).*

By walking through this dark space, visitors encountered war scenes, landscapes, letters, figures of soldiers and family groups. Projected images remained fixed in a specific portion of space, and it was the visitor who recomposed them in a unique narrative by walking past them. In a kind of "film in reverse,"[37] the visitors' displacement created a montage between the images: as they progressed through the tunnel, the projections on the walls produced effects that could be considered equivalent to figures of cinematic language. The spectators' movements had the same effects as camera movements: they produced changes in perspective or even zoom-ins – from long shots to close-ups.[38] The cinematic nature

Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino, Trento 2010.

[37] In 1942, the architect and exhibition designer Herbert Bayer conceived his *Road to Victory* exhibition as a "film in reverse": "To tell the story dramatically, I wanted to reverse the procedure of looking at the film where the public is static and the film moves. Therefore, in this case, I had the public move through the exhibition". Quoted in Olivier Lugon, *Dynamic Paths of Thought*, cit., pp. 134-135.

[38] Irina O. Rajewsky's includes this phenomenon in her definition of "systemic intermedial references", where "the media product uses its own media-specific means […] to refer to […] another medium qua system". Irina O. Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality," in *Intermédialités*, no. 6, Autumn 2005, pp. 52-53. For a

of the space was evident in the dynamism of the transitions from one image to another, which stressed the key role of the montage. The cinematic dimension also emphasized the temporal and spatial progression of the visit: the spectators' movement through the tunnel was characterized by changing rhythms and paces. It was therefore the displacement of the visitors' bodies that "set in motion" the museum narrative. Moreover, spectators were literally and metaphorically immersed in a darkness where only the lights of the projections were visible. Thus, in the black tunnel, perception did not (or not primarily) have an intellectual nature, but was predominantly embodied and affective.

"A bit like a large cinema": The Big Picture Show at the IWM North

Let us now consider the Imperial War Museum North, in Manchester, designed by the architect Daniel Libeskind, who gave it the shape of a globe broken in pieces by the destructive action of war.[39] Since its opening, in 2002, the IWM North has been featuring the so called "Big Picture Show," an audio-visual show that takes place in the main exhibition space of the museum at regular times during the day. There are currently seven shows, and one of them is projected hourly. Each draws from the Imperial War Museum's film and audio collections, and lasts for a few minutes. When the Big Picture Show starts, the lights go out and still and moving images are projected onto the whole exhibition space, including the walls, the floor, the ceiling and the bodies of the spectators. The projections, which can be as tall as twelve meters, produce a sort of kaleidoscopic space, with ever-changing and impressive visual effects (fig. 2). Additionally, every programme has a powerful soundtrack, which mixes war sounds and voices.

Fig. 2 – The Big Picture Show at the IWM North *(Courtesy of IWM).*

similar attempt to describe the exhibition narrative strategies through a comparison with cinematic language, see Mieke Bal, *Exhibition as Film*, in Sharon Macdonald, Paul Basu (eds.), *Exhibition Experiments*, Blackwell Publishing, London 2007, pp. 71-93.

[39] See http://daniel-libeskind.com/projects/imperial-war-museum-north, last visit 6 April 2015.

The museum's leaflet claims that "When the Big Picture Show is on, the Main Exhibition Space is a bit like a large cinema." The "classic" cinematic dispositive with its components (the screen, the dark room, projection, seated spectators) actually constitutes a model for the display. The whole exhibition space becomes a screen (or better, a system of screens in different shapes and dimensions) on which multi-projection documentary films are displayed. Each programme starts at a precise time and is identified by a title (such as *Remembrance* or *Weapons of War*), following a temporal organization that is closer to that of cinematographic screenings – or even of a tv schedule – than to an ordinary museum visit, during which the visitor is free to choose how much time to spend in front of each exhibit. Conversely, at the IWM it is the duration of the show that dictates the time of viewing. Incidentally, this spectatorial situation is also different from those of film installations: in that case, spectators are asked to negotiate between the temporal duration of the projection and the freedom to leave before it ends.

During the Big Picture Show, cinema is *relocated* to the exhibition space, which changes according to the protocols of film spectatorship. The term "relocation" was proposed by Francesco Casetti to refer to "the process in which a media experience is reactivated and re-purposed elsewhere in respect to the place it was formed, with alternate devices and in new environments."[40] According to Casetti, in this process, cinema "colonizes" a new portion of the world, rewrites its boundaries and its configuration, and, at the same time, the "classic" cinematic dispositive is reshaped by the new context.

One of the most noteworthy implications of the notion of relocation is the pragmatic one. The presence of a screen entails a series of behavioural guidance: visitors adopt a certain physical posture, a certain mindset and ideological position, and perform a certain set of actions.[41] During the Big Picture Show the spectatorial response is very different from the interactive participation required in the "ordinary" exhibition at the Imperial War Museum North. When the projections are over, the visitor is free to move around, interact with exhibits and explore the different chronological or thematic sections independently. But while the show is on, the typical motion of the museum visitor is transformed in to the immobility of the cinematic spectator. This is a crucial effect, since visitors are theoretically free to wonder around the space when the show is on, but they actually choose to stand in one point, or sit on the benches situated along some of the walls, as in a cinematographic *séance*.

Furthermore, the spectators in fact become surfaces of projection, and are immersed, emotively and bodily in an audio-visual narrative that has seeks to touch their feelings profoundly. This is more evident when considering the content of

[40] Francesco Casetti, "The Relocation of Cinema," in *NECSUS*, no. 2, Autumn 2012, http://www.necsus-ejms.org/the-relocation-of-cinema/, last visit 6 April 2015.
[41] See Francesco Casetti, "L'esperienza filmica e la rilocazione del cinema," in *Fata Morgana*, no. 4, 2008, p. 31.

the projections, which focus on personal stories and the intimate feelings of those who experienced war: they do not aim to investigate the causes of conflicts or their developments in full detail, but rather to depict the impact of war on people's lives.

Conclusions

As I have illustrated through this selection of examples, films and audio-visuals can play a pivotal role in museums, and should not be understood as isolated elements: their meaning is influenced by all the other elements of museum discourse, which they in turn contribute to determine.

The analysis of some contemporary high-tech, audio-visual museum installations has showed through which strategies museums deliver emotional and engaging experiences, rather than concentrating on facts, information and argumentation. Digital technologies and moving images are used in exhibitions to create spectacular presentations and to astonish visitors with uncanny effects, in a sort of contemporary version of eighteenth century phantasmagoria.[42]

Moreover, considering museum and cinema as dispositives has allowed me to illustrate how their relations can be articulated at different levels. All the elements of museum discourses, including objects, architecture, exhibition design and the visitors' role, can be fashioned in a way that resembles and evokes the language and representational strategies of film. More broadly, an investigation of the relationships between cinema and the museum in pragmatic terms has revealed how museum signification can be shaped by ways of reception and social practices typical of cinema in its "classic" form.

[42] See Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, cit., pp. 187-200.

Projects & Abstracts

Self-Configuration Gestures from the State of Conflict: Abu Ghraib, Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda's *Shahid*

Lorenzo Donghi / Ph.D. Thesis Abstract[1]
Università degli Studi di Torino

My Ph.D. thesis, starting from the definition of some significant aspects of the media production concerning the images of the so-called War on Terror, in particular from 9/11 to autumn 2008 (namely, when the global economy started to collapse and *crisis* substituted *terror* on the international stage of emergency), attempts to focus on a selection of the most important and most recent bibliographies on the subject, especially on studies coming from the Anglo-Saxon area.

Two bibliographies are the main topics debated with the aim to profile the state of the art of the current research on the war representation: the first one focuses on the new media scenario, the backdrop wherein the contemporary war is fought and negotiated;[2] the second one investigates the presence and the functions of new operators of visibility that emerged (or were reinforced) in the last decade conflicts.[3]

As a matter of fact, War on Terror is the first war increasingly fought online, a context wherein those who fight try to take advantage of new communication technologies, such a crucial instrument in the field of contemporary warfare, to be able to promote the online space as an important showcase of the conflict. In this way, the concrete and tangible ideas of the battlefield are re-mediated in a virtual landscape formed by collective imagination and data exchanges, just as the same idea of war frontline becomes a diffused horizon.[4]

But the War on Terror is also a war wherein the conception of image as *simulacrum* (a conception that reached the highest point with a suspicious and postmodern mindset during the end of the last century) has become weak, unable to ask appropriate questions about its own time. Indeed, if we can surely say that reality is not disappearing, dissolved in the variety of its representations, we can also guess

[1] Ph.D. Thesis supervised by Prof. Federica Villa and Prof. Giaime Alonge. For information: lorenzodonghi@yahoo.it
[2] Nathan Roger, *Image Warfare in the War on Terror*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke-New York 2013.
[3] Kari Andén-Papadopoulos, Mervi Pantti (eds.), *Amateur Images and Global News*, Intellect, Bristol 2011.
[4] Andrew Hoskins, Ben O'Loughlin, *War and Media: The Emergence of Diffused War*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2010.

that nowadays another examination of the *ontological unreality* of images (especially digital ones) seems to be less useful than a meticulous study conducted on their *operative reality*, the primary perspective in the study of the War on Terror.[5]

Consequently, one must interpret the war imagination shaped in the first decade of the new millennium as a complex, chaotic and cacophonous reality that requires some 'exploratory paths' to be investigated. The path chosen in this thesis is the one of self-configuration in the new media landscape: a model often employed by the current media system to negotiate the visibility of contemporary conflicts, as shown by several episodes of international news broadcasts that marked the last decade and the fighting of the War on Terror. From the participative and citizen journalism (such as the so-called *warblogs*) to the video-footage directly shot and edited by the soldiers and uploaded to file-sharing platforms, from the global network to the entertainment industry, nowadays various forms of self-representation take decisive part in the visual processes of the conflict, in its sale as a product to the audience, and in its propaganda mechanisms. Under these circumstances, the main aim of my research has been to investigate forms and modalities of the self-portraiture as a privileged trajectory of undoubted relevance to the analysis of how media return contemporary conflicts to the audiences.

More specifically, this research has taken some symptomatic case studies into consideration in order to define the close relationship between audiovisual devices and men involved in conflicts, with the intention of understanding the interrelated solutions existing between "technologies of Self" and visual forms of contemporary war.

The first one concerns the diffusion of Abu Ghraib snapshots. Indeed, in April 2004 the television program *60 Minutes* and some articles published by Seymour M. Hersh in *The New Yorker* brought to public attention a sensational case of war tortures. The cause of the scandal relates not just to what images show (notoriously, a group of western soldiers forcing Iraqi prisoners into submissive positions, often with evident sexual connotations), but also to the shocking revelation about the identity of their authors: photographs and videos were shot by the captors, who are authors of a self-portraiture gesture performed in front of and behind the camera – a gesture that, in some ways, even reconsiders the role of the war reporter, replacing his function and his presence.

The second one concerns Osama bin Laden's self-iconography. Osama bin Laden has been a political leader with no official portraiture, with no monuments erected in his honor or memory – indeed "no statues, monuments, palaces or regimes could be leveled as ways of performing the destruction of bin Laden"[6] – but he was also a leader who did not renounce a personal iconography, and who was able to use television and the Internet as the most powerful spaces of self-promotion. It means that bin Laden produced and released video-messages

[5] William J.T. Mitchell, *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2011.
[6] *Ivi*, p. 3.

using his body as a symbolic figure (capable to easily change in response to political decisions or military campaigns) and demonstrating in this way a full attention concerning his own *mise-en-scene*.

The last one concerns one of the most shocking characters in the post-9/11 war imagination: the Islamic shahid. This term defines a recurring figure in the horizon of Islamic radicalism; a person who decides to sacrifice his own life in order to kill as many enemies as possible, assigning to his action of death a powerful symbolic value and a vigorous mediatic resonance. In this perspective, the shahid often shoots a video before his death, a content that constitutes the peak of his rituals of indoctrination: in this way the shahid can assert the authorship of his imminent gesture and he can also bid farewell to the world, exactly as in the case of an audiovisual testament.

Framing Death: Death, Film and Digital Media

Nicolò Gallio / Ph.D. Thesis Abstract[1]
Università di Bologna – Alma Mater Studiorum

As reported by the news headlines handling death footage seems to concern viewers, producers and broadcasters, since its emergence is increasingly evident and death is perceived as a pervasive presence scattered throughout the mediascape.

This dissertation focuses specifically on audiovisual content, and considers how cinema, and its derivative forms, is capable of recording an event involving actual deaths. It attempts to map some trends ranging from silent films to the contemporary digital media, taking into account case studies in moral panic such as the mythology of snuff movies, as well as specific subgenres like *mondo* and those horror films that blurred the line between fact and fiction.

After an overview on the international literature on the space of death within society, which examines the tensions between the urge to think of death as the ultimate taboo, and its widespread popularity within the so-called necroculture,[2] by surveying case studies from broadcast media and the arts chapter 1 questions the effectiveness of comparing death to pornography and underlines the need for more complex analytical perspectives.

Chapter 2 addresses cinema and how filmmakers have dealt with death. Case studies include examples from the silent era to notable documentaries and experimental projects, such as *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes* (Stan Brakhage, 1971), *Nick's Movie* (Wim Wenders, 1981) and *The Bridge* (Eric Steel, 2006). Given the fact that these films were accused of being pseudo-snuff, the chapter questions what snuff means today, considering that the label was initially used by the film industry and the media to refer to urban legends rooted in the infamous Manson Family murders, as well as to the marketing campaign for the film *Slaughter* (Michael Findlay, Roberta Findlay, 1971). Since snuff is not the only subgenre dealing with death, commercially successful examples within shockumentaries and cannibal movies are also taken into account. Their international reception shows that they align to snuff as they were highly problematic to frame from a critical perspective, particularly when they were

[1] Ph.D. Thesis supervised by Prof. Guglielmo Pescatore. For information: nico.gallio@gmail.com
[2] Fabio Giovannini, *Necrocultura. Estetica e cultura della morte nell'immaginario di massa*, Castelvecchi, Roma 1998.

involved in media frenzy cases such as the Video Nasties. Ultimately they are calling for new categories, like the ones provided by Jeffrey Sconce "paracinema"[3] or Mikita Brottman "offensive films."[4]

However, how exactly were death scenes incorporated into feature films and documentaries? Chapter 3 examines the structure of shockumentaries, snuff movies and very well known footage depicting real deaths, questioning how their features (script, editing, format, style, credits, "codas" etc.) played a decisive role when sequences portraying actual killings, or staged one passed by for real, were inserted into these films.

If this peculiar structure eased to host death footage into horror movies and documentaries, marketing strategies played a key role in the international success of commercial flicks that exploited the idea of death on screen. Chapter 4 overviews films such as *Cannibal Holocaust* (Ruggero Deodato, 1980) and *Snuff* (the 1976 version of *Slaughter*), which were involved in media panic episodes precisely because of the fact that their promotional campaigns blurred the line between reality and fiction. Franchises like *Faces of Death* and *Guinea Pig* regularly made headlines all around the world for the same reason, mixing staged deaths with real ones. Decades later, young filmmakers used the same strategies to promote and distribute small budget films that exploited the niches of the most hardcore horror fans, ensuring the success of disturbing low budget films like the *August Underground* series.

Finally, Chapter 5 considers what can be labelled as "death 2.0" While images of "impending death" in the media are not new (see Barbie Zelizer's study on the "about to die paradigm,"[5]) and neither are deaths recorded by CCTV, personal cameras or smartphones, digital media today allow for their widespread circulation and manipulation. Death is therefore scattered into the contemporary mediascape, in the form of compilations of deadly accidents, war footage re-edited for online consumption or shocking documentation of killings recorded by the perpetrators themselves. As crime news show, cases such as the hunt for Luka Rocco Magnotta and the media frenzy unleashed by the online dissemination of his gruesome video *1 Lunatic 1 Ice Pick* remind us that there is a high concern for the distribution of such content on the Internet.

Nowadays, footage depicting real deaths is easily remixed and broadcast through video sharing websites such as YouTube, or streamed on the so-called shock sites. Platforms like Bestgore.com are the new media outlet for death videos and can thus be considered as ephemeral archives because it is very problematic to frame their services. As Sue Tait noted writing about Ogrish.com, when shock sites are rebranded they switch from exploitation websites, source

[3] Jeffrey Sconce, "'Trashing' the Academy: Taste, Excess, and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style," in *Screen*, vol. 36, no. 4, Winter 1995, pp. 371-393.
[4] Mikita Brottman, *Offensive Films*, Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville 2005.
[5] Barbie Zelizer, *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public*, Oxford University Press, New York 2010.

of Internet memes, to digital spots addressing citizen journalism issues.[6] As this dissertation aims to show, on these platforms communities are involved in trolling and flame wars, but users also find the way to open a debate on the space of death in the public sphere, considering the relationship between death footage, gore and body horror, censorship issues, clashes between online services and mainstream media, and calling for more transparent policies regarding the way death is manipulated by broadcasters.

[6] Sue Tait, "Pornographies of Violence? Internet Spectatorship on Body Horror," in *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2008, pp. 91-111.

Photographic Archives: From the Documentation of the Cultural Heritage to the Formation of a Visual Culture

Caterina Martino / Ph.D. Thesis Abstract[1]
Università della Calabria

This dissertation has been co-financed by the European Commission, the European Social Fund and Regione Calabria through the Regional Operative Program (POR) Calabria FSE 2007-2013, Axis IV "Human Capital," Operational Objective M.2, which is aimed at "supporting individual pathways of higher education for graduate students and young researchers in institutions of recognized national and international prestige." The funding for the research is part of a regional program aimed at stimulating training periods abroad and the exchange of best practices to improve and innovate specific areas of interest. In particular, the reference area for this research project is "Cultural Heritage."

This research aims to provide a theoretical definition and a practical method for archiving photographs. This should not be considered entirely as a practical and technical activity, but should be thought of in theoretical aspects, related both to the main function of the archive that preserves pictures and to the role and value that photography assumes in an archive. The research is divided in two parts: the first one consists of constructing a theoretical perspective that is very specific for photography in the archive, the second one consists of an empirical research that looks more in depth at the reality of photographic archives. The research is also characterized by a comparison between Italian theory and methodology that would create a unique practice when applied, and British theory and methods that prefer to respect differences and specificity. During the research stage of my thesis work, I visited several photo collections as well as spent a period as a visiting research student at the Photography and the Archive Research Centre (London College of Communication). I also worked as a volounteer at the Stanley Kubrick Archive, which has been a substantial reference for my work.

The research has inquired into the use of the word 'archive' so that the photographic document can finally be separated from a bureaucratic field. I considered the archival theory with particular reference to the Italian discipline. It appears that in Italy the archive is related to an administrative context which makes

[1] Ph.D. thesis supervised by Prof. Marcello Walter Bruno and successfully defended on 19 March 2014. For information: caterina.martino@gmail.com

it a bureaucratic system with legal value. In fact, in Italy the archetype is the State Archives and the most common notion of the archive is the result of combined action between archival theory and state laws. In addition, state intervention has also established that the archive is part of the cultural heritage contradicting its legal and administrative value. The archival theory is a well-established practice and is validated by state regulations; for this reason it is extended to all forms of the archive, including collections of photographs. However, an administrative archive contains written documents that are entirely different from the content of a photographic archive. The shared classification under 'archive' does not make them identical. What they have in common is the presence of a catalogue that determines both as ordered systems, but the catalogue should be designed according to the specific characteristics of the archive's contents. The first part of the research is a deconstruction of the traditional idea of archive and an attempt to define a more specific notion of the photographic archive. It is necessary to make a distinction between terms that in Italian are wrongly used synonymously to refer to the archive and to also consider some twentieth century authors, philosophers and artists who have theorized about the archive and the relationship between the archive and photography (among others M. Foucault, J. Derrida, P. Ricoeur, H. Foster, A. Sekula, O. Enwezor).[2]

I also inquire into the documentality of photography. The value of the document depends both on the indexical character that makes photography evidence that can be preserved and duplicated, as well as the way through which it has been used to collect the world. The documental character of pictures is emphasized when they are included in an archival system, thus becoming a historical source which can be consulted. I also mention historical episodes and photographers who have produced photographic documentation and archives. According to their public or private nature, these photographic projects have presented photography as both historical document and artistic work. Photography is a visual document that has both these values, which is demonstrated by the contemporary tendency of artists who recycle photographic documents in a context

[2] Michel Foucault, *L'*a priori *historique et l'archive*, in Id., *L'Archéologie du savoir*, Gallimard, Paris 1969 (It. ed. *L'*a priori *storico e l'archivio*, in Id., *L'archeologia del sapere*, Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, Milano 1999, pp. 169-176); Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'Archive: Une impression freudienne*, Editions Galilée, Paris 1995 (It. ed. *Mal d'archivio. Un'impressione freudiana*, Filema, Napoli 1996); Id., *Copy, Archive, Signature: A Conversation on Photography*, Stanford University Press, Stanford (CA) 2010; Paul Ricoeur, *Archives, documents, traces*, in Id., *Temps et récit. Tome III: Le temps raconté*, Seuil, Paris 1985 (It. ed. *Archivi, documenti, traccia*, in Id., *Tempo e racconto volume 3. Il tempo raccontato*, Jaca Book, Milano 1994, pp. 178-191); Hal Foster, "The Archive without Museums," in *October*, vol. 77, Summer 1996, pp. 97-119; Id., "Archives of Modern Art," in *October*, vol. 99, Winter 2002, pp. 81-95; Id., "An Archival Impulse," in *October*, vol. 110, Autumn 2004, pp. 3-22; Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," in *October*, vol. 39, Winter 1986, pp. 3-64; Id., "Reading an Archive: Photography between Labour and Capital," in Liz Wells (ed.), *The Photography Reader*, Routledge, London 2002, pp. 443-452; Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, Steidl – International Center of Photography, New York 2008.

of performing art after extracting them from a real archive. A photograph is an administrative document only if it used in an administrative context.

Finally, to understand the criteria of archivability for photography I choose to analyze in depth three archives where photography is stored: the Saverio Marra Archive in San Giovanni in Fiore (in Calabria, Italy), the Fratelli Alinari Archives in Florence and the Lambeth Archives in London. These three photographic collections are very different in terms of geographical boundaries, chronological period, typology, photographic techniques, quantity, purposes and organization. I compared them according to all the stages of their management. In the last chapter of the dissertation I propose a methodology that integrates the theoretical and empirical data I have collected throughout the research.

The practice of archiving photographs takes place at both diachronic and synchronic levels and is characterized by many stages (from the design of the archive to the promotion and the valorization of its content). The photographic archive can be defined as a system that includes mixed content that is not always produced by a single creator nor consequently managed and owned by the one who created it. It is however characterized by a universal dimension (the history of photography) that includes an individual dimension (the history of each piece). It is a combined system that can be divisible and that escapes the life cycle of archives because it always has a historical value. The Italian archival theory has classified photographic archives as "new sources," and in administrative archives photographs are still subordinated to the written files. The English distinction between *archive* and *record* could be useful to separate the two. Even in this case, the archive is the last part of the life of a document while the photographic archive is not the final destination for photographs that have lost their use value. For all these reasons a photographic archive seems to be more similar to those modalities of preservation that usually are considered opposed to the archive: collection, museum, library. Perhaps, I argue, it is necessary to change the denomination from photographic archive to photo library (*fototeca*) and manage it in relation to the visual culture perspective.

Reviews / Comptes-rendus

Luke Hockley
Somatic Cinema: The Relationship between Body and Screen – a Jungian Perspective
Routledge, London 2014, pp. 192

How can psychoanalysis contribute to the study of cinema? How can the discovery of the unconscious cast new light on the subjective experience of watching a film? Those questions might seem naïve, especially since the relationship between psychoanalysis and film can be traced back to several decades ago. And still, it is precisely when the most simple and seemingly predictable questions that allow us to look at something apparently familiar from a completely different perspective. There is in fact something that stays at the forefront of the experience of psychoanalysis that seems to have been completely overlooked by the discipline of film studies: the unconscious is always experience individually. For example, if we have a symptom, it is always inscribed in our own particular body.

It is with such a premise that Luke Hockley starts his defense of a Jungian approach to the film experience. A premise that cannot but recall a classical phenomenological assumption: an experience of vision concerns the entirety of our own body and not just our eyes. The emphasis should be put on 'our own' as well as on 'body,' meaning that an experience of vision is at the same time a bodily sensuous experience and an eminently personal one.

Hockley seems to be particularly discomforted by a certain use of psychoanalysis in Film Studies that according to him has overemphasized the linguistic – and somehow objective – dimension of cinema "prescribing the role of the individual [and overlooking] the individual relationship we have with films [through which] they become personally meaningful to us" (p. 3). The concept of 'feeling' and the Jungian alphabet of 'affect' seems to play a crucial role in this regard, limiting any objective pretension to create a direct causal relationship between the image and the viewer, and adopting a more individually-oriented point of view: "the activation of personal unconscious material is so strong that it overwrites the inscribed, consensual and collective sense of the film's narrative" (p. 84).

Jungian psychoanalysis and the whole tradition of psychodynamic psychotherapy have emphasized a clinical practice where a strong emphasis is put on the dyad analyst-patient, conceived as a relation where both parties give a necessary contribution to the progress of the therapy. This position "challenges the ubiquity of the Lacanian-inflected psychoanalytic model of film theory, along with its suggestions of decentred subjects, fragmented bodies and inherently fragile

concept of self" (p. 1), among which there is also the asymmetrical dimension of transference that is on the contrary seen in a much more disjunctive way. Such a dialogical view, which serves more than an analogical purpose, allows Hockley to give a relational account of the relationship between the viewer and the filmic image. The concept of the 'third image,' which plays a very important role in the book, is coined by the author precisely in order to describe a space that is not reducible to the subject of vision nor to the neutral objectivity of the screen, but that is constructed through the contribution of both. This interstitial space – which exists in a sort of limbo between objectivity an subjectivity – has a status similar to the 'transitional' object of Winnicott, positioned halfway between outside and inside the individual psyche (p. 44). The interplay between the film and the viewer "provides a rich environment for the unconscious material to flourish" and "what arises from these two elements is something new and fresh: not just an image from the unconscious of the viewer, not just the image on the screen, but something new that comes into being as a result of their interaction" (p. 84).

Film Studies according to Hockley should thus learn to deal with this affective and meaningful dimension of the cinematic experience, even at the cost of sacrificing the more celebrated emphasis of 'a universal language.'

The concept of image is therefore defined in this book without any recourse to empirical or objective properties, but rather relying on C.G. Jung's definition according to which, "an idea of image [is] something closer to a metaphor – something that is felt or experienced, and which contains an important psychological meaning" (p. 55).

While Hockley's argument is elegantly developed, it can become convincing only for those who already share his theoretical premise. At time his recourse to a theoretical sparring-partner – which is an understandable and respectable rhetorical strategy in order to clarify one's own position – cannot but sound slightly misplaced. For example: in his recurring references to Lacanian psychoanalysis as an opposite approach than his own, he risks to give an inaccurate account of a theoretical position that I believe, despite some evident differences, could have been in many ways (at least in the field of Film Studies) one of his allies. There is hardly any doubt that a Lacanian approach would not have put at least an equal emphasis on the singularity of the unconscious, or on the bodily dimension of vision (with the concept of gaze), or on the impossibility to reduce the study of film to an objective and prescriptive model (with the concept of the not-all). It seemed that in this case the problem for Hockley did not come so much from Lacan himself, but rather from the Lacan-influenced Film Studies literature that constitutes his exclusive point of reference in this work. The references to Lacan by Christian Metz, Jean-Pierre Oudart, Jean-Louis Baudry or Laura Mulvey, for several historical reasons, are limited almost exclusive to early texts such as *The Mirror Stage* or the *Ecrits* where the French psychoanalyst had not yet developed his most innovative and original reflection on the gaze or on the Real of vision.

[Pietro Bianchi, Duke University]

Angeles Alonso Espinosa, Hervé Chandès, Alexis Fabry, Isabelle Gaudefroy, Leanne Sacramone, Ilana Shamoon (eds.)
América Latina 1960-2013

Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris
(19 November 2013 – 6 April 2014)
Catalogue: *América Latina 1960-2013. Photographs*,
Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris / Museo Amparo, Puebla, 2013, pp. 391

The history of Southern America in the last fifty years or so encompasses a stunning variety of phases across the nations of this huge territory. *America Latina 1960-2013* covers this rich and long period providing an organic collection of documents achieving its objective. Mostly centred on photography, though including different multimedia, video and filmic materials, the exhibition aimed at mirroring the continent "tumultuous past as well as [the] reflections of its conflictual present" (Compagnon, p. 13).

Specific artistic movements were interwoven with a basic reconstruction of the historical, political and cultural situation of the continent during the long period taken into consideration. This enabled the *connoisseur* to stand side by side with the novice, and guaranteed wide access to a differentiated public. Content-wise, this idea was strengthened by coupling a fine choice of images with a timeline providing a contextualization of their production circumstances, reasons and cultural insights. Therefore, far from flattening the deep variety of the selected artistic interventions, and thus echoing the great heterogeneity of territories, cities, situations, cultures, identities and traditions quite vaguely labelled as 'Latin-American,' the exhibition successfully highlighted the essential ambivalence between similarity and differentiation that characterized South American countries from 1960 to 2013 on diverse levels. The four sections composing the expo worked in this direction trying at the same time to present four thematic areas that respectively offered a well-structured path throughout the concepts of territory [1], city [2], informing/resisting [3], memory and identity [4].

Located on the first floor, sections 1-2 welcomed the visitor providing a detailed geographical, urban and landscape map, able to frame the exhibition in spatial-temporal terms. These images showed the endless rural plain, the primitive shapes of the Amazon rainforest and the fascinating Andean scenery with its indigenous populations, as well as the overcrowded cities depicted during the economic crises, or as places of chaotic development and consumerism or, again, just as colourful environments for daily life. Unveiling the ambivalent facets of a region that appears in its dense conflicting nature, such images very often adopt a

sociocultural and political tone, as it happens clearly in Luz Marìa Bedoya's series *Pirca* (1998), Claudia Andujar's series *Horizontal 3, Marcados*, and *Health cards of Yanomami* (both 1981-3), in Facundo de Zuvirìa's series *Siesta argentina* (2003), Carlos Ginzburg's *México, Los viajes de Ginzburg* (1980), or in the video *Every Building on Avenida Alfonso Ugarte – After Ruscha* (2011) by Claudia Joskowicz.

Benefitting from the structure of the exhibition space, sections 3-4 were located underground and opened up a more intimate space betraying a mirroring process between the setting and the displayed works.

Compared to the glass-walls of the first floor that enabled a sort of continuity between the landscape depicted and the physical urban context, the cities portrayed and Paris, level -1 conveyed a sense of closure, which metaphorically evoked the shift to personal images, to the identity and memorial value exercised by the photographs on display, and to the narration interlacing private and public, ritual and political elements put forth by the exhibition.

Section 3 presented a series of works mostly produced to denounce violence, inequality, repression and above all the 'politics of disappearance' that characterized the years of dictatorship in several Latin American countries. Often mixing photography, newspapers and official documents, works such as Juan Carlos Romero's installation *Violencia* (1973-2013), Oscar Bony's series *Suicidios* (1998), or Johanna Calle's series *Pie de fotos* (2012) explicitly dealt with those themes, whereas section 4 proposed a more specific attention to the memory of atrocity, its elaboration and ritual/religious expression. The collection gave a visual voice to the relationships between emptiness/fullness (pampa vs. city, lack of documents concerning mass arrests and executions vs. omnipresence of police and army, i.e. Fredi Casco's series *Foto Zombie*, 2011), visibility/invisibility – and a-visibility[1] – most notably in the opposition between the exercise of power perpetrated by the dictatorships vs. the phenomenon of *desaparecidos*, i.e. Marcelo Brodsky's *Buena Memoria*, 1968; Juan Manuel Echavarrìa's video *Bocas de ceniza*, 2003-4), and expression/repression (Susana Torres' *Museo Neo-Inka*, 1999-2013).

These basic dichotomies presented the images of suffering and violence throughout the four section of the exhibition and constituted at the same time a "witnessing public."[2] Such witnessing attitude is also present in *Revuelta(s)*, the film that the organizers commissioned artists Fredi Casco and Renate Costa that was screened in an *ad hoc* area of the gallery space, and is now freely available via the museum's YouTube channel. Thanks to the displayed works, the visitor was initiated to a conceptual itinerary crossing America Latina; such symbolic path found completion following the artists interviewed by the two filmmakers, and in so doing gave the visitor the chance to partake this journey becoming part of America Latina's witnessing public.

[1] Alain Brossat, Jean Louis Déotte (eds.), *La Mort dissoute. Disparition et spectralité*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2002.
[2] Meg McLagan, "Principles, Publicity, and Politics: Notes on Human Rights Media," in *American Anthropologist*, vol. 105, no. 3, 2003, pp. 605-612.

The exhibition represented thus a device able to produce such audience,[3] exorcising America Latina's past, and suggesting a way to re-appropriate the territory, the city, the resistance heritage, memory and identity through visual documentation practices.

[Miriam De Rosa, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore]

[3] Leshu Torchin, *Creating the Witness: Documenting Genocide on Film, Video, and the Internet*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis-London 2012.

Sylvie Lindeperg
La Voie des images. Quatre histoires de tournage au printemps-été 1944
Verdier, Paris 2013, pp. 288

To Sylvie Lindeperg, a historian who specialises in the Second World War, to follow *La Voie des images* is an imperative that begins with *Les Écrans de l'ombre*, the first outcome of a research that aims to ascertain the awkward link between the recording of an event and the multiplicity of points of view that establish the processes of its reception and therefore of its historical, symbolic and memorializing re-actualisation.

La Voie des images has a similar purpose, even though it moves from a different starting point: its 'path' opens up to the present, then identifies the book's vanishing point in four films shot in 1944 by partisans from the Vercors Forest or occupied Paris, or even by people internalised in the concentration camps in Terezin (Poland) and in Westerbork (Netherlands). Lindeperg's analysis of these fragments is anticipated by the observation of the "uniformisation croissante des formes d'écriture de l'histoire" made today for the general public. Films (*La Rafle*), TV series (*Apocalypse*) or docu-fictions (*Auschwitz: les nazis et la solution finale* and *La Resistance*) challenge the scholar to recognise the drift that characterises the intensive exploitation of the archives and images and finally icons of recent history.

In the first chapter, "Les tyrannies du visible," Lindeperg sums the elements up to justify her statement. History (a *juicy* and marketable topic) is today manipulated and transformed into a sort of "digestible object." Thanks to the newest digital processing, restoration and editing technologies and thanks to a renewed accessibility to archives, producers and filmmakers and technicians are involved in procedures that mix up times, lengths and models of vision, encouraging an aesthetic of the *overabundant*, of the *hyper-visible*, of a history free from uncertainties or errors that speculates on its knowledge and transmission.

So it goes in *La Resistance*, where the filmmaker Christophe Nick indifferently uses so much *fictional* images (as Guy Moquet's killing scene, shot by René Clement in *La Bataille du rail* in 1945) and archive footage (related to the Parisian Resistance) that he can mix them up and level them out. Similarly in *Apocalypse* each archival footage (originally in black and white) is re-coloured, re-framed and post-synched to take in the temporal distance, which separates today's spectators from the original footage's aesthetic rules. In this way, what

Lindeperg calls the *hors champ* of History is filled up with a *champ plein* "un espace recrée où le spectateur-visiteur se déplace comme il le ferait dans un jeu vidéo" (p. 30). To counterbalance this tendency, Lindeperg suggests an alternative methodology. It consists in opposing "la lenteur persistante et obstinée d'un commerce renouvelé avec les images de cinéma" (p. 15) to this contemporary saturation and speed of circulation that does not let the archive *live* and *happen*. Lindperg uses two methods in her survey: first is the return to the fragment to study the image in its singular epiphany. Like cutting off the sequences of the French Resistance or those shot in Westerbork or Terezin, from the context that has "appauvries [theses sequences] par l'usage […], transformées en lieux communs et en icones marchandises" (p. 10) she studies the images in a *patient* and close way to let vibrate, in their sensible presence, the fragile and imperfect traces of the spectres that are hidden within. Examining the archive seems to mean implicitly a need for a freeze, a still produced in reading to re-evaluate the role of the imagination in the historical reconstruction process. This attitude allows a form of not-reconciled *survivance* of the images, and in this sense it establishes the truly temporal dimension of the archive.

The study of Anna Maria 'Settela' Steinbach, *laic icon* (Susan Sontag) of the horror of the extermination, is a clear example of this process: in 1944 Jewish photographer Robert Breslauer framed her face leaning out from a train from Westerbork to Auschwitz. As the only close-up of the film ordered by the Nazis to the photographer, this very frame seems to accomplish itself in a quest for an "instant aussi bref qu'interminable" (p. 187), so symbolic to contain all the meaning of the tragedy. If on one hand Breslauer seems to push inside the image that which he was otherwise prevented from stating, on the other hand Lindeperg, by following the trajectory of that very gaze, reproduces, as in slow motion, that short *ralenti*, that decisive instant in which the look of the filmmaker and the look of the young woman meet.

If on one hand then, by privileging these details, the author's method seems to eliminate the *hors champ* of the film, on the other hand this same method is nourished by a constant consideration of its production/reception context, as if the analysis were moved by a double trend which permits us to confute the perceptible evidence of what is shown in the light of an accurate documentary reconstruction.

To remain further on the Westerbork footage case, we can therefore retrace the various phases of its readings, uses, and rewritings to Harun Farocki's crucial *ready-made* work on Breslauer's footage titled *Respite/Sursis*. The chapter that, in Lindeperg's book, introduces these kinds of reflections, "Le double jeu du cinema," leads us to follow the questions that open the volume further: how can we illustrate History? How can we re-open the perspective of its possible readings instead of closing or saturating them?

It is actually by putting in contact these two kinds of work that we would like to take into account the value of her text in the wider frame of a contemporary debate on the archive and on the ethics of its preservation and re-use.

Georges Didi-Huberman, in a main oeuvre entitled *Remontage du temps subi*,

dwelt on the archival work promoted by the German artist Farocki. One of the *formulae* employed by the scholar to describe Farocki's critical, political and creative engagement seems to us an appropriate return to what also characterises Lindeperg's engagement in *La Voie des images:* "L'artiste-archéologue n'est pas du tout un nostalgique replié sur le passé : il *ouvre les temps* par son effort constant de transmission, ce qu'on appelle si bien, en français, un 'passage de témoin.' Et c'est en ce sens qu'il nous *reprend* par la main en nous ouvrant les yeux" (p. 108).

By inviting us to re-confer to the images their *initiative* and suggesting to us to read them closely as if we were struck by them, but also able to respect the rigour of their eluding mystery, Lindeperg succeeds in keeping History's vanishing point wide open. While *carrying us by [her] hands* (as Didi-Huberman puts it), she *re-opens our eyes* in order to transmit to us a knowledge that tries to build "patiemment un sens toujours instable, en éternel devenir" (p. 15).

[Martina Panelli, Università degli Studi di Udine]

Contributors / Collaborateurs

Alice Cati is Assistant Professor at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, where she teaches *Languages and Semiotics of Media Products* and *History of Cinema*. Her current research study is on audiovisual media and memory studies, with particular regard to home movie, autobiographical documentary, and gendered creativity. In 2009, she wrote a volume called, *Pellicole di ricordi. Film di famiglia e memorie private 1926-1942* (Vita & Pensiero). Her most recent works are *Immagini della memoria. Teorie e pratiche del ricordo tra testimonianza, genealogia e documentari* (Mimesis, 2013) and the special issue "(En)Gendered creativity: Actors Agencies Artifacts" (*Comunicazioni sociali*, 2014, edited with Mariagrazia Fanchi and Rosanna Maule).

Ilaria A. De Pascalis obtained her PhD in Film Studies in 2009 at the Roma Tre University (Rome, Italy), with a dissertation on Contemporary European Cinema and Globalization. She has published several reviews and essays in international journals and book chapters, especially about European cinema in a transnational perspective, gender studies, and narrative genres in cinema and television series. She has been visiting professor at the University of Cassino and at La Sapienza University of Rome. She also authored the volume *Commedia nell'Italia contemporanea* (Il Castoro, 2012).

Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann is Lecturer of Cinema Studies in the Department of Communication and Journalism and in the DAAD Center for German Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He holds his PhD from the Free University in Berlin where he also graduated in Film Studies, New German Literature and Political Science. He was Research Assistant at the Filmuniversity Babelsberg Konrad Wolf, and a postdoctoral fellow in the program "Media of History – History of Media" at the Bauhaus University of Weimar and at the International Institute for Holocaust Research Yad Vashem. He is author of *Geschichtsbilder im medialen Gedächtnis. Filmische Narrationen des Holocaust* (Transcript, 2011).

Luisella Farinotti is Associate Professor in Cinema Studies at Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione IULM, where she teaches *Film Theory, Aesthetics*

of Cinema and *Aesthetics of Media*. As a scholar of Cinema and Visual Arts, she published many essays in journals and miscellaneous books. In the last years, her research is focused on theory and history of the image, the relationship between cinema and memory, found-footage films and self-portrayal practices. She supervised and coordinated the research project published in *Atlante del cinema italiano. Corpi, paesaggi e figure del contemporaneo* (Garzanti, 2011). She is a member of the Editorial Board of *Cinéma & Cie. International Film Studies Journal* and, since 2009, she has supervised the column "Cinepolitica" of the journal *Comunicazione Politica*.

Barbara Grespi is Associate Professor in Cinema Studies at the University of Bergamo, Italy. As a member of the University's Centre of Visual Arts, she coordinates the Research Group on Cinema "Balthazar" and is on the scientific board of "Punctum," an international project devoted to the study of images and visual culture. She has written on gesture in the cinema, on cinema and memory and on the intersections between cinema and photography. Her recent publications include *Memoria e Immagini* (Mondadori, 2009), *Cinema e montaggio* (Carocci, 2010), *Gus Van Sant* (Marsilio, 2011), *Fuori quadro* (Aracne, 2013).

Elisa Mandelli obtained in 2015 a PhD in History of Arts at Ca' Foscari University/IUAV in Venice, with a dissertation on audio-visual displays in history museums through the 20th century. Her research focuses on the relationships between cinema and visual arts, especially in contemporary exhibition spaces. In 2009 she obtained a Degree in Cinema, television and multimedia production at the University of Bologna. She is member of the editorial board of the journal *Cinergie*.

Sylvie Rollet is Professor in Film Studies at the University of Poitiers. She is jointly responsible for "Theaters of Memory," an interuniversity research program on the relationship between moving images and memory. On filmic representation of genocides, she has published *Une éthique du regard : le cinéma face à la Catastrophe, d'Alain Resnais à Rithy Panh* (Hermann, 2011). She has also recently co-edited two collections of essays, *Paysages et Mémoire : cinéma, photographie, dispositifs* (Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2014) and *Théâtres de la mémoire, mouvement des images* (Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2010). Her research is devoted, in particular, to the works of Hungarian, Russian, Caucasian and Balkan filmmakers.

Vicente Sánchez-Biosca is a Professor at the University of Valencia (Spain) and has been the editor of the film journal *Archivos de la Filmoteca* for 20 years (1992-2012). He has been a visiting professor at a number of universities, including Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3 (for five terms), Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Université de Montréal, University of São Paulo, New York University, and University of Havana. Among his latest books are: *NO-DO. El tiempo y la memoria* (Cátedra, 2000), *El pasado es el destino* (Cátedra, 2011), both with R.R. Tranche, *Cine y guerra civil española* (Alianza,

2006), *Cine de historia y cine de memoria* (Cátedra, 2006), *Cine y vanguardias artísticas* (Paidós, 2004). He is currently leading a research project on the role of the image in the charisma-building of political leaders in Spain. His other project deals with the construction and circulation of images of atrocity, especially *perpetrator images*.

Maria Teresa Soldani is a PhD candidate in History of Visual and Performing Arts at Pegaso Project-Tuscany Region (Universities of Firenze, Pisa, and Siena). She graduated *summa cum laude* from the University of Pisa in Cinema, Music, Theatre, and in Cinema, Theatre, Multimedia Production, defending a thesis on contemporary American cinema and video prepared in Boston and New York. She published the monograph *Naked City. Identità, indipendenza e ricerca nel cinema newyorchese* (Quaderni di CinemaSud, 2013) and several essays for *Segnocinema, Duellanti, Quaderni di CinemaSud*, and *Invideo*'s catalogue. She is a filmmaker, composer and musician living in Turin, Italy.

MIMESIS GROUP
www.mimesis-group.com

MIMESIS INTERNATIONAL
www.mimesisinternational.com
info@mimesisinternational.com

MIMESIS EDIZIONI
www.mimesisedizioni.it
mimesis@mimesisedizioni.it

ÉDITIONS MIMÉSIS
www.editionsmimesis.fr
info@editionsmimesis.fr

MIMESIS COMMUNICATION
www.mim-c.net

MIMESIS EU
www.mim-eu.com

printed by Digital Team
Fano (PU) in November 2015