

ILUMINACE

Časopis pro teorii, historii
a estetiku filmu

The Journal of Film Theory, History,
and Aesthetics

1 / 2022



Na obálce / Front cover:

Políčko z filmu *Satanova jízda po železnici* (Jan Kříženecký, 1906) /

Film Still from *Satan's Railway Ride* (Jan Kříženecký, 1906) © Národní filmový archiv

ILUMINACE

Časopis pro teorii, historii
a estetiku filmu
The Journal of Film Theory, History,
and Aesthetics

1 / 2022

Ročník / Volume 34

TÉMA / MAIN TOPIC:
**MIGRATING ARCHIVES OF REALITY. PROGRAMMING, CURATING,
AND APPROPRIATION OF NON-FICTION FILM**

Editor:
Lucie Česálková

OBSAH

Editorial

Lucie Česálková: Migrating Archives of Reality. Programming, Curating, and Appropriation of Non-Fiction Film	5
---	---

Články k tématu

Jiří Anger: Shaping the Unshapeable? Videographic Curation of Early Czech Cinema.....	9
Amrita Biswas: Super-8 in Calcutta: Analysis of a “Failed” Movement.....	31
Karol Józwiak: Polish Memory of the Second World War and its Afterlife in the Early Cold War Italian Film Culture.....	53
Zachariah Anderson: Virtual Looking: Home Movies as Historical Evidence in <i>The Future Is Behind You</i> (Abigail Child, 2004)	73
Vladimir Rosas-Salazar: (Auto)biographical Documentaries as Audiovisual Microhistories of Pinochet’s Chile	91

Rozhovor

Rossella Catanese: How to Benefit from Academics? A Roundtable with Film Archives	107
--	-----

Recenze

Tereza Czesany Dvořáková: Český film jako důsledek proměny kulturního pole (Petr Bilík, <i>Financování filmu jako aspekt kulturní politiky</i>)	115
Josef Tichý: Pod povrch věcí (Rachael Hutchinson, <i>Japanese Culture Through Videogames</i>)	119

CONTENTS

Editorial

Lucie Česálková: Migrating Archives of Reality. Programming, Curating, and Appropriation of Non-Fiction Film	5
---	---

Themed Articles

Jiří Anger: Shaping the Unshapeable? Videographic Curation of Early Czech Cinema	9
Amrita Biswas: Super-8 in Calcutta: Analysis of a “Failed” Movement.....	31
Karol Jóźwiak: Polish Memory of the Second World War and its Afterlife in the Early Cold War Italian Film Culture	53
Zachariah Anderson: Virtual Looking: Home Movies as Historical Evidence in <i>The Future Is Behind You</i> (Abigail Child, 2004)	73
Vladimir Rosas-Salazar: (Auto)biographical Documentaries as Audiovisual Microhistories of Pinochet’s Chile	91

Interview

Rossella Catanese: How to Benefit from Academics? A Roundtable with Film Archives.....	107
---	-----

Reviews

Tereza Czesany Dvořáková: Czech Film as a Consequence of Changing the Cultural Field (Petr Bilík, <i>Financování filmu jako aspekt kulturní politiky</i>)	115
Josef Tichý: Underneath Things (Rachael Hutchinson, <i>Japanese Culture Through Videogames</i>)	119



Lucie Česálková (Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences)

Migrating Archives of Reality

Programming, Curating, and Appropriation of Non-Fiction Film

The digital turn, which has created new modes of access and circulation for films, underscores and amplifies what has been the fate of non-fiction film since the beginning of its existence — it has always been, and continues to be, a migrating archive of reality. While non-fiction films featured prominently in early cinema programs, the ascendancy of the feature-length fiction film as the dominant format of distribution and exhibition since the 1910s has rendered the position of non-fiction film in mainstream movie theatres contested and malleable, both restricted and supported by various legislative measures. At the same time, an intensive international circulation of non-fiction films developed beyond the cinema, through the exchange of newsreel shots, the exhibition of non-fiction films in circuits of alternative/nontheatrical distribution (notably educational, etc.), and later at festivals. Non-fiction footage also found its place in both documentaries and fiction films, etc. Driven by the massive digitization of cultural heritage and possibilities of content sharing platforms and new streaming services, which enable non-fiction film content to constantly migrate across venues, platforms, but also cultures, geopolitical barriers, artworks etc., these movements intensified in the digital media ecology.

The digitization of cultural heritage not only means new and more widely available possibilities of sharing of the knowledge, but also sets new power hierarchies of memory regarding the chosen strategies.¹⁾ As the digital environment has become the primary arena for the production, distribution and consumption of audiovisual content, the policy of digitisation and access to digitised cultural heritage has become, among other things, a key tool for contemporary engagement with the past.²⁾ At the same time, both archiving methods and filmmaking, especially the practice of found footage, have adapted and met

1) Nanna Bonde Thylstrup, *The Politics of Mass Digitization* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2019).

2) Andrew Hoskins, ed., *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition* (Routledge: New York, 2018).

these new challenges.³⁾ Along with these developments, it has become crucial to reopen questions that documentary film theorists had already asked,⁴⁾ namely, what does it mean to appropriate images of the past in new works, what new meanings do new interpretive frameworks of remixes, compilation documentaries or found footage films give to the original footage? Jaimie Barone refers to such films collectively as appropriation films, which, according to her, are “those films that, by appropriating previously recorded textual material, give the viewer the experience of an ‘archival effect’ — the feeling that certain sounds and/or images in these films come from a different time and served a different function”.⁵⁾ As in Baron’s definition, the terms “recycled images”,⁶⁾ “travelling images”,⁷⁾ “remix”,⁸⁾ and the name of our issue (“migrating archives”) are related linguistically to movement, to change, which must be taken into account if we want to understand the new conditions of communication, new political and ethical challenges,⁹⁾ and the new relationships that arise between the present and the past, between the text and its viewer.

As they increasingly appear in (but also often disappear again from) online archives, channels, virtual exhibitions, social media, YouTube etc., non-fiction films can be easily appropriated by artists, fans, and memory communities. Similarly, as the established power differentials between official and private collections change, works and topics which were hitherto barred from view or even forbidden can now become visible. The push towards mass digitization and public access to historical materials thus also offers new avenues for decanonization and decolonization. However, practices of digitization, online programming, digital curation, appropriation (including colorization of black and white archival footage), and sharing, open up new spaces and layers of meaning. Moreover, they also alter and sometimes overwrite the original or historical meaning of non-fiction films, with significant epistemic, political, and ethical consequences. In particular, the new modes of digital access carry the danger of misuses or misunderstandings of the historical content (and in some cases also of the form, aesthetics, and the materiality) of non-fiction film. Thus, the digital circulation of non-fiction films contributes to both the consolidation and the disintegration of public spaces for debate, and as such, it calls for responsible and sustainable curatorial practices based on thorough contextualization.

-
- 3) Giovanna Fossati, “Found Footage Filmmaking, Film Archiving and New Participatory Platforms,” in *Found Footage: Cinema Exposed*, eds. Marente Bloemheugel, Giovanna Fossati, and Jaap Guldmond (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 177–184.
 - 4) Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000), 12; Bill Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 29.
 - 5) Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (London: Routledge, 2014).
 - 6) William C. Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993).
 - 7) Anna Dahlgren, *Travelling Images: Looking across the Borderlands of Art, Media and Visual Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).
 - 8) Ioana Literat, “Make, Share, Review, Remix: Unpacking the Impact of the Internet on Contemporary Creativity,” *Convergence* 25, no. 5–6 (2019), 1168–1184.
 - 9) Jaimie Baron, *Reuse, Misuse, Abuse: The Ethics of Audiovisual Appropriation in the Digital Era* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2021).

This special issue is based on an online conference of the same name, organized in 2021 as part of the international research project ViCTOR-E (Visual Culture of Trauma, Obliteration, and Reconstruction in Post WWII Europe, www.victor-e.eu).¹⁰⁾ Since the issue of migrating archives is related to the issues of digitization, accessibility and valorization of archive collections of non-fiction films, and since the aforementioned project contributes to the migration of films by creating an online exhibition and making (newly) digitized films available on the European Film Gateway, we also include in this issue a roundtable led by Rossella Catanese with representatives of several European film archives, who collaborated with the researchers and in the discussion assess the situation of accessing non-fiction films and the possibilities that academic research brings for cataloguing or contextualization of archive collections.

The essays included in this issue approach the idea of migrating archives of reality from two key perspectives. The first emphasizes the role of technological conditionality of image circulation, the second asks about the reasons and consequences of the appropriation of found footage in both historical and contemporary audiovisual culture. Jiří Anger takes the digitalisation of the films of the pioneer of Czech cinema, Jan Křiženecký, as the starting point of his analysis and in the text, which also includes a videographic essay entitled *The First Frames of Czech Cinema* (Jiří Anger and Adéla Kudlová, 2021), he reflects on the challenges of curation of ephemeral film artefacts in the digital era. In a historical study of a particular cultural-political movement, Amrita Biswas foregrounds the role of the film format (specifically Super 8 in her case) as a technological condition for the development of alternative audiovisual culture in India in the 1980s. The following three essays focus on the issue of found footage. Karol Jozwiak examines the films of Michał Waszynski from the period just after World War II and discusses their use of wartime found footage. Through production and distribution analysis, he seeks to highlight the broader cultural and political background of the films' production and reception between Poland and Italy and their role in the diplomatic tactics of the end of the Second and the beginning of the Cold War. For Zachariah Anderson, a key topic of interest is *The Future Is Behind You* (2004), in which Abigail Child uses family film footage from the 1930s to reflect in an experimental way on private history or constructing gender identities. Characterizing Child's practice as that of a historian on the one hand, and as one of fictionalization and intrusive editing on the other, Anderson is primarily interested in the signifying dimension of the various techniques of intervening in the source material. Like Anderson, Vladimir Rosas-Salazar uses the comparison of a filmmaker to a historian to analyse contemporary Chilean documentaries based on a footage of home videos from the 1980s and 1990s. He adopts and develops the concepts of historians Carl Ginzburg (microhistory) and Rudolf Dekker (ego-documents) to understand the meaning of personal videos in the memory of Chilean society. The special issue of *Iluminace*, linked to the theme Migrating Archives of Reality, thus seeks to highlight and historicize a broader register of practices that, alongside the production of found footage films, can be understood as key parameters of the circulation of non-fiction film images. Taking the example of the 1980s India, it reminds

10) The conference archive, including videos of individual contributions as well as a recording of debates is available at: Migrating Archives, accessed July 29, 2022, <https://migrating-archives.com/en>.

us that the movement of images is materially and technologically determined and can lead to the birth of alternative cultural-political networks; similarly, through the example of digitization of Jan Kříděnecký's films, it does not neglect the crucial role played in contemporary culture by the politics of programming and strategies of curating (archival) digital content.

Acknowledgements

This issue is an output of an international research project ViCTOR-E (Visual Culture of Trauma, Obliteration, and Reconstruction in Post-WW II Europe), financially supported by the HERA Joint Research Programme which is co-funded by BMBF via DLR-PT, CAS, ANR, MIUR and the European Commission through Horizon 2020. This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 649307.

Bibliography

- Baron, Jaimie. *Reuse, Misuse, Abuse: The Ethics of Audiovisual Appropriation in the Digital Era* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2021).
- Baron, Jaimie. *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (London: Routledge, 2014).
- Bruzzi, Stella. *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000).
- Dahlgren, Anna. *Travelling Images: Looking across the Borderlands of Art, Media and Visual Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).
- Fossati, Giovanna. "Found Footage Filmmaking, Film Archiving and New Participatory Platforms," in *Found Footage: Cinema Exposed*, eds. Marente Bloemhevel, Giovanna Fossati and Jaap Guldemond (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 177–184.
- Hoskins, Andrew, ed. *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition* (Routledge: New York, 2018).
- Literat, Ioana. "Make, Share, Review, Remix: Unpacking the Impact of the Internet on Contemporary Creativity," *Convergence* 25, no. 5–6 (2019), 1168–1184.
- Nichols, Bill. *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994).
- Thylstrup, Nanna Bonde. *The Politics of Mass Digitization* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2019).
- Wees, William C. *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993).

Jiří Anger (Národní filmový archiv, Prague)

Shaping the Unshapeable?

Videographic Curation of Early Czech Cinema

Abstract

Whenever a curator attempts to present films from the very beginnings of cinema to contemporary spectators, multiple pressing questions always come to mind. Shall the ephemeral one-minute scenes be shown individually or as parts of larger wholes, sorted out according to thematic or chronological affinities? How to successfully reproduce not only the films' content but also their inherent technological features or the distinctive quality of early cinematic experience? How is it possible to make the audience aware of the historical distance that the surviving archival artifacts covered? How can we navigate between the film materials' past, present, and future?

This study brings forth the idea that to understand the earliest cinematic works in a richer way, film curatorship may adopt a more creative and interventionist approach — not in order to turn the artifacts into something entirely different but to highlight their hidden cracks and ambiguities. More specifically, it examines a videographic essay titled *The First Frames of Czech Cinema* (Jiří Anger and Adéla Kudlová, 2021) that plays with the paradoxes and contradictions of the recently digitized films of Jan Kříženecký (1898–1911), or, more precisely, of the very *first* images of the works we see. Both the videographic essay and its written accompaniment showcase that curation of uncertain, disfigured, and fragmentary archival artifacts from the beginnings of cinema does not necessarily have to limit itself to filling the gaps; instead, it can embrace their lacunas as windows onto all the things that make the earliest cinema so strange and fascinating.

Keywords

early cinema, film curatorship, archives, digital humanities, videographic criticism, Czech cinema, Jan Kříženecký

Introduction

Few kinds of archival artifacts challenge film curators as much as those from the very beginnings of cinema. For those responsible for preserving and presenting moving images, the fascination pioneering cinematic works produce goes hand in hand with anxiety. Whenever one attempts to screen, for example, the films by the Lumière brothers, multiple pressing questions always come to mind: Shall the ephemeral one-minute actualities be presented individually or as parts of larger wholes, sorted out according to thematic and/or chronological affinities? What types of film materials shall be used: the original nitrate prints from the brink of the 19th century, which are difficult to screen due to the non-standard single pair of round perforations¹⁾ and reek of special protection because of the permanent risk of burning or falling apart, later generation copies, which often differ significantly from the original material-wise and content-wise, or the digitized/digitally restored facsimiles of either? At what speed shall the films be projected, considering that the standard framerates we are now familiar with were not applicable back then?²⁾ How to successfully reproduce not only the films' content but also their technological features (such as camera instability)³⁾ and the distinctive quality of early cinematic experience as a collective event? How is it possible to make the audience aware of the historical distance that the surviving archival artifacts covered without overwhelming it with extra information?⁴⁾ And when the curator proceeds from merely showing the films towards creating original interpretations (texts, videos, performances) of early cinematic artifacts as aesthetic, historical, and technological phenomena for the times we are living in, how can she or he navigate between their past, present, and future?

As someone who participates in an ongoing project undertaken at the National Film Archive (Národní filmový archiv) in Prague on the "first Czech films," I have had a chance to experience first-hand how many problems, paradoxes, and contradictions the process of curating earliest cinema involves. The digitization of the earliest surviving Czech films, made by Jan Kříženecký⁵⁾ between 1898 and 1911 with the equipment obtained from the Lumières, gave birth to a body of work that simulates an authentic archival imprint of his-

-
- 1) Eric Loné, "Lumière," in Harold Brown, *Physical Characteristics of Early Films as Aids to Identification*, ed. Camille Blot-Wellens (Brussels: FIAF, 2020), 165–168.
 - 2) Paolo Cherchi Usai, *Silent Cinema: A Guide to Study, Research and Curatorship* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 61–66.
 - 3) On the camera instability in the earliest cinema, see Benoît Turquety, *Inventing Cinema: Machines, Gestures and Media History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 231–248.
 - 4) This topic was addressed poignantly by Elif Rongen-Kaynakçı during a discussion on curating early cinema: "A Season of Classic Films | Where, How and to Whom — the challenges of presenting earliest cinema," *Filmový přehled*, June 3, 2021, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://www.filmovyprehled.cz/cs/kalendar/detail/a-season-of-classic-films-where-how-and-to-whom-the-challenges-of-presenting-earliest-cinema>. Aslı Özgen and Elif Rongen-Kaynakçı, "The Transnational Archive as a Site of Disruption, Discrepancy, and Decomposition: The Complexities of Ottoman Film Heritage," *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 21, no. 1–2 (2021), 77–99.
 - 5) Of course, Kříženecký had collaborators, notably Josef František Pokorný, who acted as a producer and arranger of the 1898 films, and Josef Šváb-Malostranský, a cabaret actor who had a huge role in the creation of first short fiction films at the 1898 Exhibition of Architecture and Engineering in Prague where the first Czech films were presented.

tory, yet which is at the same time riddled with fissures, ellipses, and uncertainties. The films were digitized from the original prints and negatives (crucially, without retouching damages and instabilities that pertain to the films' technological qualities and material history)⁶⁾ and subsequently released on DVD and Blu-ray (*The Films of Jan Kříženecký*) in December 2019. The DVD / Blu-ray collection, which includes texts and videocommentaries by film archivists and historians as well as period photographs and documents,⁷⁾ strove to marry respectful cataloging and contextualization of the materials with reflecting the incompleteness of analog fragments and the necessary shifts that occur with the digitization process — what Michael Loebenstein terms “presentation with seams.”⁸⁾ Still, the edition was relatively tame when it came to deciphering the extent to which the digitized films' hybrid and fragmentary character shapes our experience of them. While the archivist and curator in charge of the digitization, Jeanne Pommeau, documented and demonstrated physical elements such as color layers on the prints, marks of static electricity, or camera trembling and also more common mechanical and chemical damages and ellipses in textual and audiovisual form,⁹⁾ the aesthetic potential of these features remained unexplored. Now it is time to experiment with practical forms of presentation in which this potential shall be unleashed, in which the so-called imperfections of Kříženecký's films shall serve to reinvigorate their historicity, materiality, and aesthetics in a defamiliarizing yet still historically accurate fashion.

This article delimits one such exercise in experimental curatorship that goes beyond merely exhibiting and contextualizing the first Czech films and interprets them via original creative forms. A videographic essay titled *The First Frames of Czech Cinema* (Jiří Anger and Adéla Kudlová, 2021) plays with the paradoxes and contradictions of the earliest cinematic works. While we watch the *first* Czech films for the *first* time in a digital form, the very *first* images of the works mostly stay overlooked. Thus, the essay gathers every single “first frame” of each piece of digitized original film material (nitrate prints and negatives) and assembles them into a compilation that reveals them in detail as well as part of a larger mosaic. On the one hand, the essay exploits the possibilities of digital technology to show the individual frames from multiple angles and bring obscure details to the fore; on the other, it is also a reflection of an early screening practice, when projectionists started the presentation with a still image that gradually evolved into a continuous movement.

The video essay subscribes to the dynamically evolving tradition of “videographic criticism.”¹⁰⁾ Its approach is based on performing research by means of the moving images and

6) See the short report on the digitization project: Jeanne Pommeau and Jiří Anger, “The Digitization of Jan Kříženecký's Films,” *Iluminace* 31, no. 1 (2019), 104–107.

7) Jiří Anger, ed., *Filmy Jana Kříženeckého / The Films of Jan Kříženecký* (DVD / Blu-ray, Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2019).

8) Paolo Cherchi Usai, David Francis, Alexander Horwath, and Michael Loebenstein, eds., *Film Curatorship: Archives, Museums, and the Digital Marketplace* (Wien: Synema — Gesellschaft für Film und Medien, 2008), 203.

9) Jeanne Pommeau, “The Digitisation of Jan Kříženecký's Films,” in *Filmy Jana Kříženeckého / The Films of Jan Kříženecký*, ed. Jiří Anger (DVD / Blu-ray Booklet, Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2019), 31–35; Jeanne Pommeau, “The Digitisation of Kříženecký's Films [videocommentary],” in *Filmy Jana Kříženeckého / The Films of Jan Kříženecký*, ed. Jiří Anger (DVD / Blu-ray, Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2019).

10) Christian Keathley, Jason Mittell, and Catherine Grant, eds., *The Videographic Essay: Criticism in Sound and*

sounds themselves, instead of in a traditional written text, thereby opening up a new epistemology of studying film objects in the digital age and general possibilities of what Bernd Herzogenrath terms “practical aesthetics,” a way of thinking *with* and *through* the artwork, not *about* it (in the sense of imposing external concepts on it).¹¹⁾ In many ways, videographic criticism builds upon found footage and archival film practices,¹²⁾ albeit in the context of academic film and media studies and the evolving field of digital humanities. As I argue through the text, the “videographic essay” format offers many opportunities not only for research but also for curatorship, as it allows us to make the historical, technological, and aesthetic ambiguity of the first Czech films more accessible (or at least more comprehensible).

To better approximate the aims and implications of the videographic essay, this study includes both the actual video and its written elaboration that proceeds in three stages. First, it delineates epistemic conditions of curating early cinema, with specific attention towards the films of Jan Kříženecký as cinematic milestones and marginal archival artifacts at the same time. Second, it covers various examples of creative appropriation of early films by European film archives, introducing ways in which they enable us to actualize the original works. Third, it contextualizes *The First Frames of Czech Cinema* and outlines how it can help us understand the materiality and aesthetics of Kříženecký’s films within the fluid digital landscape. As a whole, this study brings forth the idea that film curatorship may, under certain conditions, involve active (re)interpretation and deconstruction of archival artifacts — not in order to turn them into something entirely different but to unveil their hidden cracks and exploit their powers to make us understand the films in a richer way.

Touching Early Cinematic Artifacts with Surgical Gloves

The history of the first Czech films is a never-ceasing struggle in how to make them visible and graspable. Kříženecký’s cinematic works are mostly actualities from official ceremonies and everyday city rush whose aim is not to give a comprehensive account of captured events but first and foremost make these events perceptible despite limited technical possibilities. Even in their time, they were perceived as ephemeral, blurry, and incomplete, and their aging and circulation in multifarious contexts have only reinforced these qualities. Simultaneously, the peculiar nature of the Lumière film technology, which Kříženecký used in shooting, developing, and projecting his films, impinges upon the form and con-

Image (Montreal: caboose, 2019); Volker Pantenburg, “Videographic Film Studies,” in *Handbuch Filmanalyse*, eds. Malte Hagener and Volker Pantenburg (Berlin: Springer, 2020), 485–502.

11) Bernd Herzogenrath, “Toward a Practical Aesthetics: Thinking With,” in *Practical Aesthetics*, ed. Bernd Herzogenrath (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 1–24.

12) See, for example, Christa Blümlinger, *Kino aus zweiter Hand: Zur Ästhetik materieller Aneignung im Film und in der Medienkunst* (Berlin: vorwerk 8, 2009); Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (London: Routledge, 2014); Giovanna Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Third Revised Edition (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018); Catherine Russell, *Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and Archival Film Practices* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

tent of the moving images much more noticeably than we are used to — in some cases, it brings the films' aesthetic effects close to what we know as experimental cinema.¹³⁾ This was, somewhat paradoxically, allowed by a non-intrusive approach to digitization that did not involve retouching or overstabilization of the image.¹⁴⁾ Thus, while the newly accessible films boast high-definition picture quality, achieved by scanning the materials in 4K, and many new options for exhibition and manipulation, the digitization process did not efface the deformations present in the material but rendered them all the more visible in the image. It preserved not only damages and instabilities caused by the ravages of time but also deformations inherent in the material properties of the original nitrate prints and negatives as well as those resulting from the mechanical functioning of the Lumière camera (Cinématographe-type) that Kříženecký used. This strangely hybrid form enables us to perceive weird shapes that one usually does not encounter among the rips, dots, and dust in stock archival footage nor in crystal-clear digitally restored films. Material-technological elements — not only more traditional damages like splices or scratches but also intrinsic deformations such as a yellowish-orange color layer, marks of static electricity, or camera instability — endow the moving images with speculatively and aesthetically generative features and make the films' aesthetic effects and meanings inseparable from their shifting materiality and circulation across many eras and contexts.

Thus, we are dealing with archival artifacts that are cherished as milestones that initiated the history of Czech cinema (however inaccurate such a statement might be)¹⁵⁾ yet are also part of what Katherine Groo calls “bad film histories.”¹⁶⁾ Groo’s “particularist approach to film historiography” teaches us to take “the absences, imperfections, and discontinuities of the [...] image as crucial concepts and methodological coordinates rather than obstacles to be overcome or resolved.”¹⁷⁾ Bad film histories remind us that “the historiographic process will be messy, imperfect, and open to revision, especially as our artifacts change, degrade, and disappear from the archives.”¹⁸⁾ At the same time, treating all the rips, dots, and dust seriously is not just a matter of historicity, i.e., “the relationship that the film bears to past time and the properties that contribute to it being historically meaningful bearing and the particular relationship that film bears to past time,”¹⁹⁾ but also a matter of aesthetics. For example, in the fifth chapter of her book *Bad Film Histories: Ethnog-*

13) I have elaborated on these affinities elsewhere, see, for example, Jiří Anger, “Keep That Image Burning: Digital Kříženecký, Color Veil, and the Cinema That Never Stops Ending,” *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 20, no. 1–2 (2020), 123–155.

14) Pommeau and Anger, “The Digitization of Jan Kříženecký’s Films,” 105.

15) The question of firstness is a source of controversy in every national cinema. There are films that were made or shown on Czech territory before Jan Kříženecký’s works, and it must be constantly reminded that at the end of the nineteenth century, the Czech lands were still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Not to mention the fact that many films from the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are unknown. Thus, we work with the primacy of Kříženecký’s films as a discursive construct, which was established by the Czech Cinematograph at the Exhibitions of Architecture and Engineering in 1898 and reproduced by domestic historiography and the popular press.

16) Katherine Groo, *Bad Film Histories: Ethnography and the Early Archive* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

17) *Ibid.*, 8–9.

18) *Ibid.*, 9.

19) *Ibid.*, 8.

raphy and the Early Archive, Groo investigates badly damaged early ethnographic films from the Dutch EYE Filmmuseum collections and examines various clashes and intersections between the figurative landscape of the films — its images, cinematography, and compositional patterns — and their material landscape — rips, tears, and textures.²⁰⁾ Thus, the mechanisms that distort the archival artifacts might sometimes also be the mechanisms that guide them towards new creation.

While Groo focuses on forgotten, nameless, and discarded early ethnographic films, and we have at our disposal treasured artifacts of Czech cinema, those two are not as incompatible as they might seem. The yellowish first-generation nitrate prints and the original camera negatives, which were references for the digitization, have been deemed just as unworthy of public attention as the Dutch travelogues, and consequently almost invisible until their digitization.²¹⁾ Albeit the reasons for neglect were different — there is the single Lumière perforation that made the prints difficult to screen²²⁾ and also the understandable claim that the oldest artifacts of Czech cinema should be protected from projection — the role of physical agents in “clouding” what was originally represented in the images was a factor as well. The punctured skins of many Kříženecký’s films have been as much of an obstacle to seeing their figurative content as the distorted surface-landscape of the ethnographic films analyzed by Groo blocks the beautiful view of nature, and due to many of the deformations being tied to the properties of the Lumière technology, they have been all the more insistent and difficult to get disposed of. Therefore, even a privileged milestone of early cinema can become part of bad film histories and, thanks to this dynamic between high and low, make for an all the more interesting curatorial and research object.

How is it possible, then, to curate and appropriate such “bad” film artifacts and embrace their deformations and ellipses not as obstacles but as potentialities waiting to be unleashed? Paraphrasing Paolo Cherchi Usai, if the film archivist is like a “physician who has accepted the inevitability of death even while he continues to fight for the patient’s life,”²³⁾ the curator confronted with the first Czech films is like a doctor easing his or her “patients” (the dilapidated film objects) towards this death being forever suspended. In other words, the doctor keeps the patients eternally stuck in a moment before the death comes (as in Jorge Luis Borges’s short story “The Secret Miracle”)²⁴⁾ without ever granting any of them resolution (either in figuration or abstraction, analog or digital, stillness or movement, past or present). The curator must “touch” the films with surgical gloves, carefully discern the materials’ inner tensions within the tiniest cinematic units and play them out frame-by-frame.

20) Ibid., 255–289.

21) Pommeau and Anger, “The Digitization of Jan Kříženecký’s Films,” 104.

22) Ibid.

23) Paolo Cherchi Usai, *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory, and the Digital Dark Age* (London: BFI, 2001), 105.

24) Jorge Luis Borges, “The Secret Miracle,” in *Ficciones* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), 143–150.

Curation, Appropriation, and Remix of Early Cinema Within Film Archives and Museums

Of course, the idea of giving a second life to early cinematic artifacts through creative appropriation is nothing new. Pioneering found footage works by Ken Jacobs, Malcolm Le Grice, Ernie Gehr, or Al Razutis from the 1960s and 1970s experimented with second-hand prints of early films to show how aesthetically and conceptually rich those supposedly primitive works can be. The importance of found footage for film historiography and archival theory and practice cannot be overestimated,²⁵⁾ and while it is mainly celebrated for the knowledge it gives us of the materiality and historicity of early cinema, there have also been attempts to build upon found footage's creative impulse within the archives themselves. Perhaps the most frequently mentioned example is the *Bits & Pieces*²⁶⁾ project inaugurated by the Nederlands Filmmuseum (now Eye Filmmuseum) in the late 1980s. The project aimed to resuscitate all the abandoned, fragmentary, and unidentified films²⁷⁾ stored in cans covered by dust and destined to be either thrown away or disintegrate completely. Thus, the Filmmuseum initiated a series of compilations consisting of selected film fragments that were deemed to possess certain aesthetic qualities. In an interview with Christian Olesen, film curator Elif Rongen-Kaynakçi emphasized "subjective aesthetic experience as a criterion for selection," a matter of "speak[ing] to the aesthetic sensibility of the archivist because of a particularly curious, bizarre, or surprising feature."²⁸⁾ Although *Bits & Pieces* was based on decidedly non-interventionist principles, still accentuated by the "Archivist is not a filmmaker" motto on the project's website,²⁹⁾ the curatorial consideration of the films' aesthetic effects and the fragments' circulation in newly assembled wholes and different contexts endow the bad film artifacts with a surplus that in many ways resonates with the achievements of found footage filmmaking. Subsequent EYE Filmmuseum projects such as *Scene Machine* (a mash-up application involving the first forty years of Dutch film history) or *Celluloid Remix* (a contest encouraging user-produced remixes of early films) amplified this impulse, shifting the perspective from rescuing archival fragments and giving them visibility to offering them for reuse and recontextualization in a digitized form.³⁰⁾ Curators thereby actively encourage appropriation for artistic, scholarly, or popularizing purposes to get across the notion that early cinematic

25) See, for example, Bart Testa, *Back and Forth: Early Cinema and the Avant-Garde* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1992); Eric Thouvenel, "How 'Found Footage' Films Made Me Think Twice About Film History," *Cinéma & Cie* 8, no. 10 (2008), 97–103 or Giovanna Fossati, "Found Footage Filmmaking, Film Archiving and New Participatory Platforms," in *Found Footage: Cinema Exposed*, eds. Jaap Guldemon, Giovanna Fossati, and Marente Bloemheuvell (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 177–184.

26) "Bits & Pieces," *eye*, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://www.eyefilm.nl/en/collection/collections/film/bits-pieces>.

27) Due to a lack of copyright protection, the fragments are often described as "orphan films." Dan Streible, "The Role of Orphan Films in the 21st Century Archive," *Cinema Journal* 46, no. 3 (2007), 124–128.

28) Christian Olesen, "Found footage photogénie — An interview with Elif Rongen-Kaynakçi and Mark-Paul Meyer," *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* 2, no. 2 (2013), 557.

29) "Bits & Pieces."

30) Grazia Ingravalle, "Remixing Early Cinema: Historical Explorations at the EYE Film Institute Netherlands," *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 15, no. 2 (2015), 82–97.

fragments are distinctively oriented to the present (and to the future), precisely due to what they lack or hide from us, as their blind spots wait to be filled by the contemporary viewer.

Besides such compilations, film archives and museums have tried to reanimate the found footage tradition in the “video essay” format, which employs film fragments for the sake of analysis.³¹⁾ For instance, the Austrian Film Museum (Österreichisches Filmmuseum) made a few significant video essays on early cinema at the turn of the 2000s and 2010s.³²⁾ These essays were integrated into special DVD collections with archival films that were part of the *Edition Filmmuseum*. The noughties saw a boom of archival DVD editions whose aim was not only to present newly digitally restored films and supply contextual information in the booklet but also to introduce research findings and potentialities. The video essay was only one of the many formats these editions brought and put to use: from standard “talking-head” interviews with archivists, scholars, and filmmakers through audio commentaries consisting of experts giving insight on films in real time³³⁾ to complex systems of referencing and annotating films such as Hyperkino,³⁴⁾ we have a vast arsenal of possibilities how to curate archival artifacts in the digital age.³⁵⁾ *Edition Filmmuseum*’s editions also profited from engaging key figures of Austrian experimental cinema and found footage. For example, Peter Kubelka (a co-founder of the Museum) starred in a DVD documentary *Peter Kubelka: Restoring Entuziazm* (Jörg Burger and Michael Loebenstein, 2005), in which he demonstrated the nuances of synchronizing image and sound in Dziga Vertov’s early sound cinema classic right behind the editing table. The video essays absorbed these stimuli, and some of them stood the test of time as successful marriages of poetic imagery with minute attention towards the ebbs and flows of archival practice and scholarly argumentation, which is carried out by explanatory voice-over as well as the actual images and sounds. *Vertov in Blum: An Investigation* (Adelheid Heftberger, Michael Loebenstein, Georg Wasner, 2009),³⁶⁾ which focuses on the restoration of *The Eleventh Year* (1927) and the relationship with its infamous proto-found-footage double, a German film *In the Shadow of the Machine* (Albrecht Viktor Blum, 1928), presents a potent exercise in comparative analysis that involves a detailed side-by-side juxtaposition of the films’ fragments and intricate montage visualizations created with ImageJ software.³⁷⁾ While the

31) For the early developments of the video essay (also “audiovisual essay” or later “videographic essay”), see Tiago Baptista, “Lessons in Looking: The Digital Audiovisual Essay” (PhD diss., Birkbeck, University of London, 2016).

32) “Video Essays,” *Filmmuseum*, accessed February 28, 2022, https://www.filmmuseum.at/en/research__education/education/video_essays.

33) Mark Parker and Deborah Parker, *The DVD and the Study of Film: The Attainable Text* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 121–139.

34) Natascha Drubek and Nikolai Izvolov, “Critical Editions of Films on Digital Formats,” *Cinema & Cie* 6, no. 8 (2006), 203–214.

35) C. G. Olesen, “Film History in the Making” (PhD diss., Amsterdam University, 2017), 116–142.

36) Adelheid Heftberger, Michael Loebenstein, and Georg Wasner, “Vertov in Blum: An Investigation,” *Filmmuseum*, 2009, accessed February 28, 2022, https://www.filmmuseum.at/en/_research__education/education/video_essays/vertov_in_blum.

37) Olesen, “Film History in the Making,” 197–200. For more information on the digital humanities project that involved the restoration of Vertov’s films, see also Adelheid Heftberger, *Digital Humanities and Film Studies: Visualising Dziga Vertov’s Work* (Cham: Springer, 2016).

work's mode of address may appear slightly too didactic, its use of data visualizations and frame-by-frame analysis showcases how video essays can unravel the connections between archival practice, scholarly research, and experimental filmmaking that shape our notion of what early cinema is and can be.

Concerning specifically the earliest cinema, an inspirational research and curatorial project with videographic overtones emerged in Switzerland. It is called *50 Seconds of Basel* (50 Sekunden Basel)³⁸⁾ and it centers around a single film — *Bâle — Le pont sur le Rhin* (1896) — shot by a Lumière opérateur Constant Girel. One of the first Swiss films captures the everyday rush on the 13th-century Rhine Bridge, including an electric tram, a horse-drawn carriage, a beer truck, and over 70 people passing by the Cinématographe. The research team, operating within a larger project called “Filmgeschichte entdecken. Kinetographie in der Schweiz 1896–1900”³⁹⁾ (Discovering Film History. Cinema in Switzerland 1896–1900) and supported by numerous archival and research institutions (Cinémathèque suisse, Universität Basel, Digital Humanities Lab, etc.), aimed to reconstruct the circumstances of the shooting, identify all the figures involved, and, chiefly, recreate the film with digital tools to investigate links between the local and the global, as well as between the past and the present. One of the videos is a 3D Panorama of the Rhine Bridge scene (2020) which enables us to move 360° in a virtually reconstructed space with true-to-scale buildings and objects.⁴⁰⁾ What is most intriguing about this short video is not historical authenticity per se nor the immersivity of high-end digital technology but how it establishes connections between the panorama and the original film. There are moments when the past and the present are juxtaposed — either as a frame-within-a-frame or by means of superimposition — that allow us to compare and contrast delightfully smooth yet (especially in the anaglyph version) somewhat uncanny surfaces of CGI buildings and objects with nostalgia-inducing yet highly volatile and shaky images from the Lumière film.⁴¹⁾ These juxtapositions also intersect with textual inserts containing historical information on the objects and places we are passing by, creating another layer of meaning. *50 Seconds of Basel* may not exactly qualify as videographic criticism, but it provokes us to imagine multifarious encounters between the “old” technology (which does not signify just aging but also features inseparable from the film's conditions of production such as the camera trembling) and the “new” technology (which aspires towards total realism yet often makes the reality so shiny and bright it starts to look alien) which can lay the groundwork for a larger argument on how the early cinematic artifacts can fare in the ever-changing online landscape.

38) “50 Sekunden zwischen Belle époque und Moderne: Ein interdisziplinäres Forschungsprojekt zum ersten Basler Lumière-Film *Bâle — Le pont sur le Rhin*,” *50 Sekunden Basel 1896*, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://50sekundenbasel1896.ch/home.html>.

39) “Projekt: Was der Kinetograf alles sichtbar macht,” *50 Sekunden Basel 1896*, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://kinematografie.ch/projekt.html>.

40) “3D-Panorama: Eine szenische Nachbildung der Alten Rheinbrücke mit digitalen Mitteln,” *50 Sekunden Basel 1896*, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://50sekundenbasel1896.ch/panorama.html>.

41) The vertical and horizontal camera trembling is typical for many early Lumière films (including some of Kříženecký's films), due to the instability of the Cinématographe. Laurent Mannoni, “Les Appareils cinématographiques Lumière,” 1895, no. 82 (2017), 52–85.

With regards to *The First Frames of Czech Cinema*, we understand these archival experiments as important predecessors for dealing with “bad” early cinematic artifacts in an inventive yet historically respectful way. Yet, as I argue in the next section, the tools and methods of videographic criticism can portray the artifacts’ curiosities and ambiguities in a novel manner and find a proper balance between respectful contextualization, aesthetic defamiliarization, and scholarly argument. Furthermore, the videographic essay also hopes to widen the scope of the discipline, which is still skewed towards Hollywood cinema, European and Asian arthouse canon, and quality TV and tends to bequeath archival artifacts to the margins.⁴²⁾

The First Frames of Czech Cinema

As indicated earlier, *The First Frames of Czech Cinema* takes the form of a quasi-compilation that shows all the opening frames of the digitized nitrate prints and negatives (i.e., those that carry visual information, excluding the artificially added opening titles) both individually and as parts of a larger mosaic. Not counting the three compilations assembled from various (usually later-generation) materials and the recently found nitrate print of *Escorting the Cradle of František Palacký from Hodslavice to the Prague Exhibition Grounds* (Přenesení kolébky Františka Palackého z Hodslavic na Výstaviště; 1898),⁴³⁾ there are 28 known original film materials (21 films) that survived. While watching the individual films, as soon as each of them starts playing, its opening frame appears, but only in a fleeting, almost imperceptible form — before we are able to process it, it disappears in an uncompromising 24 fps movement. Considering we aim for an imaginative return to the grassroots of cinema, the first frames of the films, or at least what remained of them after all the years of decay, cannot be ignored. As they were the first images that appeared during screening, waiting for the “sudden transformation from still image to moving illusion” that came as the cranking began,⁴⁴⁾ and also the first images that ran through the printer, they might be considered the actual cinematic firsts. The digitization has only broadened this invisible primacy, as the first frames were also the first images that passed through the 4K scanner. To make these images visible again, with all their complicated and often contradictory histories at play, the videographic essay seems like an appropriate format.

In terms of videographic criticism, *The First Frames of Czech Cinema* is in many ways close to a tendency called “deformative criticism.” This approach “strives to make the original work strange in some unexpected way, deforming it unconventionally to reveal aspects that are conventionally obscured in its normal version and discovering something

42) An example of a videographic essay focused on archival artifacts can be found here (including an accompanying text): Evelyn Kreutzer and Noga Stiassny, “Digital Digging: Traces, Gazes, and the Archival In-Between,” *Research in Film and History*, no. 4 (2022), accessed February 28, 2022, <https://film-history.org/issues/text/digital-digging-traces-gazes-and-archival-between>.

43) As of the time when this article is being written, the print is still waiting to be digitized.

44) Tom Gunning, “An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator,” in *Film Theory and Criticism*, eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 741.

new from it.”⁴⁵⁾ Rather than diving into the depths of a single film text, the approach aims to change the rules of the game, treat the film as a modulable object and “break” it to unveil its hidden qualities. To make the outcome less predictable, the deformative approach is often also “algorithmic” or “parametric,”⁴⁶⁾ whether in the narrow sense of operating according to a computerized step-based procedure or in the broader sense of subjecting a work to one or more generative constraints or parameters.⁴⁷⁾ This approach resonates with the intention behind *The First Frames of Czech Cinema*, which involves deconstructing the films into archives of images and extracting the individual frames according to a pattern that does not depend on their content but on them being the first images in the respective films.

In order to explain the relevance of this approach, both its potentialities and limitations must be addressed. First and foremost, even if we decide to treat film as an “archive of sounds and images,” to use Jason Mittell’s words,⁴⁸⁾ it does not mean such an archive is asymptomatic. The software we work with is still designed to keep us under the illusion of control, giving us (seemingly infinite but inherently limited) options to manipulate images and sounds without questioning the interface within which we are allowed to operate and which is tailored towards visibility and completeness.⁴⁹⁾ Similarly, no matter how sophisticated the protocol is, its success in achieving surprising aesthetic or scholarly results is mostly determined by the way in which we select, arrange, and interpret the data. Hence, rather than uncritically depending on artificial intelligence, we should think about the conditions under which we are breaking the film objects, about the complex interface between human intervention and technological automatism, and strive to defamiliarize not only how we see images but also how the software wants us to see them. To inject the deformative with the performative,⁵⁰⁾ the essayist/curator does not necessarily have to stage a convoluted critique of software ideology. A self-reflexive and performative gesture may lie in the selection of the source material itself or, more specifically, in choosing a film object that is, in a way, always already deformed, unsure whether it even qualifies as an object. Not a familiar Hollywood or arthouse film that needs an enlightened critic and high-end software to make it strange, nor an experimental found footage film that is already coded as intentionally defamiliarizing. The films of Jan Kříženecký constitute such uncertain objects, even more so when we focus on the fact that their most basic building blocks — the individual frames — are the most unstable and undefinable elements. *The*

45) Jason Mittell, “Videographic Criticism as a Digital Humanities Method,” in *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2019*, eds. Matthew Gold and Lauren Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), accessed February 28, 2022,

<https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-f2acf72c-a469-49d8-be35-67f9ac1e3a60/section/b6dea70a-9940-497e-b7c5-930126fbd180>.

46) Alan O’Leary, “Workshop of Potential Scholarship: Manifesto for a parametric videographic criticism,” *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* 11, no. 1 (2021), 75–98.

47) Alan O’Leary, “No Voiding Time: A Deformative Videoessay,” *16:9*, September 30, 2019, accessed February 28, 2022, <http://www.16-9.dk/2019/09/no-voiding-time/>.

48) Mittell, “Videographic Criticism as a Digital Humanities Method.”

49) Alexander Galloway, *The Interface Effect* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012); Neta Alexander and Arjun Appadurai, *Failure* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019).

50) David Verdeure, “Deformative vs Performative,” *Filmscalpel*, 2019, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://www.filmscalpel.com/performative-vs-deformative/>.

First Frames of Czech Cinema pursues to become an exercise in deformative criticism, but one that puzzles the input as well as the output, and one that does not let the algorithmic protocol have the final say on which perspective we should take.

For the quantity of deformative operations we have at our disposal, we often forget about the nuances of the materials we want to deform. Thus, a renewed attention towards the minor elements of moving images — scenes, shots, even single frames — is necessary. Hannah Frank's call for "studying a building not by walking its hallways or perusing its blueprints, but by examining each of its bricks"⁵¹⁾ can reach out to practical research as well. Although many videographic works pay attention to a single scene, the analytic or interpretive aim is usually related to its content, not to the material construction that shapes the individual image as a film object. Inspiration may come from videographic essays by Johannes Binotto, a Swiss media theorist and filmmaker whose work gravitates precisely towards the tiniest cinematic units.⁵²⁾ Binotto demonstrates how "lingering on the small and particular" can counter the "habit of clicking and swiping through films, clips and images as swiftly as possible," which "follows completely the capitalist logic of quick and smooth consumption."⁵³⁾ He asks suggestively: "What multiplicity is there hidden in just one film moment, in just one audiovisual fragment, in one image, one sound?"⁵⁴⁾ *The First Frames of Czech Cinema* pushes this idea in a more parametric direction, asking what if this singular fragment was not a specific image but any image that followed a specific protocol. This way, a game-changing detail may spring out of a wide corpus of visual elements without privileging one picture over another.

The protocol for the essay was based on a now firmly established fact that the earliest film projections were not all about movement. Tom Gunning's famous article "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator" (1989) points out that "in the earliest Lumière exhibitions the films were initially presented as frozen unmoving images, projections of still photographs. Then, flaunting a mastery of visual showmanship, the projector began cranking and the images were made to move."⁵⁵⁾ With the advent of mass digitization, the (re)found closeness between the still and the moving in cinema gained attention in academic circles⁵⁶⁾ as well as the avant-garde (Matthias Müller, Christoph Girardet, Douglas Gordon, Karl Lemieux, and others), where this impulse already sprang to life in the 1960s and 1970s analog works by Peter Kubelka, Ernie Gehr, or Hollis Frampton.⁵⁷⁾ Thomas Elsaesser considers the still image as cinema's "memento mori: re-

51) Hannah Frank, *Frame by Frame: A Materialist Aesthetics of Animated Cartoons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019), 1.

52) See, for example, Johannes Binotto, "Touching Sound," *Transferences*, 2018, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://transferences.org/2018/02/02/touching-sound/>, or Johannes Binotto, "Trace," *Transferences*, 2020, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://transferences.org/videoessays/trace/>.

53) Johannes Binotto, "Minor Instances, Major Consequences: Video Essay Workshop," *Transferences*, 2020, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://transferences.org/lehre/video-essay-workshop/>.

54) Ibid.

55) Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment," 118.

56) See, for example, Eivind Rossaak, ed., *Between Stillness and Motion: Film, Photography, Algorithms* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

57) The mutual inspiration between experimental filmmakers and new film historians is well-known. For an overview, see André Habib, "Finding Early Cinema in the Avant-garde: Research and Investigation," in *Prove-*

minding us that at the heart of the cinema are acts of intervention in the living tissue of time, that the cinema is ‘death at work.’⁵⁸⁾ Therefore, showing the actual first frames of the first Czech films could be a way to demonstrate this repressed will to death at the very moment when the inert filmic matter starts to gain figurative contours. Our videographic experiment thereby examines the frame as a rupture in the cinematic movement, yet one that also initiates it and stirs it to life. In this way, the essay stages a complex dialectic between then and now. On the one hand, it exploits the possibilities of digital technology to change perspective and bring hidden details to the fore; on the other, it is also a reflection of the “sudden transformation from still image to moving illusion”⁵⁹⁾ to which early cinematic exhibitions owed part of their appeal.

The organization of the preserved films (28 digitized original film materials — 15 nitrate prints, 13 original negatives) was based primarily on two criteria — the year of their production and thematic affinity. Frames 1–18 come from the pioneering films presented at the Exhibition of Architecture and Engineering in 1898: numbers 1–9 are from actualities that portrayed everyday life in Prague, 10–15 are from comedy scenes staged by Josef Šváb-Malostranský, 16–18 stem from Kříženecký’s obsession with Sokol athletic exercises.⁶⁰⁾ Frames 19–26 were extracted from other actualities from Prague life shot between 1901 and 1908, while the remaining two frames (27–28) present the monument of a famous Czech historian and politician František Palacký — first as a foundation stone (1898), then as an almost complete sculpture (1911)⁶¹⁾ — and together represent a sort of longitudinal documentary that circumscribes both the creation of the monument and Kříženecký’s creative career.

The key question was how to present this assemblage of frames in a simple, not-too-intrusive form and simultaneously turn it into something more than an ordinary YouTube “supercut”⁶²⁾ that would simply replace one form of determinism (frames as units lost in a continuous movement) with another (frames blindly following each other according to a pre-established linear pattern).⁶³⁾ This is why we decided to show the frames in two forms

nance and Early Cinema, eds. Joanne Bernardi, Paolo Cherchi Usai, Tami Williams, and Joshua Yumibe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021), 261–274.

58) Thomas Elsaesser, “Stop/Motion,” in *Between Stillness and Motion: Film, Photography, Algorithms*, ed. Eivind Rossaak (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 118.

59) Gunning, “An Aesthetic of Astonishment,” 119.

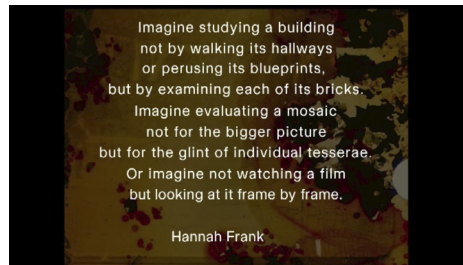
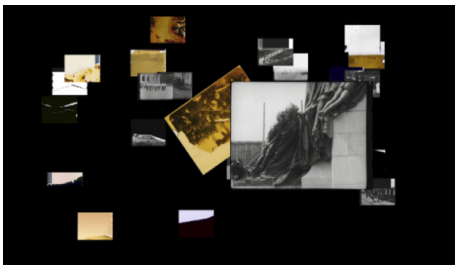
60) This obsession is perhaps most visible in his longer actualities from Sokol rallies which have been presented in the compilations.

61) The camera was also present when the monument was formally unveiled on July 1, 1912, resulting in the film *Unveiling Ceremony of the Monument — July 1, 1912* (Slavnost odhalení pomníku 1. července 1912; Unknown, 1912). The film includes material from the earlier fragment *František Palacký Monument Prior to Its Completion* (Pomník Františka Palackého před dokončením; 1911) that served as a source for Frame 28.

62) Andy Baio, “Fanboy Supercuts, Obsessive Video Montages,” *Waxy*, April 11, 2008, accessed February 28, 2022, https://waxy.org/2008/04/fanboy_supercuts_obsessive_video_montages/.

63) Of course, there are many ways in which supercut can be employed in a more academically rigorous and/or aesthetically inventive manner. See, for example, Allison de Fren, “The Critical Supercut: A Scholarly Approach to a Fannish Practice,” *The Cine-Files*, no. 15 (2020), accessed February 28, 2022, <http://www.thecine-files.com/the-critical-supercut-a-scholarly-approach-to-a-fannish-practice/> or Max Tohline, “A Supercut of Supercuts: Aesthetics, Histories, Databases,” *Open Screens* 4, no. 1 (2021), accessed February 28, 2022, <https://www.openscreensjournal.com/article/id/6946/>.

at the same time — individually in detail and as building blocks of a larger mosaic. Each frame is first seen as an isolated image and “deformed” in various ways (rotating, flickering, zooming in and out, stretching and narrowing). Then it is inserted into the background, where a mosaic of all the frames is being built. By combining “the sequential and the simultaneous modes of viewing,”⁶⁴ we present the first frames as irreducible to being erased or marginalized in favor of smooth and continuous flow as well as to being interchangeable units in a coherent whole. Paraphrasing Ian Bogost, the first frames “remind us that no matter how fluidly a system may operate, its members nevertheless remain utterly isolated, mutual aliens.”⁶⁵ Of course, the intersection of the sequential and the simultaneous, the temporal and the spatial, is not without contradictions. On the one hand, the individual frames accumulate progressively faster so as to make the essay’s rhythm and tempo more varied and consequential, which makes it more challenging for the viewer to appreciate each singular image. On the other hand, the mosaic that is being constructed out of the frames in the background allows the audience to get ahold of their similarities and differences, yet the more images appear, the smaller they look, and thus do not enable more nuanced comparison. Still, these contradictions were deemed necessary to account for the paradoxical existence of film as a medium, whose unresolved status between movement and stillness becomes even more apparent in the digital form.⁶⁶



Figures 1–4: *The First Frames of Czech Cinema* (Jiří Anger and Adéla Kudlová, 2021), © Národní filmový archiv (National Film Archive), Prague

64) Baptista, “Lessons in Looking,” 160.

65) Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology, or What It’s Like to Be a Thing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 40.

66) See, for example, Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).

The videographic essay also includes a written quote by Hannah Frank as another layer that thickens the interplay between various modes of seeing. In the vein of many videographic works,⁶⁷⁾ the text does not explain or mimic what is perceivable in the images but functions performatively as a distinctive meaning-making element. Frank's quote, more a manifesto for taking individual frames seriously than an analysis or interpretation of what is going on, is phased out into fragments and distributed in space, gradually revealing itself during the essay according to the rhythm of the images and turning the individual phrases into building blocks of their own kind. Finally, an experimental soundtrack by Jan Burian, which accompanies the digitized films of Jan Kříženecký on the DVD / Blu-ray release, was added and slightly modified to amplify the humming noise of the nitrate materials.

What can the essay teach us about the first frames of Kříženecký's films or, more generally, about the paradoxical existence of a digitized film frame? Even in the cases when digitization remains as faithful to the original artifacts as possible, the new digital frames will inevitably diverge from their models in some respects, due to the material specificities of analog and digital media as well as to subtle intentional or unintentional shifts that occur during the intricate translation from grain to pixel.⁶⁸⁾ The dilapidated images we see in the essay approximate the physical memory and patina of the originals, yet they also turn them into a snapshot, exempted from the life cycle of decaying nitrate prints and negatives and projected into a medium that allows for manipulating with the fragile frames as with any other visual data. *The First Frames of Czech Cinema* emphasizes this hybridity by "doubling" the traces of analog deformations in the digitized frames with further deformations of a digital kind. This approach takes aim at the often-presupposed neutrality and transparency of the digitization process, engaging digital manipulations in a way that makes the newly acquired malleability of the first Czech film frames directly perceptible. Also, the digital deformations (rotating, stretching, zooming, etc.) do not occlude the analog distortions but invent new perspectives from which we can grasp them. Again, the goal is to let contradictions of the first frames of Czech cinema collide and reach productive encounters rather than resolve them in one way or another.

The essay's shifting of perspectives also draws attention to the supposedly peripheral features of frames — the perforations. At the outset of cinema, perforations were often perceived as a "weakening" of film, something that makes films more vulnerable. The single pair of perforations Lumière brothers used was a compromise,⁶⁹⁾ ensuring that the perforated film strip "would be less susceptible to tear or break from the impact, however

67) There is even a "sub-genre" of videographic film studies called the "videographic epigraph." "Videographic Epigraph," in *The Videographic Essay: Practice and Pedagogy*, eds. Christian Keathley, Jason Mittell, and Catherine Grant (Scalar, 2019), accessed February 28, 2022, <http://videographicessay.org/works/videographic-essay/videographic-epigraph>.

68) See Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel* or, more specifically, Serena Bellotti and Andrea Mariani, "The Digital Witness: Film Reconstruction and the Forensic Imagination in New Media Environments," *Cinergie — Il Cinema E Le Altre Arti*, no. 20 (2021), 27–43 and Patricia Ledesma Villon, "Indeterminable Frames: Exploring Digital Humanities Approaches and Applications for the Moving Image," *Cinergie — Il Cinema E Le Altre Arti*, no. 20 (2021), 125–138.

69) For example, Étienne-Jules Marey used no perforations, while Thomas Alva Edison used four. Turqueti, *Inventing Cinema*, 173.

minimal, of the claws” while still being able to advance steadily through the film gate.⁷⁰⁾ As mentioned earlier, the films of Jan Kříženecký have only a single round hole on each side of the frame,⁷¹⁾ and thus they are significantly harder to project, restore, or even scan. Thanks to the videographic essay, we can see that the vintage Lumière perforations are not always present in their former state. Although the digitization report states that the not yet standardized aspect ratio of the films was “adjusted in order to make the entire frame visible (even during moments of vertical instability) and also the perforation whenever it was possible,”⁷²⁾ due to the limitations and divergences from current standard ratios it was not always entirely viable. This is the reason why we usually see the perforation only at one edge of the frame in a semicircular form.

Furthermore, many of the digitized first frames (particularly those from the prints) are torn to such an extent that the circular holes are nowhere to be seen — some of them — 13, 14, 18 — now have no perforation, others — 1, 2, 4, 10, 15 — had their parts replaced with later-generation film stock with four perforations. The latter group may be understood as a sign of restoration not done right but also as a document of how accidental or pragmatic physical interventions alter the archival object throughout the years. The single most intriguing case might be Frame no. 5 — taken from *Cyclists* (*Cyklisté*, 1898) — which preserves the Lumière half-circle yet also includes three other holes carved into the image as if the film was meant for standard projections. It is not clear whether they testify to mis-handling by archivists or to damage undertaken in a machine designed for film stock with four perforations, but as an impossible archival artifact, it belongs firmly to Groo’s bad film histories.



Figure 5: *Cyclists* (*Cyklisté*; Jan Kříženecký, 1898, source: nitrate print), © Národní filmový archiv (National Film Archive), Prague

70) Ibid., 174.

71) The only exception is *František Palacký Monument Prior to Its Completion* (Frame no. 28), which was shot on a standard material with four rectangular perforations.

Coda: Towards Videographic Archival Editions?

Both the videographic essay and its written accompaniment were meant to show that curation of uncertain, disfigured, and fragmentary archival artifacts from the beginnings of cinema does not necessarily have to limit itself to filling the gaps; instead, it can embrace their lacunas as potentialities for aesthetic and educational actualization and estrangement. *The First Frames of Czech Cinema* followed impulses that were latently present in the archival world but only occasionally sprang to life (*Bits & Pieces*, *Vertov in Blum*, *50 Seconds of Basel*, etc.). By mixing them with tools of videographic criticism (or, more specifically, the deformative/parametric approach), the essay attempted to stage various encounters between figuration and abstraction, analog and digital, stillness and movement, past and present that the digitization made visible in the first Czech films. By dissecting the opening frames, it accentuated the ambiguity of the films' firstness, entailing cherished historical status as well as inevitable fragility and contestation, and of their basic construction units, inherently unstable yet self-sustainable and aesthetically potent. In doing so, the essay addressed the concerns about digitizing and curating the earliest cinematic artifacts that should be taken seriously anytime another collection of "first films" in the history of a nation X emerges.

To point briefly towards the future, will there ever be a systematic videographic edition of archival films? Speaking of the first Czech films, the National Archive in Prague has recently released an online collection of Kříženecký's films that updates on the original DVD / Blu-ray and brings in formats suitable for the online space, such as a map of all the places where Kříženecký shot his films, a timeline of his life, and a few videographic essays (including *The First Frames of Czech Cinema* in English and Czech).⁷³⁾ Still, the videographic impulse is perhaps too one-sidedly oriented towards the films' materiality and ignorant of other issues such as the circulation of the materials in numerous compilations, documentaries, and TV shows or their larger historical context within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, East-Central European region, or global cinema and culture at the turn of the 19th century as a whole. Generally, in marrying materialist concerns with issues of historicity and circulation lies a significant potential to make digital curation of marginal archival artifacts (and not just the earliest ones) more complex and, at the same time, more attractive to the audience.

Funding

This article was created with the institutional support for the long-term conceptual development of a research organization provided by the Ministry of Culture, Czech Republic.

72) Ibid., 107.

73) "Filmy Jana Kříženeckého," *Kontexty Filmového přehledu*, 2022, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://www.filmovyprehled.cz/cs/kontexty/filmy-jana-krizeneckeho>.

Bibliography

- “3D-Panorama: Eine szenische Nachbildung der Alten Rheinbrücke mit digitalen Mitteln,” *50 Sekunden Basel 1896*, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://50sekundenbasel1896.ch/panorama.html>.
- “50 Sekunden zwischen Belle époque und Moderne: Ein interdisziplinäres Forschungsprojekt zum ersten Basler Lumière-Film Bâle — Le pont sur le Rhin,” *50 Sekunden Basel 1896*, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://50sekundenbasel1896.ch/home.html>.
- “A Season of Classic Films | Where, How and to Whom — the challenges of presenting earliest cinema,” *Filmový přehled*, June 3, 2021, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://www.filmovyprehled.cz/cs/kalendar/detail/a-season-of-classic-films-where-how-and-to-whom-the-challenges-of-presenting-earliest-cinema>.
- Alexander, Neta and Arjun Appadurai. *Failure* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019).
- Anger, Jiří, ed. *Filmy Jana Kříženeckého / The Films of Jan Kříženecký* (DVD / Blu-ray, Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2019).
- Anger, Jiří. “Keep That Image Burning: Digital Kříženecký, Color Veil, and the Cinema That Never Stops Ending,” *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 20, no. 1–2 (2020), 123–155.
- Baio, Andy. “Fanboy Supercuts, Obsessive Video Montages,” *Waxy*, April 11, 2008, accessed February 28, 2022, https://waxy.org/2008/04/fanboy_supercuts_obsessive_video_montages/.
- Baptista, Tiago. “Lessons in Looking: The Digital Audiovisual Essay” (PhD diss., Birkbeck, University of London, 2016).
- Baron, Jaimie. *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (London: Routledge, 2014).
- Bellotti, Serena and Andrea Mariani. “The Digital Witness: Film Reconstruction and the Forensic Imagination in New Media Environments,” *Cinergie — Il Cinema E Le Altre Arti*, no. 20 (2021), 27–43.
- Binotto, Johannes. “Touching Sound,” *Transferences*, 2018, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://transferences.org/2018/02/02/touching-sound/>.
- Binotto, Johannes. “Trace,” *Transferences*, 2020, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://transferences.org/videoessays/trace/>.
- Binotto, Johannes. “Minor Instances, Major Consequences: Video Essay Workshop,” *Transferences*, 2020, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://transferences.org/lehre/video-essay-workshop/>.
- “Bits & Pieces,” *eye*, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://www.eyefilm.nl/en/collection/collections/film/bits-pieces>.
- Blümlinger, Christa. *Kino aus zweiter Hand: Zur Ästhetik materieller Aneignung im Film und in der Medienkunst* (Berlin: vorwerk 8, 2009).
- Bogost, Ian. *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
- Borges, Jorge Luis. “The Secret Miracle,” in *Ficciones* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), 143–150.
- Cherchi Usai, Paolo, David Francis, Alexander Horwath, and Michael Loebenstein, eds. *Film Curatorship: Archives, Museums, and the Digital Marketplace* (Wien: Synema — Gesellschaft für Film und Medien, 2008).
- Cherchi Usai, Paolo. *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory, and the Digital Dark Age* (London: BFI, 2001).

- Cherchi Usai, Paolo. *Silent Cinema: A Guide to Study, Research and Curatorship* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).
- de Fren, Allison. "The Critical Supercut: A Scholarly Approach to a Fannish Practice," *The Cine-Files*, no. 15 (2020), accessed February 28, 2022, <http://www.thecine-files.com/the-critical-supercut-a-scholarly-approach-to-a-fannish-practice/>.
- Drubek, Natascha and Nikolai Izvolov. "Critical Editions of Films on Digital Formats," *Cinema & Cie* 6, no. 8 (2006), 203–214.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. "Stop/Motion," in *Between Stillness and Motion: Film, Photography, Algorithms*, ed. Eivind Rossaak (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 109–122.
- "Filmy Jana Kříženeckého," *Kontexty Filmového přehledu*, 2022, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://www.filmovyprehled.cz/cs/kontexty/filmy-jana-krizeneckeho>.
- Fossati, Giovanna. "Found Footage Filmmaking, Film Archiving and New Participatory Platforms," in *Found Footage: Cinema Exposed*, eds. Jaap Guldemon, Giovanna Fossati, and Marente Bloemheuvell (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 177–184.
- Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Third Revised Edition (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018).
- Frank, Hannah. *Frame by Frame: A Materialist Aesthetics of Animated Cartoons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019).
- Galloway, Alexander. *The Interface Effect* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012).
- Groo, Katherine. *Bad Film Histories: Ethnography and the Early Archive* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).
- Gunning, Tom. "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator," in *Film Theory and Criticism*, eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 736–750.
- Habib, André. "Finding Early Cinema in the Avant-garde: Research and Investigation," in *Provenance and Early Cinema*, eds. Joanne Bernardi, Paolo Cherchi Usai, Tami Williams, and Joshua Yumibe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021), 261–274.
- Heftberger, Adelheid. *Digital Humanities and Film Studies: Visualising Dziga Vertov's Work* (Cham: Springer, 2016).
- Heftberger, Adelheid, Michael Loebenstein, and Georg Wasner. "Vertov in Blum: An Investigation," *Filmmuseum*, 2009, accessed February 28, 2022, https://www.filmmuseum.at/en/_research__education/education/video_essays/vertov_in_blum.
- Herzogenrath, Bernd. "Toward a Practical Aesthetics: Thinking With," in *Practical Aesthetics*, ed. Bernd Herzogenrath (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 1–24.
- Ingravalle, Grazia. "Remixing Early Cinema: Historical Explorations at the EYE Film Institute Netherlands," *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 15, no. 2 (2015), 82–97.
- Keathley, Christian, Jason Mittell, and Catherine Grant, eds. *The Videographic Essay: Criticism in Sound and Image* (Montreal: caboose, 2019).
- Kreutzer, Evelyn and Noga Stiassny. "Digital Digging: Traces, Gazes, and the Archival In-Between," *Research in Film and History*, no. 4 (2022), accessed February 28, 2022, <https://film-history.org/issues/text/digital-digging-traces-gazes-and-archival-between>.
- Loné, Eric. "Lumière," in Harold Brown, *Physical Characteristics of Early Films as Aids to Identification*, ed. Camille Blot-Wellens (Brussels: FIAF, 2020), 165–168.

- Mannoni, Laurent. "Les Appareils cinématographiques Lumière," 1895, no. 82 (2017), 52–85.
- Mittell, Jason. "Videographic Criticism as a Digital Humanities Method," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2019*, eds. Matthew Gold and Lauren Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), accessed February 28, 2022, <https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-f2acf72c-a469-49d8-be35-67f9ac1e3a60/section/b6dea70a-9940-497e-b7c5-930126fbd180>.
- Mulvey, Laura. *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).
- O'Leary, Alan. "No Voiding Time: A Deformative Videoessay," 16:9, September 30, 2019, accessed February 28, 2022, <http://www.16-9.dk/2019/09/no-voiding-time/>.
- O'Leary, Alan. "Workshop of Potential Scholarship: Manifesto for a parametric videographic criticism," *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* 11, no. 1 (2021), 75–98.
- Olesen, Christian. "Found footage photogénie — An interview with Elif Rongen-Kaynakçi and Mark-Paul Meyer," *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* 2, no. 2 (2013), 555–562.
- Olesen, C. G. "Film History in the Making" (PhD diss., Amsterdam University, 2017).
- Özgen, Asli and Elif Rongen-Kaynakçi. "The Transnational Archive as a Site of Disruption, Discrepancy, and Decomposition: The Complexities of Ottoman Film Heritage," *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 21, no. 1–2 (2021), 77–99.
- Parker, Mark and Deborah Parker. *The DVD and the Study of Film: The Attainable Text* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
- Pantenburg, Volker. "Videographic Film Studies," in *Handbuch Filmanalyse*, eds. Malte Hagener and Volker Pantenburg (Berlin: Springer, 2020), 485–502.
- Pommeau, Jeanne. "The Digitisation of Jan Kříženecký's Films," in *Filmy Jana Kříženeckého / The Films of Jan Kříženecký*, ed. Jiří Anger (DVD / Blu-ray Booklet, Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2019), 31–35.
- Pommeau, Jeanne. "The Digitisation of Kříženecký's Films [videocommentary]," in *Filmy Jana Kříženeckého / The Films of Jan Kříženecký*, ed. Jiří Anger (DVD / Blu-ray, Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2019).
- Pommeau, Jeanne and Jiří Anger. "The Digitization of Jan Kříženecký's Films," *Illuminace* 31, no. 1 (2019), 104–107.
- "Projekt: Was der Kinematograf alles sichtbar macht," *50 Sekunden Basel 1896*, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://kinematografie.ch/projekt.html>.
- Rossaak, Eivind, ed. *Between Stillness and Motion: Film, Photography, Algorithms* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).
- Russell, Catherine. *Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and Archival Film Practices* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).
- Streible, Dan. "The Role of Orphan Films in the 21st Century Archive," *Cinema Journal* 46, no. 3 (2007), 124–128.
- Testa, Bart. *Back and Forth: Early Cinema and the Avant-Garde* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1992).
- Thouvenel, Eric. "How 'Found Footage' Films Made Me Think Twice About Film History," *Cinéma & Cie* 8, no. 10 (2008), 97–103.
- Tohline, Max. "A Supercut of Supercuts: Aesthetics, Histories, Databases," *Open Screens* 4, no. 1 (2021), accessed February 28, 2022, <https://www.openscreensjournal.com/article/id/6946/>.

- Turquety, Benoît. *Inventing Cinema: Machines, Gestures and Media History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019).
- Verdeure, David. "Deformative vs Performative," *Filmscalpel*, 2019, accessed February 28, 2022, <https://www.filmscalpel.com/performative-vs-deformative/>.
- "Video Essays," *Filmmuseum*, accessed February 28, 2022, https://www.filmmuseum.at/en/research__education/education/video_essays.
- "Videographic Epigraph," in *The Videographic Essay: Practice and Pedagogy*, eds. Christian Keathley, Jason Mittell and Catherine Grant (Scalar, 2019), accessed February 28, 2022, <http://videographicessay.org/works/videographic-essay/videographic-epigraph>.
- Villon, Patricia Ledesma. "Indeterminable Frames: Exploring Digital Humanities Approaches and Applications for the Moving Image," *Cinergie — Il Cinema E Le Altre Arti*, no. 20 (2021), 125–138.

Filmography

- Bâle — Le pont sur le Rhin* (Constant Girel, 1896)
- Cyclists* (Cyklisté; Jan Kříženecký, 1898)
- Escorting the Cradle of František Palacký from Hodslavice to the Prague Exhibition Grounds* (Přenesení kolébky Františka Palackého z Hodslavic na Výstaviště; Jan Kříženecký, 1898)
- František Palacký Monument Prior to Its Completion* (Pomník Františka Palackého před dokončením; Jan Kříženecký, 1911)
- Peter Kubelka: Restoring Entuziazm* (Jörg Burger and Michael Loebenstein, 2005)
- The First Frames of Czech Cinema* (Jiří Anger and Adéla Kudlová, 2021)
- Unveiling Ceremony of the Monument — July 1, 1912* (Slavnost odhalení pomníku 1. července 1912; Unknown, 1912)
- Vertov in Blum: An Investigation* (Adelheid Heftberger, Michael Loebenstein, Georg Wasner, 2009)

Biography

Jiří Anger is a researcher and lecturer at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague (KREAS Project). He also works at the National Film Archive in Prague as a researcher and editor of the peer-reviewed academic journal *Iluminace*. He specializes in theory of archival film, experimental cinema, and videographic criticism.

Anger's texts and videos have appeared in journals such as *NECSUS*, *Film-Philosophy*, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, *[in]Transition*, *The Moving Image*, and others. He is the author of the monograph *Afekt, výraz, performance: Proměny melodramatického excessu v kinematografii těla* (Affect, Expression, Performance: Transformation of the Melodramatic Excess in the Cinema of the Body, 2018). He has recently finished a doctoral thesis titled "Aesthetics of the Crack-Up: Digital Kříženecký and the Autonomous Creativity of Archival Footage."

Amrita Biswas (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt)

Super-8 in Calcutta: Analysis of a “Failed” Movement

Abstract

The Super-8 films that flourished in the city of Calcutta during the 1980s had been central to a very conscious film movement that wanted to propagate the culture of non-commercial filmmaking by organizing film festivals and workshops on the format. The movement played a pivotal role in Calcutta's film culture because it initiated film enthusiasts to a new horizon of filmmaking where anybody, on a shoestring budget, could narrate a story or document an event that the mainstream media would not cover.

However, the discourse around the movement was one of failure that witnessed the production of poor-quality films. There has also been a conspicuous critical as well as archival lacuna in chronicling Calcutta's Super-8 movement. Thus, to learn about the movement, I had to meet film society activists of the era and listen to anecdotes until I was integrated into cultural networks that helped me access the archives of personal collectors. An examination of the personal archives renders prominence to the transnational collaboration that the movement had witnessed, besides the horizon of expectations that the format had stimulated in the realms of film production and circulation. This paper shifts the emphasis on Super-8 from the “quality” of the films produced and the associated notion of “failure” of the movement to the filmic possibilities that the technological format had enabled. It thereby analyses the movement's critical role in stimulating aspiration towards a participatory practice of alternative filmmaking in Calcutta. It reads such practices as a form of politico-cultural activism.

Keywords

activism, alternative, network, film movement, Calcutta

Introduction

“But the movement was eventually a failure. The Super-8 films weren’t of high quality. Most of them had problems with syncing the sound. We had many expectations from the movement, though.”¹⁾

“To be honest, the movement was really a failure. We wanted to experiment, and we were enthusiastic about the movement. But the films produced were of really poor quality.”²⁾

This paper displaces the analytical lens from the “quality” of films produced to the question of possibilities that were engendered by the Super-8 movement in Calcutta, and by extension, in Bengal during the 1980s.³⁾ Such a critical arc enables an enquiry into the discourse of failure that congealed around the movement subsequently. The rationale behind such an analysis is to grasp a better understanding of the format and the film practices that developed around it. In this exercise, I read the Super-8 film movement not as a failed enterprise but as a form of politico-cultural activism that was interested in the creation of alternative media texts.

I understand failure as “a product of judgments that reflect various arrangements of power, competence, and equity in different places and times,” borrowing from the theorisations of Arjun Appadurai and Neta Alexander.⁴⁾ Analysing how templates of judgement produce regimes of failure, the authors ask:

what events produce these judgments (history), who is authorized to make them (power), what form they must take in order to appear legitimate and plausible (culture), and what tools and infrastructures mediate these failures or make them ubiquitous (technology).⁵⁾

The intersection of history, power, culture, and technology in the determination of failure forms the crux of critical examination of the authors and provides me a vantage point to understand the discursive registers that constructed the movement as a failure. This paper argues that the critical notion of activism aids in understanding the horizon of expectations that the movement fostered, thereby shifting emphasis from the question of failure to the notion of potentialities promised by the movement. I frame the movement as a form of activism, borrowing from the works of Michael Buser, Carlo Bonura, Maria Fannin & Kate Boyer. The authors emphasize the “relation of collective practices to space, both in how practices become tactically situated in space... and in the way that certain

1) Former member of Chitra Chetana, interview by the author, September 2016. The conversation was in Bengali. The translation has been done by the author. The source has not been named for the lack of permission for the same.

2) Former Super-8 activist associated with Jadavpur University Film Society, interview by the author, 2018. Source anonymised on purpose because of lack of permission.

3) Ibid.

4) Arjun Appadurai and Neta Alexander, *Failure* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), 1.

5) Ibid., 2.

spaces can become referents for collective visions.”⁶⁾ The authors’ focus on the situatedness of cultural activism is relevant to my analysis of the movement’s specificity in the city of Calcutta. Addressing the expanding literature on cultural activism in the discipline of Urban Studies over the last few years, they define the notion as a “type of organizing ‘where art, activism... and politics meet, mingle and interact.’”⁷⁾ Furthermore, in conceptualizing the movement as an instance of politico-cultural activism, I take cues from the arguments of Anna Bernard. She identifies the impulse to “fortify existing participants and galvanize new ones” as the central tenet of activist practices.⁸⁾ Although Bernard’s work focuses on the resource-value of cultural activism by focussing on documentary films and literary texts, her work is significant to this paper. With an active investment into workshops and training sessions, the Super-8 movement actively sought to converge multiple resources to gain visibility and an increased participation.

Sources and Methodology

My quest for tracing the history of the Super-8 movement in Calcutta began in 2016 when I was working on my M.Phil. research thesis. I read that Saumen Guha had been the pioneer of the movement, but my efforts in tracing him for an interview were rendered futile.⁹⁾ Disappointed, I continued speaking to fellow researchers to learn as much as possible about the movement. Eventually, I noticed on my Facebook feed a photograph of a booklet that had been published during the first Super-8 film festival in Calcutta. I got in touch with a fellow researcher and Facebook friend to find out how he had accessed that document. He informed me about a personal collector, Amit Bandopadhyay, who had carefully preserved documents pertaining to the Super-8 movement. I acquired the collector’s contact, and during the course of numerous conversations, he recounted to me his memories associated with the movement. The archival materials I have used for this historical analysis were thus not found in institutional archives. Curiously, both the library at Nandan, West Bengal Film Centre, Kolkata, and the National Film Archive of India, Pune, could not provide me with research materials related to Super-8 in 2016. Therefore, I had to depend on personal collections for writing this history. It makes sense to explicate here that this research would not have been possible without the mobilisation of the professional and cultural networks that I had been anchored in as a doctoral researcher. The motive of this research, however, is not to salvage Super-8 from an inconspicuous corner of oblivion and attribute currency to it. Rather, the interest is to displace the analytical loci from the quality of films produced to the political and cultural aspirations that the format had fostered, in order to critique the notion of failure.

6) Michael Buser, Carlo Bonura, Maria Fannin, and Kate Boyer, “Cultural activism and the politics of place-making,” *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 17, no. 5 (2013), 606–627.

7) Ibid.

8) Anna Bernard, “Cultural Activism as Resource: Pedagogies of Resistance and Solidarity,” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 53, no. 3 (2017), 367–379.

9) “Super-8 mm movement in West Bengal,” *Activist Canvas*, 2010, accessed January 27, 2022, <https://canvaspix.wordpress.com/2010/02/10/super-8-movement/>.

While I gained access to the personal collections crucial for this historiographical exercise, I failed to acquire an interview of Saumen Guha until April 2021. I knew a few fellow researchers who had the contact details of Guha. Nevertheless, both of them hesitated to share the details, stating that Guha had turned into a cynic over the years and therefore refused to meet new people. Navigating through such blockages, I eventually obtained Guha’s phone number through a colleague who also shared my research interest in Super-8. Initially, I hesitated to dial up, but when I did, I was surprised to find a willing collaborator who listened patiently to all my questions. For the first time-bound interview, I had prepared a structured list of questions for Guha. However, over time, the frequency of our interaction grew, leading to conversations developing organically, which offered Guha the opportunity to articulate, in detail, his memories surrounding the Super-8 movement.¹⁰ Besides speaking to me about his work, Guha also lent me his publications on Super-8 that he had preserved at his home. This brings me to the methodology of this research analysis. I write this history by juxtaposing archival evidence with anecdotal evidence.¹¹ The contextualisation of archival documents with anecdotes helps me locate the film movement within the socio-political and cultural co-ordinates of Calcutta (now named Kolkata).¹² It is within the urban context of Calcutta that the film movement gained momentum due to the organisation of film festivals and workshops on the format.

The Urban Context: Strategies of Popularising the Format

What influenced Saumen Guha to work with Super-8, though? During the first interview session, Guha emphasised that he had always borne the curiosity of gaining an insider’s view into people’s lives. During his early college days, he roamed around villages and observed the quotidian life of different strata of society. This interest propelled the subject of his apparent first film on Super-8, *Silent Calcutta* (Saumen Guha, 1980). The film focused on the lives of the pavement dwellers in Calcutta, offering a glimpse of the struggle and joy that marked their daily life.¹³ Initially, it was a silent film. Later, he acquired a negative film and a reversal film with a magnetic soundtrack from Bombay. To this, he added a soundtrack that resonated with the film’s theme. He recorded the helpless and anguished cry of a two-month-old toddler (Guha’s elder sister’s son) and incorporated it into the film’s soundtrack. Although *Silent Calcutta* is believed to be his first film, Guha clarified that his Super-8 debut was about his sister, Archana Guha.¹⁴ It captured her recovery and

10) Alfred L. Martin Jr., “Why All the Hate? Four Black Women’s Anti-Fandom and Tyler Perry,” in *Anti-Fandom: Dislike and Hate in the Digital Age*, ed. Melissa A. Click (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 166–183.

11) Sean Cubitt, “Anecdotal Evidence,” *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013), 5–18.

12) To know more about the change in nomenclature of the city, see <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/jul/22/suzannegoldenberg>.

13) In an interview, Guha mentioned that the life of pavement dwellers had always intrigued him. He shot extensively on the subject and gave a huge quantity of stock-shots, titled *Unwanted Calcuttans*, to DocFilm of Denmark in 1985 to collaboratively work with them. He was however oblivious of the final use of the stock shots by DocFilm.

14) “Super-8 mm movement in West Bengal.”

eventual walk towards the airport in Copenhagen, Denmark, after the successful treatment of her paralysis with the help of Amnesty International.¹⁵⁾ Guha's induction into the format was thus anchored into a personal context. This correlation between his personal life and the development of the Super-8 movement had further dimensions to it. Guha was emotionally attached to his mother, and during his Naxalite days, he had developed a fondness for the mothers of his fellow comrades.¹⁶⁾ He wanted to adapt Gorky's *Mother* into a film as a tribute to his own mother, and had applied for grants to the state's cultural department. Being denied the grants, Guha decided to employ the Super-8 format as an alternative medium that could bypass the demands of the state-corporate nexus. At its core, Guha's motive in developing the format had been iconoclastic in charge.

It was in Denmark, during the treatment of his sister, that Guha procured his personal Super-8 equipment, a second-hand Fuji camera. He had already read extensively about it and was aware of how the medium was being utilised in different countries for making alternative films. The aforementioned film on Archana Guha, titled *From Copenhagen with Love* (Saumen Guha, 1980), was shot on a single cartridge and was screened at Guha's home for his family and friends. *Silent Calcutta*, however, had been screened at multiple venues. In this vein, I analyse a questionnaire that was circulated in the Electrical Engineering Lecture Hall of Jadavpur University on May 9, 1981, to comprehend the critical questions that Guha had sought to address while familiarising film enthusiasts with the format. *Silent Calcutta* had been screened at the seminar on "Alternative Technique of Low-Cost Filmmaking: a Test Case." By listing the questions that might have possibly intrigued the viewer on watching the film, the questionnaire offers clues to comprehend the pivotal axes that structured Guha's talks surrounding the format:

- Is this technique applicable in all cases of (a) Photography (b) Editing (c) Sound in film-making?
- Through this technique, we can achieve how much (a) cost (b) time (c) man power reduction or benefit?
- To what extent this technique is used throughout the world?
- What is the scope of renovations in this technique?
- What is unique in this technique for extensive use?
- If this technique is viable or feasible, why it is not popular in India, or in West Bengal?
- Who or what are the obstacles, we have to fight against to implement this technique?
- What are the facilities available and how those can be explored in India or in West Bengal? (sic)¹⁷⁾

15) Archana Guha endured brutal police torture while being interrogated about the Naxalite connections of her brother. After being released from jail in 1977, Saumen Guha devoted himself to ensuring justice for his sister.

16) To know more about the Naxalite movement, see Rajeshwari Dasgupta, "Towards the 'New Man': Revolutionary Youth and Rural Agency in the Naxalite Movement," *Economic and Political Weekly* 41, no. 19 (2006), 1920–27.

17) Saumen Guha, "Alternative Technique of Low-Cost Film-making: a Test Case" (Seminar Lecture, Electrical Engineering Lecture Hall, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, May 9, 1981).

Examining the questionnaire, we can argue that the session emphasised the efficiency of the format that propelled its global usage and currency.¹⁸⁾ It also underscored the novelty of the technology and the challenges that had to be confronted to popularise the usage of the media format. The motivation was to discuss the questions “in a free and fair manner, based on factual informations, evidence, data in kind.”¹⁹⁾ After addressing the technological possibilities, Guha stressed other significant questions that demanded equal attention while deliberating on Super-8. For instance, what narrative experiments could be conducted by utilizing the technology? What were the global film movements that Super-8 had triggered? Did the format enable a configuration of new ideological templates or new models for film movements? The questionnaire makes it explicit that Guha’s lecture posited the Super-8 technology as a harbinger of creative, political, and aesthetic possibilities. It also underscored the global film movements that the technology had engendered to provide a frame of reference and a possible direction that the movement in Calcutta could aspire for.

Besides such seminars, Guha conducted workshops in Calcutta to train film enthusiasts on Super-8 and to broaden the horizons for engagement with the format. This is evidenced by a newspaper report titled “Calcuttay Super-8.” 37A, Mahendra Sarkar Street buzzed with curiosity surrounding Super-8 as young film enthusiasts gathered there to learn the technique of making a film on a shoestring budget. The workshop, titled Workshop on Little Film Making (WOLF), convened in the evening with almost ten students carefully reading cyclostyled notes that mentioned recent developments around Super-8. Equipped with a Nizo- 4056 camera, Guha mentored the students by explaining what different functions they could achieve with the camera. The rationale behind the workshop was to make a film and simultaneously learn about the filmmaking techniques. The workshop format had been envisaged by Rana Sengupta, who was later joined in his efforts by Meenakshi Pal and Adindam Basu. The organisers had approached various people for participation in the workshop. Eventually, Guha became a willing collaborator since he was also looking for a platform that would enable him to mobilise Super-8 not only as a weapon of protest but also as a medium of communication. The report highlighted the ambience of the room to offer a glimpse into the epistemic impetus that undergirded the workshop. The room boasted of books in every nook and corner: some pertained to works of American cinematographers, others were editions of *Sight and Sound*. Guha was mostly referring to *Lipton on Film Making* while tutoring the batch of students.

During the screening of his film *Silent Calcutta* at a film festival in Portugal, Guha realised the obscured and marginalised status of the format in “third world countries” since his film was the only participating entry from Asia.²⁰⁾ The workshop makes sense within Guha’s dynamics of experience. It was strategically conceived to induct active participants into the transnational cultural exchange, which had developed around the technology, as well as to familiarise them with the format’s potential. The strength of Super-8 lay in its

18) For an understanding of the different ways in which the format was used, see Stefan Szczelkun, “The Value of Home Movies,” *Oral History* 28, no. 2 (2000), 94–98.

19) Ibid.

20) Aniruddha Dhar, “Calcuttay Super 8,” *Aajkal*, June 6, 1983 (n.p.). It is difficult to cite the page number of this newspaper report since I obtained only a paper cut-out of this report from the personal collector.

small size and light weight, offering the independence and dynamic flexibility to be used in any situation. Furthermore, the films could also be blown up to 16 mm or 35 mm. To analyze WOLF and the form of participation it envisaged, I refer to the theoretical work of Ryan Shand. Focusing on the vitality of the amateur cine movement from the early 1930s to the late 1970s, Ryan Shand proposes the “community mode” as a viable terminology for addressing cine-club filmmaking that occupies an “ambivalent exhibition space” between the “home and mass modes.”²¹⁾ Shand argues that filmmakers have made movies on many issues that cannot be circumscribed by ideas of the home movie or the oppositional avant-garde. Although Shand notes that the community mode is not exclusively defined by notions of film gauge, I find his critical template useful for thinking about the Super-8 movement in Calcutta. For Shand, filmmakers working within the community mode included those

who belonged to film societies and entered their group-made films into the annual film festivals that were held all around the world, as well as travel filmmakers who toured with their films, and also more locally based civic filmmakers who rented town halls and other available exhibition spaces.²²⁾

Even though Shand focuses on a different geographical (primarily the Global North) and temporal context than my work, I find his argument productive to think about the community mode of film production and discourse generation that Super-8 movement in Calcutta galvanised through spaces such as WOLF.

The aforementioned newspaper report on WOLF argued that despite the creative and technological possibilities, there was a prevalent ignorance surrounding Super-8. However, Guha attributed a specificity to the ignorance and noted that the technology had led to a surge of blue films in Calcutta. To Guha, the ignorance lay in not mobilising the format appropriately. Guha’s perspective makes it evident that the discourse surrounding Super-8, at that particular point in time, was that the format had to be utilised and developed in a culturally legitimate direction. The emphasis, therefore, was on how Super-8 was not being optimally utilised. This undeniably calls for speculation about what was considered a legitimate and culturally appropriate usage of the format. Guha further sarcastically claimed that while Calcutta boasted of radical filmmakers, none of them had envisioned working with Super-8, whereas on the global front, most radical filmmakers were already experimenting with narrow-gauge formats. Guha’s statements in the newspaper report on WOLF rendered visible the seeds of optimism that formed the substrate within which Super-8 movement was expected to germinate. The format heralded a plethora of new possibilities, comprising not only aesthetic experimentation and transnational exchange but also a potent form of social and politico-cultural activism that could underscore people’s interests.

21) Ryan Shand, “Theorizing Amateur Cinema: Limitations and Possibilities,” *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 8, no. 2 (2008), 36–60.

22) Ibid.

Towards Building a Network for Super-8

What the workshop engendered, received a further impetus with the publication of the bulletin, *Super-8 in India*, which offered a detailed account of the endeavours and discussions that had congealed around the format:

The necessity was being felt for sometime. The World of Super-8 film in India, though small as yet, is changing. The change is a rapid one towards using Super-8 for independence and as a format for serious mode of expression. Amidst these changes an urge to build a platform for people interested in Super-8 was strongly felt and this bulletin is a step towards constructing at least a network of communication between such people.²³⁾

The bulletin provided details about the Super-8 films that had already been shot, along with a very short note about the subject and duration of the films. Since this is the only issue that I could access from the personal collections of Bandopadhyay, it is difficult to state how many editions this specific bulletin had. However, the first issue mentioned most of the films that had been screened at the Indian Super-8 film festival 1983, organised at Jadavpur University from December 17 to December 21, 1983. The list included *Jala Nahi Mile* (Saumen Guha, n. d.), a 10-minute film by Guha on the drought in the Kangsabati project area of Bankura district in West Bengal. Focusing on the city, *Calcutta -Oh* (Charles Solomon, n. d.) depicted “fragments of pedestrian hazards in Calcutta” in a 6-minute-long sound on tape film.²⁴⁾ In a similar vein of reflecting on the urban milieu, *Faces* (Subhasis Mitra, n. d.), an 8-minute-long sound film, captured the different facial expressions of the people living in Calcutta through an experimental visual collage. Engaging with the crisis of the times, *Unemployment and Automation*, a 25-minute-long film by Atanu Majumder tackled the question of automation in the banking industry. While detailing the long list of films runs the risk of evoking a monotonous reading experience, I nonetheless mention them to provide a sense of the diverse narrative content as well as aesthetic experimentation of the Super-8 films of the decade.

I now shift from the content of the films to the infrastructures for producing them. What was the point of access for the camera that was necessary to make the films? Was there a network for informing film enthusiasts about possible avenues for procuring the equipment? I glean the sub-section “Super Market” to understand these specificities that were indispensable to the movement. Advertised for sale on the bulletin was an Elmo Super-8 XL Sound 3000 AF (Macro) Camera. The features of the camera included “autofocus, low light zoom lens (F-1.2, 3X Zoom), One touch Macro filming, predrive and Electromagnetic release mechanism, 18fps and single frame shooting.”²⁵⁾ Advertised alongside was an Eumig S936 (Automatic duoplay) Super-8 sound movie projector constituting features such as “18 & 24 fps projection, microphone & auxiliary sound recording, auto-

23) Saumen Guha and Partha Chatterjee, “At First Sight,” *Super-8 in India* 1, no. 1 (1984), 1.

24) Saumen Guha and Partha Chatterjee, “For Your Eyes and Ears,” *Super-8 in India* 1, no. 1 (1984), 2.

25) Saumen Guha and Partha Chatterjee, “Super Market,” *Super-8 in India* 1, no. 1 (1984), 4.

matic/Manual level control.”²⁶⁾ The camera and the projector were offered at a cumulative price of 12000 INR by Gautam De, a resident of Bejoygarh, Calcutta. Within the aforementioned price, the offer also included accessories for both the equipment. The camera was meant to be sold with “wrist strap, earphone, earphone adopter, action mike EC-204 (may be connected with or without chord), 1.5 V G 13 Silver oxide cells, Mike chord, chord spool, Mike stand, eye cap, hard carry case.”²⁷⁾ Accessories with the projector included “microphone with stand, recording earphone, connecting chord, film spool, film cutter, one Phillips projection lamp, Microphone connecting lead.”²⁸⁾

These elaborate details definitely offer a glimpse into the technological paraphernalia that sustained the movement. It also helps us to comprehend how socially inclusive the movement had actually been. Considering that the camera and the projector cost 12000 INR back in the 1980s, it would not be misplaced to argue that only a specific class of people could afford to buy the equipment. However, this does not mean that the equipment could only be utilized by the class with sufficient purchasing power who could afford to own the equipment. The fact that there were workshops or seminars where people trained with the format on a hands-on basis presents a clue that people might have had the possibility to use the format without necessarily owning the equipment. Guha corroborated this in his interview when he recounted that fellow film activists often made Super-8 films with the equipment he personally owned. There is also archival evidence to support this axis of enquiry. For instance, the section “To Shoot Or...” in *Super-8 in India* recorded the names and addresses of people or organisations that could provide professional consultancy or equipment rentals for filmmaking. Enlisted under the section were Saumen Guha (with his ensemble of Nizo sound camera, a GOKO editor and a Eumigo projector with a sound recording facility) and Mridanga Cultural Organisation with the latter renting projectors and facilitating screenings of Super-8 films.

The bulletin also highlighted the need for education and training in the format, attempting to dislodge the commonly held perception that Super-8 was meant for amateurs that did not require sufficient skill or technological understanding. It makes sense here to address the fact that amateurism has been a dominant template for analysing small-gauge film production. Stefan Szczelkun offers a history of amateur film, noting that amateurism emerged between 1880 and 1920 to culturally invert the notion of economic professionalism, representing “spontaneous, anarchic, whimsical, personal, subjective” impulses, besides freedom and innovation.²⁹⁾ With the gradual pervasiveness of the notion of leisure, the meaning reversed, associating amateurism with “poverty of technique, lack of sophisticated aesthetic judgement and intellectual incoherence.”³⁰⁾ Szczelkun provides an insightful account of the development of different film formats such as 16 mm and 8 mm and argues that the introduction of Super-8 in 1965 made filmmaking accessible to those who had low incomes. While Guha also elaborated upon the cost-effectiveness of the format, his rationale was to counter the notion that Super-8 was solely an amateur enterprise.

26) Ibid.

27) Ibid.

28) Ibid.

29) Szczelkun, “The Value of Home Movies,” 94–98.

30) Ibid.

This explains his intensive investment into different models for training filmmakers. Therefore, I find the notion of activism more pertinent to discussing the movement in Calcutta than the analytical trope of “amateurism” that has been broadly used in scholarship on narrow-gauge formats. Patricia Zimmermann does complicate the issue, moving beyond binaries “of the accomplished professional versus the deficient, privatized amateur” and underscoring “localized microhistories rather than nationalized, phantasmatic representations.”³¹⁾ Highlighting how the lens of failure is frequently employed in discourses pertaining to amateur films, the author notes that amateur films “are often viewed as cinematic failures infused by an innocent naivety and innocence, a primitive cinema without semiotic density.”³²⁾

Mapping the discourses pertaining to Super-8 in Calcutta by speaking to filmmakers who had been associated with the movement, I realised that “failure” was a pervasive notion. The movement was deemed a failure because of its swift waning away with the advent of VHS, besides the supposed lack of technical quality of its films. However, Guha was articulate about the intentionality of the movement and the plethora of possibilities that the movement promised. It was perceived as a gateway for providing an alternative iconoclastic vision of the world that was structurally obliterated by the mainstream media. This resonates with Zimmermann’s theoretical premise in which she underlines how cultural production, facilitated by capitalist transactions, occupies a privileged position. This effectively side-lines other cultural productions that develop within “families, political collectivities or marginalized identities.”³³⁾ She argues that amateur film poses a threat to “dominant visualities,” thereby engendering “a significant site of cultural struggle over who has power to create media and to enter into representation.”³⁴⁾ While the author’s arguments align with the rationale of the film movement’s participants, a crucial point of departure lies in the preference of the term “people’s gauge” over “amateur” to signify the impetus behind the movement in Calcutta.

Undeniably, at the core of the movement lay the motivation to familiarise people with the appropriate method of employing the technology by training them on the format. In this vein, the aforementioned bulletin *Super-8 in India* quoted Leny Lipton, who argued that there was more value to Super-8 than just being a technology that could be regarded as an inferior training format for aspiring filmmakers. Lipton further noted:

There is a fantastic degree of prejudice on the part of professional filmmakers and film instructors, maybe because they cut their teeth on 16 or 35 mm. In their heart of hearts, they have scant respect for this preposterously tiny format... Super-8 actually requires more skill to turn out a decent film than the larger formats because the Super-8 frame is so tiny. If the last drop of quality is not present in the original photography and sound and if all the post-production operations aren’t carried out me-

31) Patricia R. Zimmermann, “Morphing History into Histories: From Amateur Film to the Archive of the Future,” in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, eds. Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmermann (California: University of California Press, 2008), 275–288.

32) Ibid.

33) Ibid.

34) Ibid.

ticulously, the finished film will suffer greatly. Super-8 filmmakers have to be consummate craftspeople (sic).³⁵⁾

This quote was followed by an extensive reading recommendation list, which mentioned not only the book titles but also the public libraries in Calcutta where they could be accessed. The list was divided into two parts with a total of fourteen book suggestions. While the first part pertained to a general overview, the second part focused on literature that was indispensable for learning the technical aspects of filmmaking. The quote from Lipton, and the subsequent reading recommendations, point to an attempt towards legitimizing and ascribing value to Super-8 by highlighting the possibilities engendered by the format. Citing Lipton to critique the techno-elitist dismissal of Super-8 by professional filmmakers, the editors articulated the persistent need for training in the format. They also recognised the problematic technological discourses of hierarchy that had congealed around the format. The recommended literature in the “Book Shelf” section included *Independent Film Making* and *Lipton on Film Making* by Leny Lipton in Part 1 and *The Technique of Documentary Film Production* by W. H. Baddeley (among others). The second part incorporated *Technique of Film Editing* by Karel Reisz and Gavin Miller and *Oxford Companion to Films* by Lizanne Bawdwen, besides other relevant suggestions.

Following up on the reading suggestions was an announcement of upcoming festivals where filmmakers could send their films. In this context, “The Local Event” in Cologne invited amateur filmmakers to submit Super-8 films that were shot in their immediate geographical setting. The competition had been planned for the Photokina in Cologne (then West Germany) from October 10 to October 16, 1984. The winners would be awarded with cash or other prizes and would also be offered a visit to Photokina in Cologne. The maximum length of the films submitted for the competition could not exceed 3 minutes. This announcement was followed by the notification of “Movies on Shoestring” festival, which solicited films for the 26th amateur film competition, scheduled for the first weekend of May 1984 in New York. Award winners would be able to participate in a travelling show so that the films could be screened in hospitals, clubs, and schools as well as for other potential audiences within the Rochester area. The deadline for the entries was the last week of March. The delineation of such details indicates an interest to be in the information loop about global initiatives pertaining to Super-8. This global imaginary congealing around Super-8 can also be gleaned from the previously mentioned newspaper report that argued that third-world countries were lagging behind in global filmmaking exercises with the format. Consistent with efforts to legitimise the movement in Calcutta, and attribute cultural currency to it, was the critical strategy of locating the global context against which the local filmmaking experiments could be positioned. There was a curious consensus among the film enthusiasts and the media reports of the time that the movement in Calcutta had to catch up to the experimental and alternative vigour of Super-8 that was visible in the global regime.³⁶⁾ This global imaginary surrounding Super-8 lay at

35) Saumen Guha and Partha Chatterjee, “On Records,” *Super-8 in India* 1, no. 1 (1984), 4–5.

36) To learn more about the global exercises on Super-8, see Amrita Biswas, “Tracing Kolkata’s cinephilic encounters: An analysis of alternative cinema in the city,” *Studies in South Asian Film & Media* 10, no. 2 (2019), 113–128. The following page can also provide useful details: “Super-8 mm movement in West Bengal.”

the core of the discourse of aesthetic, political, and creative possibilities that the format enabled.

What is this global imaginary, though? I understand this imaginary as a manifestation of interest to integrate into the global cultural networks that actively participated in ventures surrounding the format. Being situated within the network would enable the accrue-ment of knowledge about the technological and aesthetic or narrative experiments that were being globally conducted on Super-8. The motivation behind the organisation of lec-tures, seminars, or workshops in Calcutta was to familiarise aspiring filmmakers with the global engagements with the format. The goal was to encourage a vigorous critical invest-ment into Super-8 that would align the local along the global trajectories. Such an oppor-tunity would inevitably extend the horizon for the distribution and screening possibilities for the films. This aspiration of being incorporated into the network resonated in the “Fes-tivals in Review” section of the bulletin under discussion, *Super-8 in India*. The section of-fered a brief summary of the 1983 Super-8 film festival in Calcutta, that I discuss in the next segment of this paper. Recognising the festival to be a success, the review noted that thirty-three films from six different states had been screened during the festival that was attended by almost six hundred viewers on a daily average. The award winners were decid-ed by the audience who voted *Sam Vedana* by Mukunt Sawant, *Bubai* by Burnpur film so-ciety, and *Havenots* by M C Anand as the respective first, second and third winners. On December 21, a meeting between the different filmmakers was scheduled, followed up by prize distribution and a screening of the winning entries as well as four non-competitive entries. The festival was significant because it established contact between the filmmakers and offered a glimpse into the status of Super-8 filmmaking in India. The festival’s success ignited an optimism that the network of Super-8 would soon be a reality, facilitating effi-cient distribution and screening opportunities for the films. During the festival, it was also announced that a non-competitive festival would take place in Calcutta in March 1984 to further enable and contribute to an expanding Super-8 network.

Positioning of a People’s Gauge

To decipher the spirit behind the 1983 festival, I turn to the bulletin *Filmilieu* that was published for the eve of the first Indian Super-8 film festival. It began with a word from the editors that posited the motive of the publication:

It is time for us to believe that Super-8 film and social surrounding can no longer be considered to be separated from each other. We believe more that Super-8 can come up as weapon against the malignant society. So has come Filmilieu to speak for films, festival and society.³⁷⁾

37) Saumen Guha, Rana Sengupta, Saswata Bhadra, and Suddhasatwa Basu, *Filmilieu*, no. 1 (1983), 1.



Figure 1: The front page of *Filmilieu* bulletin. Photograph by the author from the personal collections of Amit Bandopadhyay, April 2021

The section “People’s Gauze: Super-8” included a brief interview with Dilip Banerjee and Asit Dasgupta of Chitra Chetana, which organised the 1983 festival along with the Jadavpur University Film Society.³⁸⁾ The interview began with a short epigraph that condensed the spirit behind the movement: of heralding an “alternative medium” and a “constructive movement.”³⁹⁾ The main objective for organizing the festival was the popularisation of the “people’s gauze.”⁴⁰⁾ Being a finance-intensive medium, cinema entailed issues concerning who could afford and utilise the technology that configured it. As the mainstream industry was detached from the masses, the organisers deemed it necessary to develop an alternative medium of communication that could engage with the quotidian struggles of people’s lives directly. Positing the technological and financial gains that the format facilitated, the organisers claimed that they were not against 16 or 35 mm, but they were more conscious of the possibilities facilitated by the specific Super-8 gauge.⁴¹⁾ The advantages included “the minimum expenditure in mounting and screening of the films,” which could offer the scope to any individual to become a filmmaker and attribute visibility to the in-

38) The article “Super-8 mm movement in West Bengal” offers an understanding of these different organizations: “There were other independent groups who discussed and analysed films more thoroughly and were very quick in taking up film making once an affordable and feasible opening came. People’s Film Workshop (PFW), Jadavpur University Film Society (JUFS), *Chitra Chetana*... were among such groups.”

39) Debashis Das, Atanu Sen, and Saswata Bhadra, “People’s Gauze: Super-8,” *Filmilieu*, no. 1 (1983), 1, 4.

40) *Ibid.*, 1.

41) Alexandra Schneider’s work on small-gauge private film collections as an important source for film historiography is a seminal work that unearths the potentialities of small-gauge films and argues how such collections constitute viable archives that can address gaps in the knowledge of film history. Focusing on European collectors of the 1930s, Schneider argues that the films can be read as efficient templates for filmmaking. In its interest in mapping the possibilities harboured by small-gauge films, the author offers a cue for understanding the impetus behind the movement in Calcutta.

terests of the people.⁴²⁾ The dynamic mobility of the camera also created the opportunity for any individual to render on celluloid whatever she saw and experienced on a daily basis in her immediate social surroundings. Hailing the festival as the first of its kind in India, the organisers argued that there had been sporadic attempts at screening Super-8 films, even by the Poone Film Institute (now FTII, Pune). However, there were no institutional attempts at organizing a nationwide festival that could create a space for popularizing the gauge for filmmaking. The response received for the festival was also overwhelming. While initially there were apprehensions about the number of entries that would be received, eventually, the organisers had sufficient entries, almost forty to forty-five, that prompted a three-day long festival. The publicity also aided in garnering support as many organisers extended their help. Specifically, Cine Super-8, the processor of Super-8 films and the maker of the projectors, declared to present the first and second awards to the winning entries.

How was the network that enabled all the filmmakers to gather at the festival forged, though? The organisers admitted that they were clueless about the developments taking place in Super-8 beyond West Bengal. Thus, they got in touch with numerous organisers who were interested in the format to know the names of films that were being made in different provinces. Later, they inserted an advertisement in the *Screen* magazine, which was enthusiastically responded to. Film director Girish Cassaravalli extended his support by issuing a press statement and contacting filmmakers and informing them about the festival. The motive was to mobilise this opportunity provided by the festival to build an infrastructure surrounding the format with an active involvement of the various organisers and filmmakers who participated in the festival.

The festival commenced with the screening of a non-competitive inaugural film. It was strategically divided between two sections: one competitive, the other non-competitive. For the latter, most of the films were sent by Birla Technological Museum. The non-competitive section also screened films that were acquired through the personal networks of the organizing committee. For the competitive section, the festival incorporated a novel methodology in adjudging the winning entries, much in alignment with its emphasis on delineating Super-8 as a people's format. While the prevalent mode of judgement in film festivals depended on a jury headed by a chairman, the Calcutta festival introduced the Audience Voting System. This was to highlight the opinions of the viewing audience and not posit established film personalities or urban intellectuals as the undisputed owners of cultural capital. Such a technique offered primacy to the people's judgement and considered the fact that their perspective might be different from that of the juries. Underlining the right to vote that every audience possessed, the organisers were eager to attribute value to the audience's sense of judgement. The method comprised arranging two shows of the same film within a day to a maximum viewing capacity of three hundred people. The audience had to mark the film on a range of zero to ten. In this way, every film generated six hundred marking sheets. The sheets were then handed over for tabulation, and the winners were declared based on their average score. This alternative method of judgement was supported by the personnel of WOLF, who undertook the responsibility of distribut-

42) Ibid.

ing and collecting the score sheets as well as tabulating the final scores for each individual film.

Addressing anticipations about the initiatives that would follow up after the festival to publicise the format, the organisers narrated their proposal to the Federation of Film Societies for arranging screenings of Super-8 films in all clubs of West Bengal. The activists working extensively on the format also decided that a publication called “Network” would be issued to explicate the technical specificities surrounding Super-8. Despite being optimistic about the festival before its inauguration, the organisers rued the lack of recognition and respect that the format was subjected to in India. They also stressed the necessity of eradicating the “ignorance, sheer neglect and conservations about the medium” that, they believed, had hampered the format’s development.⁴³⁾ The only strategy for circumventing such stasis lay in the active organisation of platforms and institutions that would enable a concerted publicity around the media format.

Configuration of a Film Movement

In the bulletin’s section “The History Fingerpoints Super-8,” Saumen Guha drew an elaborate genealogy of film movements around the world to ruminate upon whether India had a concerted film movement. He opined that even though the Western waves of experimentation with celluloid had reached India, they had hardly created any significant ripples. He blamed this shortcoming on the orientation of the films towards being cultural exports that would guarantee financial affluence as well as international fame. Critiquing the spate of state-sponsored films, Guha argued that being sponsored by the government, these films would please and satisfy the producer, besides keeping intact the “Indian archetype” to incur profits from overseas markets.⁴⁴⁾ Expressing his anguish over the state of filmmaking that prevailed in the country, Guha claimed that Super-8 could be a powerful weapon in a situation where the state-corporate nexus controlled cultural production. Voicing his optimism about the format, he argued that Super-8 could bridge the gap in mass communication. To get a glimpse of the life led by common people, Super-8 needed filmmakers who possessed creativity, insight, and empathy to realise the “social scourge” that had victimised “common people.”⁴⁵⁾ Thinking of the format in conjunction with the depiction of reality, Guha suggested that the format harboured the potential for offering an undistorted vision of reality that was never the priority for mainstream filmmaking.

It is intriguing that Guha questioned the efficacy of concerted film movements in India while the film society movement had already gained a strong foothold in diverse regions within the country. The question is a strategic one, aimed at locating the urgency and currency of Super-8 movement within the context of the film society movement. The question, while arguing for the need of a new movement, undeniably triggers curiosities about why the film society movement was not considered a significant movement within

43) Ibid, 4.

44) Saumen Guha, “The History Fingerpoints Super-8,” *Filmilieu*, no. 1 (1983), 3.

45) Ibid.

the country. In this vein, the bulletin’s section “Film Movement: The Indian Perspective” calls for attention since it offers a glimpse into the anxieties and disappointments that prevailed around the film society movement. In an interview with Suvendu Das Gupta, a veteran film society activist, the editors deliberated over the causes behind the failure of the movement and strove to locate the possibilities stimulated by the Super-8 movement over and above the film society movement. Such a comparative analytical lens offers significant strands to think through the notion of failure.

Acknowledging the film society movement as a failure, Das Gupta explained that the failure could be attributed to the fact that it was an established movement that undeniably entailed official restrictions. The central organisation, the F.F.S.I. (Federation of Film Societies of India), was bound to operate in tandem with the rules and regulations of the local police authorities as well as the corporation and foreign embassies. The restrictive nature of such regulations undeniably adversely affected the trajectory of development of what was considered to be a film movement. The movement was limited to screening some foreign films and publishing articles on them in film society magazines without having a definite purpose. The activists who published the magazines deemed themselves to be cultural elites, powered by a form of education or cultural training and taste that made them believe in their superiority over other members of the cinema clubs. The other members were therefore subjected to contempt for lacking cultural training and a sense of judgement. The screenings were restricted only to members of the film societies, thereby reducing the reach of the movement because it was premised on the idea of exclusion of non-members. This resulted in a specific cluster of people affiliating themselves to the movement: the “intelligent, educated and well-off ones.”⁴⁶⁾ It can be argued that the class dynamics of the movement were pertinent. The only interest of the members pertained to watching foreign films. The film societies presented programmes with foreign films to the members because when programmes with a definite purpose were scheduled, the turnout would be miserable. Providing a statistical figure, Das Gupta noted that among two thousand members, only twenty-five to thirty would turn up whenever there was an experimentation in the programme schedule. Similarly, publishing articles with a specific purpose would sell only one hundred to one hundred fifty copies. Thus, there was a crucial disparity between the preferences of the organisers and those of the other members. Das Gupta concluded that the members would not respond favourably since their interests were often very different from those of the organisers.

Citing the reasons for the movement’s failure to “develop into a real film movement,” he suggested that a movement could never be sustained by only a handful of members.⁴⁷⁾ While the masses were acquainted “with the trash” of mainstream cinema, they were not familiar with film as a full-fledged medium. Das Gupta further opined that people were oblivious of the strength of media and the far-reaching positive effects that it could achieve. The complex technology and the congruent issue of its affordability further restricted the use of the technology to a specific cluster of filmmakers with the cultural and financial

46) Rana Sengupta, Debjyoti Santanu, and Debasish Das, “Film Movement: The Indian Perspective; A couple of hours with Suvendu Das Gupta,” *Filmilieu*, no. 1 (1983), 2.

47) *Ibid.*

currency to make films. The disinterest of the political parties also plagued Das Gupta since it was a significant factor that impeded the hopes and ambitions of film society activists who wanted the movement to be a “weapon of proletariat class struggle.”⁴⁸⁾ Das Gupta argued that the movement, therefore, remained elitist and estranged from the masses.

Das Gupta’s interview throws light upon the aspirations and disappointments that had congealed around the film society movement. It also helps us to comprehend the culturally elitist understanding of media that had been harboured by film society activists who ironically critiqued the same notion. Das Gupta’s reconnaissance of mainstream media as trash makes one speculate about the conception of media that was deemed legitimate by cultural activists. There is a curious consistency between the perspectives of Saumen Guha and Das Gupta on the issue of what constitutes real media or real movement. While Guha was dismissive of the spill-over of the Super-8 format into pornographic exercises, Das Gupta was critical of the media that pervaded the masses and was anxious about the aspirations surrounding the film society movement.

Nonetheless, the Super-8 movement embedded seeds of hope. A “real film movement,” Das Gupta argued, was possible only when it was anchored into a specific political perspective.⁴⁹⁾ Since all movements germinated from social problems, Das Gupta believed that such movements would be effective, when conducted under the aegis of the revolutionary communist party. He explained that the contemporary communist leaders of Bengal had failed to engage with the film society movement’s potential. Their participation was limited to distributing film grants to a selective cluster of filmmakers. However, the need of the hour was infrastructural development for expanding the film exhibition circuit. Such lack of infrastructure prevented the handful of “good films,” that had already been made, from reaching the people and the areas where such films would carry a significant message. Prioritising the need for film exhibition over that for production, Das Gupta claimed that instead of the former, the latter’s potential would never optimally flourish. Still, the technology- and finance-intensive media industry could be infiltrated by employing the Super-8 as a “powerful weapon in the hands of an artist committed to the cause of class struggle.”⁵⁰⁾ Super-8 thus contained the possibility of creating media by circumventing the established hierarchies and structures of film production. Critiquing the existing power structures, Das Gupta lamented that dependence on the state-corporate nexus for financing a film often deprived the artist of creative aspirations about the film. Being “trapped in the system,” the artist would undeniably have to act “according to the terms and conditions of the contract.”⁵¹⁾ It is significant to underline here the contempt that the festival organisers manifested towards the reception of grants for filmmaking from private producers or the state. This was evidenced in their question:

48) Ibid.

49) Ibid.

50) Ibid.

51) Ibid, 3.

“What role do the revolutionary film makers who are making revolutionary films with money from the state and private entrepreneurs, play in exhibiting their films to the public?”⁵²⁾

The sarcasm in the question underscores the organisers’ belief that any revolutionary film was impossible under the aegis of the state-corporate conglomerate. This thread of argument was, nevertheless, important to herald the urgent need for Super-8. It emphasised the potential of Super-8 for providing relief from such financial and aesthetic traps by offering independence from institutional structures that dictated forms of filmmaking. The iconoclastic impetus associated with the movement became more pronounced when the interviewers asked whether any progressive film movement could develop by being dependent on the establishment. The spirit of the activists associated with the Super-8 movement was defined by an anti-establishment vigour, in conjunction with the motivation to reach a wide audience and incorporate them within the film movement. The anti-establishment impetus behind Super-8 had a historical and cultural specificity to it. Tracing a genealogy of the efforts invested into developing an alternative media, Guha argued that it is significant to understand that Super-8 did not emerge within a vacuum. It germinated within a politico-cultural substrate that could be defined by the little magazine culture of Calcutta or the different movements that moulded the political contours of the city.⁵³⁾

Conclusion

This paper shifts the emphasis from the “quality” of films produced to the horizon of possibilities stimulated by the Super-8 movement in Calcutta.⁵⁴⁾ This analytical arc dislodges the notion of failure that the movement’s activists have associated with it. Circling back to the theorization of Appadurai and Alexander, I read failure as the reflection of a specific interpretive stance that is anchored into constellations of power as well as technological and cultural capital. Mobilizing the critical notion of failure allows me to analyse the promises and potentials ushered in by the movement, moving beyond questions of technical or aesthetic “quality” of the Super-8 films.⁵⁵⁾ Thus, I underscore the initiatives and practices related to the format, such as lectures, workshops, and festivals that the activists organised for rendering visibility to the movement. The rationale behind this analysis is to read the motivation behind such activities and the aspirations they were geared towards. I understand such practices as forms of politico-cultural activism that sought to create an

52) Ibid.

53) Guha mentioned the food movement of 1966 as an incident that triggered massive grievance against the state. The resistance to the state was often expressed in wall magazines, table magazines, or even little magazines which could be published at a minimal cost. He argued that the politico-cultural impetus that gained momentum with these movements significantly shaped the development of the Super-8 movement.

54) I use the name “Calcutta” instead of the contemporary name “Kolkata” since the paper focuses on the Super-8 movement during the 1980s, a decade when the city was recognised as “Calcutta.”

55) I use the word quality within quotations to posit my understanding that it is a dynamic notion that cannot have standardized models of reference or templates of judgement.

alternative media that engaged with quotidian aspects of the lives of common people. As the activists associated with the movement argued, the aim was to popularise the potential harboured by Super-8 to focus on people's interests through the people's gauge. The movement also had a political impetus with a strong iconoclastic charge that was determined to free media from the control of the state-corporate nexus. The anti-establishment fervour, as evidenced in the bulletins, publications, and questionnaires that were issued in congruence with the movement, was fostered by the belief that media could not be independent if they relied on support from the state or from private producers. The imperative behind the activism was to establish a cultural network that would facilitate the creation of alternative media, independent of the structural hierarchies manifested by the mainstream film industry. The film movement's ambitions were not limited to experimenting with cinematic language. They were also channelised towards the production of media that could critique the social and economic conditions of life, to which the mainstream media was oblivious. In this vein, I position the practices that developed around the format as politico-cultural forms of activism that aspired towards the materialisation of an alternative media culture, free from the aegis of the state-corporate conglomerate.

Acknowledgements

This research has been possible with the help of Amit Bandopadhyay who enabled me access to his personal collections surrounding the Super-8 movement. I am thankful to Dr. Parichay Patra for providing me the contact details of Saumen Guha, the other important source for this paper. Saumen Guha patiently answered my questions and I sincerely thank him for his immense support for this project. Dwaipayan Banerjee helped me with the contact details of Amit Bandopadhyay and I owe my gratitude to him. I am also grateful to Prof. Dr. Vinzenz Hediger for his constant support and feedback that helped me develop this research paper. Likewise, Dr. Veena Hariharan has always been enthusiastic about my engagement with Super-8 and this paper owes much to the conversations that we had over the format.

Bibliography

- Appadurai, Arjun and Neta Alexander. *Failure* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020).
- Bernard, Anna. "Cultural Activism as Resource: Pedagogies of Resistance and Solidarity," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 53, no. 3 (2017), 367–379.
- Biswas, Amrita. "Tracing Kolkata's cinephilic encounters: An analysis of alternative cinema in the city," *Studies in South Asian Film & Media* 10, no. 2 (2019), 113–128.
- Buser, Michael, Carlo Bonura, Maria Fannin, and Kate Boyer. "Cultural activism and the politics of place-making," *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 17, no. 5 (2013), 606–627.
- Cubitt, Sean. "Anecdotal Evidences," *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013), 5–18.
- Das, Debashis, Atanu Sen, and Saswata Bhadra. "People's Gauze: Super-8," *Filmilieu*, no. 1 (1983), 1, 4.

- Dasgupta, Rajeshwari. “Towards the ‘New Man’: Revolutionary Youth and Rural Agency in the Naxalite Movement,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 41, no. 19 (2006), 1920–27.
- Dhar, Aniruddha. “Calcuttay Super 8,” *Aajkal*, June 6, 1983 (n. p.).
- Guha, Saumen. “Alternative Technique of Low-Cost Film-making: a Test Case” (Seminar Lecture, Electrical Engineering Lecture Hall, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, May 9, 1981).
- Guha, Saumen. “The History Fingerpoints Super-8,” *Filmilieu*, no. 1 (1983), 3.
- Guha, Saumen and Partha Chatterjee. “At First Sight,” *Super-8 in India* 1, no. 1 (1984), 1.
- Guha, Saumen and Partha Chatterjee. “For Your Eyes and Ears,” *Super-8 in India* 1, no. 1 (1984), 2.
- Guha, Saumen and Partha Chatterjee. “On Records,” *Super-8 in India* 1, no. 1 (1984), 4–5.
- Guha, Saumen and Partha Chatterjee. “Super Market,” *Super-8 in India* 1, no. 1 (1984), 4.
- Guha, Saumen, Rana Sengupta, Saswata Bhadra, and Suddhasatwa Basu. *Filmilieu*, no. 1 (1983), 1.
- Martin Jr., Alfred L. “Why All the Hate? Four Black Women’s Anti-Fandom and Tyler Perry,” in *Anti-Fandom: Dislike and Hate in the Digital Age*, ed. Melissa A. Click (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 166–183.
- Sengupta, Rana, Debjyoti Santanu, and Debasish Das. “Film Movement: The Indian Perspective; A couple of hours with Suvendu Das Gupta,” *Filmilieu*, no. 1 (1983), 2.
- Schneider, Alexandra. “Time travel with Pathé Baby: The small-gauge film collection as historical archive,” *Film History: An International Journal* 19, no. 4 (2007), 353–360.
- Shand, Ryan. “Theorizing Amateur Cinema: Limitations and Possibilities,” *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 8, no. 2 (2008), 36–60.
- “Super-8 mm movement in West Bengal,” *Activist Canvas*, 2010, accessed January 27, 2022, <https://canvaspix.wordpress.com/2010/02/10/super-8-movement/>.
- Szczelkun, Stefan. “The Value of Home Movies,” *Oral History* 28, no. 2 (2000), 94–98.
- Zimmermann, Patricia R. “Morphing History into Histories: From Amateur Film to the Archive of the Future,” in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, eds. Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmermann (California: University of California Press, 2008), 275–288.

Filmography

- Calcutta-Oh* (Charles Solomon, n. d.)
- Faces* (Subhasis Mitra, n. d.)
- From Copenhagen with Love* (Saumen Guha, 1980)
- Jala Nahi Mile* (Saumen Guha, n. d.)
- Silent Calcutta* (Saumen Guha, 1980)
- Unemployment and Automation* (Atanu Majumder, n. d.)

Biography

Amrita Biswas is a PhD candidate in the DFG (German Research Foundation)-funded “Configurations of Film” research collective at Goethe University, Frankfurt. She completed her M.Phil. in cinema studies at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, JNU, New Delhi. She received her BA from St. Xavier’s College, Kolkata, in English, and then pursued her post-graduation in film studies from Jadavpur University, Kolkata. Her research interests include post-partition trauma in the films of Ritwik Ghatak as well as media infrastructures of alternative and popular Bengali cinema. She has published with Meson Press, Germany, and in *Studies in South Asian Film and Media*. She was awarded the Erasmus Plus fellowship for conducting research in the department of Cultural Anthropology at Georg-August University, Göttingen, from October 2019 to March 2020.

Karol Józwiak (University of Lodz)

Polish Memory of the Second World War and its Afterlife in the Early Cold War Italian Film Culture

Abstract

In this article I discuss production, distribution and reception contexts of Michal Waszynski's films produced in Italy in the wake of the Second World War. Particularly, I pay attention to the found-footage sequences embedded in those films. I analyze them in terms of a testimony and proofs for the war experience, which was hardly acknowledged in post-war Italy. Thus, I aim at reconstructing the wider political plan to which these films were inscribed, locating them on the backdrop of the Polish Army propaganda activity and diplomacy in Italy in the eve of the cold war. I show to what extent these films were entangled into diplomatic, political and ideological struggles between the Polish Armed Forces, the Moscow dependent Polish government, the Allies and the Italian government in the early post-war years. On a more general scale, this analysis uncovers the negotiations over boundaries of what was acceptable in the Second World War depiction in Italian film culture.

Keywords

Polish Army Film Unit, cinema diplomacy, Cold War culture, Michal Waszynski, memory of the Second World War

— — —

Introduction

I am preparing this article during the first months of Russian aggression against Ukraine. It is a moment when the historical research on the cinematic representations of the war, especially relating to the controversial role of the Soviet Union, resembles the reports from the current war. Russian aggression has been justified by the very same arguments as the ones used by Stalin in the wake of the Second World War (that of Central Eastern Europe

as a buffer zone and as a part of the sphere of Russian or Soviet imperialist hegemony). The whole western world seems to sympathize with Ukraine's fight for their sovereignty and freedom. However, apart from this solidarity a critical assessment of the factors allowing Russian aggression to Ukraine seems to be equally crucial. Timothy Snyder, a prominent historian of Central Eastern Europe in 20th century, has recently pointed at one of such factors, namely a failure of memory policy in post-war Europe regarding the Second World War and Russian imperialism.¹⁾

One of the Russia's attempts in the current conflict is to isolate Ukraine, to reduce this war over western principles to a question of a local conflict, to convince the West to sacrifice the Ukrainian effort for the sake of an illusory peace with Russia and for the stability in the region. In the following article I will discuss how Poland, in the wake of the Second World War, was left in such a way. Poles felt not only betrayed by western allies,²⁾ but also deprived of the possibility to openly address this issue in the film, as the examples I will discuss below show. The Polish, and more generally the Central Eastern European memory of the Second World War could have been a propiate warning³⁾ against Russian imperialism. Focusing on Italian film culture during the early years of the cold war I will show how unwelcomed this warning was.

Geopolitical context

In the wake of the Second World War Italy became both a refuge for a significant number of civilian Poles and a station for soldiers of the Polish Army 2nd Corps (henceforth referred as 2nd Corps),⁴⁾ which contributed to the liberation of Italy in 1944–1945 along with other allied armies.⁵⁾ “One of the great obstacles to the free development of Italy is the influx to her territory of refugees and expatriated citizens from many eastern European countries” — has been noticed in 1946 newspapers⁶⁾. Indeed, in 1945–1946 over 100,000 Poles, as well as many other citizens of eastern European countries, hesitated to leave Ita-

-
- 1) I refer to his talk during an Online Seminar “Historians and the War: Discussion with Prof. Timothy Snyder,” YouTube, 2022, accessed July 14, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jp5MT4dJ1dw&t=448s>, as well as to his essay, see: Timothy Snyder, “Germans have been involved in the war, chiefly on the wrong side,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2022, accessed July 14, 2022, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/juergen-habermas-and-ukraine-germans-have-been-involved-in-the-war-18131718-p5.html>.
 - 2) See: Arthur Bliss Lane, *I Saw Poland Betrayed* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1947). In a similar manner the very first period of the Second World War is described, in terms of an isolation of Poland. Norman Davies describes the diplomatic situation of Poland during the first years of the Second World War as follows: “In the era of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the political isolation and the vulnerability of the Polish Government-in-Exile was amply demonstrated”, see: Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A history of Poland: 1795 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 361.
 - 3) Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2015).
 - 4) Jakub Żak, *Nie walczyli dla siebie: Powojenna odyseja 2. Korpusu Polskiego* (Warszawa: Rytm, 2014), 7.
 - 5) On the Polish contribution to the liberation of Italy as well as on post war presence of Poles in Italy see: Luciano Garibaldi, *Gli eroi di Montecassino: Storia dei polacchi che liberarono l'Italia* (Milano: Mondadori, 2013).
 - 6) Elisabeth Wiskemann, “The Poles in Italy,” *Spectator*, February 1, 1946, 6. The article has been recapitulated in Italian newspaper *L'Unità*, “Una testimonianza inglese”, *L'Unità*, February 23, 1946, 2.

ly and return to Soviet dominated territories. The decision was politically motivated in the main. In the Polish case, aversion toward Soviet power was grounded in both the previous experience of the USSR's ruthless occupation of Poland in 1939–1941 and, on the current reports from Poland dominated by the Soviets, consisting of NKVD (Naródnny komissariát vnútrénnikh del) (The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) terror, deportations to gulags and the forceful imposition of communist power in all public domains. Thus, Poles stayed in Italy as in a kind of limbo, suspended between the past horrors of war and unrealizable hopes for going back to their sovereign country.⁷⁾ As a significant political and social factor, not to mention the military force, the Polish presence in Italy was an important diplomatic issue between the western allies and the Soviet Union during the first post-war period.

On the other hand, Poles, despite having been a part of the victorious alliance and a significant contributor to the victory over Nazi Germany, could hardly feel optimistic by the new order emerging from the ashes of war — “the considerable Polish effort in the war against Hitler was not matched by any corresponding benefits relating to Poland's future destiny”.⁸⁾ Poland, in the wake of the Yalta and Potsdam arrangements, lost her sovereignty and a significant part of her eastern territories to the Soviet Union. On the geopolitical level, Poland was left under Stalin's hegemony, where he was busy imposing a totalitarian, communist state and eliminating all political opposition or sovereignty with the silent consent of the western allies.

Yet, the 2nd Corps didn't give up its geopolitical agency on the territory of Italy. Since challenging the new post-Yalta European order was less and less possible by military means, other ways of fighting for the Polish case came forth. After the ceasefire in Europe, the Polish Armed Forces stationed in Italy enlarged their scope and got more involved in propaganda activities aimed at Italian and international civil society. Amongst cultural media such as the press, literature and theatre, the cinema was an important element of the activity of the 2nd Corps.⁹⁾ One of its main achievements, though arguably the least well known, consisted of its involvement in the post-war Italian film industry. As a result of this activity, two full length feature films: *The Great Way* (*Wielka droga/La grande strada. L'odissea di Montecassino*, Michał Waszyński, 1946/1949) and *The Unknown Man from San Marino* (*Lo sconosciuto di San Marino*, Michał Waszyński, 1948), were produced in Italy. Both, though to different extents, were cases of give-and-take between the renowned Polish film-maker Michał Waszyński, the Italian cinema industry, and the scopes of the geopolitical propaganda of the 2nd Corps, which was the financial backer of these productions. Producers of both films made use of the found footage, filmed by the Polish Armed Forces Film Units during the military actions, thus incorporating the Polish film images of the war into the Italian cinema, and arguably into the neorealist culture.¹⁰⁾

7) Gaetano Guidi, *Perché i polacchi non ritornano in patria?* (Roma: Magi Spinetti, 1946); Karolina Golemo, *Obraz Polski i Polaków we Włoszech: poglądy, oceny, opinie* (Kraków: WUJ, 2010).

8) Davies, *God's Playground*, 200.

9) Stefan Pastuszka, *Życie kulturalne w Polskich Siłach Zbrojnych na zachodzie w czasie II Wojny Światowej* (Kielce and Warszawa: MHPRL, 2009).

10) Francesco Pitassio, *Neorealist Film Culture* (Amsterdam: AUP, 2019), 119–120.



Figure 1: The crew of the film *Wielka droga* during shooting in the Cinecittà studio in 1946. The central figure sitting in the first row is general Władysław Anders (in the military beret), to his right (under the camera) Michał Waszyński is sitting. Author: Felicjan Maliniak. Anna Maria Anders Collection. Courtesy of National Film Archive — Audiovisual Institute

Both films can be analysed in terms of psychological warfare conducted by the 2nd Corps in Italy in the aftermath of the Second World War. This double layer of film production is best illustrated in the photograph from *The Great Way* shooting, in which the commander of the 2nd Corps assists Waszyński and the film's crew in the Rome studio of Cinecittà, staged for Siberian location (see figure 1). In a certain sense this activity was a component of a very bold geopolitical agenda, since it was independent and opposed to the main geopolitical powers (USSR, US, and UK), and without any substantial backing from legitimate political circles, whether Polish or foreign. So, the films can be analysed as traces of a peculiar effort to challenge the post-Yalta settlement of Europe which had resulted in the division of the continent into opposing camps, and to question the Soviet Union's moral and factual legitimacy to establish a new post-war order. As such, this perspective was isolated in the diplomacy of the immediate post-war period and gained resonance only with the outbreak of the Cold War in the late 1940's.

In this article I will present those films' narrative, analyse their mode of production, the inclusion of found footage into their plots, their geopolitical significance, as well as their reception in Italy at the onset of the Cold War. On a more general scale I regard them as a case study in war over memory, the way the recent history was narrated, and examining the limits of what was acceptable in a public discourse, despite its factual status. Thus, I relate these films to issues of war and post-war diplomacy and the dynamics of early Cold War tensions.

Polish Armed Forces

To grasp the peculiar situation of the 2nd Corps and the reason it engaged in a kind of psychological warfare in the wake of the Second World War, it is necessary to analyze it as part of a more complex structure. Under the term Polish Armed Forces active during the Second World War there existed three distinct, and to a certain extent autonomous, armies. Although each army belonged to the Allies combating the forces of the Axis, they were governed by different interests and geopolitical affiliations. Their relations with the Soviet Union were arguably the most important feature distinguishing them.

The so-called Polish Forces in the West were the oldest formation created after the collapse of the Polish state in 1939. It was directly and in the most straightforward way dependent on the London based Polish government-in-exile. This army was quite susceptible to British and American influence and geopolitical diplomacy. Hence, it presented a moderate approach to the Soviet Union, carefully avoiding any controversies in relations with the eastern ally. The soldiers were mainly recruited in France and Great Britain in 1939–1940, from the Polish diaspora in western Europe as well as from military units, which had managed to escape Poland in the wake of the September Campaign. Those forces were mainly active in the western part of the European Theatre of War, engaged in the defense of the United Kingdom, fights in Norway, the liberation of Belgium, as well as combat in North Africa and the Middle East.

The Polish Forces in the Soviet Union (later renamed the Polish Forces in the East, and subsequently into the 2nd Corps) were created following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, a result of the Sikorski-Majski Pact (the first official agreement between the Polish government-in-exile and the Soviet Union after the Soviet invasion of Poland). It was mainly recruited from Poles who had been sent to the Soviet gulags in Siberia as political prisoners during the occupation of Poland. Thus, not surprisingly, it was characterized by legitimate rancor and resentment towards the Soviets. It is worth mentioning that thanks to the stubbornness of this army's commanders, the war crimes committed by the Soviets, such as the Katyn mass killings, were investigated and brought to light.¹¹⁾ The commander of the army was a charismatic general, Władysław Anders, who joined the dissident, anticommunist movement in the West after the war. To join the fighting in the Italian campaign, this army had to march from the central part of the Soviet Union and through the Middle East. Its most spectacular achievement was the capture of Montecassino in 1944, as well as the liberation of the northern parts of Italy.

Finally in 1943 as a counterbalance to the army under Anders' command, the Polish Armed Forces in the Soviet Union were established under the command of Zygmunt Berling. As Stalin's protégé, he openly declared loyalty towards the Soviet Union and acknowledged plans to incorporate Poland into the Soviet Union after the war. Berling initially joined Anders' army, but with its evacuation from the Soviet Union, together with a significant number of soldiers, he deserted and stayed loyal to Stalin, laying the foundations

11) Józef Mackiewicz, *Zbrodnia Katyńska w świetle dokumentów* (London: Gryf, 1948). The book was first systematic account of the soviet crimes published with the General Władysław Anders' foreword.

for the new army.¹²⁾ Henceforth, the so-called “Berlings’ Army” was one of Stalin’s chief instruments in imposing plans for the post-war Poland. It was this army, which as part of the Red Army, liberated Poland and captured Berlin in 1945.

Moreover, throughout the war in Nazi occupied Poland, the underground military resistance kept active as the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*). Its allegiance was to the Polish government-in-exile in London and to Polish Armed Forces. It was the largest underground resistance organization in occupied Europe, numbering around 400,000 soldiers in late 1943. Its activity concluded with the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.¹³⁾ With the Soviet liberation of Poland, the soldiers of the Home Army were considered enemies of communism, and as such were persecuted by the Soviet installed puppet government of Poland. Many of them escaped communist repression and joined General Anders’ troops in Italy.

Each of those armies had its own film unit, and their distinct geopolitical perspectives are clearly reflected in their film production respectively. Each of them included some of the most renowned Polish film directors and artists, crucial figures of Polish pre-war cinema and visual arts. In the first army Stefan and Franciszka Themerson, arguably the only pre-war Polish avantgarde filmmakers, who in the ranks of the Polish Army in Great Britain created two propaganda masterpieces: *Calling Mr. Smith* (1943) and *The Eye and the Ear* (1945). Michał Waszyński was the head of Anders’ Army Film Unit, while Aleksander Ford, the most important figure of the immediate post-war Polish cinema, created and directed Berling’s Army Film Unit.

It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the wide array of geopolitical stances present in their outputs, although it seems to be a quite fascinating and under researched subject. In this article I will exclusively focus my analysis on the activity of the film unit of the Polish Forces under Anders’ command. Since the history of this army is the subject of the first of the films in question, I will immediately turn to it.

Filming *The Great Way*

The history of the 2nd Corps consists of its long journey across three continents and several prominent military achievements in Italy in 1944–1945. Formed in the Soviet Union, the army moved through Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and into Italy, where it was engaged in the European Theatre of War, capturing Montecassino and liberating Bologna, amongst other military successes. As historian Norman Davies noticed, this:

extraordinary odyssey, from prison camps in Siberia and Central Asia to Buzuluk on the Volga, to Tashkent, to Pahlevi in Persia, to Baghdad, Jerusalem, Cairo, Tobruk, Anzio, Rome, to the Sangro and the Gothic Line, has never been satisfactorily recounted to western readers.¹⁴⁾

12) Sławomir Cenckiewicz, *Długie ramię Moskwy: Wywiad wojskowy Polski Ludowej 1943–1991 (wprowadzenie do syntezy)* (Poznań: Zysk, 2011), 43.

13) Davies, *God’s Playground*, 344.

14) *Ibid.*, 199.

However, throughout all this period the 2nd Corps Film Unit documented the proceedings of the army. It produced some dozen documentary films, about 40 film newsreels and finally¹⁵⁾, after the war, made a fiction film *The Great Way*, later re-edited and distributed as an Italian production under the title *La grande strada. L'odissea di Montecassino*. The film was a combination of those previous documentaries (see figures 2–3), but with a fictional plot to provide the film with a coherent story and attract a wider audience. The film title refers to the march of some 100,000 Poles from Siberia through the Middle East to northern Italy. This is the only film showing this march as well as Polish participation in the Italian Campaign.



Figure 2: Still from *Wielka droga*. A newsreel from the attack on the Montecassino Abbey. Courtesy of The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum

The film plot spans the period from the battle of Montecassino in May 1944 to the immediate post-war period. It opens with the night attack on the German positions in the ancient abbey. Blinding flashes of artillery fire silhouette the contours of Montecassino on the top of the hill. This opening scene is composed of footage from the real battle and staged shots (see figure 2). At the same time, the infantry climbs up the hill. Then, suddenly, one soldier falls hit by an explosion and is transferred to the field hospital. He temporarily loses his sight and is transferred to the regular hospital. When he regains conscious-

15) For the recapitulation of the 2nd Corps film unit activity see: Stanisław Ozimek, *Film polski w wojennej potrzebie* (Warszawa: PIW, 1974), 112–123; Władysław Jewsiewicki, *Polscy filmowcy na frontach drugiej wojny światowej* (Warszawa: WAiF, 1972), 153–161.

ness, he takes a nurse named Jadwiga (Jadwiga Andrzejewska) for his fiancée. In order to make him feel better, the nurse starts playing the role. She immerses herself in reading his diary to better perform the role of the soldier's fiancée better.

At this moment, a metadiegetic story from the past is narrated alongside her reading. The diary dates back to the summer of 1939. Adam Krajewski (Albin Ossowski) — the name of the soldier is introduced only at this moment — is a student in Lwów (now Lviv in Ukraine) and is in love with a dancer and actress, Irena (Irena Bogdańska). Adam attends her successful debut as a performer in the Lwów Opera House. Their happy life is interrupted by the German invasion of 1st September 1939. The original newsreels from the September Campaign illustrate the fate of Poland in the first days of the conflict. 17th September, the date of the Soviet invasion and subsequent annexation of eastern Poland, is described as “stabbing Poland in the back”.¹⁶⁾



Figure 3: Still from *Wielka droga*. A newsreel from the signing of the Sikorski-Majski agreement. From left to right: General Władysław Anders, commander-in-chief of the Polish Armed Forces Władysław Sikorski, Joseph Stalin, Majski. Courtesy of The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum

The Soviet occupation turns the idyllic Lwów into a fearful place, terrorized by the Red Army and the NKVD. Both Adam and Irena are caught by the NKVD and sent to gulags. After almost two years of separation, they meet again during the formation of the Polish Armed Forces in the Soviet Union. Original newsreels from the signing of the pact between Stalin, Molotov and the Polish generals Sikorski and Anders interlace the plot (see figure 3). The whole story of the march of the Polish army from the Soviet Union through Central Asia, Iran, Palestine and Egypt is narrated. The fictional plot of the main charac-

16) Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the original Italian and Polish are mine.

ters intertwines with the newsreels. Finally, Adam interrupts his diary right before the attack on Montecassino.

Parallel to this story, a melodramatic theme of the nurse steadily falling in love with Adam is subtly suggested by the main plot. Her expectations and emotions grow while Adam recovers and, slowly, he regains his sight. However, just before she removes the bandages, Irena arrives. Recovered, Adam is discharged from the hospital. Together with Irena, who works in the Entertainment Unit of the Polish Armed Forces as a performer, he re-joins the troops proceeding with the liberation of Italy. Finally, they marry in a demolished church (a long shot in a typical neorealist scenery) and settle down in Italy (although the city is not named, the shots unambiguously show downtown Bologna). The film closes with a scene in their house where Irena, rearranging the furniture, asks why Adam's rifle and army helmet still hang on the wall. Adam responds calmly: 'Our great way back to the liberated fatherland is not finished yet, and they might still be of use'. The final sentence, enforced by a musical crescendo, works as a punch line for the whole film. The as yet unfinished way is directed toward the total liberation of Poland, from both occupations.

Film Production

The production of the film started in late 1945. The shooting took place during the summer of 1946 in the Rome film studios Cinecittà, while regular film production was suspended for the holidays.¹⁷⁾ Different documents account several important actants of the Italian film industry involved in its production, such as Titanus Film, Vincenzo Genesi (who became an executive producer of this film as well as of the later film — *The Unknown Man from San Marino*), Cinecittà studios. Among scraps of documents relating to the film production, which are stored in the 2nd Corps archive, the financial engagement is deductible. Until the end of 1946 the 2nd Corps allocated 23m. lira to produce this film, (in this sum the costs of the pre-production of the latter film were included).¹⁸⁾ By the end of 1946 the Polish version was finished. The termination of the film coincided with the steady dissolution of 2nd Corps in the second half of 1946. In December 1946, the Film Unit was dissolved¹⁹⁾ and the rights to this film, presumably together with the latter film, were acquired by an Italian company, Sirena Film.²⁰⁾ The new producer aimed at making an Italian production out of it, with due tax reliefs and governmental measures for Italian films. He introduced some significant changes: he swapped the staff for Italians, changed the plot to reduce its political tone in favour of a melodramatic one and reduced the geopolitical context crucial for the Polish version. In effect, *La grande strada. L'odissea di Montecassino* al-

17) The story of the film production is recounted in a long interview with two main stars — Irena Anders and Albin Ossowski conducted over 60 years after the film production, see: Maria Dłużewska, *Trzy dni zdjęciowe z Ireną Anders i Albinem Ossowskim* (Warszawa: Trio, 2012), 67.

18) See the files of the Welfare Department and of the Press and Propaganda Department of the 2nd Corps of the Polish Army, stored at the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London.

19) Jewsiewicki, *Polscy filmowcy*, 162.

20) Archivio Centrale dello Stato (henceforth ACS), *La grande strada* file, 1950, 1.

most became a new film, with a different director. Waszynski was replaced by Vittorio Cottafavi, whilst the main characters that had been played by Polish actors were largely eliminated from the credits and the Italian secondary characters were highlighted instead.

Italian Version of the Film

The Italian version bears some significant changes. A short overview shows the limits of what was politically acceptable in post-war Italy. Interestingly, the distortions significantly affected the factual and documentary aspect of the film.²¹⁾

First of all, the geopolitical significance of the film was downplayed in the Italian version. Generally, the stress is moved from the military and geopolitical level to the melodramatic one, focusing on the two women falling in love with Adam. The Polish version continuously referred to Polish Lwów, either by the recurrent dialogue motif of coming back to “our Polish Lwów”, flashbacks to pre-war times, or intradiegetic performances of the famous song *Tylko we Lwowie! (Only in Lwów!)*. In the Italian version, the city that had been controversially annexed by the USSR is replaced by Lublin.²²⁾

All references to the Soviet annexation of eastern Poland after the 17th of September 1939 invasion, as well as to the fearful atmosphere under Soviet occupation, are absent. The Polish element of the plot is located under German occupation, which creates a significant incongruence. The main characters are arrested by Gestapo officers and sent to concentration camps. Therefore, their subsequent stay in the Soviet Union is not explained by the plot.

In the Polish version, the character of General Władysław Anders reappears several times, and sometimes even performs lines. The famous commander of the Polish Armed Forces, 2nd Corps was a controversial person from the Soviet point of view. After the Second World War, he didn't acknowledge the communist government installed in Poland and contributed to the creation of the Polish dissident movement in the West. In the Italian version, Anders is almost completely erased. Finally, the whole section of newsreels showing the liberation of northern Italy by Polish troops and the sequences of Italian people in Bologna celebrating their arrival was cut. The final scene, in which Adam alludes to a further military conflict and the fight for the sovereignty of Poland, has obviously been erased as well.

The hypothetical reason for these changes is political. The archival documents show the extent to which the distribution of the film was impeded. First, the producer failed at

21) Most probably the changes were introduced at the level of the preventive censorship but for the time being I have not discovered the evidence for this hypothesis. For a more detailed analysis of the production of this film see my article: ‘What are we fighting for? Michał Waszyński’s Italian-Polish films on the Second World War’, to be published in *Journal for Italian Cinema and Media Studies* in 2023.

22) It is worth noting, that Lublin was neutral in terms of war and post-war territorial changes (it was never annexed by the Soviet Union, remained occupied by Germany throughout the whole war until the Red Army liberated it in 1944). On the symbolic level however, the city was a seat of the puppet government installed in Poland by Moscow in 1944, prior to the liberation of Warsaw (the term *Lublin Government* referred to the communist regime installed in Poland until 1948). Thus, to a certain extent, this change could be taken as legitimizing the communist government in Poland.

getting the film recognised as an Italian production, which in the realm of the Italian film distribution meant virtually its elimination from the film circulation.²³⁾ As it results from the examination of the documents in Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Giulio Andreotti himself signed the decision to not recognize the film as Italian, thus impeding the film's wide circulation. Justifying his decision, Andreotti admitted that though the film production was "of Italian origin", it could not be recognized as being of "Italian nationality".²⁴⁾ A memorandum dated 12th November 1950 noticed the peculiar situation of the motion picture:

a film produced by an Italian company, integrally shot in Italy, recognized by the Government as a film of Italian origins, is declined any governmental measures. The film is not even included in obligatory programming, which means it is treated as a foreign production, imported to Italy. Whereas, on the other hand, in order to export the film, it should undergo procedures as an Italian product.²⁵⁾

Such a peculiar situation in fact resulted in the film's exclusion from wide distribution, both in Italy and abroad. Later in the text, discerning the film's "anti-communist attitude", the anonymous author of the memorandum wonders about "the incomprehensible treatment of the film, from the political point of view", which "today is of exceptional actuality".²⁶⁾ This film has never been widely distributed. It has remained "almost unknown, released imperceptibly, seen by very few".²⁷⁾ The only trace of film reception is dated by 1952, in an unfavourable review.²⁸⁾

The Unknown Man from San Marino

While still finishing the Italian edition of the film *The Great Way*, Waszynski started his new film, *The Unknown Man from San Marino*. The strategy to dedicate the whole feature film to the Polish case proved to be ineffective. This time the Polish element is reduced to a short subplot only, though it is a crucial part of the dramaturgy, introduced at the emotional climax. It consists of the episodes of the Polish 2nd Corps Entertainment Unit during their transfer, and a flashback from Warsaw during the uprising in 1944, showing the destruction of Poland and suggesting the suffering of Poles during the war. The latter epi-

23) I refer to the study of the modes of film production and distribution by Lorenzo Quaglietti, in which he described a nuanced and sophisticated method of controlling cinema, among which the administrative system played a crucial role, see Lorenzo Quaglietti, *Storia economico-politica del cinema italiano 1945-1980* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1980), 76-77.

24) ACS, *La grande strada* file.

25) Ibid., *Pro memoria*, 1950, 1. The text of the memorandum stored at Archivio Centrale dello Stato is incomplete, the file contains only a first page and misses the subsequent. In my research I haven't found another, complete version of the text. It is significant someone in the Direzione Generale dello Spettacolo tried to fetch and distribute this film after a few previous failures, unfortunately again unsuccessfully.

26) Ibid.

27) Roberto Chitti and Roberto Poppi, eds., *Dizionario del cinema italiano: I film: vol. 2: Dal 1945 al 1959* (Roma: Gremese Editore, 2000), 179.

28) Ibid.

sode is partly found footage. Produced between 1946 and autumn 1947, the film premiered in January 1948. The script of the film bore the stamp of the most important screenwriter of the time, Cesare Zavattini, and starred some of the most important Italian actors: Anna Magnani, Vittorio De Sica, Antonio Gandusio and Irma Gramatica, among others.

The film addresses the experience of the twilight period of the Second World War in Italy. The small Republic of San Marino is faced with a massive arrival of refugees during the liberation of northern Italy in autumn 1944. Among the mass of newcomers there is a mysterious person with amnesia, who cannot recall his name, nationality or even his mother tongue. Within the community he is simply called “forestiero”, the foreigner. During a medical examination, he is diagnosed with amnesia resulting from a head injury. He catches the attention of two local antagonists, a priest (Antonio Gandusio) and an atheist, vegetarian aristocrat (Vittorio De Sica). The former sees an incarnation of Catholic virtues such as simplicity, trust, peace of mind and love towards neighbours in him, whereas the latter is captivated by his stoicism, objection to the slaughter of farm animals and love of nature. Both compete for the favours of the newcomer, perceiving him as an exceptional personality. Some of the locals look at him with suspicion, but as the story unfolds, he wins the hearts of everyone as a kind of holy fool.

The foreigner is the first one to acknowledge problems of representatives of fringe social groups, overlooked by the local community, such as orphans, a prostitute, and a war refugee. He interacts with a squad of orphans by making jokes and dancing with them. This way he restores them the joy and easiness of childhood. When he encounters a prostitute (Anna Magnani), he helps her change her life. As a result, she puts an end to her previous lifestyle, starts helping orphans and restores her catholic faith. When the foreigner happens to be among the Polish 2nd Corps unit, he saves the army singer from committing suicide. A Polish singer (Irena Bogdańska), after receiving news of the death of her entire family (implicitly during the Warsaw Uprising, which took place precisely in the same period), finds consolation and endures despair only after the encounter with the foreigner.

Amidst this series of good deeds, his anxious reaction to the sign of the cross creates an enigma which will be revealed in the final episode. The announcement of the breaking of the Gothic Line reaches this community, signalling the end of the war in Italy. The entire community meets at the thanksgiving religious celebration. While attending to the pompous procession, with its religious ceremonial songs, banners and large cross, the amnesiac suddenly gets his memory back. In a flashback he sees the past, which is the found footage from Warsaw being destroyed by the Germans as a retaliation for the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. The religious Latin song of the procession is suddenly replaced by a Polish one about the tragic fate of the city of Warsaw. Upon the picturesque streets of San Marino, the images of a burning and demolished Warsaw are superimposed (see fig. 4). The large processional cross re-emerges from amongst the rubble of the city, but this time at the head of a massive Polish religious procession. The hero reappears in the uniform of an SS commander. He first orders the people to stop, but with the procession proceeding heedlessly, he orders his troops to fire on the innocent people, slaughtering them. At this point, the cross falls and hits his head (resolving the issue of his head injury and amnesia), ending the flashback and returning the plot to the San Marino procession.



Figure 4: Still from *Lo sconosciuto di San Marino*. A flashback episode, the face of the unknown man imposed on the images of Warsaw destroyed by Germans

Having regained his identity, the unknown man changes immediately from a meek and calm person to a brutal and anxious one. Simultaneously, Allied gendarmes arrive in San Marino in search of him. During his escape, he mauls a poor orphan, steals money from the prostitute and attempts to rape the wife of the aristocrat. Finally, he ends up robbing the church, where he meets the priest and the Polish singer. Confronted with their confusion, he admits he is a criminal without any hope for forgiveness. In despair he runs away and enters a minefield repeating “I am a murderer, there is no forgiveness for me”. After a few steps, he disappears in an explosion.

Film's Reception

The film's producer a decade after the release complained: “the commercial result of the film was disastrous”.²⁹⁾ One of the factors contributing to this failure was the harsh press campaign against the film. It was released in January 1948 and was not given any recognition for its value. Already at the level of the censorship revision, “the scarce artistic value”³⁰⁾ of the film was noticed. After its release, it was condemned by the press as “a shame

29) ACS, *La grande strada* file, a typescript by Vincenzo Genesi, 1958.

30) ACS, *La grande strada* file, MS, 1947.

for Italian cinematography”,³¹⁾ “a gross and useless insult to the cinema.”³²⁾ *Rivista del cinematografista*, advised the audience against the film.³³⁾ The communist press was in unique accord with the Azione Cattolica (Catholic Action) judgement of the film, and one referred to the other to strengthen its argument. From both perspectives the film was seen as deplorable “on the artistic level, as well as the moral.”³⁴⁾ Segretariato generale per la Moralità (General Secretary for Morality) mentioned “the clamorous dissent of the audience” and suggested further steps to appeal to the state censor.³⁵⁾ At the same time, some newspapers’ accusations resembled Stalinist rhetoric, pointing at the “erroneous clerical tendency” of the film,³⁶⁾ or noticing “a footprint of childish, clerical propaganda, deprived of any tact.”³⁷⁾ Others pointed at technical flaws: “the film is ugly and slow”, “a mediocre film”³⁸⁾, “tedious and illegible”,³⁹⁾ “pathetic and erroneous”⁴⁰⁾, “ridiculous foolery.”⁴¹⁾

The most severe criticism appeared in the communist newspaper *L'Unità*. Lorenzo Quaglietti, the newspaper’s main film critic at that time, wrote a whole column to “protest against so reprehensible an offence to Italian cinema, such as this *Unknown Man from San Marino*”,⁴²⁾ and to call on the “honourable censor” Giulio Andreotti, asking him whether he was aware of the “vulgarity present in this film”. “Will the protests of the audience at least reach his ears?” — asked Quaglietti, describing the indignation during screenings: “the audience leaving the cinema before the end, comments impossible to transcribe, whistles, shouting”. He concluded, “you have never seen a film so without tact, so inconclusive and stupid.”⁴³⁾

Several months later, *L'Unità* once again published a note on the film, this time with a series of distortions to its title (*Lo straniero di San Marino*), director (Cottafava), and the crucial element of its plot. The mass killing in Warsaw, a crucial element of the plot and its peculiar transnational feature, was mistaken. The reviewer saw in the sequence the German massacre of Italians in Fosse Ardeatine.⁴⁴⁾

“The Pole who directed the film is an ‘unknown’ as well, and as such he will remain”⁴⁵⁾ — an anonymous reviewer of the film severely judged Waszynski and the film he made. Similar disdain was expressed in other reviews, which addressed: “a certain Michael Waszynski, a Polish director, as distinguished as actually unknown”,⁴⁶⁾ or “a certain Jan Waszynski,

31) Ibid.

32) Ibid.

33) “Segnalazioni cinematografiche,” 1948, accessed January 4, 2022, <http://users.unimi.it/cattoliciecinema>.

34) From a letter of Gino Gavuzzo to mons. Albino Galetto, MS 1948, accessed January 4, 2022, <http://users.unimi.it/cattoliciecinema>.

35) “Notizie circa vari settori,” 1948, 7, accessed January 4, 2022, <http://users.unimi.it/cattoliciecinema>.

36) ACS.

37) Ibid.

38) Ibid.

39) Ibid.

40) Ibid.

41) Ibid.

42) Ibid.

43) Lorenzo Quaglietti, “Le prime cinematografiche,” *L'Unità*, January 22, 1948, 3.

44) ACS.

45) Ibid.

46) Ibid.

whom we ask apologies for not identifying him better”.⁴⁷⁾ These sharp phrases happened to be astonishingly accurate, not only in regard to the director, but to the film’s message regarding the fate of Poland and its acknowledgment in the post-war Italy as well. The perception of Poland and of Central Eastern Europe in Italy was compromised by the acceptance of the hegemony of Stalin and the Soviet Union over that region.

The Polish Case in Post War Italy

Both films are examples of failed attempts to expose the Polish perspective on the Second World War. Italian film culture proved to be quite resistant to a perspective opposing the paradigm of communism as a positive and an indispensable element of the victorious conclusion of the war. All Italian cinematic images of the Second World War, from *Rome Open City* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945) to *Italiani brava gente* (Giuseppe De Santis, 1964) contained a communist hero, whereas any negative image of a communist seems to be unthinkable. Post-war Italy was constructed on the consent of communism as a legitimate partner in constructing the new post-war order. Any voice questioning the positive role of Stalin, the Soviet Union or communism in efforts to restore the peace, threatened the stability of this consensus. Poland and Poles were living testimonies of injustice, violence and terror suffered from Stalin’s regime.

In this regard both films should be analysed against a broader political consensus upon which post-war Italy was reconstructed. The question as to what extent the difficulties the two Waszynski’s war films experienced were a result of political influence, both internal (Italian government of national unity) and external (Soviet and communist Poland’s diplomacy) remains open. It should by no means be considered the only factor of the films’ poor reception in Italy. Studies on the post-war Italian film industry list several elements determining Italian film market, such as: American influences, censorship, legislation, taxation, and state fundings conditioning the local film production, audience preferences influenced mainly by Hollywood and hardly controllable influx of American cinema.⁴⁸⁾ All those factors could negatively affect Waszynski’s Italian films’ reception in Italy in one way or another. However, a political element, namely a philosovietic consensus on which the interrelation between film culture, politics, and diplomacy in Italy was based, is underestimated and rarely taken into consideration⁴⁹⁾. This factor seems to be especially relevant in the case of the discussed films.

Studies on post-war Italian, Soviet and Polish diplomacy confirm the issue of the positive image of the Soviet Union, as well as diminishing the anti-Soviet circles, such as An-

47) Ibid.

48) Barbara Corsi, *Con qualche dollaro in meno: Storia economica del cinema italiano* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 2001).

49) Barbara Corsi alludes to this problem in the introduction to her book, noticing that Italian film industry studies, by means of two principal books: Libero Bizzari and Libero Scolari’s *L’industria cinematografica italiana* (Firenze: Parenti, 1958), and Lorenzo Quaglietti, *Storia economico politica del cinema italiano 1945–1980* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1980) are “conditioned by the communist cultural-ideological sphere, to which the authors belonged”, see: Corsi, *Con qualche dollaro in meno*, 11.

ders' army in Italy, were high on the agenda during the early post-war years. Already in the famous speech at the Brancaccio Theatre on 23rd July 1944, Alcide De Gasperi, at that time one of the leaders of resistance, later foreign affairs minister, prime minister, and long-standing leader of Christian Democracy (henceforth DC), took quite an unfavourable stand regarding the Polish case. In one sentence he acknowledged the Polish contribution to the liberation of Italy, but at the same time he expressed his unconditional confidence in Stalin "the great leader of peoples", who "will reconcile the interests of the safety of his borders and the freedom and unity of Poland". Such a statement meant nothing but a legitimisation for Stalinist hegemony over Poland and its shape. On subsequent occasions, the DC leader reiterated "loyal collaboration and friendship" with the Soviet Union.⁵⁰⁾ Pietro Quaroni, the Italian ambassador in Moscow, repeatedly expressed a need to reduce any anti-Soviet voices from the Italian press and to conduct a more philo-soviet campaign in the government dependent press. At the beginning of 1946 in his report, Quaroni explicitly named the 2nd Corps and General Anders, as desirable targets for "our partisan organisations", which could engage in battles "similar to the previous battles with the Germans".⁵¹⁾

Similarly, diplomatic relations between the communist government in Poland and the Italian government, prove that the issue of Anders and the 2nd Corps was amongst those of greatest importance.⁵²⁾ For the Polish communist government, any authority questioning its legality was a vital threat. In this sense, the communist Polish government achieved significant success in late 1946, when the Polish troops were finally removed from Italy, and Anders left without official honours.

Giulio Andreotti, DC politician responsible at the time for film censorship, had a similar attitude towards the Soviet Union: "politically I was born at the school of De Gasperi, who (...) was convinced the Soviets objectively were defenders of the peace".⁵³⁾ This conviction was contradictory to the experience of the tens of thousands of Poles living in Italy, and to the image presented in the first film. The fate of both films proves how difficult the situation of Poles in Italy in the aftermath of the Second World War was. Opposing the regime installed in their country, they didn't find necessary feedback in Italy.

50) Roberto Morozzo Della Rocca, *La politica estera italiana e l'Unione Sovietica (1944-1948)* (Roma: La Giardica, 1985), 88.

51) *Ibid.*, 158. On a more nuanced view on geopolitics in the early cold war Italy and its relation to two opposing superpowers see: Mario Del Pero, "The United States and 'Psychological Warfare' in Italy, 1948-1955," *The Journal of American History*, March 2001; Guido Formigoni, *Storia d'Italia nella Guerra fredda (1943-1978)*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2016).

52) Maria Pasztor and Dariusz Jarosz, *Nie tylko fiat: Z dziejów stosunków polsko-włoskich 1945-1989* (Warszawa: Scholar, 2018), 38.

53) Giulio Andreotti, *L'URSS vista da vicino* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1988), 8.

A Missing Element of Film History

The Great Way and *The Unknown Man from San Marino* to a certain extent were excluded from film history and have been unknown to the general audience.⁵⁴⁾ They remained stateless films, left outside of the national canons of cinema, both in Italy and in Poland. The Italian version remained unknown until 2015, when the only known original copy was discovered in the archive of the Museum of Science and Technology in Milan. In the 1950's the museum began free of charge screenings of non-commercial cinema for the public. It is unknown whether the film was part of those screenings, and under what circumstances it ended up in the archive.⁵⁵⁾ The Polish version of the film was not officially released in Poland until after the collapse of the communist regime, while *The Unknown Man from San Marino* to the best of my knowledge has remained unknown to the Polish audience and has only occasionally been presented to the Italian audience.

On a more general level, the case of Waszynski's films proves that the presumed politics of communist containment in the Italian cinema industry operated differently than film studies tend to describe it.⁵⁶⁾ Italian productions, by referring to the exceptional Polish experience with the USSR, could have been a good instrument in the cultural politics of containment of communist power. However, their potential was not only ignored but also their distribution was significantly reduced, thus critically limiting their impact on Italian society.

The value of those films is beyond a pure film studies connoisseurship. Their exclusion from film history shows one of the limits of what was acceptable in public discourse and in the way the memory of the Second World War was shaped. By means of found-footage the films were not only enriched, more dense, spectacular or eloquent, but aimed at becoming a part of the collective memory of the war, they served as a testimony, as proof. This point of view on the Second World War was not welcomed by the Italian film culture, though. To a certain extent it was a result of political calculation and diplomacy, which compromised Italian approach to the Soviet Union as well as to the Central Eastern Europe. Nowadays, during the revival of the Russian colonial expansionism resulting in the war in Ukraine, the critical revaluation and assessment of the role of cultural production in legitimizing Russian hegemony violently imposed on sovereign nations, seems to be of a particular importance and actuality.

54) Both films are absent in the main study on the Second World War in Italian cinema, although they virtually fitted the general premises of the study, as taking place in the territory of Italy during the war, see: Sara Pesce, *Memoria e immaginario: La seconda guerra mondiale nel cinema italiano* (Genova: Le Mani, 2008). Similarly, in the monumental study Calisto Tanzi, ed., *Storia del cinema italiano: 1945-1948* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2003), the scarce references to both films and to Waszynski, show how limited interest in this subject in Italian film studies has been. As for Polish film studies the situation is by no means better, apart from studies of the problem of war cinema, conducted mainly in 1970s. (beforementioned Jewsiewicki and Ozimek), only several articles appeared, among which Anna Miller-Klejsa's "Elegijna 'Wielka droga' Michała Waszyńskiego: tekst i kontekst," is worth mentioning in Anna Miller-Klejsa and Monika Woźniak, eds., *Polsko-włoskie kontakty filmowe: topika, koprodukcje, recepcja*, (Łódź: WUŁ, 2014), 17-39.

55) Simona Casonato, "Storia del ritrovamento della versione italiana," *Alias*, November 14, 2015, 4.

56) Daniela Gennari Treveri, *Post-war Italian Cinema: American Intervention, Vatican Interests* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 15. See also: Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943-91* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2000).

Funding

This work was funded by the National Science Centre in Poland, under the research project: 'Philosovietism in Post-Fascist Italian Film Culture', no. UMO-2019/32/C/HS2/00536.

Bibliography

- Andreotti, Giulio. *L'URSS vista da vicino* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1988).
- Bizzari, Libero and Libero Scolari. *L'industria cinematografica italiana* (Firenze: Parenti, 1958).
- Bliss Lane, Arthur. *I Saw Poland Betrayed* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1947).
- Casonato, Simona. "Storia del ritrovamento della versione italiana," *Alias*, November 14, 2015, 4.
- Cenckiewicz, Sławomir. *Długie ramię Moskwy: Wywiad wojskowy Polski Ludowej 1943–1991 (wprowadzenie do syntezy)* (Poznań: Zysk, 2011).
- Chitti, Roberto and Roberto Poppi, eds. *Dizionario del cinema italiano: I film: vol. 2: Dal 1945 al 1959* (Roma: Gremese Editore, 2000).
- Corsi, Barbara. *Con qualche dollaro in meno: Storia economica del cinema italiano* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 2001).
- Cosulich, Calisto, ed. *Storia del cinema italiano: 1945–1948* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2003).
- Davies, Norman. *God's Playground: A History of Poland: 1795 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).
- Del Pero, Mario. "The United States and 'Psychological Warfare' in Italy, 1948–1955," *The Journal of American History*, March, 2001.
- Dłużewska, Maria. *Trzy dni zdjęciowe z Ireną Anders i Albinem Ossowskim* (Warszawa: Trio, 2012).
- Formigoni, Guido. *Storia d'Italia nella Guerra fredda (1943–1978)* (Bologna: Mulino, 2016).
- Gennari Treveri, Daniela. *Post-war Italian Cinema: American Intervention, Vatican Interests* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
- Golemo, Karolina. *Obraz Polski i Polaków we Włoszech: poglądy, oceny, opinie* (Kraków: WUJ, 2010).
- Guidi, Giulio. *Perché i polacchi non ritornano in patria?* (Roma: Maggi Spinelli, 1946).
- Gundle, Stephen. *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943–91* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).
- Jewsiewicki, Wiesław. *Polscy filmowcy na frontach drugiej wojny światowej* (Warszawa: WAiF, 1972).
- Mackiewicz, Józef. *Zbrodnia Katyńska w świetle dokumentów* (London: Gryf, 1948).
- Miller-Klejsa, Anna. "Elegijna 'Wielka droga' Michała Waszyńskiego: tekst i kontekst," in *Polsko-włoskie kontakty filmowe: topika, koprodukcje, recepcja*, eds. Anna Miller-Klejsa and Monika Woźniak (Łódź: WUŁ, 2014), 17–39.
- Morozzo Della Rocca, Roberto. *La politica estera italiana e L'Unione Sovietica (1944–1948)* (Roma: La Goliardica, 1985).
- Ozimek, Stanisław. *Film polski w wojennej potrzebie* (Warszawa: PIW, 1974).
- Pastuszka, Stanisław. *Życie kulturalne w Polskich Siłach Zbrojnych na zachodzie w czasie II Wojny Światowej* (Kielce and Warszawa: MHPRL, 2009).
- Pasztor, Maria and Dariusz Jarosz. *Nie tylko fiat: Z dziejów stosunków polsko-włoskich 1945–1989* (Warszawa: Scholar, 2018).
- Pesce, Sara. *Memoria e immaginario: La seconda Guerra mondiale nel cinema italiano* (Genova: Le Mani, 2008).

- Pitassio, Francesco. *Neorealist Film Culture* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019).
- Quaglietti, Lorenzo. "Le prime cinematografiche," *L'Unità*, January 22, 1948, 3.
- Quaglietti, Lorenzo. *Storia economico-politica del cinema italiano 1945–1980* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1980).
- Snyder, Timothy. *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2015).
- Snyder, Timothy. "Germans have been involved in the war, chiefly on the wrong side," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 27, 2022, accessed July 14, 2022, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/juergen-habermas-and-ukraine-germans-have-been-involved-in-the-war-18131718-p5.html>.
- Wiskemann, Elisabeth. "The Poles in Italy," *Spectator*, February 1, 1946, 6.
- Żak, Józef. *Nie walczyli dla siebie: Powojenna odyseja 2. Korpusu Polskiego* (Warszawa: Rytm, 2014).

Filmography

- The Great Way* (Wielka droga, La grande strada, L'odissea di Montecassino; Michał Waszyński, 1946/1949)
- The Unknown Man from San Marino* (Lo sconosciuto di San Marino; Michał Waszyński, 1948)

Biography

Karol Józwiak is Assistant Professor in the Culture Studies Department of the University of Łódź. His main research areas address different issues of European transnational functioning of art and cinema in relation to the questions of memory, writing history, identity and politics in the twentieth century. Currently, he supervises the research project entitled 'Sovietophilia in Post-Fascist Italian Film Culture', funded by the Polish National Research Center, addressing the cinematic relations between Italy and Eastern-European countries of the Soviet bloc.

Zachariah Anderson (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee)

Virtual Looking: Home Movies as Historical Evidence in *The Future Is Behind You* (Abigail Child, 2004)

Abstract: Twenty-first century scholars debate the epistemological and historiographic questions that emerge when once-private home movies are appropriated to support public-facing histories. Building on the work of Jaimie Baron, Catherine Russell, Jeffrey Skoller, and others, I approach archival filmmaking practices — in which filmmakers appropriate extant images for (re)use in alternative audiovisual contexts — as sites that make these questions and concerns analyzable. I turn to the archival film *The Future Is Behind You* (Abigail Child, 2004) as a space for exploring reflexive modes of looking at and appropriating home movies as historical evidence. Building on Skoller’s analysis of the relationship between experimental filmmaking practices, history, and Gilles Deleuze’s notion of “virtuality,” I analyze director Abigail Child’s historiographic methods as a process I call virtual looking at home movies. Virtual looking is an engaged, critical process through which an historian, filmmaker, and/or spectator disrupts home movies’ surface-level content while exploring historical memories and experiences via imagined private perspectives. In *The Future Is Behind You*, Child manipulates and recontextualizes 16mm home movies in relation to one family member’s imagined perspective and memories, which are described via superimposed digital text. I interpret Child’s archival filmmaking processes of disruption and imagination as an invitation for further exploring reflexive strategies when appropriating and engaging with home movies in a variety of public historiographic settings.

Keywords

archive, history, archival filmmaking, home movies, historical evidence

Introduction

In her work on “archiveology,” Catherine Russell evaluates twenty-first century filmmaking practices that are “reflexively engaging with historical documents.”¹⁾ Russell argues that, as these filmmakers critically reuse archival images in new contexts, “the image bank in its fundamental contingency and instability becomes a means by which history can speak back to the present.”²⁾ Russell aligns these filmmakers’ attempts to disrupt the present with Walter Benjamin’s insistence on everyday objects’ power — a power activated through collection and montage — to critique and unsettle the present. I begin with an overview of Russell’s work because it deeply informs my thinking about the relationship between film, history, archival images, and evidence. Still, Russell’s Benjaminian emphasis on the disruptive tensions between past and present often overlooks other productive contingencies and contradictions that might be explored through reflexive engagements with archival images as historical evidence. Specifically, Russell’s study largely omits strategies for filmmakers, historians, and spectators to confront the contingencies of one image category — the home movie — and the historiographic concerns that emerge when looking at and/or recirculating these once-private images for public histories and audiences.

To analyze a model for reflexively engaging with home movies’ contingencies and the tensions between public and private that accompany their reuse(s) as historical evidence, I turn to Abigail Child’s *The Future Is Behind You* (2004).³⁾ In this approximately twenty-minute film, Child recontextualizes 16mm home movies shot by an anonymous family in 1930s Europe. Following techniques explored in films like *Daughter Rite* (Michelle Citron, 1978) and *Sink or Swim* (Su Friedrich, 1990), Child employs visible editing strategies to disrupt home movies’ surface-level content of a happy family and to interrogate what she describes as the images’ “subtext.”⁴⁾ Child’s intrusive editing involves various tactics of “fragmentation,” “discontinuity,” and “interruption” — three traits François Bovier identifies among “the main tropes of Child’s films.”⁵⁾ As in many films by Harun Farocki, including *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (*Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges*; 1988) and *Respite* (*Aufschub*; 2007), Child also superimposes digital text that raises reflexive questions about the nature of images, memory, and history. For example, Child’s digital text poses the following questions: “What is omitted?” “Can one only be intrigued by what one does not fully grasp?” “Are memories only reliable when they serve as explanation?”

In addition to confronting viewers with reflexive questions about the relationships between home movies, knowledge, memory, etc., Child’s digital text also narrates the story

-
- 1) Catherine Russell, *Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and Archival Filmmaking Practices* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 27.
 - 2) Russell, *Archiveology*, 103.
 - 3) *The Future Is Behind You* is the second installment in Child’s series titled *The Suburban Trilogy*, but I will only analyze this film on its own terms.
 - 4) Abigail Child, “Abigail Child with François Bovier and Ricardo da Silva: Conversation with a ‘Maximalist’ Filmmaker,” in *Is This What You Were Born For? Strategies of Appropriation and Audio-Visual Collage in the Films of Abigail Child*, ed. François Bovier (Geneva: MétisPresses, 2011), 128.
 - 5) François Bovier, “Strategies of Appropriation in *Is This What You Were Born For?*,” in *Is This What You Were Born For?*, ed. François Bovier, 9.

of the family depicted in the home movies. This combination of black-and-white, analog home movies and digital text narrating a family's story recalls many of Péter Forgács' well-known films. Yet, unlike in Forgács' works such as *Free Fall* (1996) or *The Maelstrom: A Family Chronicle* (1997) — films that use digital text to narrate the pre-war experiences of the Pető and Peereboom families, respectively — Child superimposes invented names and a fictional story. Child recontextualizes a real family's home movies within an imagined narrative about a young girl and her older sister as they grow up in Bavaria during the rise of Nazism. This digital, fictional narrative is often told from the first-person perspective of the family's youngest daughter. Rather than offering a factual account of home movies' subjects, Child positions present-day viewers' responses to these appropriated images in relation to one family member's imagined memories and emotions.

The Future Is Behind You's combined processes of disruption, reflexivity, and imagination offer a practical site for exploring what I call "virtual looking" at home movie images. My conceptualization of virtual looking is informed by Courtney R. Baker's insistence on the "look" as an active gesture that produces meaningful insights about images' subjects.⁶⁾ Baker's emphasis on an active, searching look counters passive understandings of the one-way "gaze" in much of visual studies.⁷⁾ My use of the term "virtual" is inspired by Jeffrey Skoller's analysis of the relationship between experimental filmmaking practices, history, and Gilles Deleuze's notion of "virtuality."⁸⁾ As Skoller argues, "To consider the virtual as part of the process of making history is to embrace what is usually understood as the antithesis of historicism: invention."⁹⁾ This embrace of invention as a critical historiographic tool is especially apparent in Child's re-evaluation of home movies through a fictional narrative and imagined perspective. I also privilege the term virtual due to its affiliation with simulation and the digital. Child's juxtaposition of analog actuality footage with digitally-imposed, imagined narration — which is told from a family member's simulated perspective — is key to what I describe as the film's process of virtual looking at home movies as historical evidence.

Digital technologies and the concept of the virtual — like the act of invention more broadly — often seem incompatible with traditional understandings of history and truth. However, Child's film models some useful ways digital tools might be employed to challenge initial readings of home movie images and to speculate about missing perspectives and responses. This interest in imaginatively seeking otherwise absent experiences and meanings aligns virtual looking with many characteristics Skoller identifies in his analysis of the relationship between experimental filmmaking and historiographic practices. Skoller argues that while many experimental films

use traditional visual elements and techniques of the historical film such as documents, artifacts, testimonies, and re-creations to represent past moments in their

6) Courtney R. Baker, *Humane Insight: Looking at Images of African American Suffering and Death* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

7) Baker, *Humane Insight*, 2.

8) Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

9) Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards*, xli.

most visible and material forms, they also work to make us aware of the nonvisible elements that also surround their images.¹⁰⁾

Skoller is primarily interested in this broader relationship between experimental cinema and historical representation, but his emphasis on filmmaking's exploration of images' "nonvisible elements" paves the way for studying critical processes of virtual looking at home movies as historical evidence. Virtual looking, then, is an engaged, critical process through which an historian, filmmaker, and/or spectator actively seeks insights about subjects' otherwise invisible historical experiences via reflexive methods and imagined perspectives, often with the aid of digital technologies.

Fiction as a Welcome Strategy

The Future Is Behind You's collision of actuality images, intrusive editing, familiar documentary tactics, and an imagined narrative is likely responsible for Child labeling her film "a documentary with fiction intruding."¹¹⁾ This framing of the film is valuable because it positions Child's tactics within a rich history of docu-fiction experiments. That said, in the context of this article's study of virtual looking, the word "intruding" risks implying that this film's fictional tactics are out of place in the process of seeking meaningful historical insights. While it might seem presumptuous to deviate from a filmmaker's own framing of a film, for the purposes of evaluating *The Future Is Behind You* as a model for virtual looking, I approach the film as a documentary that productively employs fictionalized perspectives to critically engage with home movies. Child does not employ traditional research methods one might find in films based on interviews with home movies' living family members or the cross-referencing of related sources such as diaries, photographs, letters, etc., as in much of Forgács' work. Still, *The Future Is Behind You's* process of imagination is read here as a welcome, rather than intruding, historiographic strategy for seeking insights about past experiences of home movies' subjects. This embrace of fiction and/or narrative as a strategic step in history's construction echoes Hayden White's claims about the link between history and imagination. White famously critiques the relationship between historical narratives and fiction, but he ultimately argues for the value and necessity of certain processes of imagination. As White explains, "How else can any past, which by definition comprises events, processes, structures, and so forth, considered to be no longer perceivable, be represented in either consciousness or discourse except in an 'imaginary' way?"¹²⁾

To analyze *The Future Is Behind You's* imaginative methods as a model for virtual looking at home movies as historical evidence, I approach Child as an historian. Decades ago,

10) Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards*, xv.

11) Cited in William C. Wees, "'How It Was [emphasis original] Then': Home Movies as History in Péter Forgács' *Meanwhile Somewhere...*," *Jump Cut*, no. 52, (2010), accessed June 20, 2022, <https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc52.2010/wees-forgacs/index.html>.

12) Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 57.

it was more controversial to study a filmmaker as an historian. Since the 1990s, though, many film scholars have leaned on the work of White, Michel Foucault, and others associated with the “linguistic turn” in historiography to persuasively argue that filmmaking practices offer productive modes of constructing history on-screen.¹³⁾ Much of the writing about films-as-history focuses on the Hollywood historical film, but Skoller productively shifts attention to historiographic tools produced and employed by experimental filmmakers. In his own analysis of Child’s *B/side* (1996), for example, Skoller approaches Child’s practices as historiographic methods and the film as “a work of history.”¹⁴⁾ Despite Skoller’s intervention in this discourse about experimental films as history, my emphasis on filmmaker-as-historian still runs counter to how an artist like Child is most often discussed. For example, Tom Gunning situates Child’s filmography and her visible editing strategies within the “poetic” mode of cinema theorized and practiced by Maya Deren.¹⁵⁾ Gunning argues that — despite Child’s deep interest in history — she is foremost a “maker, and in that sense an experimenter as well as a poet,” rather than an historian.¹⁶⁾ Gunning’s analyses of Child’s films as poetry are invaluable to my understanding of her filmmaking practices. To contend with *The Future Is Behind You* as a model for virtual looking, though, I shift the angle from which I analyze Child’s filmmaking practices; I approach Child as an historian to primarily interpret her cinematic devices of repetition, interruption, superimposition, etc., as historiographic methods.

Many experimental and commercial filmmakers reuse home movies to construct new historical arguments. One subcategory — the archival film — offers an especially practical site for exploring how filmmaker-historians might appropriate once-private images from the past in new public-facing contexts — and how spectators might engage with these images in new historiographic texts. In an archival film like *The Future Is Behind You*, the filmmaker primarily (re)uses extant images in a new text, rather than recording new footage. My analyses of archival filmmaking practices are informed by foundational discourses about “found footage” and “compilation” films by scholars such as William C. Wees and Jay Leyda.¹⁷⁾ Still, I employ the term archival film, rather than other commonly used classifications, to emphasize how a film like *The Future Is Behind You* constructs an historiographic text through the study and reactivation of archival images. Family archives and home movies often blur lines between official and unofficial, so the appropriation of home movies as historical evidence also complicates the traditional distinction between “archival” materials (appropriated from official public archives) and “found” materials (appro-

13) See, for example, Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Robert A. Rosenstone, *History on Film/Film on History* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Eleftheria Thanouli, *History and Film: A Tale of Two Disciplines* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019).

14) Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards*, 94.

15) Tom Gunning, “Poetry in Motion,” in Abigail Child, *This is Called Moving: A Critical Poetics of Film* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2005), xiv.

16) Gunning, “Poetry in Motion,” xv.

17) Jay Leyda, *Films Beget Films: A Study of the Compilation Film* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964); William C. Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York City: Anthology Film Archives, 1993).

appropriated from unofficial and/or private settings).¹⁸⁾ Furthermore, although the term “appropriation” carries negative connotations, I use this word here to describe any act of selecting, looking at, and recirculating home movies — even one’s own home movies — as historical evidence in new contexts. I choose the term appropriation to emphasize how looking at home movies as historical evidence involves the use — or what Jaimie Baron calls a “misuse” — of once-private images for unintended purposes.¹⁹⁾ Of course, looking at nearly any materials as historical evidence requires engaging with those materials in ways their original creators likely never intended. Appropriating home movies as historical documents, though, also requires specifically working against the grain of the images’ perceived private function. As Roger Odin argues,

In the family domain, a home movie does not function as documentation. The family film is, in fact, a *counter-document* [emphasis in original]. The collective interactions at the moment of their shooting or viewing or in the individual interior discourses aroused are more important than the images. To read a home movie as a document is to “use” [emphasis in original] it for something that is not its own function.²⁰⁾

The appropriation of home movies as historical evidence in archival films makes these tensions between counter-document and document, as well as private and public, apparent and analyzable.

The Contingent Meanings of Home Movies

Patricia R. Zimmermann traces an historiographic turn toward the study of home movies in relation to 1960s social history trends often summarized as “history from below.”²¹⁾ As Zimmermann explains, these trends evolved and expanded into diverse interdisciplinary methods that aim “to represent a wider and more diverse range of historical experience” and to historicize “everyday life.”²²⁾ As Richard Maltby suggests, in the field of film studies, many “new cinema history” methods and associated interests in previously understudied sources similarly grew out of broader historiographic trends toward the everyday and “the socio-cultural history of experience.”²³⁾ Since the 1990s, many film historians have specif-

18) For a thoughtful analysis that employs this distinction between “archival” and “found,” see Michael Zyrd, “Found Footage as Discursive Metahistory: Craig Baldwin’s *Tribulation 99*,” *The Moving Image* 3, no. 2 (2003), 40–61.

19) Jaimie Baron, *Reuse, Misuse, Abuse: The Ethics of Audiovisual Appropriation in the Digital Era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2021), 8.

20) Roger Odin, “Reflections on the Family Home Movie as Document: A Semio-Pragmatic Approach,” in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, eds. Karen I. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmermann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 261.

21) Patricia R. Zimmermann, “Introduction: The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings,” in *Mining the Home Movie*, eds. Ishizuka and Zimmermann, 3.

22) Zimmermann, “Introduction,” 10.

23) Richard Maltby, “New Cinema Histories,” in *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, eds. Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst, and Philippe Meers (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 32.

ically focused their historical studies on amateur films, including home movies, as catalysts for challenging prior assumptions about what constitutes film history.²⁴⁾ These historiographic trends and research methods demonstrate that home movies offer crucial — albeit fragmentary and mediated — traces of people, places, and events that institutional archives, Hollywood, and film historians alike have traditionally ignored or misrepresented.

Other scholars shift away from analyzing home movies as primary sources for their own historical research. Instead, as I aim to achieve in this article, these scholars primarily focus on how filmmakers and spectators engage with archival images, including home movies, in new audiovisual historiographic contexts.²⁵⁾ In addition to analyzing appropriated home movie images' content, these scholars are often interested in the perceived authenticity of — and affective reactions to — home movies' formal characteristics: uneven sound recordings, unbalanced compositions, over- or under-exposure, a lack of post-production, etc. As Efrén Cuevas argues, home movies' "noncommercial nature and their unprofessional formal features give them a surplus of authenticity that underscores their quality as a trace of the past."²⁶⁾ When home movies are appropriated, these amateur production traits might produce a sense that a spectator is witnessing a candid, unfiltered view of family life. Similarly, when encountered in new contexts, these images' typical signs of outmoded technologies tend to produce an affective version of what Baron calls the "archive effect" — or a spectator's belief that specific images "come from another time and served another function."²⁷⁾ Finally, these scholars propose that considering a tension between public and private becomes crucial to analyses of appropriating home movies. As Baron argues, "even if they contain nothing that seems specifically meant to be kept hidden, home movies may still give us a sense of being in proximity to an individual's unguarded and therefore private experience."²⁸⁾ This discourse suggests that home movies' evidentiary force is largely rooted in a viewer's belief that the images were never intended to be seen by outsiders today.

These aspects of home movies — their formal qualities, technologies of production, and perceived sites of reception — contribute to a sense that one is encountering an intimate glimpse of private life as it was really lived. Yet family archives and their home movies carry conventions, exclusions, and ideological underpinnings. Like all archives and their sources more broadly, home movies do not provide direct access to a subject's experiences. As Crystal Mun-Hye Baik summarizes, "the home film is not a raw or objective source, but is always already mediated by a host of factors, including the filmmaker's sub-

24) For example, many scholars present complex processes for engaging with amateur films, including home movies, at the annual Orphan Film Symposium.

25) See, for example, Efrén Cuevas, *Filming History From Below: Microhistorical Documentaries* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2022); Broderick Fox, "Home Movies and Historiography: Amateur Film's Re-Vision of Japanese American Internment," *Spectator* 26, no. 2 (2006), 9–21; Bill Nichols, Michael Renov, and Whitney Davis, eds., *Cinema's Alchemist: The Films of Péter Forgács* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

26) Cuevas, *Filming History From Below*, 51.

27) Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 11.

28) Baron, *Reuse, Misuse, Abuse*, 27.

jective positioning, archival practices, and curatorial directives that frame what viewers see.”²⁹) While home movies tend to be structured by their makers’ attempts to construct a controlled representation of an ideal family, attempts to harness home movies’ recordings into a stable vision of the family often clash with their unpredictable meanings and their amateurish productions’ excesses.

When I view my own family’s home movies, the fragmentary images often trigger memories and produce knowledge about the past in unexpected ways. For example, when watching footage of a Christmas morning’s gift unwrapping, my look wanders beyond the surface-level content of my twin brother and I opening gifts to a small, turtle-shaped stool in the corner of my grandparents’ living room. Over the years, as my grandparents moved to different houses, this stool remained a constant presence; my brother and I often played on or around this small piece of furniture. Beyond a visual record of a specific era’s furniture styles, this excessive information in the background of the image likely offers little of interest to outsiders. When I notice this stool, though, it points to experiences of both brotherly fun and fighting. Similarly, humor and many emotions arise when I witness the camera operator’s mistakes. For example, as I hear cheers at one of my childhood baseball games, the home movie images present grass beneath the camera operator’s feet. As soon as the soundtrack reveals that I have hit the baseball, the camera quickly tilts to catch the remainder of the action. This footage of grass does not read as a “mistake” to me; I immediately recognize that my grandfather is behind the camera, and I recall that his interest in watching my sports events with his own eyes, rather than through a viewfinder, frequently led to lengthy recordings of the ground beneath his feet. The jerky images of the ground on the sidelines of a baseball game — like the out-of-focus or seemingly incoherent shots throughout many families’ home movies — are often opaque to those without access to additional contextual information, but they are crucial to my understanding of my family’s past.

Because home movies’ contingent meanings heavily depend on their viewers’ relationship to the depicted subjects and events, I echo Baron’s insistence that the “home” in home movies is more than a reference to the location where many of the images were recorded. The home must also be understood as “a previous, private context in which the recorded documents were (or are imagined to have been) intended to be shown.”³⁰) When filmmakers reuse home movies to support historical arguments in new contexts, they raise concerns about the appropriation and public circulation of images that are perceived as belonging to a past, private site of reception. Unfortunately, when many filmmakers appropriate home movies — which spectators assume were intended for private exhibition — to support public claims about the past, they often fail to address potentially productive tensions, excesses, and contradictions. In many cases, home movie images’ signs of amateurish production are exploited as shorthand for authenticity while these fragmentary, incomplete, and contingent traces are ultimately conformed to support neat representations of the past. This trend is common in many commercial biographical documen-

29) Crystal Mun-hye Baik, “‘The Right Kind of Family’: Memories to Light and the Home Movie as Racialized Technology,” in *Screening Race in Nontheatrical Film*, eds. Allyson Nadia Field and Marsha Gordon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 367.

30) Baron, *The Archive Effect*, 91.

taries. For example, *Amy* (Asif Kapadia, 2015) and *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* (Morgan Neville, 2018) appropriate home movie footage of their subjects: singer Amy Winehouse and television host Fred Rogers, respectively. These biographical documentaries center on very different celebrities, but the filmmakers similarly present appropriated home movies as affective glimpses of everyday life without confronting the contingent meanings these images might have produced when viewed by their original private audiences.

To illustrate further: Morgan Neville recontextualizes home movie footage to support *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*'s historical narrative about the link between Fred Rogers' good-natured on-screen persona and off-screen life. For example, Neville presents home movie images of Rogers happily playing with his son on a beach while a reporter sums up the film's historical argument: this television star "has managed to escape the calloused, the embittered, the negative aspects of being a public performer. He is doing the one thing in the world that he wishes to do, and he is, by any definition, a happy man." Although Neville's film hints at darker aspects of Rogers' life, the home movies lend an affective authenticity to the documentary's primary vision of this celebrity as a positive force both on television and in "real" life. This coherent image of family life — as in similar appropriations of home movies in other commercial biographical documentaries — often has little to do with the fragmentary, messy, and unpredictable memories or historical knowledge these images produce for their original audiences. Alternatively, through *The Future Is Behind You*'s reflexive archival filmmaking practices, we can investigate processes of looking at home movies in more critical, reflexive ways that foreground — rather than smooth out — their contradictions, incompleteness, excesses, and tensions between private and public. To begin considering these processes, I now analyze Child's filmmaking practices as a model for virtual looking, which disrupts home movies' surface-level implications and speculates about the perspectives of home movies' original audiences.

Discontinuity and Disruption

In *The Future Is Behind You*'s opening scenes, appropriated home movie images of smiling sisters are not positioned as transparent or authentic glimpses into a complete, knowable family history. Instead, Child's disruptive editing tactics emphasize the home movies' mediation and the photographed girls' performativity. In the first appropriated shot, we witness a smiling young girl, her older sister, and an adult male in an outdoor setting. As in many home movies, a family member — in this case, the youngest sister — stares directly into the lens; she then dances for the camera. The direct address implies intimacy between viewer and subject, but Child interrupts this shot with a few nearly illegible frames before returning to the original shot. This jarring back-and-forth editing between the film's first two shots continues as the sisters walk toward the camera. These editing techniques of interruption and repetition illustrate what A.L. Rees identifies as experimental cinema's frequent "doubt or mistrust of apparent continuity."³¹ By approaching Child as an historian,

31) A. L. Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video: From the Canonical Avant-Garde to Contemporary British Practice* (London: BFI Publishing, 1999), 6.

we can also read these editing strategies as a challenge to traditional historiography's structures of continuity, causality, teleology, etc. Child's disruptive montage, then, aligns with methods Robert Rosenstone identifies as traits of postmodern histories. According to Rosenstone, postmodern historiographic methods often

foreground their own construction; tell the past self-reflexively and from a multiplicity of viewpoints; forsake normal story development, or problematize the stories they recount; utilize humor, parody, and absurdist as modes of presenting the past; refuse to insist on a coherent or single meaning of events; indulge in fragmentary or poetic knowledge; and never forget that the present moment is the site of all past representation.³²⁾

Many of these reflexive challenges to filmic and historical continuity are on display in *The Future Is Behind You*'s first edits, which disrupt home movie images, rather than presenting them as affective illustrations to support a definitive vision of a coherent past.

The invented narration — told via superimposed digital text — also draws viewers' attention to the home movies' excesses, contingent meanings, and varied perspectives, rather than conforming the images to an enclosed, authoritative narrative. One of the film's first digital texts states: "I was seven." Next, a shot of the older sister is accompanied by text that explains: "Ellie was ten." Upon viewing this scene, I recognize my own public distance from this invented perspective of an insider looking back at her home movies. Yet, as a viewer outside the family, I am simultaneously invited to engage with these images through this fictional insider perspective. This daughter's superimposed perspective and memories often reproduce the experience of discussing images while watching a home movie with other members of the family. As Odin reminds us, "Unlike fictional film screenings, interaction infuses the projection of a family film."³³⁾ Through Child's textual intervention, I am encouraged to re-calibrate how I look at these home movies via a family member's imagined interactions with the images. As *The Future Is Behind You* unfolds, I increasingly recognize that the youngest sister's imagined perspective is pointing to the kinds of experiences, memories, and interactions that are often neglected by an outsider's common concentration on the surface-level content of strangers' home movies.

For example, as the sisters pick flowers in a field, Child rescales the home movie footage so that its images constitute only a small square space in the upper-left corner of the frame. In the unbalanced negative space surrounding the rescaled images, digital text reads: "On particularly fine days we went out into the fields." Child slows an image of the older sister holding and smelling flowers before freezing on a moment when this girl looks quite somber or even worried. Text states: "Mama would walk ahead of us taking springy steps that were characteristic (I realize only now) of the German Wandervogel hiking movement, which must have had a lasting influence on her from her youth." As text about the hiking movement appears, viewers witness a slowed home movie image of the sisters and others walking down a hill. The surface-level content of these images does not focus

32) Rosenstone, *History on Film/Film on History*, 22.

33) Odin, "Reflections on the Family Home Movie as Document," 259.

on a mother walking but rather the sisters' movements. Yet, as *The Future Is Behind You* demonstrates, home movie images of oneself walking in a field might spark unexpected memories of a mother's walking habits and the events that influenced those habits. This process of virtual looking foregrounds absences and explores how unanticipated moments in a home movie might direct an original audience member's thoughts and memories toward off-screen experiences.

Notably, the narrator's invented reactions to her home movies' absences are positioned as retroactive. The text states that this daughter only later realized that her mother's walking style was tied to time spent in an interwar-period German youth group, which would be banned during the years of fascist control. Child's techniques point out to me as a public audience member that these home movie images are always experienced historically — and do not carry static meanings — even for those we perceive as belonging to their original private audiences. This process of virtual looking echoes Baik's insistence that a home movie “is not a repository of fixed memory, but actively recomposes layered memories as multiple audiences, situated in different times and cultural locales, struggle to make meaning of competing narratives.”³⁴⁾ By imagining the memories and thoughts that might come to mind for this daughter as she retroactively watches her family's home movies, Child's digital text inspires me to think critically about the contingent, in-flux historical knowledge that might be produced through these images by various onlookers in the future.

A Wider Historical View

Throughout *The Future Is Behind You*, Child investigates connections between personal memory and broader historical events occurring outside the frame. Cuevas identifies related approaches in films he associates with the “microhistorical documentary,” including many films by Forgács. Cuevas aligns these films, which tend to appropriate materials from family archives, including home movies, with microhistory's aim “to explore the past and to place the ‘micro’ analysis in relation to relevant macrohistorical contexts, thereby making these documentaries historiographically representative in their own right.”³⁵⁾ Although the imagination at play in Child's film separates its methods from many established practices of microhistorical research, I am interested in how *The Future Is Behind You* relates its micro-scale analysis of home movies and one family member's virtual memories to a broader historical context.

For example, Child presents home movie footage of girls performing at an outdoor event. This performance involves the girls lifting and lowering their arms in unison. The camera is positioned at an obstructed angle and the girls' movements often occur in an underexposed, shadowed portion of the frame. These visual cues hint that I am viewing an amateur-produced recording. Rather than exploiting these familiar production elements as mere signs of authenticity, Child disrupts the images and produces a reflective space for new modes of looking. Through multiple jump cuts, the duration of this shot is jarringly

34) Baik, “‘The Right Kind of Family,’” 363.

35) Cuevas, *Filming History From Below*, 31.

fragmented. This intrusive editing points to the fragmentary, unstable forms that memories — like home movies themselves — often take. Superimposed text then states: “At school, Ellie refuses to salute. She is sent home.” From this imagined perspective, shots of childhood performance — including the rehearsed lifting of hands into the air — spark a memory that links the family’s immediate experiences to broader interwar-period events. In *The Future Is Behind You*, this girl’s refusal to perform a fascist gesture is an imagined memory. Yet this imaginative process invites complex thinking about the kinds of memories a real onlooker rooted in this class position, cultural background, gender, etc., might encounter if viewing their own home movies.

In the next moments of the home movies’ childhood performance, the girls swing tree branches in the air through choreographed motions. Via disruptive montage, including freeze frames, digitally adjusted speeds, and repetition, Child draws attention to moments when the girls are dancing in a circle with their branches held high. Over this digitally manipulated, dizzying image of girls frantically spinning in circles, the seemingly pleasant performance takes on a new, unsettling tone. As the girls rapidly spin, text explains: “Palm Sunday: Windows of homes are smashed and Jews dragged through the streets.” This process of virtual looking inspires me to consider how personal memories, broader historical events, and home movies intertwine in contradictory and unpredictable ways. Here, images of (non-palm) branches raised during an otherwise cheerful performance trigger a speculative memory that Child appears to connect to the real 1934 violence on Palm Sunday in the city of Gunzenhausen.

Later, Child returns to images of the older sister and her peers performing. As they move their bodies in unison, superimposed text reads: “I recall little other than processions, marches, and parades.”³⁶⁾ The girls’ motions again take on alternative historical meanings in relation to inter-war period militarism. Child highlights this connection by cutting to home movie images of a parade, including soldiers marching toward the lens. Presumably, these two historical events — the girls’ summertime performance and the family’s trip to a parade — are not directly connected in the original home movies’ timeline. Here, though, Child’s re-sequencing and process of virtual looking suggest that an encounter with a childhood performance might produce memories of broader historical experiences, including encounters with increasingly prominent public displays of militaristic power.

Emotions, Gestures, Identities

Following images of parade marchers, footage of the girls’ performance is accompanied by digital text that reads: “Ellie had a new friend.” Child freezes the image as all but two girls exit the frame. Following this unbalanced still image of two happy friends, Child presents

36) Due to a lack of space, I omit discussion of Child’s use of sound, including John Zorn’s experimental music, which is also important to the ways this film explores experiences and memories. For example, sounds of military-style snare drums and Zorn’s music add layers to this scene’s collision of performance, a parade, and virtual memories of public militaristic displays.

a shot of the two sisters walking toward the camera; the older sister carries a small bouquet of flowers. As the older sister pushes the narrator away, text reads: “I was jealous.” The images of these girls are then interrupted by shots of the older sister with her peers, including a slowed, repeated, and reversed shot of the older sister kissing two friends. As Citron argues in relation to her own influential re-working of her family’s home movies in *Daughter Rite*, “Slowed down and repeated, the images reveal another film that had been obscured at the normal speed.”³⁷⁾ By drawing attention to the home movies’ excesses — again through digital slow motion and freeze frames — Child reveals the unpredictable responses and feelings about the past that might be inspired by this younger sister’s encounter with these images.

In this example of virtual looking, playful images of a big sister and her new friends first sparked broader connections to historical events like the violence on Palm Sunday in 1934. The footage then provoked virtual memories of militaristic displays witnessed by European children just before World War II. Through Child’s reflexive tactics, these shots also point to experiences of jealousy and other emotions tied to a young girl’s coming-of-age. These attempts to move beyond events traditionally deemed historic and toward uncovering personal experiences of jealousy from beneath home movies’ surface-level content echo Eivind Røssaak’s claim that “at stake in [Child’s] films is a kind of complex archaeology of affects.”³⁸⁾ By emphasizing this contradiction between surface-level playfulness, memories of violence and militarism, and private feelings of jealousy, Child complicates these images’ perceived immediacy while excavating the kinds of interconnected, messy emotions about the past one might encounter when viewing one’s own home movies.

Along with Child’s penchant for excavating emotions from archival images, scholars have identified an emphasis on bodies and gestures throughout Child’s career. Gunning, for example, describes Child as “a feminist [Eadweard] Muybridge, breaking down gestures and actions to reveal unconscious and otherwise invisible patterns and determinates.”³⁹⁾ In *The Future Is Behind You*, Child deconstructs gestures to reveal otherwise invisible patterns of historical experience within the excess of home movies. This process recalls Friedrich’s influential examination of latent gestures, emotions, and meanings in her own home movies in *The Ties That Bind* (1984) and *Sink or Swim*. However, Friedrich’s influential examples of an experimental filmmaker appropriating and disrupting gestures in her family’s home movies — as Citron also demonstrates in *Daughter Rite* — do not necessarily confront the methodological questions that arise when archival filmmakers and/or historians like Child reactivate someone else’s home movies. Child explores heightened levels of invention and imagination to seek alternative historical meanings and emotions via strangers’ bodies and gestures.

For example, Child models a process of virtual looking at bodies in motion on a family ski trip. An intertitle describes these images as taking place in 1935. The mother then smiles at the camera as she climbs a ski hill. Previously, on-screen text explained that this

37) Michelle Citron, *Home Movies and Other Necessary Fictions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 18.

38) Eivind Røssaak, “Celluloid City: Diary from an Encounter,” *Millennium Film Journal*, no. 52 (2009–2010), 24.

39) Gunning, “Poetry in Motion,” xix.

woman's mother (the narrator's grandmother) was Jewish, and her father was a Christian. The next shot presents the younger daughter slowly drifting on her skis; she smiles with her hands held high in the air. Everyone has fun in the snow; no one, especially the mother, seems to have a care in the world. As the film cuts to the next shots of the young daughter's body swiftly skiing down the hill, text states: "That winter, S. tells Mama a half-Jew might be embarrassing to his clientele." The frenetic shot of skiing is then interrupted by a medium close-up; the daughter now lies on the snow after an apparent tumble. The prior text — which describes the supposed embarrassment caused for others by the family's Jewish identity — remains superimposed on this image of the daughter's fallen body. The images' surface-level content presents a moment of mild embarrassment and even humor. In *The Future Is Behind You*, the daughter's invented inner voice and Child's emphasis on her body's fall tell a different story. This act of tumbling in snow leads to the speculative imagining of a disturbing experience of embarrassment and humiliation caused by the racist institutions lingering outside the frame. Reflexive digital text then draws attention to this otherwise invisible set of memories and experiences. The text states: "Another picture that is not shown."

Child also exposes elements of what is not immediately visible in the home movie images through emphases on more subtle bodily gestures. Describing her interest in exploring home movies' subtext, Child explains, "When your mother and father just say: let's take a photo; you might just be ready to go out and socialize; but you put on your smile. And I am interested in what is behind that smile."⁴⁰ To explore what kinds of experiences or memories might be lurking behind those smiles, Child foregrounds home movies' moments directly before and after a posed smile — the lead-up to and aftermath of the instance that might be isolated in a still portrait. For example, Child draws attention to the older sister's visible frustrations with the cameraperson's implied off-screen insistence that the girls continue smiling. Superimposed text describes the younger sister's reactions to these images: "I am filled with wonder, anger, yearning, and revulsion in equal measure." This younger sister then enters the frame and performs her own forced smiles. Text now reads: "I am ashamed that I do not belong." Child emphasizes the younger sister's repeated, forced bow and smile. These images are disrupted by brief shots of the younger sister grabbing and turning her mother's head toward the camera's lens to provoke a smile. As Odin explains, "No other types of films evidence as much direct address as the home movie."⁴¹ When looking at these images as historical evidence, the frequent moments of direct address often require strategic speculation about what the smiles might reveal to those viewing them later. In these moments, Child does not position smiles at the camera as public-facing evidence of happy girls and women. Through the process of virtual looking, smiles unexpectedly reveal the shame and anger experienced by Jewish girls and women who were expected to perform happiness for their family and others — as the world beyond the frame told them that they did not belong.

By recontextualizing these images within broader historical events and this family member's perspective, *The Future Is Behind You's* model of virtual looking suggests that a

40) Child, "Abigail Child with François Bovier and Ricardo da Silva," 128.

41) Odin, "Reflections on the Family Home Movie as Document," 257.

home movie's most deceptively simple moments, including posed smiles, likely lead to complex, contradictory memories and historical knowledge, rather than serving as transparent, static traces of past happiness. This insistence on the instabilities and contradictions of memories, home movie images, history, and coming-of-age recalls Stuart Hall's broader claims about identity and cinema. As Hall suggests,

Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.⁴²⁾

Viewers of their own families' past as it is represented in home movies already recognize that the identities of these images' subjects — much like the potential evidentiary values of these images more broadly — remain unsettled. As Child's film suggests, those who appropriate once-private images for new public contexts might seek ways to foreground these processual changes and unpredictable meanings.

Conclusion

In *The Future Is Behind You*, imagining the fictional perspective of a home movie's intended audience is not a matter of falsely equating fiction and the events of the past. Certainly, if *The Future Is Behind You*'s viewers mistakenly believe these narrated memories are factual accounts of a real woman looking back on her real childhood, Child's historiographic process could be deemed unethical or even dangerous. Yet, if one approaches the film's tactics as processes of virtual looking, *The Future Is Behind You* offers a path of speculation, reflection, and critical examination that leads to its own insights about home movies' subjects, as well as the values and limitations of these once-private images as historical evidence. I am drawn to Child's archival filmmaking processes of disruption and imagination, then, because I interpret them as an invitation for further exploring reflexive strategies when appropriating or engaging with home movies in a variety of public historiographic settings.

These reflexive strategies begin from a key recognition: the contradictions and tensions that arise when appropriating home movies are generative. Home movies are fragmentary, mediated documents carrying contingent meanings; their surface-level content often conceals as much as it reveals. At the same time, these fragmentary images can help us learn much about past experiences and emotions precisely because of their excesses and absences. Virtual looking also productively points to the gaps between historical realities, mediated images, and the imperfect stories we tell through them, while actively seeking to learn something about the kinds of memories, experiences, and emotions that meaningfully contribute to an onlooker's understanding of the past. Again, these gaps are

42) Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, eds. Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 257.

not ignored or approached as detrimental; they are catalysts for digging into the fertile qualities of home movies as historical evidence. Finally, virtual looking foregrounds an outsider's own distance from these once-private, fragmentary traces of the past, while seeking deeper understandings of their evidentiary values through the imagined memories and responses of an insider. *The Future Is Behind You* illustrates many advantages of confronting this disjuncture between a present-day, public onlooker's position and the private, personal responses of perceived intended audiences. These processes of virtual looking suggest that searches for traditional kinds of historical meanings and facts, including descriptions of content such as people, places, clothing, etc., are important, but these approaches only scratch the surface of home movies' evidentiary roles.

Investigating an archival film like *The Future Is Behind You* as a model for alternative methods of looking at home movies as historical evidence is not a theoretical diversion. Shifting our processes of looking at once-private images affects our understanding of what counts as evidence in the first place. Zimmermann states: "As a cinema of recovery, home movies unsettle homogeneous, unified official history by locating records as incomplete, fragmentary articulations of difference...and hence provoke a reexamination of what constitutes evidence."⁴³ Similarly, the appropriation and recirculation of home movies in public-facing histories might determine what future onlookers believe constitutes history more broadly. As Philip Rosen argues, "different modes of writing history often imply different ways of conceiving of or understanding history."⁴⁴ *The Future Is Behind You* demonstrates that archival filmmaking practices which engage with home movies make many of these processes of looking, appropriation, and constructing history visible. In turn, Child's brief film might aid in making the re-thinking of what constitutes evidence and history imaginable.

Bibliography

- Baik, Crystal Mun-hye. "'The Right Kind of Family': Memories to Light and the Home Movie as Racialized Technology," in *Screening Race in Nontheatrical Film*, eds. Allyson Nadia Field and Marsha Gordon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 353–371.
- Baker, Courtney R. *Humane Insight: Looking at Images of African American Suffering and Death* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015).
- Baron, Jaimie. *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (New York: Routledge, 2014).
- Baron, Jaimie. *Reuse, Misuse, Abuse: The Ethics of Audiovisual Appropriation in the Digital Era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2021).
- Bovier, François. "Strategies of Appropriation in *Is This What You Were Born For?*," in *Is This What You Were Born For? Strategies of Appropriation and Audio-Visual Collage in the Films of Abigail Child*, ed. François Bovier (Geneva: MétisPresses, 2011), 7–12.

43) Zimmermann, "Introduction: The Home Movie Movement," 22.

44) Rosen, *Change Mummified*, 7.

- Child, Abigail. "Abigail Child with François Bovier and Ricardo da Silva: Conversation with a 'Maximalist' Filmmaker," in *Is This What You Were Born For? Strategies of Appropriation and Audio-Visual Collage in the Films of Abigail Child*, ed. François Bovier (Geneva: MétisPresses, 2011), 111–131.
- Citron, Michelle. *Home Movies and Other Necessary Fictions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
- Cuevas, Efrén. *Filming History From Below: Microhistorical Documentaries* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2022).
- Fox, Broderick. "Home Movies and Historiography: Amateur Film's Re-Vision of Japanese American Internment," *Spectator* 26, no. 2 (2006), 9–21.
- Gunning, Tom. "Poetry in Motion," in Abigail Child, *This is Called Moving: A Critical Poetics of Film* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2005), xi–xx.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, eds. Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 257–271.
- Leyda, Jay. *Films Beget Films: A Study of the Compilation Film* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964).
- Maltby, Richard. "New Cinema Histories," in *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, eds. Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst, and Philippe Meers (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 3–40.
- Nichols, Bill, Michael Renov, and Whitney Davis, eds. *Cinema's Alchemist: The Films of Péter Forgács* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
- Odin, Roger. "Reflections on the Family Home Movie as Document: A Semio-Pragmatic Approach," in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, eds. Karen I. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmermann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 255–271.
- Rees, A. L. *A History of Experimental Film and Video: From the Canonical Avant-Garde to Contemporary British Practice* (London: BFI Publishing, 1999).
- Rosen, Philip. *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).
- Rosenstone, Robert A. *History on Film/Film on History* (New York: Routledge, 2018).
- Røssaak, Eivind. "Celluloid City: Diary from an Encounter," *Millennium Film Journal*, no. 52 (2009–2010), 12–28.
- Russell, Catherine. *Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and Archival Filmmaking Practices* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).
- Skoller, Jeffrey. *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
- Thanouli, Eleftheria. *History and Film: A Tale of Two Disciplines* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019).
- Wees, William C. "How It Was Then": Home Movies as History in Péter Forgács' *Meanwhile Somewhere...*, *Jump Cut*, no. 52 (2010), accessed June 20, 2022, <https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc52.2010/wees-forgacs/index.html>.
- Wees, William C. *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York City: Anthology Film Archives, 1993).
- White, Hayden. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

Zimmermann, Patricia R. "Introduction: The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings," in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, eds. Karen I. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmermann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 1–28.

Zyrd, Michael. "Found Footage as Discursive Metahistory: Craig Baldwin's *Tribulation 99*," *The Moving Image* 3, no. 2 (2003), 40–61.

Filmography

Amy (Asif Kapadia, 2015)

B/side (Abigail Child, 1996)

Daughter Rite (Michelle Citron, 1978)

Free Fall (Péter Forgács, 1996)

The Future Is Behind You (Abigail Child, 2004)

Images of the World and the Inscription of War (Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges; Harun Farocki, 1988)

The Maelstrom: A Family Chronicle (Péter Forgács, 1997)

Respite (Aufschub; Harun Farocki, 2007)

Sink or Swim (Su Friedrich, 1990)

The Ties That Bind (Su Friedrich, 1984)

Won't You Be My Neighbor? (Morgan Neville, 2018)

Biography

Zachariah Anderson is a PhD candidate in the Media, Cinema, and Digital Studies program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. His research explores twenty-first century archival filmmaking practices and the role(s) of image-based media as historical evidence.

(e-mail: zda@uwm.edu)

Vladimir Rosas-Salazar (University of Warwick)

(Auto)biographical Documentaries as Audiovisual Microhistories of Pinochet's Chile

Abstract

Historians work with documents as sources to research the past and elaborate a narrative. This article proposes that documentary filmmakers perform a similar practice, excavating the past by working with audiovisual documents to produce a documentary film, thus allowing stories of anonymous people to emerge. I elaborate on historian Carlo Ginzburg's approach to microhistory and propose to study this type of documentary as *audiovisual microhistories*. That is to say, as an experimental practice that pays attention to small-scale research units to access previously unknown stories and explore how they interrelate with the wider historical context. Here, I analyze three Chilean documentaries that focus on the recontextualization of home videos produced during the late 1980s and the 1990s, covering events spanning from the end of General Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship to the transition to democracy: *Story of my Name* (*Historia de mi Nombre*, Karin Cuyul, 2019), *Adriana's Pact* (*El Pacto de Adriana*, Lissette Orozco, 2017), and *Guerrero* (Sebastián Moreno, 2017). To do so, I borrow historian Rudolf Dekker's notion of ego-documents and suggest that amateur videos work as first-hand testimonies that reveal the experiences of these anonymous people and their pasts.

Keywords

audiovisual microhistory, home video, amateur filmmaking, Chilean documentary, transition to democracy

Introduction

On October 5th, 1988, Chilean people went to polling stations in a historic referendum. In this vote, they had to choose between SI (YES) or NO. SI meant General Augusto Pinochet would remain in power for another eight years, in addition to the 15-year-long dictatorship he had led since the 1973 coup when Armed Forces overthrew Socialist President Salvador Allende. On the other hand, a NO vote represented a return to democracy. At the end of a very tense day, the military junta conceded the election, and the opposition to Pinochet took to the streets in celebration. The victory triggered a presidential and a parliamentary election the following year. In an atmosphere charged with voters' hope that change was coming, Patricio Aylwin led the new democratic government, a centre-left coalition of parties known as the *Concertación* composed mainly of Socialists and Christian Democrats. It was only over time that it became evident that the military regime and the *Concertación* had struck a deal later called the *salida pactada*. This deal included a transition that would keep many of the neoliberal policies started by the dictatorship, the Constitution approved by Pinochet's dictatorship in a rigged referendum in 1980, and a political scenario that over-represented the right-wing in Congress for over a decade. It was President Aylwin who coined the disheartening phrase "verdad y justicia en la medida de lo posible" ("truth and justice as far as possible"), referring to the demands for justice in cases of human rights violations.

The transition to democracy, whose end remains unclear to date, has proven to be a frustrating period for those who have demanded timely reparation and justice. The disappointment and bitterness that stem from dealing with the traumatic events of the dictatorship became pivotal in creative acts of resistance. They denounce how some opposition discourses were overlooked, given the preference for the mainstream narrative of national reconciliation in which recalling human rights violations has seemed problematic. From this period on, a number of documentary filmmakers have addressed not only Pinochet's regime in regard to its repressive policies but also the personal and intimate stories about the disappeared and their families, the exiled, and those people forced to move to far-away villages within the country (such as Patricio Guzmán, Ignacio Agüero, or Carmen Castillo, to name a few). A significant number of this type of documentary have been studied in literature both in Spanish and English, exploring trauma,¹⁾ cinema in exile,²⁾ family relations with perpetrators,³⁾ and video resistance.⁴⁾ Ultimately, these documentaries have contributed to unearthing neglected personal stories from victims of political repression. They have collected and activated archival material that stresses the struggles the

-
- 1) Antonio Traverso, "Dictatorship memories: Working through trauma in Chilean post-dictatorship documentary," *Continuum* 24, no. 1 (2010), 179–191.
 - 2) Elizabeth Ramírez Soto, "Journeys of Desexilio: the bridge between the past and the present," *Rethinking History* 18, no. 3 (2014), 438–451.
 - 3) Fernando Canet, "Documenting the legacies of the Chilean dictatorship: Questioning the family relationship in the documentary films *El pacto de Adriana* and *El color del camaleón*," *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* 15, no. 2 (2019), 125–142.
 - 4) Paola Lagos Labbé, "Videoactivismo, denuncia y (contra) memorias: Resistencia política en los colectivos documentales durante la dictadura chilena," *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, no. 73 (2017), 139–155.

many Chilean oppositions faced against the regime, thus elaborating counter-narratives of those left behind by the transition, that indeed challenged the aforementioned transitional narrative of national reconciliation.

In this article, I conduct textual analysis of three Chilean documentaries that address events related to Pinochet's dictatorship, the transitional period, and the complicated relationship between the documentaries' protagonists and their respective relatives who actively took part in action for and against the regime. These documentaries are: *Story of my Name* (*Historia de mi Nombre*, Karin Cuyul, 2019), *Adriana's Pact* (*El Pacto de Adriana*, Lissette Orozco, 2017), and *Guerrero* (Sebastián Moreno, 2017). *Story of my Name* delves into the filmmaker's exploration of a hidden story involving her parents, who were members of a guerrilla group aiming to overthrow Pinochet; *Adriana's Pact* is the story of the relationship between the filmmaker and her aunt, an alleged agent of Pinochet's secret police who escaped to Australia; finally, *Guerrero* unpacks the biographical story of Manuel Guerrero junior, whose father was a renowned victim of Pinochet's dictatorship. From the textual analysis, I establish some comparisons in these documentaries' archival strategies used for repurposing amateur video footage from different sources, mainly recorded in the home mode⁵⁾ and the counter mode.⁶⁾ I argue these three documentaries respond to microhistorical approaches in bringing stories of anonymous people to the fore, using said videos as sources.

Audiovisual Microhistory

To understand what I mean by audiovisual microhistory, first, it is necessary to explain what microhistory is and how I engage such a notion in regard to non-fiction audiovisual production. However, a comprehensive definition of microhistory has not yet been reached, and due to its experimental work methods, this fluidity may form the core of microhistory as a practice. Microhistory, born within the field of history, was developed by a group of Italian historians in the 1970s under the name of *microistoria*, primarily through the work of Carlo Ginzburg⁷⁾ and Giovanni Levi.⁸⁾ For Levi, the change of scale of observation to explore historical events is the driving force of microhistory. It allows neglected elements to emerge, as Levi argues: "Phenomena previously considered to be sufficiently described and understood assume completely new meanings by altering the scale of observation."⁹⁾ This focus on the "small" has permitted researchers to gain insight into communities and anonymous people, predominantly overlooked in the writing of history.

5) Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 1987).

6) Tom Sloatweg, "Home Mode, Community Mode, Counter Mode: Three Functional Modalities for Coming to Terms with Amateur Media Practices," in *Materializing Memories: Dispositifs, Generations, Amateurs*, eds. Susan Aasman, Andreas Fickers and Joseph Wachelder (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).

7) Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2013).

8) Giovanni Levi, "On microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

9) *Ibid.*, 102.

Ginzburg coined the term *evidential paradigm*,¹⁰⁾ proposing to research small units looking for signs in the sources and detecting hidden clues in the text. In other words, taking different perspectives on a subject (and seeing them from a divergent point of view) will unveil previously undetected traces and provide better investigation results. On the one hand, these findings can unfold through polyvocal voices, for instance, in books such as Sheila Fitzpatrick's *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times* (1999) or Claire Zalc and Tal Bruttman's *Microhistories of the Holocaust* (2017), both based on testimonies from anonymous people about their life experience under challenging historical circumstances. On the other hand, Ginzburg's *The Cheese and The Worms* (1976), about a medieval miller nicknamed Menocchio, and Natalie Zemon Davis's *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1985), demonstrate to us that, in unearthing unknown aspects of everyday life from the past, microhistories can also develop anchored in a biographical approach.

In order to investigate the past, historians, or microhistorians in this case, rely on archival documents that are not found exclusively in official archives or libraries. In this regard, Phillip Rosen has argued that 'historiography [...] expands its evidentiary basis, from the written document to the more inclusive realm of the documentary in general, in the sense that any artifacts, written or not, could be used as historical evidence',¹¹⁾ thus considering non-written documents as sources to research too. Here I borrow Rudolf Dekker's notion of *ego-document*,¹²⁾ namely first-hand testimonies that reveal the experiences of people involved in the past. For Dekker, ego-documents can range from, for instance, public records about ordinary people to diaries detailing personal experiences. This understanding of the ego-document as eminently about (anonymous) people engages with José van Dijck's notion of *mediated memory*, inasmuch as memory produces media, which functions as a way to retain those memories. She argues that "many people nurture a shoebox in which they store a variety of items signaling their pasts: photos, albums, letters, diaries, clippings, notes, and so forth. Add audio and video tape recordings to this collection as well as all digital counterparts of these cherished items, and you have what I call 'mediated memories'".¹³⁾ I argue that van Dijck's argument suggests that mediated memories can be valued as ego-documents too, as they are records of a past worth remembering. This point is relevant for this article, as I propose videos recorded within the home and counter mode work as documents of bottom-up stories in the context of the Chilean transition. That is, they are ego-documents that allow the documentary filmmaker to access traces of everyday life.

Amateur videos do not operate secluded from society. Indeed, they are created within a particular social and historical context. Amateur videos, privileged for their content in accessing records of everyday life, can help the researcher -in this case, the filmmaker-study history from below. The expression *history from below* encompasses many practices,

10) Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 96–115.

11) Phillip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 114.

12) Rudolf Dekker, *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical Writing in Its Social Context Since the Middle Ages* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2002), 13–37.

13) José van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1.

but it is associated especially with “enlarging and democratizing the subject matter of history, with collecting new sources and materials and has often been implicitly or explicitly set up in opposition to professional, official, or otherwise authorized versions of the past”.¹⁴⁾ Thus, while it has been mostly related to social history rather than audiovisual media, history from below ultimately resists institutional structures. Media scholars such as Patricia Zimmermann¹⁵⁾ have proposed examining amateur media as evidentiary sources for the elaboration of audiovisual versions of history from below by treating the examination of this type of footage as historical evidence with social history. Exploring more personal or communal accounts opens up the potential unveiling of stories of, say, ordinary people in extraordinary times, situations that have remained unknown to most of the public until recently. Hence, I argue in this article that this is precisely what some documentary filmmakers in Chile have done in unpacking events around Pinochet’s dictatorship and the transition to democracy, especially those that took place between the late 1980s and early 1990s. In this regard, and repurposing David Ludvigsson’s notion of *historian-filmmakers*, or “professional historians who became historical documentarists, who however continue to call themselves historians”,¹⁶⁾ I sustain that the documentary filmmakers studied here play the role of audiovisual microhistorians in their approach to their subject and the selection of sources, without abandoning their filmmaking positionality.

Spanish scholar Efrén Cuevas¹⁷⁾ has championed the correspondence between microhistory and documentary cinema, which the main argument of this article is built on. However, his work has mainly focused exploring small-gauge amateur film and, more often than not, on events around the Second World War. While acknowledging the differences between the fields of documentary filmmaking and microhistory, Cuevas, in line with Ginzburg and Levi, considers the reduction of the scale of observation as the backbone of microhistory. Additionally, while revealing previously unobserved factors through microanalysis might be common ground for microhistorical research strategies, Cuevas also incorporates human agency as vital to microhistory. Emphasis on anonymous people as active individuals has been highlighted in written microhistory of different depths and has gained increasing importance as the discipline develops.¹⁸⁾ In his work, Cuevas harnesses the notion of human agency to explain the crucial role it plays in analysing how a documentary’s protagonists have room for individual action “as a way of learning broader

14) Kevin Myers and Ian Grosvenor, *Collaborative Research: History from Below* (Bristol: University of Bristol, 2018), 10.

15) Patricia Zimmermann, “The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings,” in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, eds. Karen Ishizuka and Patricia Zimmermann (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008).

16) David Ludvigsson, *The Historian-Filmmaker’s Dilemma: Historical Documentaries in Sweden in the Era of Häger and Villius* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Uppsala, Sweden, 2003), 18.

17) Efrén Cuevas, “Change of Scale: Home Movies as Microhistory in Documentary Films,” in *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web*, eds. Laura Rascaroli, Gwenda Young, and Barry Monahan (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014); Efrén Cuevas, “Microhistoria y Cine Documental: Puntos de Encuentro,” *Historia Social* 91, no. 1 (2018), 69–84; Efrén Cuevas, *Filming History from Below: Microhistorical Documentaries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

18) Brad Gregory, “Is small beautiful? Microhistory and the history of everyday life,” *History and Theory* 38, no. 1 (1999), 100–110; Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and István Szijártó, *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2013).

historical contexts, compared to macro-historical approaches where personal action is diluted".¹⁹⁾ Human agency, Cuevas argues, is especially accentuated in home movies and autobiographical documentaries, suggesting that it is in these modes of moving image-making practices where actions of anonymous people find better expression. Moreover, agency must also be considered in regard to the relevance of memory practices. Anonymous people's agency is rescued and elaborated by both microhistorians and filmmakers (or filmmaker-microhistorians, to complicate Ludvigsson's notion) in their final text. In addition, it is demonstrated in anonymous people's micro-archiving habits, that is, the creation of mediated memories such as pictures or videos. Ultimately, these ego-documents are also sources that imply agency in preserving the past.²⁰⁾

The filmmaker's elaboration of a narrative feeding off archival sources, or ego-documents, reveals the possibilities of archiving as a practice. Although space constraints prevent me from fully exploring archival studies, it is necessary to understand the discourse; by studying archiving as a practice, new opportunities arise to reassess the past. Scholars such as Julia Noordegraaf²¹⁾ and Susan Aasman,²²⁾ for example, argue that film footage are not passive objects locked away in repositories, but they get meaning in their activations and use. For instance, Catherine Russell defines archival practices in film as *archiveology*, that is, the "reuse, recycling, appropriation, and borrowing of archival material that filmmakers have been doing for decades. It is not a genre of filmmaking as much as a practice that appears in many formats, styles, and modes."²³⁾ This reworking of archival footage could unveil new ways of making history, allowing critical perspectives to emerge. These reassessments are one driving force behind the documentaries I analyze here. However, as we will see, these documentaries activate their archival footage in different ways.

***Story of my Name* (Historia de mi Nombre; Karin Cuyul, 2019)**

Story of my Name is the directorial debut of Chilean filmmaker Karin Cuyul (1988). It is an autobiographical documentary that delves into the filmmaker's story of why she was named Karin, which pivots around her parents' story as former members of the guerrilla group Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez or FPMR (Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front) that aimed to overthrow General Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship. Following a non-chronological narrative, Cuyul incorporates herself in the story as an explorer who, in looking for an answer, elucidates secretive dynamics present in her family, unbeknown to her as a

19) Cuevas, "Microhistoria y Cine Documental: Puntos de Encuentro," 76.

20) Martin Pogačar, *Media Archaeologies, Micro-Archives and Storytelling* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 64–65.

21) Julia Noordegraaf, "Remembering the Past in the Dynarchive: The State of Knowledge in Digital Archives" (Paper submitted for the conference Media in Transition 7, *Unstable Platforms: The Promise and Peril of Transition*, Boston, MIT, May 13–15, 2011).

22) Susan Assman, "Saving private reels: Archival practices and digital memories (Formerly Known as Home Movies) in the digital age," in *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web*, eds. Laura Rascaroli, Gwenda Young, and Barry Monahan (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

23) Catherine Russell, *Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and Archival Film Practices* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 1.

child. In doing so, she connects the dots between personal and historical aspects to explain better what is behind her name choice and, most importantly, to reveal her parents' story. To achieve this, Cuyul attempts to interview her parents, Sergio and Yaniré, two people who have cultivated a low profile in the different cities they have lived in and who will give elusive answers for the most part of *Story of my Name*. Anticipating this, the film structures its narrative through archival videos from different sources in order to fill the gaps. Such videos will prove themselves triggers for her soul-searching process and as a way to raise questions for Sergio and Yaniré that emerge from Cuyul's confrontation with the past.

In *Story of my Name*, Cuyul had few family ego-documents at her disposal to dig up. However, she is able to harness third-party amateur videos for that purpose. She acknowledges the incorporation of videotapes external to the Cuyul Contreras family, recorded in the home mode, helped her raise questions regarding events that she remembers only partially. The home mode, coined by anthropologist Richard Chalfen in relation to records of daily life set in the domestic sphere, describes "a pattern of interpersonal and small group communication centred around the home".²⁴ The incorporation of these communications from a different family to question her own, I argue, is where the documentary's originality resides. The function of such repurposing is not exactly to foreground the image's evidentiary value but to evoke (from the filmmaker's point of view) a past from which only a few images are available. Thus, these videos are reworked to overcome Cuyul's fallible memory and show how these events dialogue with the historical context in which said memories are situated. Ultimately, the reworking of archival video footage is crucial in Cuyul's project in re-evaluating her own past and understanding her story as a specific example of how the transition to democracy affected her family and by proposing an alternative way of showing what happened to a family disappointed by the transition.

One set of home videos that does not belong to the Cuyul Contreras, recontextualized in the documentary, is the one showing a gathering of friends after the 1988 referendum mentioned in this article's introduction, singing protest songs and carrying a NO flag, in reference to the NO campaign that challenged Pinochet. These extracts placed both at the beginning, and the end of *Story of my Name* are reused to pinpoint the divergent perspectives found within the left regarding said referendum: especially between those who wanted to restore democracy and saw the referendum called by Pinochet as an opportunity to achieve that goal, and those who considered any agreement involving the regime would be a compromise that would ultimately legitimize the dictatorship institutionally, both nationally and abroad. As in the opening images of a person holding a NO flag in front of the camera, the original audio track reveals this discussion. Thus, an unidentified man in the background states "that's why we were deluded on October 5th... we deluded ourselves," making clear such differences of appreciation, even within a group of friends who seemingly had the same goal. Cuyul's parents, like many in the FPMR, belonged to the latter group who did not want any political pact between Pinochet's regime and the opposition. One key aspect about the production of this video suggests that it was recorded among friends and possibly circulated within trusted networks of people: no one protects their

24) Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 8.

identity by covering their faces — even so, none of those present is individualized by name, at least in the documentary's final cut. This is crucial, as pointed out by authors Fernando Camacho Padilla and Laura Ramírez Palacio, active members of the opposition to Pinochet tried to avoid being photographed or leaving any visual evidence that could be traced by Pinochet's secret police.²⁵⁾

The second time these images are used is in the concluding section of the documentary, although different extracts are shown. Here, the video depicts the same group of friends singing a protest song in its entirety. As James M. Moran argues, home videos generally change their meaning over time, especially in light of critical assessments challenging their original purpose.²⁶⁾ Accordingly, unlike the editing previously analysed where Cuyul demonstrates divergent positions amongst Pinochet's opposition, in this part, she devotes more time to the sense of disappointment felt by members of the said circle who saw the transition to democracy as a compromise — a suspicion confirmed to them in hindsight. She sees this disappointment now in her parents as they grew older, but only now understands the reasons behind it. In addition, as mentioned above, nobody in the video is named. Thus, this anonymity helps Cuyul use the video (and this segment in particular) as a tool to recall the everyday life of active members of the opposition more generally. In particular, it shows them in private spaces, meeting in secrecy to discuss politics in a society where the feeling of danger in expressing revolutionary political ideas was still very much present. The way the film treats these images shows that Cuyul does not mean them to be representative of the experience of any particular opposition group but rather as a way to imagine what the filmmaker's parents must have gone through in these meetings. In light of this sequence, Cuyul reflects: "I asked my parents what they felt when they voted for the 1988 referendum. They told me they didn't vote. They didn't believe that was a viable solution because things would remain the same." In their interviews, laced with constant silence and ambiguity, Sergio and Yanire drop breadcrumbs for their daughter to laboriously follow when piecing together their story, which is only understood in retrospect in the documentary.

Later in the documentary, Cuyul discloses that one of her siblings recalled that an aunt from Santiago had visited them in Queilen, in the south of Chile, in the mid-1990s and had brought a camcorder to videotape her holidays. These images are unique in depicting a family prone to elusiveness; they offer a rare opportunity to examine their interaction with their extended family within the private space. The activation of the aunt's videos in *Story of my Name* allows Cuyul to introduce Sergio and Yaniré (whom we easily recognize as we have already seen them in the interviews), herself, her brother and her sister, all having dinner. In presenting herself, instead of freezing a frame where she appears, Cuyul decides to slow down the video and repeat the short fragment she is in. The repeated fragment continues in slow motion, showing that the original shot was, in fact, a pan ending with Cuyul's sister sitting next to her. But Cuyul disrupts this precisely by focusing on herself and extending the time she is on screen in the original short pan and, in doing so, she

25) Fernando Camacho-Padilla and Laura Ramírez-Palacio, "Fotografía y memoria visual de la dictadura militar: Reflexiones desde la historia," *Revista Austral de Ciencias Sociales*, no. 34 (2018), 54–55.

26) James Moran, *There's No Place Like Home Video* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

reminds the viewer that this is her story. Thus, the introduction is a visual device that reminds us of Cuyul's authorial voice. In the absence of more mediated memories of her as a child, this image (and its reinterpretation) propels further meanings at a personal and general level. Cuyul's aunt's video follows the premise most documents recorded in the home mode have, namely of often privileging celebratory memorialization of the family.²⁷⁾ Indeed, Cuyul comments on the joy and happiness she and her siblings shared during the two years they lived in Queilen during their childhood. Such recollection, as selective as the videos' depictions, is supported by images of both her extended and her nuclear family in an outdoor setting — sometimes in a group, but she ends this sequence by selecting shots that show only the Cuyul Contreras children. However, this montage has been done intentionally to reinforce Cuyul's recent awareness that this was not a happy time for her father Sergio, as the filmmaker acknowledges.

Home videos, as mediated memories of people recorded in the home mode, have a strong relationship to autobiography, as they "provide a narrative format for communicating family legends and personal stories".²⁸⁾ However, in studying home videos as ego-documents, Cuyul delves deeper into the layers of social dynamics present in the relationship between members of her family from a personal perspective. By merging home videos and the autobiographical documentary form, Cuyul also strengthens the personal as a starting point from which to elaborate a better understanding of Chile's recent history. Most importantly, this approach permits the filmmaker to show an intimate perspective of a rather public development in Chile's transition and reflect on, from a bottom-up, domestic scope, those disappointed with how the Chilean transition to democracy went.

***Adriana's Pact* (El Pacto de Adriana; Lissette Orozco, 2017)**

Adriana's Pact is an autobiographical documentary that discusses Chile's problematic recent past from the perspective of anonymous people, very much like *Story of my Name*. However, in *Adriana's Pact*, filmmaker Lissette Orozco unpacks the story of her aunt Adriana Rivas, who worked as an agent at the *Dirección Nacional de Inteligencia* or DINA (National Intelligence Directorate), Pinochet's secret police, until 1976. In telling her aunt's story, Orozco negotiates the perpetrator's point of view but she stops short of making her aunt an empathetic protagonist.²⁹⁾ Adriana, who moved to Australia in 1978, often visited her family in Chile, and her involvement in DINA was a family secret, even to younger family members like Orozco. In 2007, while in Chile, Adriana was arrested and accused of kidnapping Pinochet opponents. The revelation of the secret is the trigger for Orozco to delve into her dear aunt's story in trying to understand her mindset. For the documentary, Orozco interviews Adriana both face to face in Chile and through Skype in Australia,

27) Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*; Maria Pini, "Inside the home mode," in *Video Cultures*, eds. David Buckingham and Rebekah Willet (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 23–50.

28) Moran, *There's No Place Like Home Video*, 61.

29) Claudia Bossay, "Filmmakers to the Rescue of Chilean Memory: Representations of Chile's Traumatic Past in Contemporary Documentary," in *Chilean Cinema in the Twenty-First-Century*, eds. Vania Barraza and Carl Fischer (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2020), 283.

but she also broadens her scope by getting in touch with some of Adriana's former associates, in particular, a secret agent who worked with Adriana and reveals having witnessed her participating in tortures (this, to Orozco's astonishment). Thus, the documentary's title reminds us of the pacts of silence, or *pactos de silencio*, that many agents of the Chilean Army and other police services put into practice to disrupt human rights trials during the 1990s and 2000s. Ultimately, Orozco relies on archival ego-documents such as family photographs and home videos that originally present Adriana in quotidian activities as a close family member, thus complicating the label of perpetrator.

The documentary opens with a birthday video and then a wedding video, both of unidentified family members, that help Orozco introduce her personal story and the story of her family. Here, she pays special attention to Adriana or aunt Chani, "the one who taught me to say what I think, without fear," as Orozco's voiceover states. These home videos merge with pictures of the same wedding party and then of the airport, showing one of Adriana's many trips from Australia. These images, portraying happy family moments, are disrupted by the unveiling of Adriana's hidden past as the documentary continues. Ten minutes into the film, Orozco explains that Adriana "tells me that she's being wrongly accused of kidnapping and murder," a moment edited in juxtaposition to a repeated segment from the wedding party video of a couple dancing, where now it is evident that the woman in the images is Adriana. Thus, *Adriana's Pact* challenges the filmmaker's family narrative in light of new information and delves into a change of perspective from an eminently family story to a complicated narrative about Chile's recent past. Finnish historian Matti Peltonen reminds us that a key aspect of microhistories is how they negotiate the treatment of a specific subject with the structures in which it is situated. Hence, he argues that microhistories arise "only on the condition that reduction of the scale of observation reveals social structures that are relevant on a larger scale than the person or locality under view".³⁰ Although we have discussed that microhistory aims to study anonymous people and ordinary lives, the reduced scale of observation is not enough to approach research from a microhistorical perspective. It also needs to engage with the historical and social context as well, which Adriana's story aims to do.

Halfway through the documentary, there is a sequence of home videos showing Adriana's life in Australia, trivial events such as drinking coffee in a café, reading the newspaper, and enjoying sightseeing. This segment is edited in conjunction with an audio track of an Australian TV news report uncovering her judicial case and announcing her extradition to Chile. One could argue that these images, as they are not produced in Chile, might not be considered for scrutiny in light of Orozco's examination of her family story, nor be relevant to explore a microhistorical microcosm contextualized in the Chilean transition to democracy. But first, Chalfen's understanding of the home mode is not reduced to the physical home but expands in symbolic forms of communications around the home. And second, Adriana's story can only be understood when grounded in Chile's recent history and from its exceptionality in that historical and social context. Ginzberg and Poni developed the notion of exceptional normal in microhistory, or *eccezzionalmente normale*, from

30) Matti Peltonen, "What Is Micro in Microhistory?" in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography: Approaches from History, Microhistory, and Life Writing*, eds. Hans Renders and Binne de Haan (Lieden: Brill, 2014), 114.

Italian historian Edoardo Grendi,³¹⁾ as one that focuses on singular, unique events as well as individual persons. These normal exceptions are then extraordinary elements that can reveal a hidden or overlooked reality.³²⁾ No matter how trivial these pieces of evidence might appear, the microhistorian's call (and, in this case, the filmmaker's call) is to pay attention precisely to these unusual elements as starting points.

Finally, one relevant consideration in Orozco's use of footage is that it consciously disregards widely known archival images of La Moneda Palace's bombing during the 1973 coup or of the dictatorship's victims in the aftermath of the coup — which have been used repeatedly in documentaries and TV reports about the Chilean dictatorship. As a documentary elucidating the story of her aunt as a secret police agent, Orozco attempts to tell Adriana's story without reappropriating images that, overall, do not belong to those committing violent acts. In turn, *Adriana's Pact*'s archival reimagining relies on family home videos and pictures, displaying quotidian events. The violent images about the coup, depicting air strikes bombing the presidential palace, and Allende's aids being taken prisoners, encapsulate much about the consequences of the dictatorship for the victims. Subverting their original purpose of explaining the culprit's side would have diminished Orozco's message. In this regard, *Adriana's Pact* does not work as a platform for the perpetrators but seeks to complicate what has been said about the dictatorship and the transitional period from a family secret. Ultimately, both Cuyul's and Orozco's work, albeit from diametrically opposed political subjects, relate to the trauma inflicted by the historical and political events around Pinochet's dictatorship, but most importantly, with the ordinariness of such trauma, that is, how such experiences permeated their respective domestic lives regarding their subjects' secretive roles in the public space.

Guerrero (Sebastián Moreno, 2017)

Unlike *Story of my Name* or *Adriana's Pact*, *Guerrero* is not autobiographical; instead, it is a biographical documentary directed by filmmaker Sebastián Moreno about Manuel Guerrero junior. Manuel's father, a member of the Chilean Communist Party, was assassinated by the dictatorship's secret police in 1985 after returning from exile in the mid-1980s in a case that would become widely known amongst the Chilean opposition as the Caso Degollados (Slit-Throat Case). The documentary's storyline, however, goes back to the 1973 coup to explain the Guerrero family's story of exile in Hungary and later in Spain. Moreno's film aims to tell the Guerrero family's story chronologically, aided mainly by family pictures and, to a lesser extent, by moving images. Moreover, the moving images reworked in *Guerrero* are not what could usually be defined as home videos, like in *Story of my Name* or *Adriana's Pact*. Only a handful of the videos in *Guerrero* could be classed as from obscure sources (or, at least, obscure to Chilean audiences), such as a sequence tak-

31) Edoardo Grendi, "Micro-analisi e storia sociale," *Quaderni storici* 12, no. 35 (1977), 512.

32) Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Poni, "The Name and the Game: Unequal Exchange and the Historiographic Marketplace," in *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*, eds. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 7–8.

en from a children's TV program in Hungarian where Manuel Guerrero junior, along with other exiled children, talk about their experiences. Much of the archival footage *Guerrero* displays comes from documentaries about the dictatorship, such as *Chile: When Will It End?* (*Chile: Hasta Cuando?* David Bradbury, 1986), made on film. They also come from video projects such as *Teleanálisis* (1984–89), a monthly TV news report made by the opposition to Pinochet, recorded on tape and distributed on VHS, with first-hand images of protests against the regime and police violence. Both sources show the struggle members of the opposition to Pinochet who lived in Chile faced on a daily basis due to political repression and economic hardship.

While in my previous analyses I focused on textual scrutiny of how those documentaries reworked home videos, in examining *Guerrero*, I want to concentrate on the type of source the film harnesses and especially the mode in which they are produced. As mentioned above, Cuevas states that human agency is accentuated in home movies and autobiographical documentaries. In this section, however, I argue that, while home movies and autobiographical documentaries can talk about the I, other amateur images can also be produced by and for anonymous people, usually to talk about the We (to borrow from Alisa Lebow's *Cinema of Me*)³³ to circulate through non-mainstream networks. More importantly, these amateur videos become relevant ego-documents about what the opposition to Pinochet went through. To expand on this type of footage, I draw on Tom Sloop's notion of the counter mode³⁴, a mode of amateur media making enacted by social and political activists who used video mainly as an oppositional practice to overcome mainstream media's neglect of certain themes. While Sloop unpacks his definition by focusing on the case of a Dutch video collective, the counter mode gains traction in the context of a dictatorship that persecutes its opponents. Images from *Teleanálisis* are crucial in providing visual evidence of a community disregarded in the public discourse during the dictatorship, thus creating what Nancy Fraser calls subaltern counter-publics, that is, "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs."³⁵ This role has been played by video projects not only in Chile but by grassroots video projects across Latin America, especially in the 1980s, when a number of countries were ruled by dictatorships.³⁶ Hence, the following question arises, can images made in modes other than the home mode help unearth stories of anonymous people and produce microhistorical narratives?

In following a strand of suspicion from one's learnt story, where films such as *Story of my Name* and *Adriana's Pact* succeed, Guerrero does not. Ultimately, *Guerrero* reaffirms the story of Manuel Guerrero senior as a political activist who was assassinated by the dictatorship. Manuel Guerrero junior tells his story as a child in exile in Hungary and how his

33) Alisa Lebow, ed., *The Cinema of Me: The Self and Subjectivity in First Person Documentary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

34) Sloop, "Home Mode, Community Mode, Counter Mode".

35) Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 67.

36) Patricia Aufderheide, "Latin American grassroots video: beyond television," *Public Culture* 5, no. 3 (1993), 579–592.

parents' marriage was torn apart (to the Chilean Communist Party in exile's disapproval). In doing so, Sebastián Moreno's film reasserts the image Manuel has about his family in the private space, feeding off family pictures and complementing them with his father's counter-public image at the same time through video images. It is true that the documentary unveils unknown aspects of a victim of police repression and shows the viewer personal aspects of a family highly entrenched in the political process in Chile. However, the uncritical scope it takes does not mean that Guerrero is less microhistorical than *Adriana's Pact* or *Story of my Name*, as it deals with a bottom-up perspective that allows us to enrich our understanding of a historical period. But in my view, the difference in the treatment of archival sources, and subsequently in the narrative, highlights the memory work that Cuyul's and Orozco's documentaries develop as a research strategy, specifically in the realization that what they thought they knew is challenged.

Conclusion

Microhistory invites us to interrogate the past we thought we already knew, as Levi states.³⁷⁾ By changing the scale of observation and researching into smaller units, new stories arise, providing us with comprehensive knowledge about such a past and new types of protagonists: the lives and experiences of anonymous people. However, a change of scale is not enough. These stories do not take place in a vacuum; they interact with their social and historical context. More importantly, for microhistorians, the individual's agency impacts the course of actions and not the other way around — regardless of the outcome. As Levi explains, "all social action is seen to be the result of an individual's constant negotiation, manipulation, choices and decisions in the face of a normative reality which, though pervasive, nevertheless offers many possibilities for personal interpretations and freedoms".³⁸⁾ *Story of my Name*, *Adriana's Pact*, and *Guerrero*, all to a different extent, deal with the individual's agency, central to Cuevas' argument on microhistory and documentary filmmaking. Ultimately, one key part of the research strategy for microhistories (and audiovisual microhistories, in this case) is what I define as ego-documents, the tangible outcome of people's intuitive archival desire, a chance to say that one experienced a moment worth remembering. Moreover, as Jacques Derrida³⁹⁾ reminds us, archives are not about the past: they are about the future. The re-reading of these ego-documents, then, can talk about the future as well.

In line with personal memory transcending to the public sphere, historian Pierre Nora has argued that *democratization of history* can occur if emancipatory versions of the past surface: "Unlike history, which has always been in the hands of the public authorities, of scholars and specialized peer groups, memory has acquired all the new privileges and prestige of a popular protest movement".⁴⁰⁾ However, it is important to bear in mind that "history from below is not emancipatory per se, nor does the use of oral history or testi-

37) Levi, "On microhistory".

38) Ibid., 94.

39) Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

40) Pierre Nora, "Reasons for the current upsurge in memory," *Transit* 22, no. 1 (2002), 6.

monial witnesses automatically imply a polyphony of voices".⁴¹⁾ The story of Adriana Rivas, for instance, teaches us that the background to anonymous individuals' narratives on a micro-level (family, community, village), can be rather problematic too. Nevertheless, the role the documentary filmmaker plays as a microhistorical audiovisual researcher is crucial in reworking the sources at their disposal in a manner that allows them to create a narrative where such stories can emerge. It is much more complex (and at the same time, nuanced) than "giving voice to the voiceless" or empowering disenfranchised groups. It means understanding the past through a different lens.

Bibliography

- Aufderheide, Patricia. "Latin American grassroots video: beyond television," *Public Culture* 5, no. 3 (1993), 579–592.
- Assman, Susan. "Saving private reels: Archival practices and digital memories (Formerly Known as Home Movies) in the digital age," in *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web*, eds. Laura Rascaroli, Gwenda Young, and Barry Monahan (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).
- Brunow, Dagmar. *Remediating Transcultural Memory: Documentary Filmmaking as Archival Intervention* (Germany: de Gruyter, 2015).
- Bossay, Claudia. "Filmmakers to the Rescue of Chilean Memory: Representations of Chile's Traumatic Past in Contemporary Documentary," in *Chilean Cinema in the Twenty-First-Century*, eds. Vania Barraza and Carl Fischer (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2020).
- Canet, Fernando. "Documenting the legacies of the Chilean dictatorship: Questioning the family relationship in the documentary films *El pacto de Adriana* and *El color del camaleón*," *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* 15, no. 2 (2019), 125–142.
- Camacho-Padilla, Fernando and Laura Ramírez-Palacio. "Fotografía y memoria visual de la dictadura militar: Reflexiones desde la historia," *Revista Austral de Ciencias Sociales*, no. 34 (2018), 53–70.
- Chalfen, Richard. *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 1987).
- Cuevas, Efrén. "Change of Scale: Home Movies as Microhistory in Documentary Films," in *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web*, eds. Laura Rascaroli, Gwenda Young, and Barry Monahan (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).
- Cuevas, Efrén. "Microhistoria y Cine Documental: Puntos de Encuentro," *Historia Social* 91, no. 1 (2018), 69–84.
- Cuevas, Efrén. *Filming History from Below: Microhistorical Documentaries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).
- Davis, Natalie Zemon. *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).
- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
- Dekker, Rudolf. *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical Writing in Its Social Context Since the Middle Ages* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2002).

41) Dagmar Brunow, *Remediating Transcultural Memory: Documentary Filmmaking as Archival Intervention* (Germany: de Gruyter, 2015), 6.

- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- Fraser, Nancy. *Justice Interrruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
- Ginzburg, Carlo. *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).
- Ginzburg, Carlo. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2013).
- Ginzburg, Carlo and Carlo Poni. "The Name and the Game: Unequal Exchange and the Historiographic Marketplace," in *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*, eds. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).
- Gregory, Brad. "Is small beautiful? Microhistory and the history of everyday life," *History and Theory* 38, no. 31 (1999), 100–110.
- Grendi, Edoardo. "Micro-analisi e storia sociale," *Quaderni storici* 12, no. 35 (1977), 506–520.
- Lagos Labbé, Paola. "Videoactivismo, denuncia y (contra) memorias: Resistencia política en los colectivos documentales durante la dictadura chilena," *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, no. 73 (2017), 139–155.
- Lebow, Alisa, ed. *The Cinema of Me: The Self and Subjectivity in First Person Documentary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).
- Levi, Giovanni. "On microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).
- Ludvigsson, David. *The Historian-Filmmaker's Dilemma: Historical Documentaries in Sweden in the Era of Häger and Villius* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Uppsala, Sweden, 2003).
- Magnússon, Sigurður Gylfi and István Szijártó. *What Is Microhistory? Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2013).
- Moran, James. *There's No Place Like Home Video* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).
- Myers, Kevin and Ian Grosvenor. *Collaborative Research: History from Below* (Bristol: University of Bristol, 2018).
- Noordegraaf, Julia. "Remembering the Past in the Dynarchive: The State of Knowledge in Digital Archives" (Paper submitted for the conference Media in Transition 7, *Unstable Platforms: The Promise and Peril of Transition*, Boston, MIT, May 13–15, 2011).
- Nora, Pierre. "Reasons for the current upsurge in memory," *Transit* 22, no. 1 (2002), 4–8.
- Peltonen, Matti. "What Is Micro in Microhistory?" in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography: Approaches from History, Microhistory, and Life Writing*, eds. Hans Renders and Binne de Haan (Lieden: Brill, 2014).
- Pini, Maria. "Inside the home mode," in *Video Cultures*, eds. David Buckingham and Rebekah Willet (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 23–50.
- Pogačar, Martin. *Media Archaeologies, Micro-Archives and Storytelling* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
- Ramírez Soto, Elizabeth. "Journeys of Desexilio: the bridge between the past and the present," *Rethinking History* 18, no. 3 (2014), 438–451.
- Rosen, Phillip. *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

- Russell, Catherine. *Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and Archival Film Practices* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).
- Slootweg, Tom. "Home Mode, Community Mode, Counter Mode: Three Functional Modalities for Coming to Terms with Amateur Media Practices," in *Materializing Memories: Dispositifs, Generations, Amateurs*, eds. Susan Aasman, Andreas Fickers, and Joseph Wachelder (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).
- Traverso, Antonio. "Dictatorship memories: Working through trauma in Chilean post-dictatorship documentary," *Continuum* 24, no. 1 (2010), 179–191.
- van Dijck, José. *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).
- Zalc, Claire and Tal Bruttman, eds. *Microhistories of the Holocaust* (New York; Berghahn Books, 2017).
- Zimmermann, Patricia. "The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings," in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, eds. Karen Ishizuka and Patricia Zimmermann (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008).

Filmography

- Adriana's Pact* (El Pacto de Adriana; Lissette Orozco, 2017)
- Chile: When Will It End?* (Chile: Hasta Cuando?; David Bradbury, 1986)
- Guerrero* (Sebastián Moreno, 2017)
- Story of my Name* (Historia de mi Nombre; Karin Cuyul, 2019)
- Teleanálisis* (Teleanálisis; Augusto Góngora, 1984–89)

Biography

Vladimir Rosas-Salazar is a Chilean journalist and researcher. He received his MA in Film and Screen Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London, and is currently undertaking a PhD in Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. Rosas-Salazar's research interests include amateur filmmaking and video aesthetic. (Vladimir.Rosas-Salazar@warwick.ac.uk)

Rossella Catanese

How to Benefit from Academics?

A Roundtable with Film Archives

The following dialogue is the result of a roundtable conducted via Zoom about the relation between the research project *ViCTOR-E* (*Visual Culture of Trauma, Obliteration and Reconstruction in Post-WWII Europe*), here represented by Rossella Catanese (University of Udine), Lucie Česálková (Academy of Sciences in Prague), and Paolo Villa (University of Udine), and the partner film archives, represented by Marion Boulestreau (Ciné-Archives, France), Matěj Strnad (Národní Filmový Archiv Prague, Czech Republic), Elena Testa (Archivio Nazionale Cinema Impresa, Italy), Julia Welter (Deutsches Filminstitut & Film-museum) with the purpose of deepening the issues about academic research and cinema-theques. As the *ViCTOR-E* project focused primarily on non-fiction cinema as an agent of post-war reconstruction of the public space, the discussion deals primarily with this type of archive collections and the status and possibilities of their valorisation.

— — —

Rossella Catanese: *How would you describe the role of your institution in preserving, gate-keeping, and providing access to non-fiction cinema?*

Marion Boulestreau: I am working at Cinéarchives, which is a very small non-profit association located in Paris and our role is to preserve and promote the film archive of the French Communist Party and the Labour movement in France. The French Communist Party was one of the biggest Communist parties of Western Europe, alongside with the Italian party, but in France it was very powerful even in the 1930s. Since this period until today, the Party produced a huge number of films, so the scope of this collection is very broad. It's mainly non-fiction, but there are a few fiction films as well. It's a bit hard to say how many films there are because you can't really quantify all the recent material, but we used to say that we have about 1500 films. For many years now, we've been digitising the collection, and today, about 800 films are available online for free on our website (<https://>

www.cinearchives.org/). The association was created in 1998 and is pursuing the action that was once launched within the Communist Party, despite now we are a fully independent association. We are a very small team, just two or three people. Our daily job is mainly to document the films, but we also sell the materials to documentary filmmakers, which is one of the most important funding sources for our archive. As this is so important activity for us, we don't have enough time to develop collaborations with universities or scholars. But occasionally, we go to universities and introduce Ciné-Archives and our work to history and cinema students.

Matěj Strnad: We are a national film archive, Národní Filmový Archiv, of the Czech Republic, which means we are a rather large institution with a large collection, funded nationally through the Ministry of Culture. As a long standing FIAF member, we focus mainly on film preservation, but selling of footage is an important part of our activities as well, because two thirds of our budget come from licensing. All cinema production after 1945 in the former Czechoslovakia was nationalised and this condition existed up until 1992 — that is why NFA as a national institution administers the production rights of Czechoslovak cinema. It is a quite exceptional situation for a film archive to have such a broad and general access to rights. This, in theory, could make things very easy for us in terms of providing access, and valorisation of the collection, but at the same time, we are sort of sitting on two chairs because the reason why we have been granted these production rights for the Czechoslovak cinema is so that we can make up these two thirds of our budget from licensing. On a more general level, there is a certain dynamic between our incentive to make the collection accessible and the need to fund the preservation budget through licensing and commercial distribution. When it comes to non-fiction films, it's very difficult to say the numbers, but our database listings alone give me about 30,000 documentaries and newsreels, so the collection is large. It mainly consists of Czech and Czechoslovak cinema, but we take care also of a huge set of international films, both non-fiction and fiction. There are about 130 or 140 people working in the archive, including the library, the cinema, and all the distribution activities, so we would belong among the larger institutions.

Julia Welter: The Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum is the oldest film institution in Germany. It was founded as early as 1949 and then in 2006 it merged with the collections of the German Film Museum — and we're both in the same building anyway. And, unlike what Matěj said, we're not a national film archive because in Germany, due to the federal states, there are several archives that share the responsibilities of what are the tasks of national archives in other countries. We don't have only a film archive, but also a cinema and a museum, where we promote and teach about film history. Our film archive is medium-sized, we have around 30,000 film copies, 20,000 film works. It covers pretty much everything from feature films, short films, documentaries as well as amateur and experimental films, we also have a sizeable collection of animated films, and specifically focus on advertising and industrial films. I'd say the DFF has a special role in Europe in that, as early as 2006, we started coordinating European funded projects that were particularly concerned with giving access to either information on nonfiction film collections of European film archives or giving access to those films. Most notably, Film Archives Online was created back in 2006; as a joint catalogue of 18 film archives, where they gave access to cat-

alogue information, particularly on non-fiction films that they held in their collections. We started the European Film Gateway, where we also give access to, among other things, digitised non-fiction films from about 40 plus partner archives — lots of newsreels but also other documentary short formats. We're also very much into giving access and promoting these formats online.

Elena Testa: Archivio Nazionale Cinema Impresa was created in 2006 in Ivrea, near Turin, as a branch department of Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia foundation — the Italian National Film Archive of Rome. ANCI's mission is the identification, cataloguing, storage, preservation and valorization of industrial and promotional films made by some important Italian companies, such as Borsalino, Fiat, Edison, National Railways, Olivetti and others. Currently, the Archive holdings consist of 80.000 films on manufacturing, business organization, construction, official events, recreational, social and well-being activities for workers and their families. The film collection held in ANCI is a unique material of its kind. On one hand, the rediscovery of industrial films has made it possible to enhance production areas of Italian cinema that had long been neglected, completing the filmography of important filmmakers such as Bernardo Bertolucci, Franco Zeffirelli, Alessandro Blasetti, Luca Comerio, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, Dino Risi, Valentino Orsini, Ermanno Olmi, and others. On the other hand, this rediscovery reveals works whose artistic value may be relative, but which are becoming increasingly important as historical sources and as support for teaching. Of course, the documentary value of the films depends largely on the historians who question them, on the quality of their questions, on the depth of their interpretative hypotheses and on the originality of their intellectual project: however, fostering the encounter between films and scholars, between film source and research is one of the most important missions of this archive. From this encounter an ever more suggestive and effective story of the industrial twentieth century can be told. In recent years, ANCI has opened up to little-known film genres such as home movies, amateur film, religious and militant cinema that bear witness to different aspects of the evolution of an entire community and tell the story of the twentieth century from different points of view.

R. C.: *May you explain the collaboration with the ViCTOR-E project on an online exhibition about post-war non-fiction cinema? And can you identify barriers and assess the benefits of cooperation between film archives and research institutes (universities, academic institutes, etc.)?*

E. T.: ANCI collaborated with ViCTOR-E project by making available films produced by companies and documentaries that recounted the transformations of those years in Italy. The researchers worked both in the archive and online through YouTube channels that we manage: *Cinemaimpresatv*, *Mi ricordo* and *Documentalia*. The main difficulty was due to the time needed to prepare and to digitize the masters. Our archive is very young and not all the material has been processed.

M. B.: I was very happy we could join ViCTOR-E project since it's the first time for us that we're participating in this kind of collaboration. I particularly appreciate the work with researchers and the international dimension of the project. We are such a small team that is often overwhelmed by all the daily amount of work, so it's very hard for us to launch

big projects or to give access to our films on a European level, especially because we lack international visibility. Also, our website is in French, and we've been waiting to translate it for years, but we're still lacking budget and time, so we just keep it as it is... Maybe this could be the first step to gain a bit of a recognition from other institutions. For the question of the barriers between film archives and research institutes, I think in France at least, film is still regarded as a source that's not to be trusted by many scholars, maybe not by the younger generation, but still, it is by many historians. Cinema has been existing for 120 years and it is still not seen as trustworthy as books and written material.

M. S.: We are always glad for an opportunity to address the less visible parts of the collection, or the parts of the collection which maybe haven't yet been fully processed and digitised, so any incentive in this respect helps us to shift our attention towards non-fiction films. We find it very useful because, since we are such a large institution, we tend to focus primarily on fiction film and big digital restoration projects. If there is palpable interest, both national and international, in non-fiction film, it helps to advocate for putting more resources that way. As an institution, we can benefit from the research and from these new perspectives of understanding our collections. We probably agree that this is something we all want, but in our case, for example, we are quite lagging in terms of our cataloguing systems and ways how we process and describe our film collection. There's great potential, and as we're working on a new cataloguing system, I hope in the future there would be better ways to facilitate this kind of mutual exchange.

Lucie Česálková: In this respect, I would like to follow up on Matěj and mention that the very concrete result of the cooperation between the ViCTOR-E project and the NFA will be the incorporation into the NFA catalogue of keywords created by the project researchers. It will not be a replacement of the original metadata description, but an extension with the new set of keywords. I think that exchanging knowledge on how to conceptualize films and how to apply these conceptualizations in cataloguing can be one of the important ways of cooperation between film archives and academics in the future.

J. W.: I think it's true for DFF as well. For all the reasons that were mentioned before, we appreciate it being a partner in this project. We've also been able to digitise thanks to the lab La Camera Ottica (at the Gorizia branch of the University of Udine), around 30 titles from our collection that wouldn't otherwise have been digitised, at least not at this point, I suppose, which is always obviously a great thing. Maybe I could say a few words about my role as the archives' contact in this project, and I would support what Marion and Matěj have said — that, in general, archives were very open to collaborate with researchers, I guess, because they do have an interest in seeing their collections evaluated and reused in context that add a new layer to catalogue information that they have in the archive. We have used two approaches: on the one hand, we contacted archives for the film clips of the exhibition, which is, I guess, a very day-to-day and straightforward request for an archive. We were lucky that rights were not a major obstacle in our project. I honestly had expected this to be more difficult, but luckily the archives were very collaborative, some of them even went to the length to clear the rights for us. On the other hand, we also asked them to make available larger parts of their collections on the European Film Gateway, so in contrast to the clips we're using in our online exhibition, on EFG we have the higher number of complete films that are connected to the research topic (right now there

are 650 titles connected to *ViCTOR-E*). The researchers investigated all those films and added keywords developed within the project which also really improved their findability on the European Film Gateway but also in archives own catalogues. Also, the archives saw the benefit and having these extra keywords or, in some cases, even content descriptions written by researchers.

R. C.: *So, the visibility of the archives and the international network that was created was beneficial. Audiovisual heritage is now receiving attention from policymakers. What impact would you expect from the governmental institutions at the local, national, and international levels about your archive's content and mission?*

M. B.: I would be very curious to know about the situation in the other European countries because we've been lucky in France to benefit from a very voluntary public action for decades, regarding culture and cinema. For instance, the CNC, the National Centre for Cinema has been, and still is, a very important protagonist for many years in the preservation of cinema — and it preserves lots of our own collections. In the past few years, however, we see a shift: there is both a decrease of public funding in France and also among the projects that they still support they are growing more and more interested in other stuff — i.e. virtual reality, which is far from what we do. Thus, we are rather worried now because we are not expecting much from national or local policymakers. It's been five years now since we don't have any more public funding, and we remain dependent on footage selling only. For the European level, projects are way too complicated for a small structure like we are. Our way can be joining bigger projects launched by other people.

M. S.: I'm not sure that the audiovisual heritage is receiving attention from policymakers, or that it's sufficient. We are very much dependent on the Ministry of Culture, which means that there is obviously institutional support, but this kind of reliance makes you very dependent on outcomes of elections, approaches that your local policy bodies take towards inflation, towards supporting public heritage institutions, etc. However, I would rather like to stress the role of the ACE, the European Association of European Cinema-theques, that is instrumental, as you all know, in the European Film Gateway project. It is very important for European archives to have a common platform, but also an interlocutor as a means of representing themselves towards not only European public, but also to the European policymakers. There I see still a great potential for improvement in terms of the European administration and its relation to film archives. How EU understands the importance of audiovisual heritage, the importance of film heritage institutions in this respect and how it finds the way to support them is crucial, because usually when there's anything that relates to European film, it's usually new productions. There is very little concern taken for film heritage institutions. Things are improving slowly, step by step, and this is why it is so important to highlight these projects and these collaborations on a European level and show that there is a great potential in further supporting and strengthening relations between archives and academic institution. Thanks to this the Commission and other parts of the European administration could take film archives maybe even more seriously than they do now.

J. W.: Yes, first I would like to second everything that Matěj has said about the situation on the EU level and stress that the EU is not usually funding digitisation. In this respect,

this project was an exception, where we were able to have a small budget to do digitisation, but they never do it on a larger scale. We had another exception in years 2012 to 2014 with the *EFG 1914* project, where 21 archives digitised meaningful collections related to the First World War, but this was the only project we had on the EU level that actually funded larger scale digitisation and after that digitisation was pushed back on national level where it's handled very differently. For example, in Germany we have no mass digitisation at all, we have a national digitisation funding program that is very much focused on fiction feature films, or I should say fiction films in general, and then also very much geared towards presentation in the cinema. As a result, literally everything that's digitised in this project is aimed for screenings in cinemas so there's nothing in there that allows us to publish those films online. At the same time, even within this project we can't speak about huge number of films. I think it enables to digitize around 300 titles per year throughout all German film institutions, so we're talking about, say 40 titles for the DFF, for example. More recently, we have really been trying to push the agenda more so that we're able to include more documentary films in this digitisation funding pool that we have.

E. T.: In Italy, in the last few years there has been and there is a real commitment on the part of institutions: local, and national, which is giving a great boost. This drive towards digitisation, which has been going on since the 1990s, is changing the way we see and consult archives. However, a too rapid transformation can generate problems. We must be careful and not forget that preservation is not the same as digitisation.

R. C.: *As institutions devoted to audiovisual heritage and memory, what do you think of your role in the future? What are your ideas about the new chances offered by digital access?*

M. B.: Well, in this regard I don't think much has changed for 15 years now that we have been digitising; even a very small structure like us has been able to digitise a very huge amount of films and, of course, the digital offers easier distribution of films, it also helps that it doesn't deteriorate too much the physical elements, because you prevent them from circulating too much. Of course, the digital helps us also make the films available on an international level. But then, well, I don't know what will happen. I just hope small independent institutions or film archives like ours will be able to maintain their activities in years to come. This is, I think a threat for us and a challenge to be able to carry on with this activity without being swallowed by national institutions, because, for instance, when in 1998 when Ciné-Archives was created at first, the idea had been to give this collection to INA, the National TV archive in France, and then a political decision was made within the Communist Party to try and maintain an independent structure. I just hope we can still continue in this way.

M. S.: I feel slightly bad for talking about these things after Marion because it's true that right now I'm representing this one national institution. While at NFA, we sometimes think about new agenda in the realm of really a broader understanding of audiovisual heritage, such as computer games, for example, and we, at the same time, ask ourselves, should it really be us again absorbing this? Is this centralization what's really needed? Shouldn't there be more institutions dealing with audiovisual heritage, for example? So, I perfectly understand the benefits of greater diversity of institutions, small and large, striving for not only preservation, but also research and valorisation because then this kind of

diversity also very much helps when it's not governed by one dominant institution. We are the national and the central institution so far, but we don't want to colonise the whole field. The other part of the question, however, also ties obviously two things that sometimes get conflated, namely the idea of access and availability and curation. And I think the obviously great deal of interest in the future would be in ways, how to make our collections accessible and available, but at the same time, work hard on curation and on helping people navigate, search, understand and learn from them, to publish it in an appropriate way and not just put more content online. We don't want to think of our audiovisual heritage only as content, but at the same time we don't want to be putting any barriers towards access. In our case, it's easier at this moment to make the actual films and digitised clips and videos accessible than the actual cataloguing information. So internally, for us, this is the biggest challenge. In that respect we are really lagging some like 10 or 15 years, because most of the major film heritage institutions already have their collection catalogues available and we don't. I'm active within FIAF's Programming and Access to Collections Commission so this is very much on our agenda and we are trying to monitor this. Archives invest a lot of time and energy into making individual videos available on either their channels or some VoDs etc., which is important for projects like this, a curated exhibition connected with EFG, but at the same time, we should be able to find the energy and time to work on making collection catalogues available and searchable for everyone.

E. T.: Our case is particular, because ANCI was opened in 2006, so we were born at a time when digital issues were already taking place and we structured our institution in this direction. For us, the climate control rooms for preservation, the database, the laboratory, and the online channels are working tools that move in a coordinated way. The heterogeneity of our films speaks to such a wide and diverse audience that the only way is digital access. This was clear to us from the beginning, and we have been rewarded, since now in Italy ANCI's "non-theatrical" historical materials are explored by historians, students, and production companies.

J. W.: I think there's also sometimes a disconnect between public expectation and that what an archive really can provide. Particularly in the beginning of the whole digitisation efforts, funding bodies were very keen on archives making as much content available online as possible, which then in the early days of Europeana and EFG, in fact, lead to huge collections that are online, but many of them with poor metadata. So, I totally agree also with what Matěj said. That it is really important for archives in the future to make sure they're not just publishing everything which then cannot be discovered properly because it lacks the appropriate catalogue information. Going to the question of new chances offered by digital access, particularly for non-fiction films, it has been answered, by Elena and Marion; it offers a much better exposure of underrepresented formats such as short non-fiction materials and it also allows us to promote this content as a historical source even to be evaluated and be done research on, like we did in the *ViCTOR-E* project. Ideal way is to integrate this content more into the educational context, which is also an important achievement of this project, as the creation of toolkit of E-learning activities allows non-fiction films to be watched and discussed in the classroom. I think that's a huge benefit of having these materials available in digital form but also increasingly online and it really enlarges the space where we used to promote film. That said, I'd like to remind us

that only 3% to 5% of all content that is available on Europeana is moving image content, so we're very much lagging behind the digitization of other material. It is for obvious reasons, of course, but still I think it's worth pointing out that, despite so much progress that has been made, and continues to be made, it's still such an effort to bring these materials online. That's where I see the biggest chance — the accessibility and promotion of under-represented formats.

Paolo Villa: You actually touched on many topics that have emerged in our discussions during our project meetings, like the curatorship, the availability, providing the material, but also providing it in a way that the content can be properly contextualised and easily accessible to the viewer. There are also other important issues that we, as researchers, don't take too much in consideration, like all the world of commercial licensing that is so important for the archives to keep on going with their work. Moreover, the constellation of smaller archives, that Marion was mentioning, and them being in danger of being swallowed up by the biggest institutions. I also want to stress the idea that the audiovisual heritage is a broader context than simply "film", and here I agree with Matěj that we are dealing specifically with "cinema heritage". In our project we tried to give the chance to these smaller institutions to gain visibility and to give a wider spectrum of the variety of their archival panorama, so it was important for us to have a point, a moment in the project, where we give voice to the archives, so thank you very much to all of you.

M. S.: Actually, I was about to say that it doesn't happen so often that the researchers by the end of the project come and are interested in archive's experience with their project. We, as film archives, are naturally interested in your user experience with our institution, but oftentimes it's not as easy as things should be. It is also great to see the interest you have in what we as the archives think, and what we need, etc. I haven't been so intensely involved with the project, but I was lucky enough to be at the launching meeting in Frankfurt and I'm happy to see this and to have witnessed that close connection between the research and archival part, researchers and archivists; that is very beneficial.

R. C.: With regard to the plurality of archives that we involved, I am thinking about the case of Home Movies in Italy, which is a very small institution, very similar to Ciné-Archives. This visibility is also part of an idea of pluralism, that we have tried to include within our project into many layers: thematic, political, and even institutional. I think that this roundtable was its final point.

Český film jako důsledek proměny kulturního pole

Petr Bilík, *Financování filmu jako aspekt kulturní politiky* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2020).

Nová monografie olomouckého filmového historika Petra Bilíka cílí, jak její poměrně strohý a věcný název naznačuje, na vývoj státní podpory české kinematografie po roce 1989. Činí tak velmi velkorysým způsobem, který v sobě zahrnuje několik mezioborových teoretických rámců, zakotvení filmového průmyslu v širších kulturně-politických souvislostech a zmapování vývoje filmové politiky sahajícího od stručného exkurzu do doby českého raného filmu přes vysvětlení specifik zestátněné kinematografie až do současnosti.

V prvních kapitolách práce nás autor seznamuje s výsledky svých rešerší k tématu, z nichž poměrně jasně vyplývá, že není příliš z čeho vycházet — s čestnou výjimkou nemalé skupiny diplomových prací¹⁾ nebo třeba studií Aleše Danielise.²⁾ Bilík se statečně pustil do první ucelené syntézy tématu a navázal vedle zmíněných zdrojů také na své předchozí výzkumy a projekty (série rozhovorů s aktivními zástupci filmové obce po roce 1989 Ladislavem Helgem a Jaromírem Kallistou či s příslušníky střední producentské generace v rámci projektu FIND, vlastní insiderská zkušenost v pozici člena rady Státního fondu kinematografie v letech 2015–2018) a také — možná především — na statistické a interní materiály svazu FITES či institucí Ministerstva kultury a Státního fondu kinematografie a v neposlední řadě na dobovou mediální reflexi. Samostatnou skupinou sekundárních inspiračních i informačních zdrojů jsou autorovi analýzy příbuzných kulturních a kreativních oborů typu Institutu umění, ale také tituly z oborů politologie a ekonomie, ať již v českém, či v zahraničním kontextu.

Klíčový teoretický rámec vychází nikterak originálně, ale zcela adekvátně z poměrně známých politologických a převzaté i kulturních konceptů advokačních koalic a kulturního pole. Autor nahlíží několik desetiletí trvající boj českých filmařů za systematické a důstojné zafinancování českého filmu jako „elementární vazbu příčin a následků“, které podléhají čtenáři postupně odhalovaným faktorům,

1) Vedle poměrně známé diplomové práce Pavla Strnada „Transformace české kinematografie v letech 1989–1999“ (Diplomová práce, FAMU, 2000) je to třeba zatím méně citovaná absolventská práce Richarda Němce „Možnosti návratu finančních investic do českého celovečerního filmu po roce 1989“ (Diplomová práce, FAMU, 1999). Z prací, které Bilík pomíjí, bych si dovolila připomenout ještě diplomovou práci Františka Poka „Proces tvorby české audiovizuální legislativy po roce 1989: Perspektiva Multiple Streams Framework“ (Diplomová práce, FSV UK, 2018).

2) Aleš Danielis, „Česká filmová distribuce po roce 1989“, *Iluminace* 19, č. 1 (2007), 53–104; Aleš Danielis, „Česká filmová distribuce 2007–2016: Desetiletí změny“, *Iluminace* 29, č. 2 (2017), 25–63.

jež proces „znesnadňovaly“, a těm, „které naopak pomohly“ (176). Výsledkem těchto úvah je vedle analýzy jednotlivých okolností bodová, avšak velmi výstižná a komplexní syntéza v závěrečné kapitole.

Bilík nám ukazuje, že proces emancipace českého filmu v posledních třiceti letech je vlastně velmi napínavý příběh, který se vyvíjel v etapách ne nepodobných klasickému (melo)dramatu s expozicí, peripetemií, kolizí a závěrečným happy endem. Knížka se ovšem nečte nijak snadno, protože autorovy cíle jsou mnohem poctivější, než aby se nechaly ukolébat atraktivitou dějinného vývoje. Jedním z největších kladů Bilíkovy knihy je samozřejmost, s jakou se pohybuje na mezioborovém poli, a jeho schopnost vnímat filmovou problematiku ve vertikálních i horizontálních souvislostech včetně mezinárodních kontextů a širších kulturně-politických, ale i čistě politických rámců. Mnohé výstižné poznámky a hodnocení si v naprosté většině zachovávají akademický odstup a dokládají, že autor sám není jen historik, nýbrž také zkušený a racionální aktér kulturně-politických a manažerských procesů.

Až globálně jsou pojaty především první historické kapitoly, které popisují celý kontext politických změn a transformace po roce 1989 a vývoj „ne-vztahu“ státu k filmovému průmyslu. Kapitoly věnované vývoji samotného filmu můžeme při kritickém čtení označit jako disproporční. Zbytečně podrobný je kupříkladu již zmíněný historický exkurz do počátků filmového průmyslu v kapitole „Ozvyky minulosti“, naopak důvody rezignace FS Barrandov na koprodukcí českých filmů v kapitole „Barrandov“ jsou zmíněny jen obecně jako „poněkud nešťastné vlastnické transfery“, které studio přivedlo „takřka mimo vliv původních akcionářů“ (73). V 90. letech se autor ještě dostane k občasné charakteristice národní filmové produkce (fenomén chčipáckého filmu aj.), zatímco později už nikoliv. Na druhou stranu obecnější kulturně-politický horizont — který je ostatně jádrem autorova výzkumného zájmu — je analyzován poměrně systematicky a konzistentně. Až překvapivě informačně nosné se v průběhu desetiletí ukazují být dokumenty na úrovni programových prohlášení vlád či obecných kulturně-politických koncepcí — ať již pro konkrétní formulaci oněch několika vět o filmu, nebo pro její absenci.

Osobně vnímám největší historický přínos publikace v podrobném popisu vývoje českého filmového průmyslu v prvních měsících a letech po listopadu 1989. Bilík s využitím výzkumů Pavla Strnada, rozhovorů s pamětníky či archivu FITESu zasazuje proces transformace do širších časových úvah před rokem 1989 a rekonstruuje pro mou generaci už ne vždy přehledné názorové pozadí a rozložení sil v ideových sporech kolem privatizace podniků Československého filmu a budoucího financování českého filmu, a to až na úrovni sítí konkrétních skupin aktérů a jejich motivací. Druhé historické těžiště knihy lze identifikovat v analýze snah českých filmových kruhů o změnu nevyhovující legislativy, která vyvrcholila schválením nového zákona o audiovizí v roce 2013. Frustrující dvacetiletý proces provázelo mnoho intervencí ze strany zastánců a odpůrců veřejné podpory filmu, více či méně validních diskuzí, konfliktů a nátlakových akcí, ale i pomalá, leč hluboká proměna pohledu politické reprezentace na český filmový průmysl. Tento vývoj byl sice již dříve syntetizován v některých odborné veřejnosti známých materiálech Ministerstva kultury, Bilík jej ovšem vedle představení širší veřejnosti také důsledně kontextualizuje a domýšlí. Poukazuje na zásadní body vedoucí i „tranzici“, jimiž podle něj byl třeba vstup České republiky do Evropské unie či vznik důležitých nezávislých analýz a koncepčních dokumentů v prvním desetiletí 20. století.

Zásadním bodem filmové advokacie podle autora nebyla jen zákulisní jednání, ale z dnešního pohledu do značné míry zákonitá změna politického paradigmatu a překvapivěji také nové vědomosti a analýzy, které přinesly mnohem kvalitnější argumenty proti zastáncům ideje, že film jako soukromé podnikání nemá být státem nikterak podporován. V této souvislosti si nemohu odpustit poznámku, že

Národní filmový archiv, Státní fond kinematografie, Ministerstvo kultury, Institut umění, NIPOS ani Český statistický úřad v současné době nesbírají, respektive nezveřejňují ani ta základní data o filmu, jaká byla ještě před deseti lety dohledatelná ve Filmových ročenkách či Zprávách o kinematografii. Vraťme se však k Petru Bilíkovi, který ve své knize v neposlední řadě odhaluje důležité decision-make-ry a aktéry, jimiž byli vedle filmu fandících ministrů kultury (mj. Pavel Dostál nebo Václav Riedlbauch) také aktivističtí filmaři (kromě již zmíněného Jaromíra Kallisty autor cení především dlouholeté úsilí producenta Pavla Strnada), ale i méně nápadná, a přitom klíčová osobnost bývalé úřednice Ministerstva kultury a současné ředitelky Státního fondu kinematografie Heleny Bezděk Fraňkové. Právě té se podařilo úsilí o uznání nutnosti podpory filmu dotáhnout do úspěšného konce.

Petr Bilík se snaží být co nejpresnější interpretátorem a pro svého čtenáře je velmi důvěryhodným průvodcem po vývoji postavení filmu v české kulturní politice posledních třiceti let. Polemiku s autorem bych vedla pouze v několika málo momentech. Jak dokládá Aleš Danielis,³⁾ nástup multikin nevedl k poklesu návštěvnosti a ekonomických výnosů českých filmů (88), nýbrž k přesnému opaku. Už hůře dohledatelná je interní ministerská informace o tom, že pokles, respektive výkyv odvodů za práva k českým filmům do Fondu na konci 90. let nesouvisel se snížením zájmu diváků (89), ale se špatně nastavenými podmínkami smluv s prodejci práv k tzv. „fondovým“ filmům, které umožňovaly pro cash-flow Fondu velmi nevýhodné několikaleté balíkové prodeje. Polemizovala bych také s nutností mapovat vývoj českého filmového průmyslu až prakticky do současnosti, respektive do pandemického roku 2020. Čím čerstvější jevy jsou autorem reflektovány, tím zkratkovitěji a nepřesněji se tak v historické práci děje. Myslím, že výzkum mohl být uzavřen komfortně a zdůvodnitelně například u novely zákona o audiovizí v roce 2015. Autor v závěru mimo jiné upozorňuje na to, jak křehké vítězství osvíceného pohledu na národní filmový průmysl je. Kroky nové vlády už několik měsíců po dopisování rukopisu (dočasné pozastavení programu filmových pobídek a výplaty peněz z Národního plánu obnovy) bohužel naznačují, že Bilíkova obava může být velmi oprávněná.

S průkopnictvím a šíří tématu, autorovou sympatickou snahou o komplexnost a pravděpodobně i s organizačními úskalími výzkumného projektu završeného v pandemické době souvisejí také některé slabiny textu. Petr Bilík chce, leč nemůže všechna sledovaná období a všechna paralelní sub témata a motivy popsat srovnatelně podrobně. Už proto, že takový výzkum by mu spíše než roky zabral desítky let. V některých případech tedy nechtěně přicházejí na řadu až žurnalistické zkratky. Hlavní výhradu bych nicméně odvíjela od pravděpodobně napjatého času na závěrečnou autorskou revizi textu (či jiný typ organizačních překážek) a především od chybějícího odborného redaktora, kterého by si publikace tohoto významu, vycházející navíc ve velkém a respektovaném nakladatelství, zasloužila. Mezi hlavní nedostatky tohoto typu řadím v některých kapitolách zcela absentující či chybně uvedené zdroje (několik příkladů za všechny — chybí pramen k cenné informaci o statistikách videodistribuce /70/, jména konkrétních historiků a respondentů, na které se autor odkazuje na stranách 83 nebo 103, ale i zdroje k celým kapitolám /81–88/). Identifikovány nejsou jednotlivé dílčí archivní fondy FITESu. A především tzv. „dokumenty“, tedy pro výzkum klíčové interní materiály z provenience státních institucí, nejsou ozdrojovány, respektive lokalizovány vůbec (strana 198, ale i předchozí soupis literatury — třeba důležitá studie Jana Svobody). V závěrečných korekturách došlo k přehlédnutí zmatku v názvech kapitol (evidentně chybí oddělení klíčové kapitoly o schválení zákona o kinematografii, 157nn) a navíc k jejich nesprávnému stránkování v obsahu knihy.

3) Danielis, „Česká filmová distribuce po roce 1989“, 89.

Budoucí badatel, který bude chtít na Bilíkův výzkum navázat, nebude mít tudíž lehkou práci. Což je — vzhledem ke kvalitám výstupu — opravdu velká škoda. Bylo by žádoucí, kdyby se v budoucnosti podařilo autorovi projekt doplnit ještě o edici předmětných interních materiálů (ne nutně v tištěné podobě) a ideálně i o publikaci (či alespoň veřejnou archivaci) rozhovorů, které Petr Bilík v rámci projektu realizoval. Minimálně část těchto velmi cenných podkladů není veřejně přístupná, a jejich dohledání za pár desítek let je tudíž spíše iluzorní.

Zaráží mě také, že se k publikaci takového oborového významu její nakladatel zachoval poměrně macešsky. Kniha vyšla uprostřed pandemie bez jakékoliv propagační kampaně. Vedle chybějící odborné redakce se šetřilo i na vazbě a měkké obálce, které komplikují komfortní badatelskou práci s knihou. Na obálce nezaujme sterilní neautorská fotografie sedaček v multikině koupená v agenturní fotobance, která navíc nekoresponduje s tematickým jádrem knihy, jež se o multikinech zmiňuje jen opravdu okrajově. Sazba je generická a bez ilustrací (výjimkou je několik nekomentovaných přehledových a informačně cenných grafů v závěru, s nimiž už ale autor v textu zpětně nepracoval). Forma prezentace tak více než důležitému završení několikaletého výzkumu významného akademika odpovídá spíše utilitárnímu sborníku z nedůležité konference, který je vydáván nikoliv z vůle nakladatelského domu, ale na zakázku. Pousmání vzbuzuje i (zřejmě záměrný) grafický prvek metadat sazby v pravé části stránek. Časová informace o tisku totiž nezáměrně a drze prozrazuje, že realizace knihy byla ve skutečnosti dokončena v jiném kalendářním roce, než uvádí tiráž.

Výše uvedené výhrady by ale rozhodně neměly odradit potenciálního čtenáře Bilíkovy knihy od jejího pečlivého prostudování. Jedná se o dosavadní završení předchozích výzkumů a publikací autora. Historická objevnost, vydařeně propojení tématu vývoje českého filmového průmyslu s politickými změnami po roce 1989, fundovanost a originalita pohledu, to vše stojí nad dílčími metodickými a redakčními nedostatky. Vznikl redakčně neučesaný, ale obsahově velkorysý průvodce světem filmové politiky po roce 1989. A navíc zatím se šťastným koncem.

Tereza Czesany Dvořáková

Bibliografie

- Danielis, Aleš. „Česká filmová distribuce po roce 1989“, *Iluminace* 19, č. 1 (2007), 53–104.
- Danielis, Aleš. „Česká filmová distribuce 2007–2016: Desetiletí změny“, *Iluminace* 29, č. 2 (2017), 25–63.
- Pok, František. „Proces tvorby české audiovizuální legislativy po roce 1989: Perspektiva Multiple Streams Framework“ (Diplomová práce, FSV UK, 2018).
- Němec, Richard. „Možnosti návratu finančních investic do českého celovečerního filmu po roce 1989“ (Diplomová práce, FAMU, 1999).
- Strnad, Pavel. „Transformace české kinematografie v letech 1989–1999“ (Diplomová práce, FAMU, 2000).

Pod povrch věcí

Rachael Hutchinson, *Japanese Culture Through Videogames* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

Rachael Hutchinson, profesorka japonských studií na University of Delaware, v knize nahlíží japonskou kulturu prostřednictvím média videoher, a hned úvodem je nutné konstatovat, že tak činí velmi neotřelým způsobem. Právě svým úzkým zaměřením na japonskou kulturu coby soubor artefaktů studie objevuje v kontextu videoherního bádání dosud neprozkoumané teritorium. Daří se jí tak i přesto, že se tématem japonských videoher dříve z jiných úhlů pohledu zabývala již řada autorů. Například Mia Consalvo v monografii *Atari to Zelda*¹⁾ zkoumá japonské videohry nejen z hlediska specifické korporátní produkce a marketingu, ale také z pohledu recepce, zejména tedy u hráčského publika na Západě. Svým záběrem se však Consalvo dotýká i fenoménu fanouškovských modifikací původních titulů, problematiky lokalizací aj. Konzumní vzorce a v mnohém jedinečné podmínky japonské hráčské komunity naopak přibližuje Hiroki Azuma v publikaci *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*.²⁾ Téma žánrové tvorby, konkrétně japonského videoherního hororu, pak z hlediska kognitivní filmové teorie zpracovává kanadský teoretik Bernard Perron. Zvláště inspirativní je v tomto jeho monografii věnovaná prvním třem dílům série *Silent Hill*.³⁾

Hutchinson své teze (spíše než o pozorování hráčského konzumerismu či teorie filmu) opírá o důkladnou znalost japonské historie a kultury, místy v ostré konfrontaci s její americkou perspektivou. Navzdory očekáváním tak publikaci otevírá scéna (1), v níž někdejší japonský premiér Šinzó Abe, sám o sobě dosti kontroverzní figura novodobých japonských dějin,⁴⁾ v kostýmu oblíbené postavy Super Maria od společnosti Nintendó vystupuje na závěrečné ceremonii Letních olympijských her v Rio de Janeiru roku 2016. Má tím být ilustrován hluboký vztah, který nejen k postavě Maria, nýbrž v širším smyslu k celému hernímu médiu Japonci coby národ chovají. Současně tímto příkladem autorka demonstrovuje svůj rozhled a znalost širšího kontextu, který je pro ni příznačný a v jehož rámci na dalších stránkách vztah videoher k japonské kultuře pojednává. Mimoděk navíc přináší i důležité podněty na

1) Mia Consalvo, *Atari to Zelda: Japan's Videogames in Global Contexts* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2016).

2) Hiroki Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, trans. Jonathan E. Abel – Shion Kono (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

3) Bernard Perron, *Silent Hill: The Terror Engine* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2012).

4) Viz např. Daniel Hurst, „Shinzo Abe and wife accused of giving cash to ultra-nationalist school“, *The Guardian*, 23. 3. 2017, cit. 28. 1. 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/23/shinzo-abe-wife-akie-accused-giving-cash-ultra-nationalist-school>.

téma apropriace jinak přísně apolitické videoherní tvorby pro účely populistické agendy japonské vlády.

Monografie je přehledně členěna na převážně teoretický úvod a tři hlavní části, jež na sebe plynule a logicky navazují. Autorčiným ústředním, již v úvodu deklarovaným záměrem je analýza vybraných japonských videoher coby tzv. „kulturních scénářů“ (5), tj. rozbor těchto her jakožto případových studií v kontextu soudobého života v Japonsku konce 20. a počátku 21. století. Japonská hráčská komunita i specifika tamější videoherní subkultury jsou záměrně ponechány stranou autorčina zájmu. V návaznosti na práce teoretiků typu Kena McAllistera⁵⁾ a Christophera Paula⁶⁾ se Hutchinson v knize pokouší o reflexi videoher coby svébytných „diskurzivních struktur“ (10). Vychází přitom z premisy, že samotné hraní her může být svého druhu „diskurzivní praktikou“ (10), protože je v intencích ideologické kritiky pojímá coby jedinečné subverzivní médium. Jak Hutchinson dále konstatuje, videohry v sobě nesou ideologické stopy společnosti, která je vytvořila (ať již prostřednictvím konkrétních způsobů reprezentace, volbou narativu, způsobem uchopení zvoleného tématu, anebo např. zobrazením hierarchických struktur společnosti), současně ale obsahují i potenciál, jehož prostřednictvím lze tyto hodnoty zpochybnit (10).

Text knihy postupuje od nejméně problematických témat typu reprezentace japonských realit na pozadí proměňujících se ročních dob či tradičních uměleckých technik přes demografické změny a sociální rozvrat i související ekonomické potíže Japonska od 90. let minulého století do současnosti až po traumata válečného období a otázky nepohodlného a spíše okrajového žánru japonských válečných her. Neabsentuje ani polemika nad dědictvím japonského kolonialismu z dob někdejšího japonského impéria ve východní Asii (1910–1945) a souvisejících kontroverzí.

První část s názvem „Japonská kultura coby hratelný objekt“ pojímá kulturu jako bezpočetný soubor artefaktů, s nimiž tvůrci her svobodně manipulují, zatímco jejich práce mohou souběžně sloužit nejen k zábavě, ale též k edukativním účelům. Například mírně excentrická, nicméně hluboce originální série *Katamari Damacy* (Namco, 2004) umožňuje uživatelům hry seznámení se současným japonským obydlím. Neukazuje jej však jako výkladní skříň soudobé architektury a designu, nýbrž spíše coby rozměrově skromný prostor zahlcený změtí nesourodých předmětů. Ty se v obydlí akumulují během každodenního shonu, přičemž úkolem hráčů je herní prostor těchto věcí zbavit prostřednictvím kutálející se koule zvané *katamari*,⁷⁾ která má schopnost na sebe nalepit okolní objekty. S postupem narativní linie se *katamari* zvětšuje a hráč na ni musí nabalovat stále rozměrnější předměty, v některých případech dokonce i zvířata a lidi. Hutchinson coby jednu z možných interpretací tohoto faktu uvádí poněkud nihilistickou kritiku konzumu, která pokládá člověka na roveň komodity, a zároveň jako svérázný komentář k problému přelidnění naší planety. Jakkoli nekonvenčně toto čtení působí, připouštím, že i z mého pohledu zní spíše validně. Za doprovodu japonské populární hudby tak hra zobrazuje japonské domy i celá města, která s notnou vizuální nadsázkou reprezentují nepřiliš výstavnou „realitu“ moderního žití (30). Ta je jednak „pateticky přelidněná“ a „beznadějně chaotická“⁸⁾ a zároveň v přímém rozporu s tradiční estetikou ovlivněnou zen-buddhismem. Jinými slovy, ně-

5) Ken S. McAllister, *Game Work: Language, Power, and Computer Game Culture* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004).

6) Christopher A. Paul, *Wordplay and the Discourse of Video Games: Analyzing Words, Design, and Play* (London – New York: Routledge, 2012).

7) Samotný název hry je slovní hříčkou složenou z japonských výrazů pro „slepenec“ (*katamari*) a „duši“ (*tamaši*), v transliterované podobě užito jako *damacy*.

8) Kyoichi Tsuzuki, *Tokyo: A Certain Style* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1999), 9.

kdejší asketismus a střídmost ustupují důrazu na objem a kvantitu.⁹⁾ Realita v *Katamari Damacy* je ovšem notně posunutá, takže zobrazené reálie v rámci eklektické směsi nostalgie a kýče hry ne vždy korespondují s příslušným prostorem, zvyky a detaily sahajícími až k pokrmům typickým pro jednotlivá roční období. Hutchinson důkladně rozebírá jednotlivé komponenty tradičního ideálu japonského domova od slaměných rohoží *tatami* přes specifické ohřívadlo a nízký stolec v jednom zvané *kotatsu* až po tradiční pokrmy či dětské hračky typu dřevěných panenek *kokeši* roztroušených v jednotlivých lokacích. Podává tak zasvěcený japanistický výklad srozumitelný i pro širší akademickou obec, a je-li to nutné, upozorňuje na zřejmé nesrovnalosti či některé nesmysly ve hře obsažené. Tradičně v zimním období konzumované mandarinky a novoroční přání *nengadžó* jsou tak, jak autorka správně upozorňuje, v ostrém kontrastu k idylické letní scénérii venku za oknem.

Další z klíčových děl, jejichž analýzu nalezneme v první části, je vizuálně působivé *Ōkami* (Capcom, 2006). Hra, jejíž stylizace upomíná na tahy štětcem v tradiční tušové malbě a kaligrafii, volně zpracovává starojaponské mýty z kronik *Kodžiki* (712) a *Nihon šoki* (720), přičemž videoherní médium zde slouží k přiblížení látky mladším generacím i cizímu publiku. Je příznačné ironické, že právě hra, která se setkala s úspěchem u kritiky, komerčně nijak nevynikla. Nedlouho po jejím uvedení se proto vydavatelská společnost Capcom rozhodla svou experimentální divizi v podobě studia Clover trvale uzavřít. Hutchinson jde však ve své analýze za známá fakta a v barvitě světě *Ōkami* mj. identifikuje projevy orientalismu, tedy procesu, na který už mnohem dříve a v odlišném kontextu upozornil Edward Said.¹⁰⁾ Orientalizace je ostatně toutéž rétorickou metodou využívanou dříve francouzskými a britskými pozorovateli odlehklých zemí v Africe a na Blízkém východě v 18. a 19. století. Uchopení této metody v rukou Japonců a její zacílení zpět na samotné Japonsko, jeden z původních objektů orientalistického diskurzu, problematizuje postavení subjektu (54) a nese v sobě jistý paradox. V této pasáži autorka naráží na jeden z často se opakujících procesů, které lze v japonské (nejen herní) tvorbě identifikovat, a sice přejímání cizích vlivů a jejich přizpůsobení domácímu prostředí a potřebám. Tuto snahu o vytvoření harmonie (*wa*) však v *Ōkami* doplňuje i o poznání méně pacifistické úsilí hlavního etnika o podmanění svého severního souseda, tedy původních obyvatel severní části hlavního japonského ostrova Honšú, národa Ainu. Ainuové byli zejména ve 2. polovině 19. století segregováni a vytlačeni až na severní ostrov Hokkaidó. V neblahém osudu Ainuů a absenci jakýchkoli jiných sousedů ústředního (japonského) etnika ve hře, ať už by šlo o Číňany, Korejce, anebo obyvatele někdejšího jižního království Rjúkjú (dnešní prefektura Okinawa), autorka spatřuje ozvěny hrdého nacionalismu, který ostatně dotvrzuje i název fiktivního světa hry. Výraz „Nippon“ totiž přímo odkazuje k militantně orientovaným snahám o vytvoření normativní japonské identity a základům japonského imperialismu v období Meidži (1868–1912).

Neméně podnětná je i poslední sekce první části, jež pojednává o japonských bojových sériích typu *Karate Champ* (Data East, 1984–) či *Street Fighter* (Capcom, 1987–). Zde autorka na základě podrobných rozborů vystupujících postav a lokací ilustruje využití stereotypů a přehnaně sexualizovaných mužských i ženských typizací, a to opět za účelem dosažení exoticky působící reprezentace vybraných etnik a ras. Domnívám se, že za pozornost v tomto smyslu stojí zvláště bizarně působící informace o krevní skupině, oblíbeném pokrmu či barvě jinak poněkud ploše vykreslených postav, které dávají větší smysl ve specifickém kontextu japonské kultury. Ta totiž přikládá zvláštní význam právě

9) Inge Daniels, *The Japanese House: The Material Culture in the Modern Home* (Oxford – New York: Berg, 2010), 112–113.

10) Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995 [1978]).

krewní skupině jedince, na jejímž základě jsou mj. predikovány obecné charakterové vlastnosti člověka (podobně jako se v evropském kontextu k těmto účelům využívá znamení zvěrokruhu). Klíčovým tématem analýzy bojových her je nicméně binární opozice Japonska a Spojených států. Zkoumané hry v tomto reflektují tvrdé ekonomické soupeření zmíněných dvou mocností během 80. let minulého století a prostřednictvím výchozího nastavení Japonce jako hlavní postavy jasně demonstrují perspektivu svých tvůrců. Zmíněné tendence jsou navíc v knize umně vsazeny do kontextu někdejších teorií o výjimečnosti Japonců, tedy literárního žánru tzv. *nihondžinron*,¹¹⁾ který z dnešního pohledu působí mnohdy až rasisticky. Na základě často domnělých charakteristik, jež přisuzoval japonskému národu kupř. kvůli převládajícím stravovacím návykům ovlivněným výraznou konzumací rýže, totiž utvrzoval některé xenofobní postoje, a to paradoxně i ve vztahu Japonska k jiným asijským zemím.

Druhá část publikace pojednává o ideologiích a společenské kritice. Dané téma otevírá oblíbené klišé japonské populární kultury, jímž je námět opuštěných dětí a chybějících rodičů. Navzdory závažnosti samotné problematiky, která v mnohém odráží reálný posun v japonské společnosti v průběhu 80. a 90. let minulého století, kdy souběžně s ekonomickým růstem přibývalo i rozvodů a současně klesala porodnost, autorka pojednává tuto část mnohdy až humorně. Narativ založený na absenci rodičů se totiž v produkci tehdejší doby vlivem nadužívání stával terčem vtipů a parodií (103). Humor, důraz na mládí a jistá pošetilost bývají přitom integrální součástí těchto namnoze lineárních narativních struktur (105), které jsou typické nejen pro žánr japonských *role-playing games*. Ilustrativní jsou v tomto ohledu série *The Legend of Zelda* (Nintendo, 1986–), *Dragon Quest* (Enix, 1986–) či *Final Fantasy* (Square, 1987–). Posledně zmiňovaná série autorce slouží jako oslí můstek k přestupu do další sekce, jež zpracovává diskurz věnovaný jaderné energii, zejména se zřetelem na její negativní dopady. Kniha opět detailně přibližuje historické pozadí a metodou *close reading* analyzuje vybrané tituly z více než patnáctidílné série. Není přirozeně v možnostech této recenze shrnout veškeré poznatky, jež zde autorka vrší ve skutečně úctyhodném množství. Zvláště bych však ocenil její snahu o vykreslení Japonců nejen coby obětí nukleární agrese, do níž se dlouhodobě stylizují, ale zároveň též jako svého druhu agresory vůči jiným stranám. Autorka k tomuto (132) připomíná texty Simona Avenella, který již dříve upozornil na diskutabilní snahy Japonska o zřízení úložiště jaderného odpadu na území méně rozvinutých ostrovních států v oblasti Pacifiku či bezohlednou těžbu uranu na půdě patřící domorodým kmenům v Austrálii.¹²⁾

Od přemítání o jaderné energii je pak jen krok k úvahám o bioetice a jaderné krizi. Ke svým případovým studiím zde Hutchinson znovu využívá her ze série *Final Fantasy*, přidává však rovněž sci-fi ságu *Metal Gear Solid* (Konami, 1987–) a okrajově též některé pasáže z hororové řady *Resident Evil* (Capcom, 1996–). Generační konflikty a krize identity v těchto hrách zobrazené autorka situuje do kontextu poválečného vývoje velkých japonských korporací typu bankovních domů Micui a Sumitomo nebo průmyslového konglomerátu Micubiši, které dokázaly vytěžit maximum ze zmatků a šedé zóny poválečné japonské ekonomiky. Této jinak mimořádně inspirativní sekci bych vytkl snad jen to, že část věnovaná sérii *Resident Evil* a společenské korupci by jednoznačně zasloužila rozvést šířeji, a to už vzhledem k vlivu těchto her nejen na produkci v Japonsku, ale i na Západě. Vhodné by např. bylo i přiblížení samotného žánru *survival horroru*, jenž byl touto sérií etablován, a jeho pojednání coby důležitého průsečíku média videoher, vlivů japonské i západní kinematografie a tradičních uměleckých

11) Doslova „teorie o Japoncích“.

12) Simon Avenell, *Transnational Japan in the Global Environmental Movement* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017), 148–176.

disciplín typu klasické hudby nebo malířství. Pochybovat lze naneštěstí i o tom, zda autorka správně uchopila smysl těchto her, v nichž namísto svérázného adresování existenciálních otázek současně společnosti spatřuje spíše jen bezmyšlenkovité násilí. Jak ovšem již zaznělo, vzhledem k množství otevřených témat a jednotlivých podotázek i celkovému rozsahu knihy jsou jistá selektivnost i zúžení pohledu v některých pasážích nutné a v zásadě pochopitelné.

Poslední, třetí část publikace uzavírají témata nejméně pohodlná, dosud bolestně prožívaná a aktuální. Patří mezi ně také žánr japonských válečných her. V precizně zpracovaném výčtu faktů a komentářů zaujme například pasáž věnovaná heroizaci poražených na úkor vítězů, která se táhne japonskou historií jako červená nit minimálně od dob japonského středověku (187–188). Nutno podotknout, že signifikantní je zejména způsob smrti těchto adorovaných hrdinů, jež autorka příznačně nazývá „vznešenými ztroskotanci“ (187), neboť prokázali „sílu charakteru tváří v tvář porážce“. Dále též poznamenává, že většina válečných videoher japonské provenience je situována do vzdálené minulosti, ať už jde o občanské války z dob japonského středověku, či postupné sjednocování země v 2. polovině 16. století, obvykle se samuraji v ústředních rolích. Hra *Kessen*¹³⁾ (Kōei, 2000) tak kupříkladu dramatičuje souboje mezi zakladatelem předmoderního Japonska, šógunem Iejasuem Tokugawou, a zbylými příslušníky klanu jeho předchůdce Hidejošiho Tojotomiho. Stylově titul vychází z epických historických snímků režiséra Akiry Kurosawy typu *Kagemuša* (1980) či *Ran* (1985) a i jeho cílem je upevnit předobrazy vytvořené populární literaturou a filmem spíše než přinést nový, alternativní pohled na danou látku.

Moderní svět a události 20. století jsou naopak v japonských hrách tohoto žánru příznačně vynechávány. Pokud už například období II. světové války zmiňováno je, děje se tak zpravidla v souvislosti se svržením atomových bomb, zejména oné hirošimské z 6. srpna 1945. Zvláštní místo v tomto ohledu zaujímá již zmíněná série *Metal Gear Solid* od herního autora Hidea Kodžimy, která je tématem předposlední sekce knihy. Ta k vyvolání dojmu historické autenticity využívá i archivních monochromatických fotografií a záběrů skutečných jaderných explozí. Samotnému Kodžimovi je věnována podstatná část těchto analýz — autorka vyzdvihuje zejména na svou dobu průlomovou integraci médií fotografie a filmu pro navození pocitu žurnalistické reportáže (209). Hutchinson zkoumá sérii v celé její šíři a kromě estetiky *mukokuseki*,¹⁴⁾ která má usnadnit přijetí takovéto hry u zahraničního publika, upozorňuje na Kodžimův ambivalentní vztah k USA, v němž postupně převažují vzrůstající antipatie. Dovedná konstrukce herního prostředí s převážně bělošskými postavami a důsledné vynechání Japonska v rámci hlavní dějové linie však společně s přímým využitím konvencí hollywoodských snímků, jakým byl například první *Terminátor* (James Cameron, 1984), Kodžimovi umožnila vzbudit protiválečné a antinukleární sympatie též u západních spotřebitelů. Hutchinson Kodžimovy osobní postoje dále přibližuje citacemi z dostupných rozhovorů a doplňuje je kritickou analýzou mýtů o Japonsku coby nezúčastněném outsiderovi (či dokonce oběti) i polemikou, jež směřuje k vyvrácení jednostranné odpovědnosti Spojených států a jejich vlády ve významných světových konfliktech. Poukazuje přitom na roli britského kolonialismu a jeho útlaku velké části světa včetně Afghánistánu a dalších konfliktů sužovaných zemí ve střední Asii od 17. až do 19. století. K tomuto viz zejména její rozbor tématu jedné

13) V překladu „Rozhodující bitva“.

14) Doslova „bez státní příslušnosti“. Termín, který poprvé použil Koichi Iwabuchi v publikaci *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). Autor jím odkazuje ke specifickému typu japonské kulturně neutrální produkce, která záměrně eliminuje výskyt japonských reálií za účelem bezproblémové recepce těchto děl u zahraničního publika.

z her této série, která pracuje s námětem pokusu o zničení angličtiny coby „parazitické lingua franca“, v níž namnoze čerpala z předchozí práce od Whaleyho.¹⁵⁾

Domnívám se však, že právě tato část publikace projevuje jistou zaujatost, jelikož se v ní autorka snaží de facto obvinít Kodžimu z pokrytectví a zamlčování role Japonska coby obávaného agresora ve východní Asii od sklonku 19. století až do klíčové kapitulace země v roce 1945. Hutchinson však současně nepřipomíná, že Japonsko na cestu k zahraničním výbojům postavily právě USA svým nátlakem na otevření této dlouho izolované země od r. 1853 a následným uzavíráním série nerovnoprávných smluv. Zjevné absenci odstupu v některých pasážích, jimiž autorka částečně zabředá do obhajoby amerických postojů, bylo však zřejmě obtížné se vyhnout i vzhledem k úzké provázanosti Japonska a Spojených států od konce II. světové války. Zdařilejšího zpracování této problematiky bychom se pravděpodobněji dočkali od skutečně nezáúčastněného pozorovatele těchto sporů v osobě zástupce třetí strany. Zmíněné části textu od Hutchinson v tomto smyslu působí jen jako další příspěvek do diskuze z hlediska americké strany, nikoli coby definitivně platný závěr.

Poslední oddíl závěrečné třetí části se pak zabývá odkazem japonského kolonialismu, jehož důsledky, ač ne zcela v otevřené podobě, přetrvávají jako specifické a neblahé dědictví dodnes. Autorka jeho projevy vhodně ilustruje na příkladech sérií *SoulCalibur* (Namco, 1995–) či *Yakuza* (Sega, 2005–), a sice se zvláštním zřetelem ke způsobům zobrazování Korejců. Zatímco první z těchto sérií se pohybuje v žánru fantasy, Koreu reprezentuje coby „věčně podřízenou japonské kolonizaci“ (234) a zejména korejské ženy jako sexualizované objekty zájmu, série *Yakuza* nabízí realističtější pohled na korejské etnikum skrze zpodobení jeho nelehkého života v Japonsku, konkrétně v roli ostrakizované menšiny.

Přes některé dílčí výhrady ke knize musím závěrem konstatovat, že v naprosté většině předkládaných případových studií autorka zachovává důsledný odstup od probírané látky, pročež převážná část pojednání působí objektivně a vpravdě přesvědčivě. Tam, kde je to vzhledem k povaze zvolených herních artefaktů možné, nabízí precizní a vyčerpávající shrnutí syžetu, postřehy z vlastního hraní včetně poznámek k hernímu prostředí a v některých případech i analýzy tzv. herního paratextu, tedy výtvarného zpracování historických herních automatů či krabic s hrami, jejich doprovodných manuálů a dalších, spíše periferních materiálů. Všechny rozebírané videohry Hutchinson příkladně vsazuje do kontextu společensko-historických událostí a opatřuje nutnými komentáři. Lze proto uzavřít, že kniha dovedně překlenuje oblasti herních i japonských studií a je mimořádným přínosem pro obě tyto disciplíny.

Josef Tichý (FAMU)

Bibliografie

- Avenell, Simon. *Transnational Japan in the Global Environmental Movement* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017).
- Azuma, Hiroki. *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, trans. Jonathan E. Abel – Shion Kono (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

15) Benjamin Whaley, „Beyond 8-bit: Trauma and Social Relevance in Japanese Video Games“ (Disertační práce, University of British Columbia, 2016), 95.

- Daniels, Inge. *The Japanese House: The Material Culture in the Modern Home* (Oxford – New York: Berg, 2010).
- Hurst, Daniel. „Shinzo Abe and wife accused of giving cash to ultra-nationalist school“, *The Guardian*, 23. 3. 2017, cit. 28. 1. 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/23/shinzo-abe-wife-akie-accused-giving-cash-ultra-nationalist-school>.
- Hutchinson, Rachael. *Japanese Culture Through Videogames* (New York: Routledge, 2019).
- Iwabuchi, Koichi. *Recentring Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).
- McAllister, Ken S. *Game Work: Language, Power, and Computer Game Culture* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004).
- Paul, Christopher A. *Wordplay and the Discourse of Video Games: Analyzing Words, Design, and Play* (London – New York: Routledge, 2012).
- Perron, Bernard. *Silent Hill: The Terror Engine* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2012).
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995 [1978]).
- Tsuzuki, Kyoichi. *Tokyo: A Certain Style* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1999).
- Whaley, Benjamin. „Beyond 8-bit: Trauma and Social Relevance in Japanese Video Games“ (Disertační práce, University of British Columbia, 2016).

VÝZVA K AUTORSKÉ SPOLUPRÁCI

NA MONOTEMATICKÝCH BLOCÍCH DALŠÍCH ČÍSEL

Prostřednictvím monotematických bloků se *Illuminace* snaží podpořit koncentrovanější diskusi uvnitř oboru, vytvořit operativní prostředek dialogu s jinými obory a usnadnit zapojení zahraničních přispěvatelů. Témata jsou vybírána tak, aby korespondovala s aktuálním vývojem filmové historie a teorie ve světě a aby současně umožňovala otevírat specifické domácí otázky (revidovat problémy dějin českého filmu, zabývat se dosud nevyužitými prameny). Zájemcům může redakce poskytnout výběrové bibliografie k jednotlivým tématům. **Každé z uvedených čísel bude mít rezervován dostatek prostoru i pro texty s tématem nijak nesouvisející.**

S nabídkami příspěvků (studií, recenzí, glos, rozhovorů) se obraťte na adresu: lucie.cesalkova@nfa.cz.

V nabídce stručně popište koncepci textu; u původních studií se předpokládá délka 15–35 normostran. Podrobné pokyny pro bibliografické citace lze nalézt na webových stránkách časopisu: www.iluminace.cz, v položce Redakce/kontakty.

Television and COVID-19: How to Deal with Global Pandemics While Broadcasting

(Deadline September 30, 2022)

Guest Editor: Jana Jedličková

One reason that COVID-19 is a global issue is that it has significantly influenced our everyday experience, our daily routines, and even imprinted itself into our social behaviour and cultural practice. Though it only appeared as recently as the autumn of 2019 and spread worldwide in the winter of 2020, the virus has already become a fixed part of our shared social reality. It ultimately even reached a point where not only had almost every living human being at least heard of COVID-19, they most probably consumed some content that directly or indirectly reflected upon our own pandemic-related experiences. While it certainly can be viewed as a disruptive element in our shared lives, the global pandemic can also present an opportunity for new ways of making social connections and giving rise to new cultural practices and shared experiences. Television (including online streaming platforms and VOD portals) is a medium that equally occupies the private and public spheres, and thus not only enables constructed reflections of COVID-19 and its cultural and social meanings in our lives, it also creates new interpretations and meanings of the disruptive existence of global pandemics.

Therefore, the following issue of *Illuminace* is focused on the topic of television and TV industries dealing with COVID-19. Even though we realize that topics connected to the virus and its influence on TV industries and audio-visual industries, and the entertainment business in general, are time-consuming in regard to conducting proper academic research, we urge readers to share your academic views on the pandemic's influence on creative industries (mainly connected to linear and non-linear TV). After all, studies reflecting upon broadcasting and/or streaming COVID-19 news, disrupting TV production, or challenging distribution strategies already exist and have been or are in the process of being published.

Many TV productions were held back or cancelled due to the pandemic. TV companies had to change their programming strategies because less new content was being made (leading to fast and cheap reality TV programming, short-format comedy series targeting younger audiences, and extensively relying on reruns and archival programming). Shooting was also upheld by extensive health protection regulations and, lately, also by demands of mandatory vaccinations for cast and crew (in some countries often resulting in losing actors who disagree with the policies). Not to mention there are increased costs for producing TV series. On the other hand, TV programming went through a renaissance due to the need to report reliable information (the role of PSM raised significantly, hand in hand with the viewership of public service media) and to fight against fake news. Many TV companies and streaming services (including VOD portals) reported raised interest in documentary and educational television content, not to mention broadcasting targeting children. COVID-19 also significantly influenced our societal and individual mental health, which television often used as an advantage, and it also reframed a concept of so-called comfort TV. Not only do we observe the rise of calming, soothing, optimistic TV series (contrary to dark and semi-traumatic quality TV prevalent in the past two decades), but the topic of mental health is often the main theme of many TV series and factual programming (e.g., *Ted Lasso*, *Queer Eye*, *The Morning Show*,

We're Here, *Doom Patrol*, *In Treatment*, *WandaVision* and *The Falcon and The Winter Soldier*, *Station Eleven* just to name a few internationally known examples). There is also a new format of covid short programming appearing all over the globe: fictional TV series targeting younger audiences (sometimes branded as online-only or web series) and reflecting upon life during lockdowns (series such as Irish *Le Ceangal*, Spanish *Quarantine Diaries*, or Czech *Láska v čase korony* (Love in the Time of Corona) or *Třídni schůzka* (Parent-Teacher Conference)). Not by chance, series such as these are usually set in Zoom or Skype interface, using specific communication tools and situational comedy coming from relying on lousy internet connections, weak technological skills, and distance relationships. Finally, TV industries needed to adapt very quickly to a new and unprecedented situation. Unlike live arts such as music, theatre, and dance, you can watch your favourite TV programme without the need to leave your apartment. Thus, TV was able to adapt, though not without costs, and even offer space and time to those who were less flexible, such as movie blockbusters aiming for cinema openings. Streaming portals such as Netflix, Amazon, or HBO Max (and other non-exclusively TV VODs) jumped in to catch potential viewers who got stuck in their homes: they even developed and offered group and family viewing options, along with the possibility to chat with friends while watching a TV show, to their interfaces. Many such technological features are being reconsidered as there is no further use for them.

Thus, for this issue, we invite global, national, regional, or other studies, case studies, academic reflections, etc., focusing on COVID-19 and its influence (or presence) on TV and audio-visual industries, with possible topics including but not limited to:

- COVID-19 (or absence of) as a theme of contemporary TV content
- narrative strategies, online communication, and TV content targeting young viewers
- comfort TV framed through COVID-19 pandemic
- educational and documentary TV formats, reality TV, and/or live TV and COVID-19
- reporting COVID-19 news on TV
- watching and streaming TV in the age of COVID-19
- new production and distribution strategies of contemporary TV programming resulting from national lockdowns and health protection regulations
- role of PSB in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic
- COVID-19 resulting in innovative TV programming strategies, targeting new audiences, launching new streaming services and TV channels (or rebranding old ones)
- TV and live arts (music industry and theatre especially) as an example of crisis cooperation due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- technology and COVID-19 in TV broadcasting and streaming
- contemporary TV trends influenced by COVID-19

For further inspiration, see the literature, podcast, and blog examples of semi- or fully academic reflections on COVID-19 in TV industries cited below.

Please send an abstract (250 words) and a short bio (150 words) to lucie.cesalkova@nfa.cz and ja.jedlickova@gmail.com by **June 1, 2022**. The authors will be informed of the decision by **June 25, 2022**. The deadline for submitting the full article is **September 30, 2022**.

Literature:

- Apuke, Oberiri Destiny and Omar Bahiyah. "Television News Coverage of COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria: Missed Opportunities to Promote Health Due to Ownership and Politics," *SAGE OPEN* 11, no. 3 (2021), 1–13.

- Berman, Judy and Simmone Shah. "How Docu-Mania Took Streaming by Storm," *TIME Magazine* 197, no. 13/14 (2021), 95–97.
- Berman, Judy. "How the Virus Attacks Traditional TV," *TIME Magazine* 195, no. 20/21 (2020), 87–89.
- "Covid-19 crisis: Public service media audience performance," EBU, 2020, cit. 14. 1. 2022, <https://www.ebu.ch/publications/research/membersonly/report/covid-19-crisis-psm-audience-performance>.
- "Covid-19 crisis: Public service media support to the arts and creative sector," EBU, 2020, cit. 14. 1. 2022, <https://www.ebu.ch/publications/research/membersonly/dataset/covid-19-crisis-psm-support-to-the-arts-and-creative-sector>.
- Flynn, Roddy. "Irish Film and Television the Year in Review-2020: Introduction, The Irish Audiovisual Sector in 2020: Living in the Shadow of Covid," *Estudios Irlandeses — Journal of Irish Studies*, no. 16 (2021), 303–311.
- Graca, Martin and Sláva Gracová. "Effect of the Quarantine on Television Viewership," *Megatrends & Media: Media Farm — Totems & Taboo*, no. 1 (2020), 41–48.
- Horeck, Tanya. "'Netflix and Heal': The Shifting Meanings of Binge-Watching during the Covid-19 Crisis," *Film Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (2021), 35–40.
- Kabbadj, Mohcine and Mohamed Bendahan. "Television Channels in the Face of the Covid-19 Pandemic: Case of Public Television Channels in Morocco," *Essachess* 14, no. 2 (2021), 129–150.
- Lino, Mirko. "Post-Apocalypse Now. Cinema and Zombie Series as a Pre-Mediation of Contagion: Spaces, Media and Lockdowns," *Between* 11, no. 22 (2021), 113–138.
- Raats, Tim. "The Resilience of Small Television Markets to COVID-19: the Case of Lock-down," *Baltic Screen Media Review* 8, no. 1 (2020), 82–89.
- Samudio Granados, Marcela, Mónica Maruri Castillo, and Roberto Ponce-Cordero. "Voices and Images of Hope: The Rebirth of Educational Television in Ecuador in Times of COVID-19," *Journal of Children & Media* 15, no. 1 (2021), 65–68.
- Shaw, Caitlin. "Introduction: Television and Nostalgia Now," *Journal of Popular Television* 9, no. 3 (2021), 287–91.
- Túñez-López, Miguel, Martín Vaz-Álvarez, and César Fieiras-Ceide. "Covid-19 and Public Service Media: Impact of the Pandemic on Public Television in Europe," *El Profesional de La Información* 29, no. 5 (2020), 1–16.

Other sources on contemporary TV industries (and covid-19):

- Aca-Media. *The Society for Cinema and Media Studies*. [podcast]. <https://spoti.fi/3qQV7vB>.
- Digital TV Europe: TV Watch. [podcast]. <https://spoti.fi/3EYNKaD>.
- Digital TV Europe, cit. 14. 1. 2022, <https://www.digitaltveurope.com/>.
- Talking TV. *TV News Check*. [podcast]. <https://spoti.fi/3sUGtWW>.
- FLOW TV, cit. 14. 2. 2022, <http://www.flowjournal.org/>.
- CST online, cit. 14. 1. 2022, <https://cstonline.net/>.

(Eco)Traumatic Landscapes in Contemporary Audiovisual Culture

(Deadline: September 30, 2022)

Guest editor: Bori Máté

The advent of the Anthropocene epoch is marked by the emergence of so-called (eco)traumatic landscapes, which bear the tragic consequences of human intervention in the ecosystem. These landscapes are essentially defined by “hyperobjects,” a concept by which Timothy Morton refers to those human-manufactured things “that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans” and are directly responsible for “the end of the world.”¹⁾ In geographical areas such as Chernobyl, Fukushima, or “Mar de plástico” in Almería (southern Spain), long-life plastic or nuclear materials exert long-term harmful effects not only on the surrounding primal, natural elements (like water, soil, air) but also on human and nonhuman life forms around. The damage played out by invisible nuclear, plastic, or agrochemical “perpetrators” over years and generations is a typical example of “slow violence,” a usual consequence of so-called “toxic geographies.”²⁾ Rob Nixon’s idea of this specific form of violence associated with capitalism and industrialization calls our attention to the social consequences and human suffering present in these areas and environments; at the same time, slow violence broadens our traditional ideas of spatiotemporality and provokes artistic and theoretical questions about representation, visibility, medium specificity, but also agency and affectivity. Similarly to Nixon’s concept, Jennifer Gabrys points out that forests themselves become “planetary media” by recording, registering, and operationalizing collective amassings of carbon and heat, the results of global warming.³⁾ Thus, the ways ecology-related traumatic events register in nonhuman agents can be considered as both planetary and medial events. See, for example, the camera-less Japanese experimental film, *Sound of a Million Insects, Light of a Thousand Stars* (Tomonari Nishikawa, 2014), which was created by burying a 100-foot-long 35mm negative film under fallen leaves approximately 25 km away from the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Station. The soil, the insects inhabiting that soil, the air that carries radioactive molecules are the planetary media that then imprint themselves into the film’s body — another organic material — that does not only function as another (planetary) medium but makes visible the local manifestation of a hyperobject called radiation.

Certain experimental films and documentaries that Scott MacDonald theorizes as “ecocinema” suggest that it is not the undertaking of such cinematic works to create “pro-environmental narratives shot in a conventional Hollywood manner [...] or even in a conventional documentary manner.” Their task lies in providing “new kinds of film experience” that pose “an alternative to conventional media-spectatorship and to help nurture a more environmentally

1) Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

2) Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2011).

3) Jennifer Gabrys, “Becoming Planetary,” *e-flux*, October 2018, accessed June 30, 2022, <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/accumulation/217051/becoming-planetary/>.

progressive mindset.”⁴⁾ MacDonald primarily emphasizes cinematic works that produce “visual/auditory training in appreciating the experience of an immersion within natural processes” and offer viewers “a depiction of the natural world within a cinematic experience that models patience and mindfulness.”⁵⁾ Instead, we propose to open up his original category towards audiovisual works that might not focus (or at least not quite unequivocally) on the aspects of patience and deep appreciation of nature, yet foster the development of a more environmentally progressive mindset by creating a sensory experience of hyperobjects (global warming, radiation, the long-lasting effects of pollution and the extraction of raw materials, etc.).

This issue was inspired by the observation that certain photographic works, experimental films, and expanded cinema pieces, among other audiovisual practices that follow distinctive formal strategies, confront us with the challenges of documenting slow violence in audiovisual arts. Thus, we aim to address the modes by which artistic practices place and configure human agency in relation to traumatic events and the role of technology and materiality in translating trauma to sensual artworks. We would like to point out how the trauma discourses of such photographic and filmic documents take a stand on the politics of visibility/audibility and the possibilities of artistic expression in the Anthropocene.

For this issue, we welcome proposals on the following topics or others considered pertinent in the context of this call within the fields of cinema, photography, and other visual arts:

- Landscapes of social and ecological traumas
- Landscapes as emotional archives
- Re-conceptualization of the representation of (eco)trauma
- Affect theory and (film) phenomenology in (audio) visual “representations” of (eco)trauma
- “New materialist” and non-linear approaches to agential matter
- Human and non-human agency
- Decolonial theory and trauma
- Artistic vs political images
- Conflicts of trauma representations and documentations
- Personal and collective consequences of (eco)trauma
- Photographing and filming hyperobjects

Abstracts of the proposed studies of up to 200 words together with a short biography should be sent by **September 30, 2022**, to [lucie.cesalkova@nfa.cz](mailto: lucie.cesalkova@nfa.cz) and [barbatrukk1@gmail.com](mailto: barbatrukk1@gmail.com). The authors will be informed of the decision by **October 21, 2022**. The deadline for submission of final studies is **January 31, 2023**.

Literature:

- Barad, Karen. “Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart,” *Parallax* 20, no. 3 (2014), 168–187.
- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matters: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010).
- Bennett, Jill. *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

4) Scott MacDonald, “The Ecocinema Experience,” in *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*, eds. Sean Cubitt, Salma Monani, and Stephen Rust (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 20.

5) *Ibid.*, 19.

- Gabrys, Jennifer. "Becoming Planetary," *e-flux*, October 2018, accessed June 30, 2022, <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/accumulation/217051/becoming-planetary/>.
- Graham, Steve and Marvin Simon. *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).
- Haraway, Donna J. "The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others," in *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 295–336.
- Heather, Davis. "Life & Death in the Anthropocene: A Short History of Plastic," in *The Routledge Companion to Critical Approaches to Contemporary Architecture*, eds. Swati Chattopadhyay and Jeremy White (London and New York: Routledge, 2019).
- Kanngieser, AM and Zoe Todd. "Listening as Relation, an Invocation" (Lecture given at CTM 2021: Critical Modes of Listening, January 21, 2021, accessed June 30, 2022, 1:06:39: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGe0DYMroEg>).
- Lewis, Richard. "Technological Gaze: Understanding How Technologies Transform Perception," in *Perception and the Inhuman Gaze: Perspectives from Philosophy, Phenomenology, and the Sciences*, eds. Anya Daly, Fred Cummins, James Jardine, and Dermot Moran (London and New York: Routledge, 2020).
- MacDonald, Scott. "The Ecocinema Experience," in *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*, eds. Sean Cubitt, Salma Monani, and Stephen Rust (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 17–42.
- Morton, Timothy. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
- Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2011).
- Schuppli, Susan. *Material Witness: Media, Forensics, Evidence* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2020).
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt, Heather Anne Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bubandt, eds. *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).
- Tumarkin, Maria M. *Traumascapes: The Power and Fate of Places Transformed by Tragedy* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2005).

ILUMINACE

je recenzovaný časopis pro vědeckou reflexi kinematografie a příbuzných problémů. Byla založena v roce 1989 jako půlletník. Od svého pátého ročníku přešla na čtvrtletní periodicitu a při té příležitosti se rozšířil její rozsah i formát. Od roku 2004 je v každém čísle vyhrazen prostor pro monotematický blok textů. Od roku 2005 jsou některé monotematické bloky připravovány ve spolupráci s hostujícími editory. Iluminace přináší především původní teoretické a historické studie o filmu a dalších audiovizuálních médiích. Každé číslo obsahuje rovněž překlady zahraničních textů, jež přibližují současné badatelské trendy nebo splácejí překladatelské dluhy z minulosti. Velký prostor je v Iluminaci věnován kritickým edicím primárních písemným pramenů k dějinám kinematografie, stejně jako rozhovorům s významnými tvůrci a badateli. Zvláštní rubriky poskytují prostor k prezentaci probíhajících výzkumných projektů a nově zpracovaných archivních fondů. Jako každý akademický časopis i Iluminace obsahuje rubriku vyhrazenou recenzím domácí a zahraniční odborné literatury, zprávám z konferencí a dalším aktualitám z dění v oboru filmových a mediálních studií.

POKYNY PRO AUTORY:

Nabízení a formát rukopisů

Redakce přijímá rukopisy v elektronické podobě v editoru Word, a to e-mailem na adrese lucie.cesalkova@gmail.com. Doporučuje se nejprve zaslat stručný popis koncepce textu. U původních studií se předpokládá délka 15–35 normostran, u rozhovorů 10–30 normostran, u ostatních 4–15; v odůvodněných případech a po domluvě s redakcí je možné tyto limity překročit. Všechny nabízené příspěvky musí být v definitivní verzi. Rukopisy studií je třeba doplnit filmografickým soupisem (odkazuje-li text na filmové tituly — dle zavedené praxe Iluminace), abstraktem v angličtině nebo češtině o rozsahu 0,5–1 normostrana, anglickým překladem názvu, biografickou notickou v délce 3–5 řádků, volitelně i kontaktní adresou. Obrázky se přijímají ve formátu JPG (s popisky a údaji o zdroji), grafy v programu Excel. Autor je povinen dodržovat citační normu časopisu (viz „Pokyny pro bibliografické citace“).

Pravidla a průběh recenzního řízení

Recenzní řízení typu „peer-review“ se vztahuje na odborné studie, určené pro rubriku „Články“, a probíhá pod dozorem redakční rady (resp. „redakčního okruhu“), jejíž aktuální složení je uvedeno v každém čísle časopisu. Šéfredaktor má právo vyžádat si od autora ještě před započetím recenzního řízení jazykové i věcné úpravy nabízených textů nebo je do recenzního řízení vůbec nepostoupit, pokud nesplňují základní kritéria původní vědecké práce. Toto rozhodnutí musí autorovi náležitě zdůvodnit. Každou předběžně přijatou studii redakce předloží k posouzení dvěma recenzentům. Recenzenti budou vybíráni podle kritéria odborné kvalifikace v otázkách, jimiž se hodnocený text zabývá, a po vyloučení osob, které jsou v blízkém pracovním nebo osobním vztahu s autorem. Autoři a posuzovatelé zůstávají pro sebe navzájem anonymní. Posuzovatelé vyplní formulář, v němž uvedou, zda text navrhuji přijmout, přepracovat, nebo zamítnout. Své stanovisko zdůvodní v přiloženém posudku. Pokud doporučují zamítnutí nebo přepracování, uvedou do posudku hlavní důvody, respektive podněty k úpravám. V případě požadavku na přepracování nebo při protichůdných hodnoceních

může redakce zadat třetí posudek. Na základě posudků šéfredaktor přijme konečné rozhodnutí o přijetí či zamítnutí příspěvku a toto rozhodnutí sdělí v nejkratším možném termínu autorovi. Pokud autor s rozhodnutím šéfredaktora nesouhlasí, může své stanovisko vyjádřit v dopise, který redakce předá k posouzení a dalšímu rozhodnutí členům redakčního okruhu. Výsledky recenzního řízení budou archivovány způsobem, který umožní zpětné ověření, zda se v něm postupovalo podle výše uvedených pravidel a zda hlavním kritériem posuzování byla vědecká úroveň textu.

Další ustanovení

U nabízených rukopisů se předpokládá, že autor daný text dosud nikde jinde nepublikoval a že jej v průběhu recenzního řízení ani nebude nabízet jiným časopisům. Pokud byla publikována jakákoli část nabízeného textu, autor je povinen tuto skutečnost sdělit redakci a uvést v rukopise. Nevyžádané příspěvky se nevracejí. Pokud si autor nepřeje, aby jeho text byl zveřejněn na internetových stránkách časopisu (www.iluminace.cz), je třeba sdělit nesouhlas písemně redakci.

Pokyny k formální úpravě článků jsou ke stažení na téže internetové adrese, pod sekci „Autoři článků“.

Knihovna Národního filmového archivu nabízí zahraniční filmové databáze

<https://nfa.cz/cz/knihovna/licencovane-database/>

Ve studovně Knihovny NFA (KNFA) jsou v roce 2020 uživatelům (pro registrované uživatele i ve vzdáleném přístupu) k dispozici pro náš obor vybrané elektronické informační zdroje (EIZ). Kromě původních databází NFA (Filmový přehled, Digitální knihovna NFA, Online katalog Knihovny NFA), jsou to licencované elektronické zdroje (mediální databáze, zahraniční filmové databáze). Konkrétně v případě zahraničních filmových databází se jedná v rámci České republiky o jedinečnou kombinaci EIZ, která bude navíc našim čtenářům dostupná až do roku 2022.

Zahraniční filmové databáze v Knihovně NFA:

1. **Screen Studies Collection** (dříve FIO — Film Indexes Online)

nabízí komplexní nástroj pro přístup k aktuálním publikacím zaměřeným na filmovou vědu spolu s podrobnými a rozsáhlými filmografiemi.

Kolekce zahrnuje indexy a filmografie

- a) American Film Institute (AFI) Catalog
- b) Film Index International (FII)
- c) FIAF International Index to Film Periodicals

a) **American Film Institute (AFI) Catalog**

Filmografická databáze zaměřená na americkou produkci poskytující podrobné informace o dlouhometrážních hraných filmech vyrobených na území USA nebo financovaných americkými produkčními společnostmi v období 1893–1972. Databáze obsahuje více než 48000 záznamů filmů s produkčními informacemi, technickými údaji, údaji o tvůrcích, hereckém obsazení a ztvárněných postavách; dále záznamy obsahují podrobný obsah filmu, poznámkový aparát, žánrové zařazení filmu a citační odkazy. Nové údaje jsou vkládány dvakrát ročně. Klíčový zdroj doporučený pro výuku, výzkum a studium filmového umění.

b) **Film Index International (FII)**

Filmografický informační zdroj vytvářený British Film Institute (BFI). Představuje světově nejrozsáhlejší profesionálně budovanou filmovou knihovnu s více než 100000 podrobných záznamů o filmech ze 170 zemí od prvních němých filmů do současnosti s více než milionem odkazů na herecké obsazení a technické údaje. Dále 500000 odkazů na bibliografické citace k jednotlivým filmům a filmovým tvůrcům, 40000 profesních profilů filmových tvůrců, informace o získaných cenách na prestižních filmových festivalech.

c) **FIAF International Index to Film Periodicals**

Databáze obsahuje více než 230 000 záznamů o článcích s filmovou tematikou od roku 1972 do současnosti z více než 345 filmových akademických i populárních periodik z celého světa. Roční přírůstek činí 12000 záznamů. Každý záznam sestává z bibliografických údajů, abstraktu a záhlaví (jména autorů, filmové tituly, předmětová hesla). Databáze obsahuje také záznamy o televizi od roku 1979 (cca 50000 záznamů), od roku 2000 se omezila na články s televizní tematikou pouze z filmových periodik.

2. **JSTOR**

zkratka z anglického Journal Storage (úložiště časopisů)

Digitální knihovna pro studenty a výzkumníky poskytující přístup k více než 12 milionům akademických článků, knih a primárním zdrojům z mnoha disciplín včetně filmu.

Představuje špičkovou on-line databázi digitalizovaných plných textů z více než 2000 vědeckých časopisů. Každý časopis je plně digitalizován od prvního čísla prvního ročníku až po pohyblivou hranici (moving wall), což je obvykle „tři až pět let od současnosti“.

3. **EBSCO**

Megazdroj vědeckých informací pro společenské a humanitní obory.

Databáze EBSCO vychází vstříc požadavkům všech výzkumníků a nabízí elektronickou knihovnu obsahující desítky tisíc časopisů, magazínů a reportů a mnoha dalších publikací v plném textu.

EBSCOHost je jednotné rozhraní umožňující přístup k vybraným bibliografickým a plnotextovým databázím.

V Knihovně NFA jsou k dispozici dvě databáze megazdroje EBSCO:

a) **Academic Search Ultimate**

Databáze byla vytvořena v reakci na zvyšující se nároky akademické komunity a nabízí nejširší kolekci recenzovaných plnotextových časopisů, včetně mnoha časopisů indexovaných v předních citačních indexech. Obsahuje tisíce plnotextových časopisů v angličtině i jiných jazycích, publikovaných na severoamerickém kontinentu, v Asii, Africe, Oceánii, Evropě a Latinské Americe, a nabízí tím pádem jedinečné regionální pokrytí. Databáze integruje lokální obsah předních územně specifických zdrojů z celého světa a umožňuje tak studentům pohled na jejich studium a výzkum z globální perspektivy. Cennou součástí obsahu je i kolekce videozáznamů (více než 74000) od agentury Associated Press. Při vyhledávání se na seznamu výsledků zobrazují v karuseli relevantní videa. Databáze obsahuje videa předních zpravodajských agentur publikovaná od roku 1930 do současnosti a je aktualizována každý měsíc.

b) **Film and Television Literature Index with Fulltext**

Online nástroj pro výzkum v oblasti televize a filmu. Databáze pokrývá problematiku filmové a televizní teorie, uchovávání a restaurování, produkce, kinematografie, technických aspektů a recenzí. Obsahuje kompletní indexování a abstrakty 380 publikací (a selektivní pokrytí téměř 300 publikací), dále plné texty více než 100 časopisů a 100 knih. Databáze Film & Television Literature Index with Fulltext navíc obsahuje i filmové recenze z předního zdroje Variety, datované od roku 1914 do současnosti, a více než 36 300 obrázků z archivu MPTV Image Archive.

Databáze Evropské audiovizuální observatoře (European audiovisual observatory)

O Evropské audiovizuální observatoři

Evropská audiovizuální observatoř (EAO) vznikla roku 1992 jako následnická organizace Eureka Audiovisuel, jejím sídlem je Štrasburk. Činnost této instituce spočívá ve sběru a šíření informací o audiovizuálním průmyslu v Evropě. V současné době sdružuje 41 členských států a Evropskou unii, zastoupenou Evropskou komisí. Je financována přímými příspěvky členských zemí a příjmy z prodeje svých produktů a služeb.

Posláním EAO je poskytovat informace profesionálům v oblasti audiovize a tím také přispívat k větší transparentnosti audiovizuálního sektoru v Evropě. EAO sleduje všechny oblasti audiovizuálního průmyslu: film, televizní vysílání, video/DVD a nová média. O každé z těchto oblastí poskytuje informace ve sféře trhu a statistiky, legislativy a financování výroby audiovizuálních děl. EAO sleduje a podrobně analyzuje vývoj audiovizuálního sektoru v členských státech.

Působí v právním rámci Rady Evropy a spolupracuje s řadou partnerských a profesních organizací z oboru a se sítí korespondentů. Kromě příspěvků na konference jsou dalšími hlavními činnostmi vydávání ročenky, zpravodaje a zprávy, kompilace a správa databází a poskytování informací prostřednictvím internetových stránek observatoře (<http://www.obs.coe.int>).

Česká republika je členem EAO od roku 1994.

LUMIERE VOD je adresář evropských filmů dostupných na vyžádání v Evropě. Najdete služby a země, kde je film uveden na VOD, a zkombinujte vyhledávací kritéria a vytvořte seznam dostupných filmů podle režiséra, země nebo roku výroby.

Prezentační video je k dispozici https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wxp_SwD3BZg.

Tento projekt, spravovaný Evropskou audiovizuální observatoří, je podporován programem CREATIVE EUROPE Evropské unie.

LUMIERE VOD je databáze evropských filmů dostupných na placených videích na vyžádání (transakční a předplatné VOD). Poskytuje seznam filmů dostupných v daném okamžiku ze vzorku služeb na vyžádání působících v Evropské unii.

LUMIERE VOD je primárně určen pro profesionály v audiovizuálním průmyslu : autory, producenty, distributory, filmové fondy a regulátory, aby jim pomohl sledovat využití filmů na VOD a posoudit složení katalogů VOD. Účelem není usnadnit pronájem nebo nákup filmů ani předplatné služby.

LUMIERE VOD řídí Evropská audiovizuální observatoř na základě maximálního úsilí. Adresář je aktuálně v beta verzi a obsahuje asi 300 katalogů VOD. Počet sledovaných katalogů a frekvence aktualizací se bude postupně zvyšovat.

Poskytnuté informace

Databáze je prohledávatelná podle řady kritérií. Upozorňujeme, že:

- všechna metadata jsou poskytována s maximálním úsilím;
- zahrnuli jsme možnost vyhledávat filmy podle originálních nebo alternativních titulů. Na stránkách výsledků se zobrazí pouze původní název;
- země produkce uvádějí různé země podílející se na výrobě filmu. Země produkce uvedená na

prvním místě označuje zemi, která údajně nejvíce přispěla k financování filmu. Nejedná se o oficiální státní příslušnost filmu, jak je posouzeno národním filmovým fondem nebo národním regulátorem.

I když byla věnována maximální pozornost zajištění přesnosti, není poskytována žádná záruka, že materiál neobsahuje chyby nebo opomenutí. Naším cílem je udržovat tyto informace aktuální a přesné. Pokud budeme upozorněni na chyby, pokusíme se je vyřešit. Můžete nás kontaktovat ohledně jakýchkoli technických informací v adresáři pomocí kontaktního formuláře.

Evropská audiovizuální observatoř (EAO) vznikla roku 1992 jako následnická organizace Eureka Audiovisuel, jejím sídlem je Štrasburk. Činnost této instituce spočívá ve sběru a šíření informací o audiovizuálním průmyslu v Evropě. V současné době sdružuje 41 členských států a Evropskou unii, zastoupenou Evropskou komisí. Je financována přímými příspěvky členských zemí a příjmy z prodeje svých produktů a služeb.

Posláním EAO je poskytovat informace profesionálům v oblasti audiovize a tím také přispívat k větší transparentnosti audiovizuálního sektoru v Evropě. EAO sleduje všechny oblasti audiovizuálního průmyslu: film, televizní vysílání, video/DVD a nová média. O každé z těchto oblastí poskytuje informace ve sféře trhu a statistiky, legislativy a financování výroby audiovizuálních děl. EAO sleduje a podrobně analyzuje vývoj audiovizuálního sektoru v členských státech.

EAO vydává Statistickou ročenku, měsíčník IRIS se speciálními suplementy (v tištěné i elektronické podobě), účastní se různých konferencí a workshopů. Na webových stránkách EAO jsou veřejnosti dostupné tyto informační databáze: LUMIERE (obsahuje údaje o sledovanosti filmů distribuovaných v evropských kinech), IRIS MERLIN (informace o legislativě upravující audiovizuální sektor v Evropě), databáze poskytovatelů AVMS. Informace o provozování televizního vysílání v členských státech obsahuje databáze MAVISE. Všechny tyto informace jsou poskytovány v angličtině, francouzštině a němčině.

Nejvyšším orgánem EAO je Výkonná rada, v jejímž předsednictví se každý rok střídají jednotlivé členské země.



**Národní
filmový
archiv**



**Národní
filmový
archiv**

Sbírka orální historie v Národním filmovém archivu


NFA pečuje o nejrůznější typy dokumentů se vztahem k historii českého filmovnictví včetně zvukových a zvukově-obrazových nahrávek.

Vlastníte-li takové typy materiálů (rozhovory, záznamy událostí či jiné druhy audiozáznamů, eventuálně audiovizuálních záznamů rozhovorů, vztahující se k tématu české kinematografie, a to z jakéhokoliv období), a máte zájem o jejich bezpečné uchování, nabízíme vám bezplatné uložení v depozitářích NFA.

NFA splňuje všechny podmínky, které zaručují nejvyšší možnou kvalitu archivace.

Jakékoliv obohacení naší sbírky z vašich zdrojů je cenným příspěvkem k rozšíření povědomí o minulosti českého filmu a současně i naší kulturní historie.

Kontakt: kurátorka sbírky Marie Barešová
Marie.Baresova@nfa.cz



ILUMINACE

Časopis pro teorii, historii
a estetiku filmu

The Journal of Film Theory, History,
and Aesthetics

1 / 2022

www.iluminace.cz

Redakce / Editorial Staff:

Jiří Anger, Jan Hanzlík, Matěj Forejt, Ivan Klimeš

Šéfredaktorka / Editor-in-Chief:

Lucie Česálková

Redakční rada / Editorial Board:

Petr Bednařík, Jindřiška Bláhová, Jana Dudková,
Nataša Ďurovičová, Tereza Cz Dvořáková, Radomír D.
Kokeš, Jakub Korda, Tomáš Lachman, Alice Lovejoy,
Jakub Macek, Petr Mareš, Richard Nowell,
Francesco Pitassio, Pavel Skopal, Ondřej Sládek,
Andrea Slováková, Kateřina Svatoňová,
Petr Szczepanik, Jaroslav Švelch

Vydává / Published by:

Národní filmový archiv, www.nfa.cz

Adresa redakce / Address:

Národní filmový archiv, Oddělení podpory výzkumu
Malešická 12, 130 00 Praha 3

Iluminace je recenzovaný vědecký časopis. Redakce
přijímá rukopisy na e-mailové adrese lucie.cesalkova@nfa.cz
nfa.cz / Iluminace is a peer-reviewed research journal.
Submissions should be sent to lucie.cesalkova@nfa.cz

Korektury / Proofreading:

Soňa Weigertová, Lucie Česálková

Grafická úprava a sazba / Graphic design:

studio@vemola.cz

Tisk / Print: Tiskárna Protisk, s. r. o.

Iluminace vychází 3× ročně. /

Iluminace is published three times a year.

Rukopis byl odevzdán do výroby v srpnu 2022. /

The manuscript was submitted in August 2022.

Cena a předplatné:

Cena jednoho čísla: 120 Kč.

Cena e-verze: 60 Kč.

Předplatné 1 ročníku pro Českou republiku
vč. manipulačního poplatku:

Předplatné tištěná verze: 360 Kč.

Předplatné e-verze: 180 Kč.

Předplatné zajišťuje Národní filmový archiv,
obchodní oddělení — knižní distribuce,
Bartolomějská 11, 110 01 Praha 1;
e-mail: obchod@nfa.cz

Prices and Subscription rates:

Each copy: € 10 (Europe) or \$ 12 (US)

Subscription: € 30 (Europe) or \$ 36 (US)

Prices include postage. Sales and orders are managed
by Národní filmový archiv, obchodní oddělení —
knižní distribuce, Bartolomějská 11, 110 01 Praha 1;
e-mail: obchod@nfa.cz

Iluminace je k dispozici také v elektronické podobě
v licencovaných databázích Scopus, ProQuest a Ebsco. /
Iluminace is available electronically through Scopus,
ProQuest and Ebsco.

MK ČR E 55255; MIČ 47285,

ISSN 0862-397X (print), ISSN 2570-9267 (e-verze)

© Národní filmový archiv

CONTENTS ILUMINACE 1/2022

EDITORIAL

Lucie Česálková: Migrating Archives of Reality. Programming, Curating, and Appropriation of Non-Fiction Film

THEMED ARTICLES

Jiří Anger: Shaping the Unshapeable? Videographic Curation of Early Czech Cinema

Amrita Biswas: Super-8 in Calcutta: Analysis of a “Failed” Movement

Karol Jóźwiak: Polish Memory of the Second World War and its Afterlife in the Early Cold War Italian Film Culture

Zachariah Anderson: Virtual Looking: Home Movies as Historical Evidence in *The Future Is Behind You* (Abigail Child, 2004)

Vladimir Rosas-Salazar: (Auto)biographical Documentaries as Audiovisual Microhistories of Pinochet’s Chile

INTERVIEW

Rossella Catanese: How to Benefit from Academics? A Roundtable with Film Archives

REVIEWS

Tereza Czesany Dvořáková: Czech Film as a Consequence of Changing the Cultural Field (Petr Bilík, *Financování filmu jako aspekt kulturní politiky*)

Josef Tichý: Underneath Things (Rachael Hutchinson, *Japanese Culture Through Videogames*)

OBSAH ILUMINACE 1/2022

EDITORIAL

Lucie Česálková: Migrating Archives of Reality. Programming, Curating, and Appropriation of Non-Fiction Film

ČLÁNKY K TÉMATU

Jiří Anger: Shaping the Unshapeable? Videographic Curation of Early Czech Cinema

Amrita Biswas: Super-8 in Calcutta: Analysis of a “Failed” Movement

Karol Jóźwiak: Polish Memory of the Second World War and its Afterlife in the Early Cold War Italian Film Culture

Zachariah Anderson: Virtual Looking: Home Movies as Historical Evidence in *The Future Is Behind You* (Abigail Child, 2004)

Vladimir Rosas-Salazar: (Auto)biographical Documentaries as Audiovisual Microhistories of Pinochet’s Chile

ROZHOVOR

Rossella Catanese: How to Benefit from Academics? A Roundtable with Film Archives

RECENZE

Tereza Czesany Dvořáková: Český film jako důsledek proměny kulturního pole (Petr Bilík, *Financování filmu jako aspekt kulturní politiky*)

Josef Tichý: Pod povrch věcí (Rachael Hutchinson, *Japanese Culture Through Videogames*)