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On the cover is a proposal for the facade reconstruction of the Valtice Palace Theatre building (Moravian Regional Archive, Brno, Fund F115 Liechtenstein Construction Office, map 7572).

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Jan Černík

Theatre|

Valtice Palace Theatre and Bourgeois Drama at the End of the 18th Century: Contexts and Intersections¹

Abstract | A palace theatre operated in the South Moravian town of Valtice supported by its owners, the Liechtenstein family, over the years 1790–1805. An exploration of the primary sources concerning this distinguished aristocratic stage scene has revealed that due to the socio-cultural background of the time the aristocratic stage also went through major changes. The image of the Valtice theatre of the late 18th century gradually developed from the Baroque tradition of renting theatres to individual troupes to creating their own troupe and having a year-round theatre repertoire. The aristocracy naturally embraced the bourgeois theatre management model and the requirements of the day. The crucial influence of the bourgeois theatre is reflected in the repertoire which is the focus of this study. This analysis of never-before-studied manuscripts presents what kind of plays and genres (originally bourgeois drama) were the favourite pastime for the aristocracy of the Valtice Palace Theatre during the years of its operation.

Keywords | palace theatre – House of Liechtenstein – Alois I. Joseph Liechtenstein – Valtice – wandering troupes – the Enlightenment – bourgeois drama – theatre reforms by Joseph von Sonnenfels

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Introductory Contextualization

Aristocratic court entertainment and bourgeois theatre consist of two separate categories in historical theatre study, with both having developed significantly specifically in the Baroque period. The link between the two were often wandering professional troupes which travelled around various European destinations in the 17th and in the first half of the 18th century² and performed for townsfolk, and when there was interest and opportunity, for any of the art-loving aristocrats at their palace.

This study focuses on Liechtenstein family palace theatres and follows a period in the development of aristocratic theatre culture at a later time, when the principles described above already seemed outdated due to the Enlightenment and the linked reforms and also due to the demands raised by the dramatic arts. The article covers the years 1790–1805 when theatre performances regularly took place during the reign of Aloys I, Prince of Liechtenstein in one of his most spec-

¹ This article was written as part of the project 'Support for the excellent research teams creation and intersectoral mobility at Palacký University in Olomouc' CZ.1.07/2.3.00/30.0004. This project is co-financed by the European Social Fund and the state budget of the Czech Republic.

² In the Habsburg Monarchy lands de facto throughout the entire 18th century.

tacular residences in Valtice in South Moravia. A significant number of virtually unexplored materials have survived from this time which the current research on the Liechtenstein theatre is largely based. As stated previously, this is a period from the historical point of view when large court spectacles of typical Baroque theatre festivals in Europe were already “out of fashion”. It is known, however, that at the end of the 18th century as well as in the 19th century a new palace theatre emerged and theatre performances persisted with breaks at certain palaces in the territory of the Habsburg Monarchy, including the Czech Lands.³ This was primarily, however, a specific kind of non-public family home entertainment,⁴ known as the so-called “Haustheater” where the family members played the performances themselves. As will be consequently analysed by exploring the repertoire thoroughly, the palace theatre in Valtice represents a completely different and in all probability unique phenomenon in terms of the influence of all these social and artistic changes, compared with other palace theatres of the time. At its peak phase after 1800, the bourgeois (and enlightened) theatre model of organization took over and pursued having a stable theatre troupe with an innovative repertoire and advanced acting. Between the years 1790–1805 the Valtice theatre stage was not moving from the spectacular court performances to the non-public noble family entertainment, but came quite close to large-scale bourgeois ideas of theatre. Even in this respect, researching this issue is an extremely specific connection involving mutually defining the aristocratic and the bourgeois social class and “their” typical theatrical culture.

The Forming of the Bourgeois Theatre and Drama in German Speaking Lands

The turn of the 19th century is generally symptomatic of the major socio-political changes that permanently influenced the development of modern European society. With its motto “liberty–equality–fraternity” the Great French Revolution sought to democratize society and foreshadowed other events of the “revolutionary” 19th century, culminating in 1830 and in particular 1848. The Napoleonic Wars also resulted in a conflict of the whole society and led to the territorial reorganization of Europe.⁵ Finally, the Enlightenment way of thinking, the main social-artistic style of the 18th century impacted all levels of the European population and also permanently changed the nature of its culture.

All these influences naturally also manifested themselves in the art of the theatre with the aim of this study being primarily the area of German speaking theatre. The leading force of the enlightened reformist movement was university scholars as well as the new bourgeois class, which was hugely influenced by these ideals. The Baroque theatre culture model was slowly dropped because it had specific features such as partly improvised comedy with standardized characters, developed in particular in German-speaking countries on the background of so-called *haupt-actions* (*Haupt-und Staatsaktionen*). These were performed by a variety of professional wandering troupes, which were invited to various towns and aristocratic residences for a certain

³ For more see Matthias J. Pernerstorfer, “Ferdinand Raimund v Telči. K zámeckému divadlu a divadelní knihovně hraběte Podstatského-Lichtenštejna,” *Divadelní revue* 25, no. 2 (2014): 94–103.

⁴ The typical Austrian art and lifestyle Biedermeier was undoubtedly an influence that is not characterized by moderation, peace and bourgeois virtues but is also a result of Metternich absolutism as an escape from public life into an isolated family environment.

⁵ On the basis of the so-called Congress of Vienna, which took place from 1 October 1814 to 9 June 1815. Germany was disrupted by Napoleon, who founded the Confederation of the Rhine in 1805, which actually meant the end of the Holy Roman Empire and was influenced by major changes. The German Confederation was newly created as a loose confederation of 39 countries. A definitive unification of Germany finally took place in 1871.

period or season. As a rule, the system was that the city theatre was rented to privileged troupe performers for an even longer period, at time for up to several years.⁶

This theatre practice was sharply challenged, however, as of the 1730s, particularly by Johann Christoph Gottsched, who was influenced by the French Enlightenment and the encyclopaedists and who pursued reforms of this kind in Germany as well. In his view, all the rules of art which the artist should follow are derived from reason and nature. It is consequently necessary to exclude all that is contradictory and unlikely from the artwork. He had assumed that the “reasonable burgess” would see anything that disrupts the rules of natural or social life as unlikely. In this sense Gottsched opposed opera as a typical court entertainment, but was also against the then widely spread aforementioned genre of *haupt-actions* by wandering troupes. He viewed opera as a symbol of artificiality which can peacefully exist as an art form appropriate for the representation of the nobility. For the bourgeois, however, it is important to develop an art form which focuses on reason and nature as the basis for understanding the world and themselves. In this spirit Gottsched also rejected performance and the repertoire of wandering troupes who failed to change any rules and where “everything is layered one over the other”.⁷ Gottsched not only heralded efforts to introduce so-called regular (literary) drama, but also distinguished between the fundamentally aristocratic and bourgeois class, and thereby also the differentiation criteria of court and bourgeois theatre culture.

As late as the 1770s, a movement to establish theatre in the spirit of national efforts emerged. This was due to Enlightenment reforms in the studied language area and primarily due to the figures of Johann Gottsched and Joseph von Sonnenfels in Austria. There was the view that towns should have their own theatre building with a permanent acting company and a repertoire committed to the Enlightenment. The newly conceived function of the theatre, which was used mainly for didactic purposes of moral education for nationally thinking citizens, was fully embraced by the government, which systematically controlled these theatre activities and regulated the current censorship⁸ and also the newly established journalistic theatre criticism.⁹

The genre of the repertoire changed significantly as well. The genres of bourgeois drama were initially exported into the German-speaking area as a foreign influence, specifically from England, where the first so-called “bourgeois tragedy” was formulated, and from France where the so-called models of “*comédie larmoyante*” (tearful comedy) and the “*genre sérieux*” were created (genre sérieux was the name for a “serious genre” which was featured as the mainstream bourgeois drama). The founder and promoter of this genre, Denis Diderot, personally referred to as a “drama halfway between comedy and tragedy”.¹⁰

Thanks to the efforts of the “domestic” playwrights Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Friedrich Ludwig Schröder, Friedrich Schiller – in the early stages of his work, for example, his drama *Intrigue and Love* (*Kabale und Liebe*) – August Wilhelm Iffland and August Friedrich Ferdinand von Kotzebue (both extremely popular in their times), the German language theatre region quickly managed to catch up with the development of middle class drama in Europe and anchor this genre with its characteristic features as well as develop it thematically and formally by various modifications thus forming the so-called “Bürgerliches Drama”.

⁶ The troupes themselves gradually sought out buildings for a permanent theatre residence. Restructuring theatre practice was therefore not only sought out through the efforts of Enlightenment reforms, but was also based on the practical needs of the troupes themselves.

⁷ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Dejiny drámy* (Bratislava: Divadelný ústav, 2003), 215–27, here 218.

⁸ See Hilde Haider-Pregler, *Des sittlichen Bürgers Abendschule. Bildungsanspruch und Bildungsauftrag des Berufstheaters im 18. Jahrhundert* (Wien/München: Jugend und Volk, 1980), 61–68.

⁹ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Dejiny drámy*, 222.

¹⁰ Denis Diderot, *O umění* (Praha: Odeon, 1983), 109.

Bourgeois drama, which was originally developed as a form of opposition to aristocratic neo-classical tragedy and served as self-identification for the bourgeois class, gradually transformed “along with the increasing sovereignty of burgesses into – using current vocabulary – mainstream culture”.¹¹ The basic outline of the genre was formed and mutually confronted by two sets of figures – the family circle, where the family represented the “original nature-given order of interpersonal experience”¹² and the circle of city representatives. While in the early days of the formation of this genre in Germany its creators put an emphasis on the family as a patriarchal community in “which the paternal power is a crucial aspect of defining the relationship between men and women, as well as between a father and children”,¹³ in the second half of the 18th century, these family relationships were greatly emotionalized. The former gap between a father and his children was radically reduced, the father was now seen as a wise as well as a friendly character, in front of which the other family members “do not hide any thoughts of their heart”.¹⁴ This “model family” was characterized by a strong emotional bond and deep inner harmony. Thus an idealized middle class family came into the German theatre world and for more than 150 years became one of the most important institutions of middle class socialization.¹⁵ New trends re-emerged, in contrast, as of the 1770s which turned the established conventional bourgeois drama tragedy (Trauerspiel) into a grotesque parody or travesty, and in some respects also a socially critical comedy.

In connection with the examination of the Valtice palace theatre repertoire, this study will be continually returning to this genre, the transformation of its forms and the individual representatives of a particular model. In the late 18th century, bourgeois drama in its various modifications completely filled the repertoire of the city theatres in Vienna and Brno, which were closely linked to the Valtice stage. In addition, either the most steady titles or still expanding new pieces of this genre were included into the repertoires of the still surviving wandering troupes. Over the last decade of the 18th century they were still at least attempting to find a seasonal engagement at (among other places) the house of Liechtenstein based on the established ways. The type of repertoire and titles which the individual directors of these companies had to offer and therefore which form of middle class drama might be successful with the senior aristocracy, serve as the main thematic points of the following study.

The Palace Theatre in Valtice and its Operation¹⁶

The period under analysis (1790–1805), upon the background of which the connections between urban repertory theatres, professional acting companies and the Valtice palace theatre can be demonstrated, is even more limited. By studying the primary materials of the Vienna Liechtenstein archive collections, it was determined that the house of Liechtenstein only hired professional troupes into their service in the first decade of their newly built Valtice. In addition, this was always only for three months, usually from early September to late November,

¹¹ Zdenka Pašuthová, *Ján Chalupka. Súborné dramatické dielo I* (Bratislava: Divadelný ústav, 2012), 472.

¹² Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Dejiny drámy*, 225.

¹³ Zdenka Pašuthová, *Ján Chalupka*, 474.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Dejiny drámy*, 227.

¹⁶ I focus on the organization and operation of the palace theatre in Valtice in detail in my study “Ve službách knížete Liechtensteina: několik poznatků k provozu zámeckého divadla ve Valticích,” *Theatralia* 18, no. 1 (2015): 85–105.

when the Liechtenstein family regularly stayed in Valtice and organized the traditional autumn hunting festivities.

Starting in 1799, the prince officials in charge of the palace theatre consequently sought out a permanent company,¹⁷ which would stay for up to three years. This could help regulate the company better and continuously educate it theatrically, but at the same time the stable company would have the opportunity to perform in other residences or towns, which were associated with the house of the Liechtenstein estate. Although there are applications in the Liechtenstein archive by the Liechtenstein court office in charge of hiring the troupes in the period after 1799, these were already being disregarded. Theatre administration and management positions were taken by individual prince officials, who were also helped by influential theatre personalities of the time (Joseph von Sonnenfels, a prominent Viennese actor and reformer Johann Heinrich Friedrich Müller, etc.) and they sought to ensure the successful formation of their "Liechtenstein company".

These grand ambitions were interrupted, however, by the prince's untimely death in 1805. In the context of the war years and the reactionary policies of the ruler Francis I, his successor brother Johann I Joseph also drew his attention to entirely different issues than theatrical entertainment. The company was disbanded and other entries of theatrical activities held by the Liechtensteins are to be found in the years 1812–1815, but already in a modified,¹⁸ and not such an intensive shape.¹⁹ From the aforementioned aspects, the period of the late 18th century will therefore be crucial for the purposes of the study, demonstrating the intersection and cooperation of the aristocratic and bourgeois theatre entertainment demands and their mutual resonance primarily in the repertoire matter.

Throughout the fifteen years of its intensive existence, the Valtice palace theatre was clearly influenced by closely related theatre events in Vienna and Brno. This is evident, for example, by the fact that most of the troupes hired in the early years into Liechtensteins' services came from the Brno and Vienna theatres in the autumn. The Liechtensteins knew local theatre affairs extremely well and convened fully to the offered repertoire. It is also likely that they chose specific theatre directors for interaction with their troupes in Valtice themselves. In the years 1792, 1794 and 1795,²⁰ Karl Mayer, the director of the Vienna Theater in der Josefstadt at that time, was signed up. He was replaced by Georg Wilhelm, tenant of Baden theatre, in 1793 where Vienna citizens and also the imperial family itself often repeatedly spent their time. Joseph Rothe, director of the Brno City Theatre, received a three-month contract in 1796. Although not a single piece of inventory repertoire was archived to any of the tenants of the Valtice theatre, which each director had to present before signing the contract of engagement to the Liechtenstein prince office and ultimately to Alois I, Prince of Liechtenstein, the nature of their genre orientation is still clearly demonstrable.

Karl Mayer²¹ himself initiated the founding of Theater in der Josefstadt and directed it over the years 1788–1812. Only fragmentary information has been preserved in connection with the

¹⁷ In connection with changes to the Liechtenstein palace theatre organization the terms are distinguished as follows: "troupe" means the actors' wandering lifestyle period and "company" a permanent and consequential development of the acting group.

¹⁸ It was more an occasional entertainment, while later in the 19th century the entertainment was provided by local amateurs. See the Moravian Regional Archive, Collection F 94 Velkostatek Valtice, file 485.

¹⁹ Furthermore the prince Johann I Joseph focused on Lednice palace, where in all probability theatrical entertainment took place to a greater extent in this period.

²⁰ He had to be substituted, however, in this year by his wife because Mayer was in debt.

²¹ Karl Mayer is in terms of his abilities and involvement in theatre directing often compared to Emanuel Schikaneder. One of his greatest successes is in particular the fact that he received a special privilege to also perform plays during the time of Lent and permission to perform all musical and drama genres, ballets and pantomimes

performed repertoire from the first years of its operations, primarily from the daily public press reviews or from the artists' diaries, who personally visited Theater in der Josefstadt. It is apparent that dance substantially dominated at that time in the repertoire. Among the genres, so-called allegoric and pantomimic ballets were performed most often, these having been arranged by the dance master Campigli.²² Particularly over the first years of operations, the ballet performances were also most often commented on by the public, and the dance and musical ensembles seemed to reach a much higher quality level than the drama, at least at the beginning of Theater in der Josefstadt's operations. Although the repertoire from the year 1795, when information about the Theater in der Josefstadt repertoire also began to spread out, demonstrates that comedies and also comic and magic singspiels from this year were most obviously dominating this stage,²³ which was characteristic for all the suburban stages at that time.

Generally popular titles and authors were performed at Theater in der Josefstadt (e.g. *Der Diener seines Herrn* which J. H. Brockmann adapted from Goldoni; *Die Jäger* by Iffland; comedies by F. W. L. Schröder, etc.) but also works by authors who were directly connected to this theatre – namely Salomon Friedrich Schlettner, Ferdinand Eberl and Matthäus Voll. The first of them worked in the theatre as an actor, while the others were engaged by Mayer directly as so-called “Hausdichter” (“homewriters”). This established repertoire was then presented in all probability without any greater changes in the palace theatre in Valtice as well.²⁴

The other two directors, Georg Wilhelm and Joseph Rothe, are primarily mentioned in encyclopaedic entries and older theatre almanacs in connection with the dramaturgy of their companies as notable representatives of musical theatre, particularly of the then extremely popular singspiel. Georg Wilhelm often introduced the new Viennese musical theatre repertoire in his guest performances in local theatres (in the aforementioned Baden, but also in Brno, Znojmo, Olomouc and other cities). For example, in 1779 in Znojmo he boldly featured, among others, drama and comedy, which had already been subject to censorship.²⁵

During the engagement of Joseph Rothe as director of the Brno City Theatre (1792–1803), a regular German-based *Allgemeines europäisches Journal* began to be issued, which included the published repertoire of individual major German city theatres and which also reported on the Brno theatre scene. This allows us to reliably determine which drama and opera performances Rothe had rehearsed with his troupe during this period and also probably performed in the Valtice palace theatre in the autumn of 1796.²⁶

as the exclusive organizer. This permission was given to Karl Mayer on 20 August 1791 by Emperor Leopold II, who had personally visited Theater in der Josefstadt several months earlier on 18 February 1791. At that time the Emperor hosted His Sicily Majesty Ferdinand IV and his wife Maria Karolina. For more see Anton Bauer, *Das Theater in der Josefstadt zu Wien* (Wien: Manutiuspresse, 1957), 13–33, here 23–24. All these conditions had also unquestionably a direct influence on Mayer's troupe engagement in the Liechtenstein services. As no previous application by Mayer for a contract in Valtice has been preserved, it can be assumed Mayer was directly addressed for this operation.

²² Campigli is also mentioned in manuscripts connected with the Liechtenstein palace theatre operations in Valtice in 1795 when he led the palace theatre together with Karl Mayer's wife.

²³ See Anton Bauer, *Theater in der Josefstadt*, 195–96.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁵ Otto G. Schindler, “Georg Wilhelm,” in *Starší divadlo v českých zemích do konce 18. století. Osobnosti a díla*, Alena Jakubcová et al. (Praha: Divadelní ústav/Academia, 2007), 663–64.

²⁶ Although no specific evidence was preserved, it can be presumed that Rothe split his troupe in half for the period from September to December 1796 – one part stayed and worked permanently in Brno, the other went with Rothe to perform at the Valtice palace theatre. One of the conditions for the Liechtenstein court office when concluding a contract with the directors of theatre companies was that the principal along with his troupe not only had to constantly perform their everyday duties in Valtice but also had to communicate with persons in

Joseph Rothe is undoubtedly one of the most important directors of the Brno City Theatre of the 18th century who introduced a number of specific elements to the audience from the world of opera (widely popular comic and heroic singspiels), as well as drama, but also ballet. He excelled in musical theatre, and success in this area was certainly caused by the fact that he gathered a number of exceptional singers, himself included.²⁷ The repertoire prints indicate that the opera was basically performed every third day. In addition to operas by already famous names (Gluck: *Pilgrim von Mekka*, Dittersdorf: *Das Rothe Käppchen*, Hieronimus Knicker, *Der Gutsherr*, *Der Doktor und der Apotheker*) Rothe featured the works of his favourite contemporaries, mostly Salieri (*La Ciffra, oder Die Entzifferung*, *Der Talisman oder Die Zigeuner*) and Mozart, whose works he presented to the Brno audience in many cases for the first time (*Die Zauberflöte*, *Entführung aus dem Serail* – called *Belmont und Konstanze* in Brno, *Die Hochzeit des Figaro*, *Don Juan*, *Die Güte des Titus*). To the same extent he also featured titles emanating from the troupe of Emanuel Schikaneder, who wrote the librettos for them (*Der Stein der Weisen*, music by E. B. Žák,²⁸ *Der wohlthätige Derwisch oder Die Schellenkappe*, music by E. B. Žák,²⁹ *Der Spiegel von Arkadien*, music by F. X. Süssmayer, *Die Waldmänner*, music by J. B. Henneberg etc.). Rothe was often adapting renowned Italian and French opera among others (Martín y Soler: *Una cosa rara*, Luigi: *Calipso Abbadon*, Sarti: *Im Trüben ist gut Fischen*). Works created by contemporary artists staying in Brno were also added to this repertoire, particularly the extremely popular bandleader Wenzel Müller (Rothe featured, for example, his operas *Das neue Sonntagskind*, *Der Fagottist und der Zauberritter*, *Die Schwestern von Prag*, *Der Alte Überall und Nirgends*).

As stated in the *Allgemeines europäisches Journal*³⁰ note in 1794, Rothe was so busy directing opera that starting in June 1794 he divided the management of drama among his three capable drama performers (Scholz, Nabel, Exner), who were always alternating once a month in direction of the plays. The most frequent drama productions were naturally titles by the most played authors who had contributed to the prosperity of the German-speaking middle class drama itself – Christian Heinrich Spiess,³¹ Friedrich Wilhelm Ziegler,³² Johann Friedrich August Jünger³³ and of course Kotzebue and Iffland. The last mentioned playwright was very positively and uncritically acclaimed by the Brno theatre audience. As mentioned in the repertoire list *Allgemeines europäisches Journal* of the period, all Iffland's plays featured in Brno had always been considered "masterpieces" and were accepted with great enthusiasm, many of them were moreover performed only from the manuscript, which means that they were extremely fresh material which had not yet been printed. The Brno theatre scene apparently sought to create a primacy of performing of Iffland's plays at least in Moravia.

charge appointed by Alois I Joseph Liechtenstein and entrusted with the theatre management. Based on this fact it can be concluded that Rothe was physically present in Valtice for three autumn months and did not send a representative there, as he later did, for example in 1799 and 1800, when part of his troupe directed by Tilly worked with the opera repertoire in Znojmo theatre. See Jan Trojan, "Joseph Rothe," in *Starší divadlo v českých zemích*, 504–507.

²⁷ Rothe excelled as the first bassist.

²⁸ *Der Stein der Weisen* is a collective work. Apart from Schikaneder and Žák, also Franz Xaver Gerl and Johann Baptist Henneberg participated as composers of this work.

²⁹ This work was also created on the basis of collective creation by Schikaneder, Žák, Gerl and Henneberg.

³⁰ *Allgemeines europäisches Journal* (July 1794): 166. The journal is available online under the link <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008696484>. I would like to thank professor Margita Havlíčková for this information.

³¹ His work covers a wide spectrum of genres, but he excelled the most in the writing of knightly plays, dramas with a criminal plot (this genre was also the focus of his written prose, which he wrote after his theatre career came to a close), historical tragedies and bourgeois comedies.

³² Sad dramas ("rührende Schauspiele") and comedies predominate in his repertoire.

³³ He excelled at comedy writing.

It is also clear from the repertoire that there were primarily the works of playwrights who came out of the theatre environment themselves and worked in the theatre the majority of their lives. There is also the quite common option of certain personal contacts which helped in terms of their featuring. The works by these authors were additionally theatrically extremely bountiful and the form and the content were elaborated precisely according to their own theatre experience in order to attract the attention of the general public. These playwrights often moved away from French models and maintained a relationship with Shakespeare – who had been condemned earlier by representatives of bourgeois drama. They emphasized that his works, in which characters are not sketched in black and white, are dramatically more elaborate and also that human characters are much more likely as such.³⁴

It is also apparent from the Brno theatre repertoire list of plays directed by Joseph Rothe that, similarly to Mayer, dance production held quite a strong position, particularly the shorter one-act (or two-act) ballets, most of which were part of a composed dancing evening, or followed as the second part of the evening after a short singspiel or comedy. Antonio Vigano, an Italian ballet master and dancer who also worked for many years in Vienna and stayed with his wife in Brno in 1778–1782, also had an undeniable influence on the interests of Brno audience in dance and ballet. This artistic career was taken over by Rothe, as is evident, for example, by a dance solo *Solo al Vigano*, which starred Rothe's daughter Leopoldine in the Brno dance repertoire (the title refers directly to the Italian dancer).

It was the opera and dance productions which in all probability attracted the attention of the Liechtenstein prince which is why he decided to establish cooperation with director Rothe. Correspondence has been preserved in the Vienna Liechtenstein archive from November and December 1793 which might partly confirm this hypothesis. In this particular period, a Baden troupe performed their three-month engagement, led by the businessman Georg Wilhelm, however Rothe was invited to Valtice to show “two trial performances”.³⁵ Rothe's letter of 5 November 1793 indicates that at least one of these performances had to be opera, specifically *Die Zauberflöte*. This opera title was, according to Rothe, received with all honours in Valtice, which is also confirmed by the prince office's answer of 6 December 1793. This is directly expressed here, as well as the fact that he broke his so badly needed chimes with its repairs costing 30 ducats. As Rothe further writes, this unfortunate event made it impossible for him to perform an opera the very next Sunday, which is the period of the traditional autumn urban markets. This caused a huge loss and therefore he asked for compensation for this damage.³⁶ In response, the prince's office then, in addition to the promise of compensation, stated that the prince would like Rothe to manage the following year's performance at the Valtice palace theatre, and required an alternation of opera comedies (which the singspiel *Die Zauberflöte* certainly is) and ballets.³⁷

³⁴ Friedrich Ludwig Schröder is the first mentioned person in the German speaking area in connection with this movement away from academic writing of bourgeois drama which was also often featured in Brno. Schröder came from a theatrical family, therefore since his childhood he knew the artistic environment very well as well as what resonated in the audience the most, and in this spirit wrote his genre family scenes. As one of the first German playwrights, Schröder began to work with the Enlightenment model of the family, as described in this study. His immediate successors were for example Iffland and Kotzebue, both of whom were also raised in the practical theatre life. See Arthur Eloesser, *Das bürgerliche Drama. Seine Geschichte im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Herz, 1898), 46–60.

³⁵ Hausarchiv der regierenden Fürsten von und zu Liechtenstein, Wien (further referred to as HAL), file H2330, Schlosstheater in Feldsberg (1790–1805), f. 168.

³⁶ Ibid., f. 157.

³⁷ In this light it is entirely possible that shorter ballet performance or a dancing sequel could have been part of these two trial performances as was usual in the Brno repertoire.

The impact of ballet performances in Rothe's troupe, and also during his involvement in Valtice in the autumn of 1796, is demonstrated by another short message by Valtice former theatre manager Arnold von Lewenau. He was, as he writes in his letter of 28 November 1796,³⁸ entrusted to express the magnificent satisfaction of the prince with "yesterday's legendary big ballet" to three persons, who contributed greatly to its good performance, although they did not perform directly themselves. These were specifically: the Valtice conductor Johann von Triebensee, the court painter Michael Sichnit, who designed the scene and Mrs. Wenzl, who provided the necessary wardrobe. Since this is specifically the only year when Rothe worked with his troupe in Valtice and it can be assumed that these were again some of the ballet performances of his Brno repertoire. Linking the Brno theatre with the Valtice palace stage is illustrated by several other names. Mad. Bullinger³⁹ was newly assigned at the beginning of 1796 to Rothe's troupe and was warmly accepted by a very enthusiastic audience after her first performance as Diana in the comic opera by Martín y Soler *Der Baum der Diana* and soon became a popular and renowned singer. Five years later, in the autumn of 1801, the singer applied as "erste Bravura Sängerin" to the Valtice theatre, where the Liechtenstein permanent company had already been forming for the third year. According to a report from 4 October 1801 by the manager of the theatre Fridolin Belot to the prince, the application was received with undisguised pleasure.⁴⁰ In the list of Liechtenstein acting troupe after 1800, there are the names of the Tillies, who also worked at Rothe's in Brno in the late 18th century. Under Tilly's direction, part of the Brno troupe guest performed in Znojmo as the so-called *Zweite Brünner Gesellschaft unter der Direktion des Herrn Joseph R.* with their opera repertoire from November 1799 to January 1800. Thirdly then, in the repertoire list and the commentary in the *Allgemeines europäisches Journal* there appears the name of an actor Schantroch, who is also considered an extremely talented and capable artist⁴¹ by the publisher of the journal. In the Liechtenstein archive collections of 1801 a request for an engagement of the Valtice troupe survived, at the time led by Georg Schantroch, a businessman in Ljubljana.⁴² His request makes apparent that the author was well aware of the conditions and manner of renting Valtice palace to troupes.⁴³ His engagement in Rothe's troupe in the Brno theatre is documented in the year 1795 and at least in the first months of 1796 (and again at the beginning of 1797). It can be presumed that Schantroch actually knew the Valtice palace stage organization and operation quite well, at least from his colleagues' stories (or, hypothetically, Schantroch himself

³⁸ HAL, file H2330, Schlosstheater in Feldsberg (1790–1805), f. 283.

³⁹ Her first name has not been found.

⁴⁰ HAL, file H2330, Schlosstheater in Feldsberg (1790–1805), unsigned foil.

⁴¹ *Allgemeines europäisches Journal* (January 1796): 180–81, also available online at <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008696484>.

⁴² Schantroch's creative periods in Ljubljana and Klagenfurt rank among his most successful ones. He produced singspiels by Viennese authors in Ljubljana with great success, new plays by Kotzebue and Iffland, and also renowned titles by Shakespeare or Schiller. However, Schantroch's name is primarily connected with theatres in south and west Bohemia where he lived up until 1809. He influenced the theatre activities in Karlovy Vary significantly, as well as in České Budějovice (he participated in the building of a new theatre) and in Plzeň, where he later died in 1809. For more see Adolf Scherl, Jitka Ludvová, "Georg Schantroch," in *Hudební divadlo v českých zemích. Osobnosti 19. století*, ed. Jitka Ludvová (Praha: Divadelní ústav, 2006), 463–66.

⁴³ Schantroch defined the period very precisely, for example, when his troupe should have been engaged in Valtice, specifically from 17 September to 15 December, which is exactly the period for which the Valtice theatre was rented. He also refers to his excellent opera repertoire and German drama, which were written at that time (still in manuscript) and made available directly from the k. k. Viennese court theatre. At the same time he requests, as with all of his predecessors (!), to have a band, lighting, wardrobe, decorations and theatrical props owned to a large amount by the Valtice theatre. See HAL, file H2330, Schlosstheater in Feldsberg (1790–1805), f. 337.

could perform in Valtice under Rothe's direction). Schantroch's name is regularly mentioned in *Allgemeines europäisches Journal*, in connection with his successful roles, in only the first half of 1796. If the hypothesis was confirmed that the Brno troupe was divided for the period of a three month engagement in Valtice, then one part remained in Brno while the other part left together with Rothe to Valtice. It could consequently be possible that one of these members would also have been Schantroch. The other option is that Schantroch was already working for the rest of 1796 out of Rothe's troupe with his own (wandering) troupe, as the encyclopaedic entry states in *Hudební divadlo v českých zemích. Osobnosti 19. století*.⁴⁴

The Preserved Repertoire Lists as Direct Sources of their Research

Important resources for studying the Valtice Palace theatre are preserved applications from three theatrical entrepreneurs who were interested in being part of the Liechtenstein theatre scene: Carl Hain⁴⁵ in 1796, Václav Mihule⁴⁶ in 1798 and Franz Xavier Felder also from 1798. They also included complete lists of the repertoire which the director and his company offered to the aristocracy. Although the applications of the first two failed at the princely office, their offered repertoire is an important sample for the studying (and comparing) of the scope and genre stratification of these directors, at that time already well-known personalities of bourgeois theatre life.

At the time of filing the application, Carl Hain worked with his troupe in the Olomouc City Theatre where he performed without interruption from 1793 to September 1800. The rehearsed repertoire, through which he tried to obtain the favour of the Liechtenstein prince's office, was significantly more modest compared with Mihule's and Felder's inventories, but unlike the two aforementioned persons, Hain only featured titles which his group had already rehearsed, and apparently these were successful. His list, divided by genres into three sections (1. comedies and family scenes, 2. operas, 3. tragedies, dramas and knight plays), includes a total of about 75 works of drama and 44 pieces of opera, with the comedies prevailing. Special attention is focused on operas, with these being structured by the Viennese performing dates which Hain may have considered a particularly important criterion. Nine operas (such as *Die Zauberflöte*, *Der Stein der Weisen* by Mozart – Schikaneder, Wranitzky's *Oberon* or Gerle's *Schellenkappe*⁴⁷ also with Schikaneder's libretto) are mentioned in the context of their performance in the "Wiedner Theater" of Emanuel Schikaneder, 25 (most of which were the most commonly played operas of the time by Paisiello, Sarti, Dittersdorf) referring to their performance in "k. k. Hoftheater" in Vienna, and ten which were featured under the authority of the Director Marinelli at the "Leopoldstadt Theater". Also in the field of drama his repertoire is strongly focused on plays widely featured in Viennese theatres or from authors working directly for the theatre in Vienna at that time (Johann Friedrich Jünger, Friedrich Wilhelm Ziegler). There was also, however, a prominent title which was absent elsewhere during the study of the repertoires and which directly thematizes a glorious period of Czech history – *Ottokar, König von Böhmen*.⁴⁸ The artistic conception of the life and fate of this Premyslid ruler is famous thanks to Franz Grillparzer, the Austrian playwright who created his own version three decades later, specifically in 1825.

⁴⁴ Adolf Scherl, Jitka Ludvová, "Georg Schantroch," in *Hudební divadlo v českých zemích*, 463–64.

⁴⁵ For more see Adolf Scherl, "Carl Hain," in *Starší divadlo v českých zemích*, 223–24.

⁴⁶ See also the articles by Alena Jakubcová "Dobré pověsti je třeba každému – pro ředitele divadla je však nezbytnou rekvizitou. Václav Mihule na Moravě a ve Slezsku v letech 1800–1808", *Divadelní revue* 23, no. 2 (2012): 39–48 and "Principál Václav Mihule na dvoře vévodském," *Cornova* 2, no. 2 (2012): 29–47.

⁴⁷ Full name *Der wohltätige Derwisch oder Die Schellenkappe*.

⁴⁸ For more, see HAL, file H2330, Schlosstheater in Feldsberg (1790–1805), f. 279–80.

Two years after Hain, Václav Mihule also unsuccessfully applied to Valtice, being best known as the director of the Patriotic theatre (*Vlastenské divadlo*) which he also led over the years 1790–1793.⁴⁹ In Prague he presented for the first time ever, for example, Mozart's renowned operas *Die Zauberflöte* and *Così fan tutte*⁵⁰ and was strongly focused in his dramaturgy on more challenging pieces by German playwrights: Lessing, Goethe and Schiller. In 1793 he left Prague after several setbacks, however his set dramaturgical model was retained in the subsequent period when he was forced to make a living primarily as a wandering theatre organizer. He encountered numerous problems, such as the constantly changing number of members of his troupe which led to various repertoire conflicts. Nevertheless, in the list of works that his troupe rehearsed or prepared for staging, Mihule seems unsurpassed. His repertoire included 195 drama works, although the list does not specify if these are comedies, tragedies or plays of other genres. Unlike other theatre managers, he states the name of the author with the major titles. Among the titles of a comic character he also performed demanding plays in terms of theatre and performance, similarly as he did during his time in Prague. In the presented example, his repertoire features Schiller (*Don Carlos*, *Verschwörung des Fiesco in Janov*) and Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* which gave an essential character to the revolutionary drama of the German Sturm und Drang movement (1765–1775) and whose poetic style is aimed against the ruling aristocracy. Among the authors emerging from this movement, Mihule also staged dramas of Friedrich Maximilian Klinger and from the circles around the personality of Johann Wolfgang Goethe also works by his brother-in-law Christian Augustus Vulpius (*Ehrstandsprobe*, *Glücksprobe*, *Liebesprobe*), which Goethe himself featured during his leading of the Weimar Theatre in 1791–1817.

Mihule also offered an impressive amount of opera productions, namely 53, which primarily listed works by Mozart (*Figaro*, *Don Juan*, *Così fan tutte*, *Zauberflöte*, *Entführung aus dem Serail*), which made him famous during his Prague period, as well as popular plays by Wranitzky (*Oberon*, *Das Fest von Lazanni*), Dittersdorf (*Gutsherr*, *Rotte Kappe*, *Hocus Pocus*, *Doctor und Apotheker*) as well as operas by Gretry (*Zemira und Azor*, *Urtheil des Midas*) and Müller (*Das neue Sonntagskind*, *Schwester von Prag*, *Fagottist*).⁵¹

In retrospect, knowing how much Mihule's artistic career after was hampered after retiring from Prague (an unsuccessful application in different cities, annually changing locations throughout the German-speaking area, a constant personnel turnover), the number of such diverse works appears somewhat exaggerated in an effort to attract the attention of the Liechtenstein prince. It suggests, however, the enduring relentless commitment that Mihule was not lacking even in such an unfavourable period.

The third troupe of the director Franz Xavier Felder is crucial for exploring the repertoire from several points. Along with his application, his list of offered repertoire has also been preserved and is also almost identical to *Alphabetisches Verzeichnis der für das Feldsberger Hoftheater in der Zeit von 1790 bis 1806 in Aussicht genommenen Stücke*. This inventory was listed at the end of the Liechtenstein palace theatre study by Hans Bohatta,⁵² who was one of the first professional researchers into the Valtice stage. Moreover, Bohatta supplemented this list with additional necessary data, such as the names of the authors of each play (which Felder did not state in his

⁴⁹ See Adolf Scherl, "Wenzel Mihule," in *Theater in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien. Von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts*, eds. Alena Jakubcová, Matthias J. Pernerstorfer (Wien/ Praha: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften/Institut umění – Divadelní ústav, 2013), 432–36.

⁵⁰ This opera was performed under its German title *Eine machts wie die andere oder Die Schule der Liebhaber* at the Patriotic Theatre.

⁵¹ HAL, file H2330, Schlosstheater in Feldsberg (1790–1805), f. 288–90.

⁵² Hans Bohatta, "Das Theaterwesen am Hofe des Fürsten von und zu Liechtenstein," in *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Wiener Theaterforschung 1950–1951* (Wien, 1952), 38–86.

files) and with notes featuring these titles in Viennese theatres, as well as possible sources of inspiration. Despite being an extremely valuable primal source it should be noted, however, that Bohatta's list of plays demonstrates only a fraction of what could have been featured in Valtice palace theatre between the years 1790–1805. At the same time it is quite evident by the similarity to Felder's repertoire that it is directly derived from it. However, as Felder's troupe was accepted in Valtice, it is possible that this repertoire was featured in the autumn of 1798 in the local theatre.

Not much information can be found about the German theatrical manager Franz Xavier Felder.⁵³ He is only mentioned in the years 1784–1786 when he managed the theatre in Regensburg. Here an actor and later also a playwright by the name of Karl Ludwig Giesecke joined his troupe (real name Johann Georg Metzler). A number of his plays were also featured by Felder. In 1786 he travelled with his troupe to Salzburg and in 1791 together with the actor Johann Nepomuk Wodraschka he signed a contract for management of the city theatre in Ljubljana. He left the local engagement soon after without much success. Other reports are as late as the application to Valtice palace scene management from the spring of 1798. It is not known if he had a permanent engagement at this time, where he could have been known to the prince of Liechtenstein and his court office, and which would therefore provide him with favour once again in their services. The fact is that the aforementioned Felder's troupe was prioritized over the relatively well-known director Mihule who applied to join Liechtenstein's services a few months earlier.

Felder's repertoire is also quite large both in quantity and genre diversity. It contains 85 already rehearsed comedies, 33 dramas, 40 tragedies and 18 singspiels.⁵⁴ A number of them were eventually, perhaps after the intervention of the court offices, removed or replaced by other titles.⁵⁵ In his comment on the repertoire list, Bohatta states that Felder's repertoire is largely derived from Vienna Burgtheater titles and partly from the Leopoldstädter Theater.⁵⁶ From the total number of 176 plays in Felder's repertoire list, 82 of them were also featured at the first Austrian stage at the time.

By studying Felder's repertoire, the considerable inspirational influence of Bohatta surprisingly goes to the Mannheimer churpfälzische Hochschauspielgesellschaft under the direction of Theobald Marchand⁵⁷ particularly by featuring comic singspiels which the troupe took over mainly from French originals (for example Hubatschka's *Der Schlosser* or Johann Andres' singspiels *Der Fassbinder*, *Der alte Freier*, *Der Freund vom Hause* etc.). Felder's and Bohatta's repertoire list clearly shows that the entire prince family openly favoured comedies (except for singspiels) and middle class "tearful" drama (i.e. bürgerliches Rührstück).

It certainly would be a future challenge to compare these with the list of additions to the prince wardrobe inventories and fundus, which were newly recorded each year and, based on the needs of the individual plays, also changed and enlarged, and from which further Valtice repertoire development may be seen in the period after 1800. Unfortunately, no more lists seem to have survived from this time, however, in connection with the transformation of Valtice Palace Theatre (with their own troupe also performing in other Liechtenstein cities) a change in the entire repertoire in the spirit of Enlightenment reforms established by Sonnenfels can be presumed.

⁵³ See Jitka Pavlišová, "Ve službách knížete Liechtensteina," 93 and 95.

⁵⁴ HAL, file H2330, Schlosstheater in Feldsberg (1790–1805), f. 295–300.

⁵⁵ This was usually the case with dramas, for example, Kotzebue's play *Das Kind der Liebe* or Klesheim's *Prüfung und Frauengeduld* were completely removed. Instead of Schroeder's five-act play *Der Richter*, Felder eventually chose Iffland's *Die Mundel*, etc. See Hans Bohatta, "Das Theaterwesen am Hofe des Fürsten von und zu Liechtenstein," 61–65.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 78–86.

⁵⁷ See Joseph Kürschner, "Marchand, Theobald," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (1884), also available online at <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd104342358.html>.

Moreover in the first years of the launching of the palace theatre in Valtice, the dramaturgy was more focused on large and occasional opera spectacles, and in this respect the established wardrobe was initially equipped in particular with costumes for allegorical and mythical characters. It can be hypothesized here that these types of costumes would not have been used later for the operations of contemporary bourgeois drama and had to be at least partially newly equipped.

Investigation into the mutual influences of the character of bourgeois class theatre and the Valtice theatre stage, which was in operations over the later period of the palace theatre's existence, has also shown that the high-ranking Austrian aristocracy during their fifteen-year rule quite naturally embraced not only genres of initially purely bourgeois theatrical entertainment, but also the theatre model as a continually working institution with their own permanent company after 1800. This also caused a definite intersection of social classes, which were formerly radically different, and what is more, the bourgeois element had already started to strongly dictate the artistic and social development of the following century.

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Re-presentation of History as a Component of Teaching History of Theatre. Remembering the Deceased Assoc. Prof. PhDr. Ján Jaborník, Ph.D.

Abstract | The submitted paper is dedicated to assoc. prof. PhDr. Ján Jaborník, Ph.D. (1942–2010), a long-time lecturer in the history of Slovak and Czech theatre at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, who educated and formed a range of contemporary Slovak teatrologists as well as practitioners. His approach encouraged an interest in the study of history, which culminated in the form of numerous productions from old Slovak literature, documentary dramas based on history as well as professional publications.

Despite the separation of the Czechoslovak Republic, he continued to deliver lectures on the history of Czech and Slovak theatre. The paper depicts and analyses his fundamental conceptual foundations as well as several seminar assignments, through which he taught his students to re-present theatre history.

Keywords | Czech theatre – education – history – methodology – Slovak theatre

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Prologue

After the Velvet Revolution in 1989 the past became one of the most frequent themes for social and cultural events in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Theatre life has been enriched with new forms such as documentary drama and theatre, site-specific projects, public performances of various historical events as well as a number of other multi-genre projects closely related to the memory of the nation or Europe. The phenomenon of a return to the past came about in post-socialist countries as a natural consequence of the preceding political regime, which focused on the presentation of the past as part of the ideology. The selection of the events presented and the manner of their perception were subordinated to this phenomenon. Examples from theatre life in Slovakia would include specific readings of classic dramatic texts, whereby Tyl's *Švanda the Bagpiper*, for instance, was not within the "framework of romantic fairy tale heroes", but was "a prototype of an individual driven into the world by the demands of rural capitalism in order to make money"¹ or staging tales whose ideological and educational objectives were mirrored already in programmes: "Be happy children, so that you may live in times when the government fulfils all the wishes of children, when wise men led by Comrade Stalin and Comrade Gottwald work for your happiness and joyful future."²

¹ [s. n.], "Za ľudovú zábavu na javisku," *Lud* 3 (1950, 7th July): 1.

² Oľga Lichardová, "Slovo k deťom," in *Jenö Gáli: Mocný Jano* (production program 20th January 1952, Mládežnícky súbor Nová scéna Bratislava), 4–5.

Presentation of the past in this spirit occurred in former Czechoslovakia in two long-lasting waves – firstly, in the 1950s and secondly, in the years of normalisation and consolidation (1968–1989). The experience of Socialism and its consequent loosening and even collapse in the second case linked two generations of Slovak theatre space – the generation of the 1960s, which represents a very strong and inspiring phenomenon, and the generation whose members attended the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava in the 1990s. Its members mostly consisted of “Husák’s children”,³ for whom the revolution of 1989 formed an imaginary landmark separating childhood from adulthood. One of the results of the life experience of these two generations and their mutual impact during university studies is the intensive “re-presentation” and “re-interpretation” of the past in Slovak performing arts, where these two generations currently meet and have established a creative dialogue.

Apart from theatre practitioners (such as Martin Porubjak, Vladimír Strnisko, Milan Lasica, Martin Huba, Emília Vášáryová, Milan Čorba, Jozef Ciller) several teatrologists (Soňa Šimková, Vladimír Štefko) rank among this influential group of academics at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. Up until recently, Ján Jaborník had occupied a specific position among them. Slovak teatrologists as well as the wider public parted with him five years ago. He perceived the specific generation affiliation as a gift that could be beneficial for further generations as well.

I hold it a life gift that being a Slovak teatrologist I was born and part of the generation which entered theatre life in Slovakia in the 1960s. [...] I consider the definite and complete break with romanticism and the romantic residues of adolescent times and secondary school times, which had also been drummed into us through so-called “revolutionary” romanticism, the most important. It seems that even then, we, the youth, experienced too many ideals and varied faith. Regarding our experiences today I think that it is mainly scepticism that our generation of sexagenarians can pass down to the younger generations. Not scepticism and nihilism, but scepticism as a positive, activating and mobilising phenomenon, drawing attention to the pitfalls of false or unworthy faith.

His unique status along with the great impact on the formation of students was primarily connected with the focus of the courses he taught. The course History of Slovak and Czech Theatre had the particular potential and space for re-presentation and re-interpretation of the past and thus for understanding our own cultural identity.

A Legendary Teacher

Ján Jaborník was born on 27th May 1942 in Bratislava. As early as 1959, after graduating from the eleven-year secondary school in Holič, he passed the entrance examinations to study Theatre Studies at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. Due to political reasons, however, he was forced to leave and go into the manufacturing industry. He worked as a manual worker on the docks in Komárno, where he completed his apprenticeship as an electrician. He passed the entrance exams to study Theatre Studies again in 1961 and graduated in 1968. He worked as a dramaturge in Jonáš Záborský Theatre in Prešov during his studies (1965–1969), where he initiated the staging of an extensive cycle of plays by William Shakespeare. He lectured at the Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Prešov over the years 1968–1973 and in 1982, after passing his rigorous exams, was awarded a doctor of philosophy degree (PhDr.). He began to work in the Theatre Institute in 1969, where he became one of the co-founders of theatre documentation. Over the 1970s and 1980s he was involved in supervision of artistic activities and documentation for several theatres (apart from theatres

³ Husák’s children – the generation born in the mid-1970s.

based in Bratislava, the list includes Jonáš Záborský Theatre and the Ukrainian National Theatre, both in Prešov, the State Theatre in Košice, J. G. Tajovský Theatre in Zvolen, the Slovak National Uprising Theatre in Martin, Regional Theatre Nitra, Hungarian Regional Theatre in Komárno and its stage Thália in Košice). Apart from professional theatre he was involved with amateur theatre life as well. He was a methodological and educational associate for numerous amateur festivals and exhibitions and was awarded the G. Fejérpataky-Belopotocký Medal (1979) of merit for the development of amateur theatre. He published his observations in journals such as *Film a divadlo*, *Nové slovo*, *Javisko*, *Slovenské divadlo*, *Teatro*, *Divadlo v medzičase*, *Kod*, etc. He was the chief editor of the so-called yearbooks *Divadlá na Slovensku v sezóne...*; he contributed greatly to *Encyklopédia dramatických umení Slovenska*,⁴ where he compiled a number of entries on non-Bratislava theatres and theatre performers. He also cooperated in the creation of additional Slovak encyclopaedic projects.⁵ He began to teach at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava in 1979 as an external lecturer. He obtained a full-time contract in 1987 and three years later – in one of the most problematic periods in the existence of the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava⁶ – he became the head of the Department of Theatre Studies at the former Faculty of Drama and Puppet Theatre (1990–1998). He was awarded the degree of associate professor in 2000. He returned to the Theatre Institute in 1999 in the position of head of the Department of Theatre Documentation and Informatics, where he initiated the project of retrospective yearbooks *Divadlá na Slovensku v sezóne...*, which he processed backward from the 1970/1971 season to the 1964/1965 season. One of his last projects was the largest modern exhibition on the history of Slovak theatre entitled *Theatre – Passion, Body, Voice*, which was held by the Theatre Institute and the Slovak National Museum in Bratislava in 2005 and which was re-installed in Košice and Martin.⁷ Alongside the work at the Theatre Institute he continued to deliver lectures at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava up until the end of his life.

The biographical data indicate a remarkable time span and intensity in terms of his teatrological activities. He was immersed in historical, documentary and critical work for more than half a century and passed on his experience to students for more than twenty years. After succumbing to terminal illness, his former students, now established members of the Slovak cultural community, labelled him as the “friar of theatre”⁸ or the “departing legend”.⁹ A long-term teatrological practice connected with his educational activity at the university enabled him to create an elaborate system of teaching, in which the original meaning of the word “university”, i.e. integration, creation of a community between students and a lecturer, was reflected. With hindsight, “his” history represents a complex set of knowledge and skills that influenced several generations of artists and theatre theoreticians both at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava and beyond. He also impacted graduates from conservatories as a secondary target group, where his methodology and interpretations have been applied into teaching history by his former students (e.g. Peter Čahoj, Miriam Kičiňová, Soňa Smolková).

⁴ *Encyklopédia dramatických umení Slovenska I, II* (Bratislava: SAV, 1989, 1990).

⁵ *Encyklopédia Slovenska I–VI* (Bratislava: Veda, 1977–1982). *Pedagogická encyklopédia Slovenska I–II* (Bratislava: Veda, 1984–1985).

⁶ This problematic period was connected with the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and changes at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, namely in the Theatre Faculty. See: *VŠMU 1949–2009* (Bratislava: VŠMU, 2009).

⁷ Another large exhibition was installed in the Bratislava Castle in 1971 (libretto: Dr. Štefánia Poláková): *The Slovak Theatre Before 1918*. See: Ladislav Čavojský, “Nedivadelná výstava o divadle,” *Slovenské divadlo* 19, no. 2 (1971): 274–76.

⁸ Jana Wild, “Rehoľník divadla,” *Kod* 4, no. 6 (2010): 60–61.

⁹ Zora Jaurová, “Keď odchádzajú legendy,” *Týždeň* 7, no. 25 (2010): 52.

The words of Zora Jaurová¹⁰ can be viewed as testimony for the entire generation – especially from the perspective of students of directing, dramaturgy and theatre studies in the period of the 1990s, who naturally and at the same time intensively searched for truth concerning their identity after the political changes and for whom Ján Jaborník became a unique companion in this pilgrimage: “Janko Jaborník searched for the truth not only in dusty archives and books, but also in his own life. He taught us to ask who we were, what the Slovak theatre was like, what the Slovak nation was like. The answers were not always flattering. But also thanks to them I care about my country and its heritage. Because I understand it...”¹¹

Theatrology as an Open Scientific Discipline

As the head of the Department of Theatre Studies at the Faculty of Drama and Puppet Theatre, the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava (1990–1998), he implemented several essential conceptual changes into the study programme. One of them was the regular introduction of the study of theatre studies in a combination of subjects, either in combination with disciplines at neighbouring faculties at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava (film studies, theory of dance) or at the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava (English language and literature, Latin language and literature, Polish language and literature, ethnology). He believed in introducing theatre studies in combination with the Hungarian language and literature, library and information science and also archive studies was necessary, even though this suggestion has not been implemented so far. Perception of theatre studies as an open interdisciplinary field ranked among the fundamental pillars of his conception of theatrological work.

The second pillar, based primarily on his experience as a documentarist, was his so-called “black work”. He derived the concept from analogical perception of the work of a theatrologist and an archaeologist. Consistent heuristics, uncovering and naming the “layers” of period sediments, revealing and understanding specific interferences and alterations of a piece of art, evaluation of conservation or damage of a piece of art, exploration of connections in a wider context and verification of results – these were the basic stages of work which he practised and which he also required from his students. He emphasised within this context analysis, comparative method and reconstruction as fundamental methods of theatrological research. Mastering them formed a precondition for independent and thorough theatrological work in higher years of study. From his position as head of the department, he consequently included them in the teaching plan as the content of methodology seminars and course theses in the first and the second year of the bachelor’s degree programme. In the first year of the programme, a comparative analysis of a dramatic text was taught and developed. The course was focused on a comparison of a classical dramatic text with a newer adaptation of the same myth or subject in dramatic art. In the second year of the programme, students focused on a reconstruction of a production exclusively on the basis of classic, i.e. visual and textual materials (audio and audio-visual recordings were strictly forbidden). In the third year of the programme, one of the main subjects was an analysis of a theatre production on the basis of an audio-visual recording.

¹⁰ Zora Jaurová – graduated from the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, Bratislava in 1998 (theatre dramaturgy). She is active in various European cultural networks (Culture Action Europe, the Institute for Cultural Policies – NGO platform for research, analysis and advocacy in the field of cultural policies). She worked as a chief consultant for the city of Košice (European Capital of Culture 2013). She was appointed Artistic Director of the project Košice – Interface 2013 in 2008. She was also a member of the artistic board and a jury member for several national art competitions. A number of her translations of British and American theatre plays have been published and staged in Slovak theatres.

¹¹ Ibid.

Practical seminars focused on the above-mentioned methods of theatrological work were an organic part of the History of Slovak and Czech Theatre teaching. This course was framed as a representation of the past thanks to the application of the method of “staging history”.¹² Individual productions and their reconstructed forms were the starting point for a deeper examination of individual developmental stages of Slovak theatre life, personalities as well as theatre ensembles. The particularities of Jaborník’s pedagogical approach included the requirement of frequent returns to original roots and sources as well as a revision of methodology while handling them, refinement of the ability of critical evaluation and re-evaluation of one’s own attitudes. Practical seminars opened up space for formation and formulation of one’s own opinions, but first and foremost, helped create a positive relationship with theatre history and encouraged interest in its study. The extraordinary relationship between the teacher and the students and his legitimate interest in their opinions and observations was the added value.

The History of Slovak and Czech Theatre was one of the major courses for the fields of theatre studies as well as theatre directing and dramaturgy. The course was compulsory; in the bachelor’s degree programme it consisted of four to six semesters, depending on individual study plans; in the higher years of study the Department of Theatre Studies offered optional seminars related to the course. The time horizon of the subject matter ranged from the Middle Ages up to 1989, while the seminars focused on more recent periods, i.e. after 1945 or after 1962. Distribution of the content of the course into semesters and the time range of the individual thematic units often varied – depending on the expressed interest of the students of a particular year in a specific area of history. Ján Jaborník consequently began the course History of Slovak and Czech Theatre with an extensive series of lectures where “fundamental characteristic features of Slovak theatre culture and its relationship to Czech theatre culture as well as its incorporation into broader developmental contexts of European theatre and developmental periodization of Slovak dramatic theatre”¹³ were discussed. The series of lectures made specific demands on the first-year students and the passing of it was a requirement for further studies in the subject. The structure of the series and the overall system of teaching can best be demonstrated in the way Jaborník himself processed the subject matter. Jaborník’s lectures were mainly based on theatrological practice in theatre documentation, which was reflected in the form of archiving the knowledge on to catalogue cards with various quotations and notes. The material for the individual lectures always represented a newly completed set of catalogue cards for a certain topic. This kind of system meant the lectures could be continuously updated with new information, enabled the organising of the subject matter in various ways and at the same time served to highlight the intersections of the individual thematic circles.

Ján Jaborník emphasised that history is not a single straight line. He replaced the exact verbal definition with a scheme of intricate lines sketched by his hands in the air, which would resemble a network or a graphic representation of the Internet, although he himself preferred a typewriter and his own memory up until the end of his life.

The course was taught exclusively by Jaborník for a number of years, which undoubtedly added to the complexity of the explication and interpretation of history. Ph.D. students and

¹² For instance, the history of MCHAT was elaborated employing this method (Moscow: Moskovskij Chudožestvennyj teatr, 1998); reconstructions of Provázek productions edited by JAMU (Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno) created a similar type of “staging history”. See for instance David Drozd, *Příběhy dlouhého nosu: analýza a rekonstrukce inscenace Evy Tálské v Divadle na provázku* (Brno: Divadelní fakulta JAMU, 2011).

¹³ Information sheet for the course History of Slovak and Czech Theatre (lecturer: Ján Jaborník), 1st academic year 2009/2010. Archive of the Department of Theatre Studies, Theatre Faculty, Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava.

assistant professors were only in charge of time-bound thematic units. In light of the schedule of individual themes, which were lectured in various time periods, it can be assumed that the intention was to gradually hand all the periods of history over to younger colleagues.¹⁴ However, this aim was not achieved.

Initial Series of Lectures – The Basis of Orientation

“Fundamental characteristic features of Slovak theatre culture” formed the content of the above-mentioned initial outlined series of lectures. Their amount is the result of Jaborník’s precise comparative analysis of the development of Slovak and Czech theatre with an overlap with the Central European cultural space as well as an overlap with the individual developmental stages of Slovak theatre culture. He defined the following as the particularities of Slovak theatre culture: delayed development, documented mainly in a comparison with Czech theatre culture; contacts with other cultures, relationships between amateur and professional theatre; formation of professional directing and layering of generations of actors. He analysed each of the given periods on the basis of a chronological overview, while mapping the genetic (contact) and typological connections effectively. As an example, notes to the thematic unit Contacts with other cultures are introduced:¹⁵

Contacts with other cultures

*Slovak culture is based on the **Central European space** and reacts to it:*

*Ever since the Middle Ages **Western and Eastern tendencies** have been intersecting within our territory. The mission of Cyril and Methodius to our countries was a political strengthening of the Eastern, i.e. Byzantine influence, which was primarily reflected in folk theatre and later in the work of certain directors (namely Ján Jamnický).¹⁶*

The manner of thinking of the 19th century, along with Slavonic patriotism, was focused on the East, where Slovaks found a needed historicity, identity as well as protection in an alliance with Czechs and Russians. In connection with the national revival and the existence of a multinational monarchy the mutual impact of cultures of specific European nations began to grow stronger (both in a positive and negative sense): Czech culture primarily reacted to German, Slovak to Hungarian culture, while these cultures drew upon Western European sources (France, England).

*The 20th century and the rise of the professional Slovak National Theatre brought new impulses to culture. **Janko Borodáč**, the first Slovak professional director, focused mainly on domestic and Russian drama. His dramaturgy and directing were influenced by **the East**: the production of the Moscow Art Theatre (K. S. Stanislavsky and V. N. Danchenko) was his artistic goal and source of inspiration.*

¹⁴ Among his Ph.D. students and assistant professors were, for instance: Martina Hubová (maiden name Lichá) (theatre production in the Slovak National Theatre in the period of the Slovak State), Anna Grusková (Czech avant-garde theatre), Zdenka Marková (maiden name Pašuthová) (Czech and Slovak national revival), Martin Timko (Czech theatre and drama of the second half of the 19th century).

¹⁵ The following text originated on the basis of student notes by the author of the paper from the lectures of assoc. prof. Jaborník in 1994, including a comparison with notes of students of later generations. The specific incompleteness is maintained on purpose, so is the personality contribution of Ján Jaborník is reflected in certain specific phrases and idioms.

¹⁶ This influence was mentioned particularly in connection with *God’s man (Boží člověk)* by Milan Begovič and *Ekvinokcia* by Ivo Vojnovič (both staged in 1939 by Ján Jamnický at the Slovak National Theatre).

The period of the **Slovak Republic, the so-called Slovak State**,¹⁷ brought about an **opening of windows** to Europe. In the field of directing this was due to the work of Borodáč's younger colleagues: **Ján Jamnický and Ferdinand Hoffmann**, whose work reacted to **Western European impulses** (contact points could be found with directors such as Jessner, Brecht, Dullin, Pitoëff, etc.). In the field of dramaturgy (Ferdinand Hoffmann was the dramaturge of the Slovak National Theatre), essential dramatic works from individual historical periods (antiquity, classicism, post-classicism, romanticism, neo-romanticism as well as contemporary works) and from individual geographical regions (France, Germany, England, the USA, etc.) spread onto our stages. The significant development of **literary artistic translation** is also connected with this.

The rise of Socialism at the beginning of the 1950s brought about a violent "closing of windows" and **"a compulsory view"** only **in the direction of the East** – the Soviet Union. It concerned all theatre units: dramaturgy, within which there existed a prescribed dramaturgical ladder; directing – the most appropriate and at the same time only possible poetics was realism; acting – the 1950s brought about an internal understanding of the system thanks to Jozef Budský in the Slovak National Theatre, but at the same time also various deformed explications and practises in the system. The 1950s had the worst impact on stage design, the "recuperation" of which took the longest.

Liberation during the political situation **in the 1960s**, the onset of so-called Socialism with a human face, brought about **"a filling in of the blank spots" on the theatrical map of Slovakia**. Theatre appeared in new forms (musicals, pantomimes, little theatres). It was supplemented with new genres – even with those "forbidden" ones (absurd drama, model drama, grotesque). Impulses did not come to Slovakia from the East, but **from the West**. During this period Slovak theatre culture significantly **made up for the lost time in contacts with the USA and Great Britain**. Among the reasons for the delay in this field (apart from politics), was the unsuitable geographical position and the long-term poor state of British studies. Note: As early as 1864, commemorating the 300th anniversary of the birth of William Shakespeare, Czech theatre staged the entire cycle of his plays in Czech translations.

Before Slovak theatre makers could come to terms with the Western challenges, this development was interrupted by **the years of "normalisation" and "consolidation"**, when the impact of the **Soviet Union** and their allies was strengthened once again and culture policy returned to the modified practices of the 1950s. The Soviet Union and Poland became the place (in theatre culture) where Slovak theatre makers went to breathe some "fresh air" in the 1970s and 1980s. The production of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, directed by Lyubimov (Lubimov, Taganka Theatre), may serve as an example, where all the characters performed in uniforms. In Poland, especially in Krakow and Warsaw, excellent productions based on the works of Polish romanticism were staged.

After the **revolution in 1989** the impact of the West was strengthened once again. The question as to what extent and for how long will be the subject of research for future generations of theatrologists. This period is marked by success in making up for lost time in cultural contacts with Great Britain and the USA, however, at the expense of Eastern drama.

The text is an example of an analysis of one of the specific features of Slovak theatre culture during changing times. Lectures on other particularities were composed in a similar manner. Their comprehensive outline and time specification of changes created the basis for a detailed periodization of the development of Slovak theatre culture. The periodization which Ján Jaborník presented in his lectures was slightly different from other established models. The differences

¹⁷ Historians tend to use the names the 1st Slovak Republic or simply the Slovak Republic for the years 1939–1945. Concerning this topic see, for example: Dušan Kováč, *Dejiny Slovenska* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2010). Although the term Slovak State has an emotional background, assoc. prof. Jaborník employed this term.

were seen mainly in the division of the developmental stages of professional theatre culture, i.e., since the founding of the Slovak National Theatre (1920). Its form was preserved in one of his last works as follows:¹⁸

1920–1938 *Founding of the Slovak National Theatre, its existence and development of theatre life in the period of the first Czechoslovak Republic.*

1939–1945 *Development and key developmental accents of Slovak theatre art in the period of the Slovak State.*

1945–1949 *Contributions and accomplishments of post-war theatre production and post-war theatre life in the period of relative political freedom.*

Slovak theatre during the period of totalitarianism.

1949–1956 *Manifestations of the originating and strengthening of political totalitarianism and indications of its loosening.*

1956–1962 *Transformations and the new social and artistic initiative of theatre production during the period of the political “thaw”.*

1962–1970 *Multilateral contributions of theatrical and artistic activities of the 1960s.*

1970–1989 *Reflections of “normalisation” and “consolidation” in theatre art and theatre life. Transformations of theatre production and its contribution to the destruction and fall of the totalitarian regime.*

While determining the milestones, Jaborník respected socio-political events, but at the same time also considered the time until the consequences of political changes were manifested in theatre practice. The seeming time shift for certain periods is connected with this consideration (the period of totalitarianism began in 1949 and not in 1948; or the period of “normalisation” and “consolidation” begins in 1970 and not in 1968). He also took into consideration internal changes in individual groups (personal and organizational in particular). The labels of the individual periods, where the expression of movement predominates (the origin, development, expressions, contributions, accomplishments, transformations, etc.), are also distinctive. He used even more illustrative and exact definitions in his lectures at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava (he referred to the period 1939–1945 as the period of “opening windows to Europe”, 1962–1970 “filling in the blank spots in the theatre map of Slovakia”, etc.). The most important aspect of the initial series of lectures was its unfinished character. The outcome of the series was the creation of an imaginary table, in which the developmental periods of Slovak theatre culture were chronologically arranged in one direction and their specifications in the other direction. Its creation and accomplishing orientation was a demanding, but extremely functional foundation for further study. It also provided stimulation for reflections on contemporary theatre culture and a definition of its specifications, which created a notional continuation of the outlined system. Jaborník therefore re-presented history as stimulation for considerations about the present time.

¹⁸ The periodization is adopted from a project of Jaborník's planned publication *History of Slovak Theatre*, which was filed in the Edition Plan at the Theatre Institute in Bratislava. Available online: http://www.theatre.sk/sk/02/CVD/PDF/Dejiny_divadla.pdf, accessed November 15, 2014.

Slovak – Czech Correlation

After the separation of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic in 1993, a discussion occurred in the academic community as to whether it was now necessary to provide parallel lectures on Slovak and Czech theatre. Ján Jaborník clearly promoted the model of their parallel teaching considering their language but foremost their developmental relatedness. The history of Czech theatre was basic material for the application of a comparative analysis in the clarification of the development of Slovak theatre culture, mutual contact connections (predominant in the 19th century) or contact-typological connections with Czech culture (particularly after the establishment of the Slovak National Theatre).

The Slovak-Czech correlation was one of the major thematic fields within the examination of the delayed development of Slovak theatre culture. Individual thematic units from the history of Czech theatre were explicated “in advance so that referencing to necessary chapters related to the development of Slovak drama was made possible”.¹⁹ The concept of the lectures, with regard to the time shift, defined the following developmental periods and phenomena as genetically or typologically related:

- (1) Czech National Revival (J. N. Štěpánek, V. K. Klicpera, J. K. Tyl) – Slovak National Revival (J. Chalupka), including the years of Matica (J. Palárik, J. Záborský);
- (2) Czech drama during the period of Realism (G. Preissová, A. and V. Mrštík) – Slovak drama during the period of Realism (J. G. Tajovský, B. Slančíková-Timrava);
- (3) The Prague National Theatre and its development up to 1900 – institutionalisation of Slovak culture (Matica slovenská, Slovenský spevokol, Národný dom);
- (4) The formation of modern Czech directing (directing production of J. Kvapil and K. H. Hilar) – founding of the Slovak National Theatre and its transformations (directing production of J. Borodáč and V. Šulc);
- (5) Czech avant-garde theatre (production of J. Honzl, E. F. Burian and J. Frejka, Osvobozené divadlo) – development and production of the Slovak National Theatre during the period of the so-called Slovak State (J. Borodáč, F. Hoffmann, J. Jamnický, J. Budský).

When considering the development of theatre after 1945, when Slovak theatre culture – although for only a short period of time – adjusted not only to Czech development, but European development as well, Jaborník dealt in detail with the 1960s in connection with Czech theatre, particularly with the little theatres and their modified forms in Slovakia, which served as a platform for a more liberated production in the period of the 1970s and the 1980s.

Several seminar assignments were related to the above-mentioned concept of correlation. Some of them were one-off assignments, while others held a stable place in the system of teaching. *A Comparison of the Work of V. K. Klicpera and J. Chalupka* belonged to the latter, related to the thematic unit of the National Revival. According to the students, the disadvantage of the assignments was their “nonspecificity”. Jaborník only rarely provided specific information on what he expected. The length of the assignment and the date of its submission were the only requirements. The “nonspecificity” represented a certain advantage from the educational point of view. It encouraged the creativity of the students and forced them to interpret and elaborate the assignment in accordance with their abilities, diligence and last but not least their talent. Despite the various procedures that they employed (a comparison of works, a comparison of

¹⁹ Information sheets for the course History of Slovak and Czech Theatre 2009/2010 (lecturer: Ján Jaborník), archive of the Department of Theatre Studies.

selected titles, a comparison of plot schemes or the relationship schemes of selected dramatic texts, linguistic and stylistic means), their conclusions were extremely similar with the work of V. K. Klicpera being evaluated more positively. Among the reasons stated were primarily literary maturity, easier readability and comprehension (even despite the Czech language), suitability for a potential dramatic production for a wider target group. The work of J. Chalupka was evaluated more critically mainly due to its language, but also due to the fragmented composition and the resolution of conflicts in a satirical spirit. Based on these observations, Jaborník clarified the principles of the harmonising and idealising aesthetics of Biedermeier reflected in the work of V. K. Klicpera, as well as the creation of travesty forms which appear in the work of the Slovak playwright J. Chalupka.

The first and probably the most stable seminar assignment in the History of Slovak and Czech Theatre was a project on the work of Pavel Kyrmezer *Komedie česká o bohatci a Lazarovi*. The seminar assignment consisted of several follow-up parts, thanks to which the students learned the basic methods of theatrological work, as well as the necessity for re-evaluation of their own attitudes. The initial partial assignment was an analysis of the dramatic text in the form of an essay on the topic *To stage or not to stage Kyrmezer?* The second assignment was *A partial reconstruction of the performance* based on listening to the music and on visual materials (photos, reproductions of stage and costume design). The last part was formed by an *Analysis of the performance* of the given work based on an audio-visual recording (directed by Milan Sládek and Eduard Žlábek, the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, 1964). While the students' evaluation of the dramatic text was mainly negative (due to its language, schematic depiction of characters and relationships, religious theme), the second part of the seminar project already admitted the possibility of staging. The final watching of the recording of the performance did not allow for any doubts concerning the possibility of staging – even in the original version, without any violent and significant updates. As a result of this procedure students were able to recognise and appreciate the original contribution of the creative team in their subsequent analysis. The gradual shaping and correction of the primary, often premature and unfounded opinions, was undoubtedly an interesting and at the same time beneficial element of working on this assignment.

Even though the attempts to apply this task at present run into several problems that are connected to the easier availability of resources and virtual communication (availability of the recording of the performance, sharing of the assignments of individual years of students in virtual space), it still constitutes a suitable introduction to the basic methodology and problems of history, as well as a suitable way to interconnect the past with the present and arouse interest in it. A tangible result of such an interest was the establishment of a successful performance of *Komedia česká o bohatci a Lazarovi* at the Department of Puppetry in 2011, directed by Zuzana Kollárová. Ján Jaborník's approach to the evaluation of seminar projects was also interesting from the educational point of view as it took place without marking, exclusively in the form of a discussion with the students with questions predominating. Searching for answers as well as evaluating the level and complexity of their own seminar project was often a challenging self-reflection. Ján Jaborník's critical school, which was clearly more seeking and reflexive than evaluative and critical, was reflected in it.

Staging History

The reconstruction of a production as a method was extremely frequent in the History of Slovak and Czech Theatre. It was on the one hand part of the lectures for the individual developmental periods, and on the other hand a routine seminar assignment for students. Jaborník's reconstruction method which he encouraged in his students, was close to the concept introduced by Mieczysław Tomaszewski in relation to a musical work.²⁰ According to his interpretation, a musical work develops from a conception, through the first actualisation (mainly by the authors themselves), the second actualisation (by the interpreter of the work) to perception (immediate contact with the audience) and reception (evaluation of the work by critics). Ján Jaborník reconstructed the process of the origin of a production in a similar way. Each production was characterised by a short introduction to the historical context and its significance for the work of a director or the entire period as such, clarification of the basic directorial-dramaturgic concept (including information on the translation or modification of the text), description of the staging form (set design, music, etc.) first and foremost acting and finally, the presentation of the critical response.

Reconstructions of productions were an inseparable part of the lectures and seminars, which followed the initial overview block and analysed the individual developmental periods of Slovak theatre culture in a chronological order. Thanks to the staging tradition of the individual works of authors and the detailed research into the productions of the individual directors, overlaps and interconnections between the individual developmental periods of Slovak theatre were established and thus, the knowledge acquired in the initial block of lectures was supported as well as expanded. At the same time, selected "staging history" of individual authors was created by means of this method, which could be further organised (like Jaborník's catalogue cards) into profiles of directors, actors or various cross-sectional topics (e.g. productions of Slovak classical drama, Russian drama, productions of a specific period or ensembles). As an example, descriptions recorded in notes and propositions about the staging tradition of the works of the Slovak playwright of the Matica period Ján Palárik are shown, which could have been applied to the topic of tours of the Slovak National Theatre to Prague or the work of directors such as Janko Borodáč, Karol L. Zachar or Ľubomír Vajdička and many others.

***Dobrodružstvo pri obžinkoch (Adventure at Harvest Time)* (directed by: J. Borodáč, the Slovak National Theatre 1933 and 1936)**

The production of Adventure at Harvest Time did not elicit a significant response in Slovakia. In Prague, where the Slovak National Theatre was on tour, it was different.

*Prague critics particularly appreciated the Slovak **acting and Slovak language as the stage language**²¹ (Jamnický in the role of the young baron Kostrovický in particular). A notable Prague critic Jindřich Vodák praised the **suitable casting** and mutual complementing of the protagonists' characters: Hana Meličková (the Countess) gave a prudent impression, Oľga Borodáčová (Miluša) gave a determined impression,²² "manly-built"²³ Ján Jamnický (Baron Kostrovický) provided a contrast to the more unrestrained Andrej Bagar (Rohoň).*

²⁰ Mieczysław Tomaszewski, "Nad analýzou a interpretáciou hudobného diela," *Slovenská hudba* 18, no. 2 (1992): 215–54.

²¹ A. M. Brousil, "Slovenská činohra Národného divadla," *Venkov* 31, no. 100 (1936, 28th April): 10.

²² Jv (Jindřich Vodák), "Slovenský Palárik v pražském Národním," *České slovo* (1936, 28th April): 10.

²³ AMP, "Slovenské Národní divadlo v Praze," *Právo lidu* 45 (1936, 28th April).

Phrases such as “happily archaic charm with simplicity, but vivid vitality”,²⁴ or “a Russian sense of reality”²⁵ were connected to the **realistic poetics** of Borodáč’s production.

Borodáč “made sure the entire hide-and-seek of the lovers had the character of a merry and frolic tag, in which only the pathos of revivalist speeches sounded seriously”.²⁶

Prague critics noticed the **delayed national-revivalist tendencies** in Palárik’s work as well as his **inclination towards the aesthetics of Biedermeier** and justifiably **compared his work to the work of Josef Kajetán Tyl**.²⁷

Inkognito (Incognito)

(directed by: K. L. Zachar, the Slovak National Theatre 1959)

K. L. Zachar staged *Incognito* during the period of the so-called Golden Age of Drama at the Slovak National Theatre. In a creative dialogue between Jozef Budský – Tibor Rakovský – K. L. Zachar, particularly thanks to Zachar, the **phenomenon of theatre which is supremely about acting, a theatre that is devoid of philosophy and literature**, appeared. With Palárik’s *Incognito* Zachar maintains his reputation as a **theatre maker of “pure genres”**.²⁸ He was convinced that “it is the nature of a man to prefer living cheerful, beautiful moments rather than hours of pain and sorrow”.²⁹

Text Arrangement:

Zachar **harmonized Slovak – Jewish relationships** (crossing out certain passages) and **avoided any thesis** (crossing outs, e.g. in the final scene about the Slovak theatre). He created an optimistic, merry play from Palárik. **Conflicts were replaced by plot-lines.**

Cast:

Sokolová – M. Bancíková, Evička – Z. Gruberová, Potomský – K. L. Zachar, Jelenfy – F. Dibarbora, Jelenský – K. Machata, Borka – E. Krížiková.

The production was extremely successful. Zachar later premièred **a revival** (with a new cast), where a **new generation of actors** performed (Evička – B. Turzonovová, Borka – E. Vášáryová, Jelenský – J. Adamovič).

Stage design and costumes:

The creation was based on K. L. Zachar’s proposal. Evička, harvesters and female rakers (university students at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava) were **beautifully and festively dressed young people**. Regarding the costumes and the stage form, Zachar used Slovak folklore as a demonstration of culture. They were even subject to **idealisation** (figuratively speaking, it is possible to eat off the floor in every Slovak hut).

²⁴ Mir. Rutte, “Bratislavští u nás,” *Národní listy* 76 (1936, 27th April): 1.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ kd, “Se zbožným ostychem,” *Národní osvobození* (1936, 28th April): 6. A. M. Brousil, “Slovenská činohra Národního divadla,” 10.

²⁸ The term “pure genres” was used by J. Jaborník as a synonym especially for comedies relieved of all tragic moments.

²⁹ Karol Zachar, “Farba a rytmus Palárikových postav,” in *Ján Palárik: Inkognito* (production program 11th July 1959, Slovak National Theatre Bratislava), 1.

Zachar **acknowledges the theatricality** in the scenography.³⁰

If, at present, we denote some of Zachar's productions (*Vejár*, *Dobrodružstvo pri obžinkoch*, *Ženský zákon*) as "white", *Incognito* was a "**pastel**" production.

Critical response:

The play was a **luminous picture in aquarelle**³¹ full of light and jubilant situations. Zachar managed to create a **dramatic concert** – him being the conductor. The critics praised Zachar, Gruberová and Machata in particular.³² Thanks to the virtuous acting performances Zachar's production actually surpassed the text.

Inkognito (Incognito)

(directed by: L. Vajdička, Theatre of the Slovak National Uprising Martin 1971)

L. Vajdička approached Palárik in a similar manner as Chalupka. His first production of *Incognito* was connected with the **climactic point in the creative period in Martin's theatre** and the action-based scenography of Jozef Ciller.

Martin's *Incognito* is **beyond the range of all the previous interpretations**. Vajdička does not use the principle of idealisation or harmonisation, but instead de-poeticizes, de-idealizes.

He made the story more condensed and dynamic. He tailored it **into a Chalupka-like cut** and gave it life credibility. In Ciller's scenography the story does not take place in "idyllic Krasňany, but in lumpish and filthy Kocúrkovo".³³

The only thing in this interpretation that felt unfamiliar and **problematic** was the **character of the patriot Jelenský**, who did not fit into the overall concept.³⁴

Inkognito (Incognito)

(directed by: L. Vajdička, Studio NS [Theatre New Scene in Bratislava] 1979)

The production in the Studio of the New Scene met with an **enormous response**. It was a **follow-up to Martin's production**. The "de-poeticizing" was taken to extremes, however. When considering the scenography it is manifested in a minor detail, for instance, – in Martin there was a beautiful ceramic stove on the stage, while in Bratislava there was only a completely common, rounded one.

Magda Paveleková played the part of Mrs. Sokolová. The critics labelled her as a character monolith, a prototype of the petty bourgeois at the time. At the beginning of the play she is collecting linen and singing not in Slovak, but in **Hungarian**.

While Evička remained a "blunt frump" in the Martin staging, even though she had been to the "Erziehung" (and does not learn to recite *Slávy dcéra*), here, **Evička** (M. Vášáryová) is like a rococo doll. "Even the old Sokolová swallows her pride and together they parrot the noble sonnets of Kollár's *Slávy dcéra*, however, **only to impress and capture the groom Jelenský**."³⁵

³⁰ Zachar liked to use titles or curtains with titles. The titles used in *Incognito* described the number of the performed act.

³¹ Ladislav Čavojský, "Svietivý obrázok v akvareli: Na okraj inscenácie Palárikovho Inkognita v SND," *Práca* 14 (1959, 17th July): 5.

³² Andrej Mráz, "Storočná veselohra," *Pravda* 40 (1959, 19th July): 5.

³³ Ladislav Čavojský, "Inkognito v Martine," *Film a divadlo* 15, no. 11 (1971).

³⁴ Štefan Šugár, "Bez národnej glorioly: Palárikovo Inkognito v DSNP Martin," *Smena* 24 (1971, 12th May): 4.

³⁵ Ján Jaborník, "Palárik podľa Chalupku," *Večerník* 24, no. 6 (1979, 9th January): 5.

*Jelenský (E. Horváth) gives the impression of the “negative of his literary model”³⁶ in the New Scene staging. An “immature”³⁷ and maximally “impractical manikin”³⁸ (wearing Lennon style glasses) finds himself in bondage and under the influence of Mrs. Sokolová. He is not a patriot at all. He composes and recites verses only because he is **convinced of his own talent**, although he does not actually have any.*

*Hidden meanings were supported again by the **action-based stage design by Jozef Ciller**. For example, Sokolová tests Jelenský discreetly – she “palpates” the quality of his coat. This is the criterion which opens up the doors to her house for him. At another point, she sits on a coffer with Evička’s trousseau. At the end she showers the young couple with it, while talking about the beauty of Slovak poetry.*

*As concerns the characters of the **harvesters** and the female rakers, Vajdička uses a trick, seemingly borrowed from Martin’s Kocúrko [premiered in 1978 – auth. note] – **he cast elderly actors** in these roles – tired, worn out by life, who freshen up with alcohol especially at the moment when a statement about their bravery is heard.*

*He does not avoid the theme of **alcoholism** or decayed **eroticism**.*

Specific information on the significance of the given text in the period of its origination and cross-sectional information on its various interpretations inspired students not only to theatrical reflection, but often – mainly in the case of directing and dramaturgy students – to their own stage actualisation. Ján Jaborník’s educational activity contributed to the creation of several productions of works by Slovak authors, which appeared at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava after the Velvet Revolution (in the second half of the 1990s in particular). Jaborník incorporated them continuously in the production history and thus, provided students with valuable feedback. The school acts of the directing-dramaturgical tandem Rastislav Ballek and Martin Kubran, who staged two older Slovak texts (Vajanský’s *Podivíni*, premiered on 7th June 1995 and Dohnány’s *Odchod z Bratislavy*, premiered on 20th December 1995) were among these productions. In connection with the second mentioned production, Jaborník reflected on its “bidirectional” message in his lectures shortly after its premiere. One of the directions turned to the history of the the idealist Štúr generation, where the authors made use of the melody and rhythm of the mellisonant Slovak language. The second direction was exclusively contemporary – “reading” the story through the lens of absurdity and scepticism, in which activities characterising departure were repeated cyclically. The awakening, washing, dressing of our “patriots”, who were constantly twirling in an imaginary circle (among a bed, a basin and a wardrobe) instead of departure was meant to be similar to the Slovak socio-political situation of the given period.

He was also interested in the philosophical texts of Ladislav Klíma *Jsem absolutní vůle* in the conception of Eduard Kudláč, Martin Kubran and Tomáš Hudcovič (1997); as well as the demasking comedy *Znénadála* by the Slovak author Pavol Všudyslav Ollík directed by Stanislav Herko (1998), which was staged at the Slovak National Theatre, directed by Peter Mikulík, shortly after the school premiere (also in 1998). Jaborník praised the work of another significant directing-dramaturgical tandem – Patrik Lančarič and Peter Pavlac, who began the epoch of productions inspired by Expressionism, in connection with the motif of the circus, with their graduate production of a play by Július Barč-Ivan *Dvaja* (1999). Jaborník studied the work of the students and graduates enthusiastically and evaluated it also during their professional career. He was able to “sense” the truthfulness and honesty of the creative search intuitively, designate

³⁶ Pavol Palkovič, “S klasikom i proti nemu,” *Pravda* 60, no. 14 (1979, 17th January): 5.

³⁷ Nelly Štúrová, “Inkognito,” *Film a divadlo* 13, no. 6 (1979, 23rd March): 25.

³⁸ Ján Jaborník, “Palárik podľa Chalupku,” 5.

conceptual intentions of theatre makers accurately, and express accord or discord with his personal theatrological experience and opinion.

Without a Legacy?

It is a sad reality for Slovak theatrology that due to his constant work with theatre art and “black work” Ján Jaborník did not have sufficient time to compile his knowledge and experience into a comprehensive monograph. In spite of the fact that publications exist aimed at a presentation of the comprehensive history of Slovak theatre,³⁹ none of them map out the development of our theatre culture to such an extent and with such a developed system as Jaborník’s lectures and seminars.

The most plastic embodiment of his vision of the history of Slovak theatre culture was materialised in the above-mentioned exhibition *Theatre – Passion, Body, Voice*. He was among the creators of the concept of this theatre exhibition project and was also the author of the texts in the accompanying booklets. They currently represent a valuable outline of the history of Slovak theatre. Shortly after the exhibition, he began to prepare texts for the publishing of a book.

His enthusiasm for history, joy in re-presentation of the past and its re-evaluation are thus preserved in the form of various publications which he edited; studies, journal papers, reviews, internal evaluations as well as reviews of courses and final theses at the Theatre Faculty, the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava.

The results of his work are now primarily available in the form of a live documentary – the educational and cultural background of personalities of the Slovak theatre environment, who are currently in their thirties and forties. It is not only the legacy of Ján Jaborník, but the legacy of an entire generation of his contemporaries, with whom this generation feels an exceptional propinquity. Part of this is formed by the “optimistic-sceptic” or the “sceptic-optimistic”⁴⁰ view of one’s own past and a certain alertness in its examination. History can be re-presented with the intention of the search for the truth, however, it can be also presented as a servant to ideology, as it is expressed in a historical joke in the Slovak drama classic Jonáš Záborský:

Tutor: Tell me, charissime, what is history?

Pupil: It should re-present the past, however, it is actually the art of covering up the truth.⁴¹

Ján Jaborník definitely re-presented the history of Slovak theatre culture. May my gratitude also be expressed by means of this paper.

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³⁹ *Kapitoly z dejín slovenského divadla* (Bratislava: SAV, 1967). Miloš Mistrík, *Slovenské divadlo v 20. storočí* (Bratislava: Veda, 1999). Iva Mojžišová – Dagmar Poláčková, *Slovenská divadelná scénografia / Slovak Stage Design 1920–2000* (Bratislava: Divadelný ústav, 2004). Vladimír Štefko (ed.), *Dejiny slovenskej drámy 20. storočia* (Bratislava: Divadelný ústav, 2011), etc.

⁴⁰ Zdenka Pašuthová, “Nič nie je čierno-biele: rozhovor s Jánom Jaborníkom,” *Kritika & kontext* 10, no. 31 (2006): 105, on-line: http://www.kritika.sk/pdf/3_2005/11.pdf, accessed November 15, 2014.

⁴¹ Jonáš Záborský, “Násmešné rozhovory,” *Zlatý fond denníka SME* 2009, retrieved 25th November 2014. Available online: http://zlatyfond.sme.sk/dielo/1124/Zaborsky_Nasmesne-rozhovory.

Cinema|

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Who Needs Film Archives? Notes Towards a User-centred Future¹

Abstract | Film archives today face many conflicting demands and expectations, from funders and a relatively small cohort of users. Their policies and practices still largely reflect the era when they first came into being, in the face of industry suspicion and scholarly indifference. Although academic film studies has largely ignored the archive, there are now opportunities to engage with new currents of interest in representations and evidence of the past, and in doing so to connect with new curatorial practices and audience-centred currents in the study of the moving image. This paper reviews new forms of archival engagement and argues for a user-centred future that could re-invigorate the concept of the film archive.

Keywords | archive – film – cinephilia – digital – mediatheque – screen media – rights – restoration – access – intermedial

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National film archives have never had the status of documentary and written archives, despite the oldest now approaching seventy-five years of age and the existence of an international film archives association that implies uniform standards and coverage.² Only the motion picture division of the American Library of Congress belongs to its nation's authoritative central archive, with a record of collecting to establish copyright in the new medium that dates back to the 1890s. And thanks to successive stages of conservation, the incunabula of early American film have been preserved like no others.³ Elsewhere, attempts to deposit films as historic documents were largely resisted – as in Britain, with only single frames imperfectly stored – until the 1920s saw a number of independent efforts to preserve copies of what remained from early film production, by which time, many of the pioneer producers had ceased operation and retained no further interest in their early work.

There were many disincentives facing the early collectors. Film stock was highly flammable and prone to deterioration if not carefully stored. Nor was there much point in preserving a used projection print, which would be unsuitable for making new copies; while preserving or making negatives would ignore the fact that film stocks were constantly changing, and by the end of the decade both colour and sound-on-film systems were gaining wide acceptance. Despite the appearance of histories of the medium, which identified already-antique works as having historical

¹ This article was published within the project CZ 1.07/2.3.00/20.0068, 'Re-presenting the Past: New Methods of History Interpretation in Arts and the Media', co-financed by the European Social Fund and the state budget of the Czech Republic.

² The earliest national film archives date back to the 1930s. The Federation International des Archives du Film was founded in Paris in 1938 and revived post-war. Based in Brussels, it now recognizes over 150 archives in 77 countries. See <http://www.fiafnet.org/>.

³ For a history of the international archive movement, see Penelope Houston, *Keepers of the Frame: the Film Archives* (London: British Film Institute, 1994).

significance, it required a rare confidence and vision in the early 1930s, when the first “national archive” collections were formally established, to believe that this history of a fast-changing medium would matter to the future.

The inevitable consequence was a massive scale of loss from the early decades, estimated at approximately 80% of all pre-1930 production, which has become increasingly apparent as digital access to early film has begun to generate informed “demand”. For it is one of the paradoxes of the digital era that, with film now widely experienced in digital formats, either on-line or via DVD and DCP, has come a range of “archival” passions that have generated interest in many periods and genres of film long believed of little or no significance. The history of film in all its many aspects is almost certainly more alive today than at any period during the last century – which poses a special challenge, and perhaps opportunity, to traditional film archives.

Archival activism

The new culture of “cinophilia 2.0” was ably characterised by Laurent Jullier and Jean-Marc Leveratto in their contribution to an anthology on the current state of audiencehood.⁴ Most of these new and often compulsive cinephiles have no training in the routines of the traditional film archive; and few would have any patience with their legal restrictions surrounding digital access to film, which have been largely governed by commercial efforts to control digital consumption of entertainment content. The new connoisseurs and collectors of “archival” film have been characterised as “prosumers”, referring to the fact that they are likely to make use of their findings in personal productions, making them in effect producers, although not necessarily with any commercial ambitions. The rapid growth of personal digital media, capable of manipulating moving and still images, has eradicated any sharp distinction between producers and consumers, giving enthusiasts efficient means to shape their compilations, which are far from “archival” in a traditional sense, but often serve a similar purpose, and more efficiently.

Access to these resources has created what could be considered a new golden age of archival activism. Where the efforts of the first generations of archivists were largely devoted to securing copies of canonic fiction films, film archives have increasingly sought to broaden their holdings of non-fiction and of informal film as well as related visual media and contextual data, with family films and local commemorations featuring strongly among the holdings of regional, if not national, film archives.

Once again, the American Library of Congress and Smithsonian collections pointed the way, with curated thematic displays and later on-line exhibitions demonstrating the potential of combining film with other media to illuminate periods and themes in American history.⁵ But others have followed, and pioneered new ways of bringing the fruits of such activist archiving to wider audiences, as several contrasting case studies may make clear. An influential model emerged from French municipal library policy in the 1980s, concentrating on developing “médiathèques”, which would combine traditional print-based holdings with a variety of disc-based media and films on video-tape. Out of this came the Vidéotheque de Paris, launched in 1988 as a promotional initiative by the mayor’s office, in part to circumvent the restrictive practices then common in such official film archives as the Cinémathèque Française or the CNC Service des

⁴ Laurent Jullier and Jean-Marc Leveratto, “Cinephilia in the Digital Age,” in *Audiences: Defining and Researching Screen Entertainment Reception*, ed. Ian Christie (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 143–54.

⁵ Even the Library of Congress Motion Picture Division did not start active collecting until the early 1940s. See the American Memory range of on-line guides, tours, menus etc., developed by the Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>.

Archives.⁶ Offering direct viewing access on video to a wide range of films made in or about Paris, this quickly established itself as a democratic new institution committed to catering for a wide variety of users and promoting access to many different kinds of film, including advertising, commercials, music promotion – all of which originated in Paris. While traditionally documentary enjoyed a quasi-artistic status within French cinema, the range of material now made available under “subject” search criteria amounted to a revelation and undoubtedly helped advertise the potential of a user-oriented approach.

Archives and history go regional

Elsewhere, there have also been shifts in archival policy which would lead to a more “de-centred” and responsive service. In the UK, the traditional structure of national archives was challenged during the 1980s by the creation of a network of regional film archives, many later re-named “screen archives” to advertise their intention of collecting *all* screen media, from lantern slides to modern digital formats, and including television, which had often been separated from film in earlier archiving practices. By collecting material from delimited geographical regions, such as the south-east of England (excluding London), the new archives were joining a movement to de-centralise arts provision, and indeed many aspects of government, across the UK.⁷ The result, although subject to many funding problems over subsequent years, has been a profound change in attitude towards what an audiovisual archive can be. The UK regional media archives have created patterns of work and regional representation which brought archiving close to its constituency, and showed how audiovisual media could play a vital part in defining and preserving regional identity.

Two aspects of the UK and other regional archives’ work have proved particularly important. One is the practice of showing curated selections of their holdings to local audiences, where the response has been typically lively and engaged, often leading to improved identification and future donations. Another is collecting narrow-gauge colour film, as widely used by amateurs from the 1930s onwards. Television producers of such popular series as *The Second World War in Colour* (1999) and *The Thirties in Colour* (2008) have found that much of their most vivid material came from regional archives’ holdings, where traditional archival prejudice against reversal stocks and amateur formats had been ignored. In many ways, regional archives were following the earlier growth of local and regional written histories – notably E. P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) and the work of the Annales group in France, especially Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie’s *Montaillou* (1975); and more recently Raphael Samuel’s *Theatres of Memory* and Pierra Nora’s *Lieux de memoire*.⁸ Where the new historians had made use of micro-histories, ephemera and oral records, the pioneer local film archivists took an interest in previously scorned genres and formats. While the new film archivists have rarely been radical in their politics, they were radical in their belief that film could have a closer relationship with people than being merely commercial entertainment, or the distant “classics” of the cinema canon

⁶ Launched by Jacques Chirac, then mayor of Paris, as part of the new underground shopping and services hub at Les Halles/Chatelet.

⁷ See Frank Gray, “Recovering a Region’s Film History,” *Film Studies*, no.1 (Spring 1990): 92–94.

⁸ See Raphael Samuel’s collected essays in *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994), which recognized the value of many informal collecting practices; also the multi-author series *Lieux de memoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984–92) edited by Pierre Nora, which showed how popular traditions of commemoration create “cultural sites” that include many media. An abridged translation of this was published by Columbia University Press as *Realms of Memory* (1994–96), while four volumes have been published by the University of Chicago Press, under the general title *Rethinking France: les lieux de memoire* (1999–2010).

traditional screened by cinemathèques. So the valuation of local documentary and amateur film that began with regional archives has since flourished through television, with the rise of social history programming, linked with such historic private initiatives as Albert Kahn's *Archives of the Planet*, as well as the Internet Archive, and indeed with YouTube and similar "sharing" sites.

This unplanned and often anarchic "bottom-up" movement has in many ways left the official archives struggling to find their place amid a new, populist tide of interest in "experiencing" the past. For example, the UK's "Their Past Your Future" project of 2005, intended to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of World War Two and communicate its importance to the young, funded a number of regional archives to produce local compilations, among which London's Screen Archives Network was able to digitise and compile an overview of the experience of the war and its aftermath in London, widely distributed to community groups and education users.⁹

The emergence of YouTube as an omnipresent open-access archive has obviously brought a hitherto unimaginable quantity of moving image material to everyone with an Internet connection. And if much of this is parasitic on collections and even archives, it has also become an important site where hitherto inaccessible material may be quickly and informally accessed. One among many examples of the new "archival" role of YouTube is its hosting of substantial portions of the otherwise lost multi-media production *The Photo-Drama of Creation* (1914).¹⁰ But however beneficial, this is not without difficulties, the most fundamental being the issue of rights and ownership. While much of YouTube functions in an effective "zone of tolerance", with many rights holders permitting and even encouraging material they "own" to appear freely, some copyright regimes are more exacting, notably the French. With publications and "creation" attracting multiple forms of protection under French law, few French film-texts are free to be made available on-line, and in other countries which offer complex safeguards against unauthorised publication, archives find that the new digital opportunities pose as much of a legal threat as an opportunity to create maximum access. Faced with the challenge of making their collections regionally accessible, both the British Film Institute and the Australian National Film and Sound Archive have created networks of mediatheques, where pre-curated specialist archival programmes may be viewed, without the rights issues raised by physical copies being supplied to users or open on-line access.¹¹ Despite these restrictions, undoubtedly irksome to those now used to the freedom of desktop access afforded by YouTube, the opportunity to book a viewing space for group use and to browse within a curated sub-collection does offer real advantages – especially compared with the cramped flatbed conditions of traditional film-based archival viewing.¹²

⁹ *Their Past, Your Future*, a DVD produced by the London Screen Study Collection at Birkbeck College for London's Screen Archives: the Regional Network, drew heavily on the Pathé Newsreel Library, including a number of items never finalized for release.

¹⁰ This vast production by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania under the direction of Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Bible Student movement (forerunners of the Jehovah's Witnesses), was considered lost until segments resulting from a private restoration project by Brian Kuschner began to appear on YouTube several years ago (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7cF0nw5S-g>). A partial screening based on this restoration, presented by the present author, took place as part of the Derry/Londonderry City of Culture programme in November 2013.

¹¹ The British Film Institute now operates nine mediatheques around the UK, offering casual or pre-booked access to curated selections, see <http://www.bfi.org.uk/archive-collections/introduction-bfi-collections/bfi-mediatheques/bfi-mediatheques-around-uk>. The Australian National Film and Sound Archive, based in Canberra, offers The Australian Mediatheque at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in central Melbourne.

¹² Film viewing in archives is generally carried out on a variety of "flatbed" viewers, such as the Steenbeck, which allows film and sound elements to be combined, speed to be varied, and frequent stopping and starting.

Such examples of state-funded film archives seeking to fulfil their statutory obligations in a seemingly permissive climate of universal digital access are indeed a far cry from the image of the archive as a place of ultimate authority, invoked by Jacques Derrida in his widely cited essay *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*.¹³ The archive, Derrida recalled, was traditionally a site of power, containing titles and documents on which other powers and entitlements depended. But if all this is still true to some extent in the civic or state archive, it has rarely, if ever, been true of the film archive. The only near-exceptions would be the archives of ex-communist states, where images of canonic figures and events were once jealously preserved and guarded against corruption – having already been subject to brutal ideological pruning.¹⁴ There may indeed still be scope in a number of state film archives for the forensic investigation of how cuts have been made, and compilations of fragments assembled, but in view of the poor state of documentation within most archives, it is highly unlikely that any substantive conclusions could be drawn about what may have guided these actions.

Unlike state archives, with their mass of legal and political documents, most film archives consist mainly of what were once commercial productions, which are still residually controlled by successor companies – even if these have only a nominal link with the historic company of a similar name. In a climate of vigorously asserted IP (intellectual property) law, where the latent value of rights and assets is routinely overestimated, and fear of violating rights that are little more than theoretical often prevents sensible action in favour of the common good, many large archives find themselves paralyzed by the threat of potential litigation while also obliged to preserve films which they do not “own” – a very different situation from the equivalent museums and galleries of historic visual art, which are able to capitalise on ownership of their holdings by making available reproductions on a commercial basis and charging loan fees.

Restoration as the new archival distinction

For many, the way forward in this unenviable situation has been to reinvent themselves as centres of expertise in reconstruction or “restoration”. Even though much of the specialist photo-chemical and increasingly digital manipulation involved may be sub-contracted to commercial experts, archives increasingly distinguish themselves through “authorship” of restorations of important holdings. These may range from producing definitive editions of well-known films long available only in corrupted versions – such as Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927)¹⁵ – to curated presentations of neglected genres in “DVD editions”. Among the latter have been such achievements as Czech animation, British documentary and many other such collections.¹⁶ At a time when the popularity is growing of “live” presentation of films from the silent era, often in festivals devoted to such re-appreciation, such as the Giornate del cinema muto, in Pordenone, and the Cinema Ritrovato festival, Bologna, both in Italy, archivists have been joined by a new generation of festival organis-

¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: a Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), trans. Eric Prenowitz from *Mal d'Archive: Une Impression Freudienne* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1995).

¹⁴ The Soviet archives had to be especially vigilant in both removing representations of politically censored figures, and in preserving these in case of subsequent rehabilitation. After Stalin’s denunciation by Khrushchev in 1956, almost all filmic representations of Stalin disappeared from view, and were not seen again until the *perestroika* period of the later 1980s, some in copies preserved clandestinely by foreign archives.

¹⁵ Originally shortened for export versions in an attempt to court popularity, *Metropolis* has enjoyed a number of reconstructions – the most recent in 2010, following discovery of an original copy in Argentina.

¹⁶ *Czech Animated Film from 1920 to 1945*, published by the Czech National Film Archive (2013); and, following an earlier set covering the first decade of British documentary, *Shadows of Progress: Documentary Films in Post-war Britain, 1951–1977*, 4-disc DVD set with accompanying book, British Film Institute (2010).

ers and curators, in search of new discoveries among their holdings. And similarly, the growth of the specialist DVD market, setting store by quality of presentation and contextualisation rather than simply cheapness or rarity, has helped to create a “secondary market” for restoration and curation in the form of albums and box sets, which can be seen as the audiovisual equivalent of historic music’s extensive panoply of “archival” box sets. Once again, an American project has set the standard, with the *Treasures from American Film Archives* collections, a series of seven boxed sets coordinated by the National Film Preservation Foundation since 2000, which has made available well-presented and annotated DVDs of American archives’ early film holdings, initially circulated to interested parties on a non-profit basis through archival festivals.¹⁷

There are indeed reasons to be optimistic that the sheer flexibility and economy of digital organisation and access has started to rescue film archives from their long subordination as the poor and unrespectable relations of paper archives, although this should not diminish respect for the extraordinary tenacity and ingenuity of their founders.¹⁸ And it must be admitted that the very term “film archive” has already begun to sound like a period concept. At a time when the majority of our film viewing needs are met by on-line or other forms of digital mediation, the archives that cater for surviving elements of film’s material life have perhaps become closer to archaeological museums; and as such, they have perhaps finally gained a status as “ultimate repositories” that they never enjoyed during film’s uniquely photochemical era. Indeed, with the commercial film industry now well advanced in its conversion to wholly digital operation, the archives’ specialist laboratories catering for archival work may well become the sole surviving sites capable of carrying out such photochemical operations.

A future for film archives?

If film archives have ceded many of the functions that they were never well-equipped or funded to perform, and have gained new conservation and curatorial roles in the digital era, as I have suggested, the opening question may perhaps be rephrased: do we *need* to have separate audio-visual archives in the digital future; and if so, what functions might they serve for future users?

As we have seen, the earliest film archives were created by those convinced that film had created a new cultural form, which was in danger of being lost due to its material and commercial fragility. For all the archival pioneers, educating and inspiring future generations was an essential part of their motivation, sometimes, as in the case of Henri Langlois, founder of the Cinémathèque Française, taking precedence over prudent conservation.¹⁹ But once there is

¹⁷ See “Treasures from American Film Archives,” *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treasures_from_American_Film_Archives.

¹⁸ At the British National Film Archive, in the 1970s, its technical officer, Harold Brown, devised ways of printing from shrunken and damaged film elements, which laid the basis for preserving many early films then in danger of ceasing to be reproducible. See obituary, “Harold Brown RIP,” *The Bioscope* (November 2008), at <http://thebioscope.net/2008/11/17/harold-brown-rip/>.

Even earlier, the US Library of Congress had engaged Kemp Niver to begin the process of transferring paper prints of its early copyright deposits so that these could generate new negatives, laying the basis for the Library’s unique Paper Print Collection. See Kemp Niver, “From Film to Paper to Film,” *The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 21, no. 4 (October 1964): 248–64. On the story of the paper print conversion program, see also Paul C. Spehr, “Some Still Fragments of a Moving Past,” *The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 32, no. 1 (January 1975): 33–50.

¹⁹ Henri Langlois was notoriously cavalier in screening and storing rare prints, in contrast to Ernest Lindgren, the founding curator of Britain’s National Film Archive, who always regarded conservation as the highest priority, irrespective of access requests. Although responsible for the loss of many elements through fire and poor record-keeping, Langlois was rewarded by an international campaign in his support in 1968 and by a continuing place

an alternative to the centralised archival collection, with a wide range of films accessible independently by other means, there would seem to be no further role for charismatic archivists. Or perhaps even for separate film archives?

This would be an understandable, but I think premature conclusion. On the one hand, it risks assuming that the recognition of film culture that Langlois, Lindgren, Ledoux and their many colleagues in the international archive movement fought for has been achieved. It also potentially places the surviving film archives in a precarious position, at a time when large-scale digital storage and conservation seems to offer attractive economies of scale. Despite the evidence of film's presence at many levels of education, and a general level of "film literacy" very different from the period when archives and their supporters were first active, there is still widespread resistance to recognising how projected pictures and cinema transformed the culture of the fin-de-siècle. Rather than portray film as a "new art" in the early 20th century, as was common in early film education, it would be more accurate to show how cinema became part of an increasingly multi-media culture – in many cases helping to diffuse new tendencies in literature, fashion and music and so act as an engine of modernity.²⁰

Film archives, during their foundational phase, were not ideally placed to portray film in this intermedial light, often tending to emphasise the exceptional, rather than to trace the shifting role of film within a new cultural ensemble. By contrast, a number of recent comparative studies have ranged beyond the vagaries of archival holdings to demonstrate the value of locating genres of early production within larger and more pervasive cultural trends. One such is the ongoing programme of studying filmic representations of the ancient world produced in the silent era, led by Pantelis Michelakis and Maria Wyke, which has involved a wide range of archives and given new currency to their holdings by showing how these films were often informed by revivalist painting, symbolist literature and archaeology itself – as well as promoting public screenings at the Cinema Ritrovato festival in Bologna and at academic venues.²¹

Another comparative project based in the same era has focused on one of the most distinctive features of early production: the creation and promotion of stars, who would develop loyal followings in many countries. Asta Nielsen emerged as a star of Danish films in 1909 and soon moved to Germany, where her many varied roles made her the most popular screen actor in the world before Chaplin. An international conference, "Importing Asta Nielsen", organised by the German film historian Martin Loiperdinger at the Deutsches Filminstitut in Frankfurt, 2011, demonstrated how pervasive and also varied the impact of Nielsen had been, providing a focus for currents of emerging modernism and feminism in many cultures.²²

Neither of these projects would have been considered "progressive" during the early years of film archiving, often preoccupied with the progress of "filmic language" and the medium's "specificity". Yet both ancient world subjects and Nielsen's vehicles reached and influenced vast audiences even before the First World War. Indeed their impact, depending on much more than

in the legend of the Cinémathèque Française as a cradle of future filmmakers. On controversy surrounding Langlois, see Roger Smither, "Henri Langlois and Nitrate, Before and After 1959" in *This Film is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*, ed. Roger Smither (Brussels: FIAF, 2002), 247–55.

²⁰ This is the argument advanced in Ian Christie, *The Last Machine: Early Cinema and the Birth of the Modern World* (BBC, British Film Institute, 1994) and in the accompanying BBC television series; also in various conferences marking the "second birth of cinema" in 1910, reported in *The Bioscope* blog, at <http://thebioscope.net/2010/06/18/the-second-birth-of-cinema/>.

²¹ Pantelis Michelakis and Maria Wyke, eds., *The Ancient World in Early Cinema* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

²² Martin Loiperdinger and Uli Jung, eds., *Importing Asta Nielsen: the International Film Star in the Making 1910–1914* (New Barnet, UK: John Libbey Publishing, 2013).

a growing mastery of filmic *mise-en-scène*, did much to establish the pervasive cultural presence of cinema by c.1912. But this cannot be understood by reference alone to the surviving copies. It needs more complex research that draws on newspaper, journal and ephemera archives, as well as a grasp of comparative social and cultural history.

Archives are not alone among institutions created during the era of collecting and classifying in having to rethink how they justify their existence, especially to economy-seeking paymasters. Museums and libraries face similar challenges – although in many ways they are better buttressed by core academic disciplines that value their collections and expertise, and by a wider public esteem for these. Many have also managed to reinvent themselves as “destination venues” in the context of modern cultural tourism, in a way that relatively few film archives have yet managed.²³

In earlier decades, film archives suffered from a disconnect between their often deficient collections and the generally ahistorical new academic field of film studies, which was more closely aligned with connoisseurship and latterly cultural studies. Most were founded by charismatic enthusiasts, but developed traditions of secrecy and defensiveness when faced with the early hostility of the film industry, and remained isolated from academic disciplines that might have influenced their direction, such as History or History of Art. In consequence, they have continued to lack the large-scale support of film scholars, PhD researchers, or indeed historians of most kinds, especially as many of these now find their film sources and references on-line. But as archives are engaged in re-defining their role in the era of YouTube, a number of possible new constituencies and motivations for research seem possible.

- There are surely opportunities to learn from how the regional and local archives have engaged with amateur family and community historians, joining this great popular movement – long shunned by academic historians, but beginning to attract recognition as a new form of “participant history”.
- Historians interested in the “pervasive” impact of film (and related media) in all its forms – “the place of filmgoing/viewing in national life;” or in how film and television contributed to trans-national themes, such as the world wars, de-colonisation, the Cold War, the post-communist world after the 1980s, space travel and exploration, etc. Could archives do more to address and even anticipate these questions and discourses, through their own research projects? Can they join forces with the new user-friendly sources of visual history, and with the new providers of on-line historical source material – the databases, wikis and special-interest webs?
- Those inspired by the new sub-divisions of history, such as gender history, histories of representation, emotions, work, the everyday, etc. In fact women’s history has already been a powerful driver of interest in film history, as feminist historians have sought to challenge received canons and reveal the subordinated role of women – at all levels, from filmmakers to film fans. Now gay and sexual minorities’ history are starting to do the same, seeking out once-marginal, interstitial material.
- The material and social histories of the media that were grouped under “film”, reaching back into earlier photographic and projection media and forward into the digital media of today

²³ The British Film Institute’s pioneering Museum of the Moving Image (1988–1999) was an early success as a visitor attraction, although ultimately unable to sustain its continued development within the BFI’s budgets. However, a number of other film museums appear to be flourishing: notably the Fondazione Maria Adriana Prolo – Museo Nazionale del Cinema (Turin, Italy, since 2000); The German Film Archive – Museum for Film and Television (Frankfurt, Germany, since 2000); and The Museum of the Cinémathèque Française at Bercy (Paris, France, since 2007).

and the future (following the lead of Frankfurt, Turin and the Cinémathèque Française). Can they respond to the new interest that is emerging in “obsolete” formats and technologies, from stereoscopy and the Magic Lantern to 16 mm, 8 mm and even 9.5 mm – an interest that links car-boot sale collectors with contemporary visual artists and media archaeologists?

There are undoubtedly opportunities as well as challenges for film archives today, at a time when the very basis of their collections is shifting from photochemical to digital. Some European archives are already providing large-scale access to their collections online, helped by the EU directive on Orphan Works, which aims “to boost the development of Europe’s digital libraries and archives and its capacity to foster search and indexing technologies”.²⁴ However, screen archives still face massive challenges, especially in explaining that digital is *not* a preservation format, and that access, restoration and preservation are to some extent in conflict as priorities, as Nicola Mazzanti, head of the Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique, explained on behalf of the FIAF Technical Commission at a recent Cinema Ritrovato session in Bologna.²⁵ A world with fewer screen archives would ultimately be a poorer place, leaving audiovisual heritage to the mercy of private collections and changing formats, while screen archives with more active and discerning users could potentially overcome the neglect that for too long relegated their ancestors to the margins of intellectual and institutional life.

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²⁴ See the “Impact Assessment” for the EU Orphan Works Directive, 2011, at http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/copyright/docs/orphan-works/executive-summary_en.pdf.

²⁵ Widespread ignorance about the instability of digital formats is probably the greatest “public awareness” challenge facing archives in explaining their mission today. But equally misunderstood is the conflict of priorities between “restorations” that secure attention and collection management. See the bulletins of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) at <http://www.fiafnet.org/uk/>.

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The Depiction of the Passion of Christ in Early Cinema: Between Artistic Tradition and Modern Representational Issues¹

Abstract | Because of their novelty as a means of communication and language, early films on the Passion of Christ (1896–1916) faced unexpected problems and roused unprecedented questions about the issue of a valid representation.

Filmmakers and producers attempted to respond to such problems resorting and adhering to the given religious art tradition. In this paper I will attempt to analyze the reasons, modalities and meanings of the artistic references in early filmed *Passions* in order to reach and meditate on the core of such representations whose essence as *aura* was called into question by the entrance into the spectacle and the system of mass society.

Keywords | *Aura* – early cinema – Jesus Christ – mass society – 19th century – *Passions* – religious art – *tableaux vivants*

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Almost as soon as the new technological medium of the *Cinema*, along with the new visual form of the *moving picture* it introduced, appeared in the late 19th century, it was immediately used, among other possibilities, to *show* and *represent* – if still not to *tell* – the story of Jesus Christ.

Since 1896 in fact, the genre of the *Passions*, as it was immediately named – even though it generally included the *Holy Birth* and his *Youth* as well as the *Miracles* – was attempted by almost every film production company in the world, especially by the French and the American ones, but also by Italian and English producers: from the first *Passion* filmed by Léar, the pseudonym of Kirchner, based on a scenario written by frère Bazile, to the *Passion Lumière* filmed by Hatot in the Bohemian village of Horitz; from the tricks-based *Christ marchant sur les eaux* by Méliès to the American productions by Hollaman or Lubin; from the studio's *Passions* realized in different editions by the most important companies of the time, such as Pathé and Gaumont during the 1910s, to the big budget epic versions that appeared after 1912, such as Olcott's *From the Manger to the Cross* and Antamoro's *Christus*; until, and finally, the attempts to assimilate and integrate the *Passion* into a larger and more coherent narrative system, such as in Griffith's *Intolerance* and Incé's *Civilization* in 1916 which marked the end of the genre of the *Passions* as we know it from its beginnings and which will be considered in the present study.²

¹ The present article is part of my Ph.D. research at University of Florence, Italy on *Passions of the early cinema and their relationship with the larger artistic and cultural context*.

² For a general overview of the *Passions* of the early Cinema, see: Georges Sadoul, “Les Pionniers du cinéma: de Méliès à Pathé (1897–1909),” in *Histoire générale du cinéma*, vol. II, ed. Georges Sadoul (Paris: Denoël, 1947); Michel Estève, ed., “La Passion du Christ comme thème cinématographique,” *Études cinématographiques* 10–11 (1961); Guy Hennebelle and Philippe Boitel, ed., “Le film religieux de 1898 à nos jours,” *CinémAction* 49 (1988);

If one attempts to turn the early film genre of the *Passions* into a specific temporal development, three main moments can be recognized and defined in it, which seem to follow and confer a chronological sense to the classification into three main tendencies or sub-genres which many years ago Amédée Ayfre proposed in his studies.³

In the first period, since their very appearance, in 1896, until around 1902, *Passions* were primarily reportages and documentaries of Oberammergau's and Horitz's Passion Plays. As has been well pointed out,⁴ the success of Oberammergau's and Horitz's Passion Plays in the western world since the second half of the 19th century probably lay in their ambiguous nature between theatre and ritual: even though it was theatre, therefore fiction, in fact, they were born into and used in devotional and religious contexts, and yet they attempted to preserve the pureness, the naivety and the sincerity by adopting amateur rather than professional actors and by adhering to the model of medieval mystery plays through a conception of *tableaux vivants* more than to the model of 19th century bourgeois drama.

André Gaudreault stressed that this polarity of a representation swinging between fiction and reality appeared even more in tension when it entered the space and the dimension of the film: the first filmed *Passions*, in fact, were at the same time travel films, more precisely documentations of a performance, that is a unique event, and, on the other hand, representations of a representation, hence fictions; and in such a strong fusion, Gaudreault proposed to rethink and call them with the paradoxical epithet of "véritable théâtre de fiction".⁵

The second moment in the history of the *Passions* starts around 1902 and lasts until approximately 1912, and it represents for some aspects a natural continuation of the previous, documentary and theatrical moment and, for many other aspects, its contrary: it is the period of the studio's *Passions* produced by the largest film production companies such as Pathé, Gaumont, Film d'Art, Warwick and Kalem, among others, related to the names of Zecca and Nonguet, Guy, Jasset, Maître.

Actually, filmed *Passions* of this second period also continued to reveal an ambiguous nature, being at the same time a mass entertainment and a means for religious devotion. Up until the end of 1912 in fact, studio *Passions* were screened not only in vaudeville theatres and in the other show-business places, but also inside churches, next to the religious paintings and statues, revealing in this ambiguity that they were considered as both part of the spectacle's system and the confessional context of the Christian cult and faith.

An extremely important event for the history and development of the genre of films which we are studying here occurred in December 1912. An order of the Sacra Congregazione Conciliare

"Christianisme et cinéma," *CinémAction* 80 (1996); Agnès Devictor and Kristian Feigelson, ed., "Croyances et sacré au cinéma," *CinémAction* 134 (2010).

³ Ayfre proposed to classify the genre of the early *Passions* into three currents: a documentary tendency, the most related to the stage's *Passions* set in Oberammergau and Horitz that the first cinematographers had the aim to record as travelogues; a second, tricks, the *féerique* tendency, in which the main interest lay in the miracles and in the supernatural aspects of the life of Christ that cinema could represent and emphasize as *attractions* with the special effects possibly in and through it; and, finally, an intermediate and academic tendency, or rather the studio's *Passions* produced serially by the big film companies and characterized by a fairly fake aspect, that became the most common and popular version of *Passions* of that period. See: Amédée Ayfre, *Dieu au cinéma, problèmes esthétiques du film religieux* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953).

⁴ See: James Shapiro, *Oberammergau: The Troubling Story of the World's Most Famous Passion Play* (London: Little Brown and Company, 2000).

⁵ André Gaudreault, "La Passion du Christ: une forme, un genre, un discours," in *Une invention du diable? Cinéma des premiers temps et religion*, ed. Roland Cosandey et al. (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1992), 95.

and, by extension, the Catholic Church, definitely decided to forbid the screening of every film in religious buildings, and thus the *Passions* as well.⁶

This fact marked a break between the *Passions* realized and screened before December 1912 and *Passions* realized and screened after that date: if it was not a break at the level of their language, of their conception and of their production, it undoubtedly represents an important change at the level of their acceptance.

Such a change allows for an outline the third and last period in the history of the *Passions* of the early cinema: from 1912 up to around 1916, the period in which *Passions* underwent a gradual but irreversible entry in the spectacular system, up to the epic productions of the historical films and to the narrative movie's developments.

In spite of the differences related to the specific moment or to the tendency they belong to, all *Passions* of the cinema of the early period, consciously or not, posed a problem concerning representation, and more precisely the representation of Christ, its legitimacy, its validity and its possibility *with* and *in* the new medium.

This was not of course the first time in the history of the arts and the media that someone produced images about Christ. It was, however, without a doubt the very first time in the history of the arts and the media that someone was in the position and had the opportunity to record moving images about that holy subject. In the tension between a well-established religious and cultural frame and new sensitivities and technological possibilities, the first filmed *Passions* generated unprecedented questions and faced unexpected problems.

In that respect, it is evident that the filmed *Passions* that are under consideration had more than a cultural and technical precedent for their genesis, which one could and should consider individually in accordance with the specific role it assumed in the representational issue. First, and obviously, the literary precedent of the Gospels and their hundreds of year-old history of reinterpretations; and, secondly, as has already been pointed out, the Theatre, both as a guarantee of validity and legitimacy – through the authority of the stage *Passions* set in Oberammergau or in Horitz and the tradition of the medieval Mystery Plays – and as a model for the *mise-en-scène* – through the living pictures style and tendency. And then, many other precedents: such as the lantern slide shows, the religious conferences through images, the photographic travelogues about exotic countries and peoples, just to mention the main and the most evident.

Among the numerous and various references and influences that the first films about the Passion received from the larger representational system, however, the figurative ones, or rather those related to the history of art, appear extremely important and significant because of their remarkable number and their ability to cross and summarize all the others.

It is a *history of art* in many senses conceived: various in its periodization, with quotations taken from the past and classical masters or from contemporary religious and academic paintings. It is various in its level, swinging between the high, most cultured and elitist art, and the low, more popular expressions of the mass culture; and, finally, various in its evocation's modalities, moving from explicit and declared quotations, through a *tableau vivant's* style, to a hidden or even unconscious assimilation as figurative models.

In attempting to analyze and understand all the uses and motivations of the presence of art history, interpreted in such a large sense, in films about the Passion, then, and making order among all of them, it will be possible to reach the core of the representational problem itself which was generated in and by the films that constitute the object of the present study.

⁶ The original text in Latin is in: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis. Commentarium Officiale*, IV (Roma: 1912). Later republished in: Enrico Baragli, ed., *Cinema cattolico. Documenti della Santa Sede sul cinema* (Roma: Edizioni "La Civiltà Cattolica," 1958), 41–42.

Firstly, one needs to take under consideration practical and social explanations because they are the most undeniable and the simplest.

As many film scholars and theorists have pointed out, cinema, which was born as mass amusement, initially strove to raise itself from the level of popular entertainment to find its position among other artistic manifestations of middle-class society.⁷

The explicit quotations of artworks in films of the very first period, not only in those about the story of Christ but as a general tendency and in particular in history films, worked, in this sense, as an effort made by the newly born medium to gain legitimacy and find respectability in the system of arts.

During the sixth Domitor Conference in 2000 in Udine and Gemona which focused on the relationship between cinema and other arts, Gian Piero Brunetta demonstrated and discussed, for instance, the presence of Giotto's frescos of Assisi and Padova as a model for the Italian film *Cenere* by Febo Mari (1917), the presence of Doré's illustrations for *L'Inferno* by Bertolini and Padovan (1911) and that of Gonin's engravings for Rodolfi's film *I promessi sposi* (1913);⁸ Victoria Duckett revealed the reference to Paul Delaroche's history paintings in some films of the 1910s starring Sarah Bernhardt, such as *Queen Elizabeth* (1912) and other *Film d'Art* productions;⁹ Ivo Bloom underlined the quotation of two paintings by the French academic artist Gérôme in the Guazzoni epical big budget movie *Quo vadis?* (Cines, 1913), demonstrating that the influence of these artworks in all probability stemmed from illustrations for a recent Italian edition of the novel by Sienkiewicz which the film comes from.¹⁰

The list of quotations of figurative artworks in history films of the cinema of the early period could be even longer but this will not be necessary as the few and simple examples which have been enumerated suffice to demonstrate their value and meaning.

However, in the case of films about the Passion of Christ, the practical and social reasons for the quotations of a given artistic tradition also indicate another meaning. That is the attempt of the film producers to avoid being blamed for blasphemy and not being offensive toward the religion and confessional institutions, when attempting to offer to the public gaze an object of worship and devotion and not merely a spectacle.

The figurative and artistic tradition in this context is, and was at that time, felt as a necessity if not a mandatory filter for the respectful representation of Christ and of the holy subjects itself, almost innate and intrinsic with that, so valid for any figurative expression of it realized with any artistic or mechanical means, and not merely related to the new medium of the film.

On the pages of the Catholic French magazine *Revue de l'art chrétien*, for instance, Jules Helbig disapproved the world-famous watercolor series *The Life of Jesus Christ* that James Tissot painted after his recent spiritual and artistic trip to the Holy Land – which later also became a very important reference for the filmed *Passions* under consideration – exactly because they showed a new, realistic and overly modern sensitivity, which appeared to be in contradiction to the centuries-old figurative and cultural tradition and incompatible with the given iconography: “Dans le domaine de l'art – he states – il faut redouter la routine sans doute, mais dans l'art religieux, il y a une tradition qu'il faut respecter. Tout chrétien s'est formé un idéal de la divine

⁷ See: Noël Burch, *Lucarne de l'infini. Naissance du langage cinématographique*, trans. Paola Cristalli (Parma: Nuova Pratiche Editrice, 1994) and Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 1–125.

⁸ Gian Piero Brunetta, “Ut pictura ita cinema,” in *La decima Musa: il cinema e le altre arti*, ed. Leonardo Quaresima et al. (Udine: Forum, 2001), 191–95.

⁹ Victoria Duckett, “Discovering Delaroche: Sarah Bernhardt, Queen Elizabeth and the Film d'Art,” in *La decima Musa*, 243–51.

¹⁰ Ivo Bloom, “Quo Vadis? From Painting to Cinema and Everything in Between,” in *La decima Musa*, 281–92.

figure du Christ, de la Vierge Marie [...]. Notre esprit a plus ou moins nettement entrevu leur traits à la lecture des Évangiles [...] Et si vous me demandez de quoi se compose cet idéal, je crois qu'il se compose des œuvres d'art."¹¹

Similarly, as some critics praised Leda Gys for playing the Virgin Mary in Antamoro's *Christus* because of "the simplicity, the hieratic modesty of her gestures [that] transformed her into a pure model, worthy of Raphael's art,"¹² *Redenzione*, another Italian history film about Mary Magdalene from 1919 by Carmine Gallone, was disapproved of because it represented Jesus, as the reviewer described, "not framing Him with the appropriate brilliance and significance", and because Diane Karenne, the actress playing the main role, "does not look like Magdalene because she has too thin a profile not in accordance with the traditional legendary beauty of the Saint."¹³

The presence of quotations from a well-established artistic tradition, then, finds its social and pragmatic reasons, strong and persuasive, almost obvious justifications: it appeared related, in fact, on one side to the desire of the film producers to raise their industrial and commercial enterprise to the level of an artistic expression and on the other, to the nature of the represented subject itself, so sacred and important that any new representation of it cannot be anything but an adhesion to a previously approved model.

This level of analysis should suffice to explain at least the clear and explicit quotations of famous artworks, mostly Italian Renaissance paintings, in filmed *Passions* of the early period: quotations evoked through a *tableaux vivants* style that may have reached their highest point in Antamoro's *Christus* (1916). [Fig. 1]



Fig. 1

¹¹ Jules Helbig, "La vie du Christ par Tissot," *La Revue de l'art chrétien*, July, 1896, 256.

¹² Constant Larchet, *Le Film*, January 1, 1917, quoted in Vittorio Martinelli, *Il cinema muto italiano. I film della grande guerra: 1916 – I parte* (Roma: Bianco e Nero, 1992), 100. The translation from Italian is mine.

¹³ Ulrico Imperi, *La vita cinematografica*, March 22, 1919, quoted in Vittorio Martinelli *Il cinema muto italiano, I film del dopoguerra: 1919* (Roma: Bianco e Nero, 1995), 228. The translation from Italian is mine.

But in such explicit art quotations, as Charles Tashiro pointed out in an article in *Cinema Journal* in 1996, one can also find a psychological dimension. In his view, the pleasure of a “sensuous spectacle”, able to give the viewers a “satisfaction” resulting from the identification of well-known images, works also to make spectators feel reassured in their visual system and in their knowledge.¹⁴

Such remarks on the psychological dimension related to the receptional level help in taking a deeper look at the analysis and considering other possible answers to the question of those artistic presences. After all, this does not work only for explicit and clear quotations, but also for those cases in which the presence of a figurative tradition is not so explicit and well declared through visual modalities such as those of the slow-motion or the hieratic composing of the actors in a *tableau*.

In many cases in fact, art references are present in filmed *Passions* at a hidden or at least not manifest level, as models for the conception of the space and the action or documentations for settings, costumes and characters.

In this regard, one can consider the recourse to Doré's illustrations for the Bible published by Mame in 1866 in Pathé's *Passions* realized serially during the first decade of the 20th century by Ferdinand Zecca and Lucien Nonguet,¹⁵ [Fig. 2, Fig. 3] or the use of Botticelli's feminine figures in Alice Guy's *Passion* produced by Gaumont for the portrayal of certain characters in the film, [Fig. 4] as examples of artistic references used for the conception of the scenes and their details but not necessarily understood or perceived by the audiences.

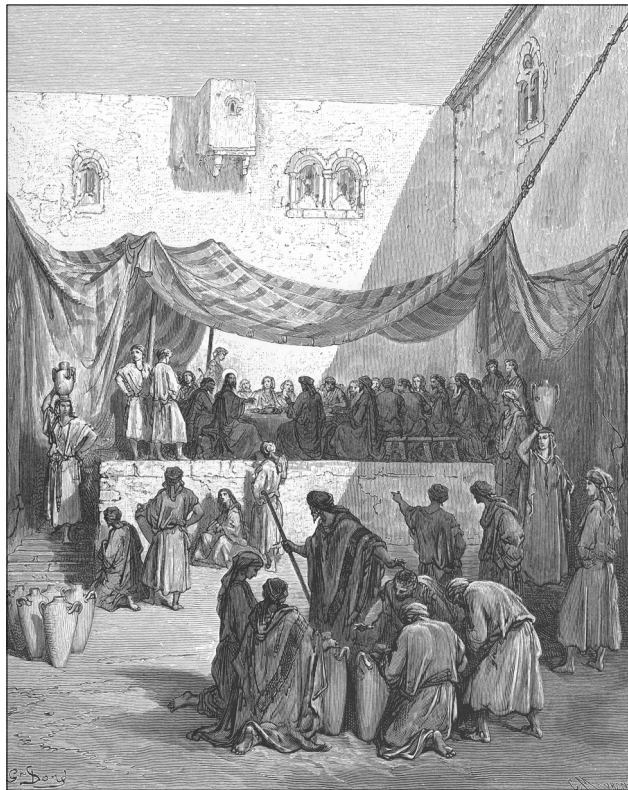


Fig. 2

¹⁴ Charles Tashiro, “When History Films (try to) Become Paintings,” *Cinema Journal* 3 (1996): 19–33.

¹⁵ See: Alain Boillat and Valentine Robert, “*Vie et Passion de Jésus Christ* (Pathé, 1902–1905): hétérogénéité des ‘tableaux’, déclinaisons des motifs,” *1895. Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze* 60 (2010): 33–55.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

However, the most significant case in this sense comes from the American *From the Manger to the Cross*, produced by Kalem and filmed by Sidney Olcott in 1912 in Palestine, in the actual places of the life of Christ. This *Passion* is completely conceived and based on Tissot's illustrations of the Bible, insomuch as, and Herbert Reynolds has stressed it appropriately, only twenty shots from a total of ninety are not a direct reference to them.¹⁶ [Fig. 5, Fig. 6] Nevertheless, if one thinks of the practical and social benefits that an explicit quotation of a famous artwork could have in the case of the films under discussion, it is at least curious that Kalem and Olcott appeared reluctant to clearly declare that reliance, and that they rather tended to devaluate it as merely a documentary draft for the conception of several costumes.¹⁷



Fig. 5

¹⁶ Herbert Reynolds, "From the Palette to the Screen: The Tissot Bible as Sourcebook for *From the Manger to the Cross*," in *Une invention du diable?*, 275–310.

¹⁷ Herbert Reynolds, "From the Palette," 289–90.



Fig. 6

In his memoirs, Karl Brown, assistant to cameraman Bitzer for the realization of Griffith's *Intolerance*, remembered why Tissot's Bible was also chosen as the visual model and guide for the conception of the Judean narrative of this film, and his remarks can help clarify the question under discussion:

People believe only what they already know. They knew all about how people lived, dressed, and had their being in Biblical times because they had been brought up on Bible pictures, Bible calendars, Biblical magic-lantern shows, Christmas cards, Easter cards, pictures of every incident with which we were concerned. Never mind whether these pictures were accurate or not. Follow them in every detail because that's what the people believe to be true, and what the people believe to be true is true – for them – and there's no budging them.¹⁸

In other words, the use of an already-established iconography – it does not matter, at this level of analysis, if from a *high* or *low* versant – as the cultural background helps to provide a psychological credibility to the moving images, allowing them to adhere to a collective imaginary, that is the way people thought and still think of the past of Christ such as every past. As Roland Barthes sharply pointed out, the effect of realism, or rather of credibility, in the figurative just as in every representational process, is obtained as a “pastiche”, that is “copying a (depicted) copy of the real”.¹⁹

This again is not only applicable for early films about the Passion of Christ, but for every early history film, and for any representation of the past generally. A reason like this actually serves to

¹⁸ Karl Brown, *Adventures with D. W. Griffith* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1973), 135.

¹⁹ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill & Wang, 1974), 55.

explain why Giotto was used and quoted in films set in the Middle Ages, or Gérôme in films set in ancient Rome. It is about the creation and belonging to a popular and collective imagination.

An imaginary is not only related to a psychological, conscious or unconscious, dimension when it is considered from another perspective. It is not merely at the level of the spectator's horizon of expectations, but it reveals and assumes other meanings: cultural and historical meanings.

Ernst Gombrich, among others, in fact, demonstrated that every human creation, that is every representation, occurs inside a figurative tradition and takes place inside previous knowledge: or rather that no one, in an attempt to create, such as to receive and contemplate any type of representation, is free from his established experience of visual schema and assimilated conventions. The representational act, in his view, is the final result of a long path passing through a continuous tension of rules and corrections, in which its value of style lies.²⁰

If the current problem is regarded from this point of view, it can consequently be recognized that filmmakers and producers adhered to the visual culture of their time and used their artistic tradition to create early filmed *Passions* not only as an conscious act of decision, but also because they could not do otherwise, or rather because, being men of those times, they could not think and create differently.

In other words, apart from social, practical and psychological reasons, there is also an historical and cultural explanation for the presence of artistic references in early filmed *Passions*: that is the inevitable relationship of those representational forms with their larger contemporary visual context and universe, to which they appear as a further expression, manifestation and declination, and to which they continue to belong to.

Already Jacques Aumont in his masterly essay, *L'œil interminable*, proposed the idea of reading films inside an endless and continuous history. He refers to this as *histoire de la vision* – because film acts next to photography and painting as a *representational art*, not being a new and modern medium and language, but merely the last phase of an artistic conception whose apogee resides in the 19th century.²¹ Aumont actually founded his hypothesis on a concept of art and cinema quite different from the one under discussion. He in fact talks about the Impressionist and realistic painting of the 19th century, considering the Lumière brothers as its last exponents, because, in his view, they indicate the same denial of the *instant prégnant* and the same ontological adherence to reality.²² In contrast, I am talking about the academic and religious painting of the last 19th century which is still strongly figurative and stylistically traditional, and about the contemporary filmed representations of the Passion of Christ, founded on fiction and not on the documentary film's essence: thus about two cultural expressions still and strongly grounded on the idea of *instant prégnant*.

In spite of this difference, however, the methodological frame traced by Aumont also seems valid for our analysis, and indeed the analysis confirms and strengthens it. It is only a matter of extending Aumont's argument and enlarging his paradigm to all kinds of art and all kinds of cinema of that period, demonstrating that the relationship *cinéma/peinture* he outlined functions for films and paintings of every genre and style.

More recently, a similar effort to reconnect the theoretical problems raised by the *Passions* of the early cinema and the figurative solutions proposed in them, with the larger contempo-

²⁰ See, in particular: Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (London: Phaidon, 1960).

²¹ Jacques Aumont, Preface to *L'œil interminable: cinéma et peinture*, trans. Daniela Orati (Venezia: Marsilio, 1991), X–XV.

²² About the ontological realistic essence of the photographic and cinematographic image, see Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *L'Image précaire* (Paris: Seuil, 1987).

rary cultural context of the western artistic and figurative tradition, has been skilfully made by Isabelle Saint-Martin in her studies about the religious art and culture of France of the 19th and 20th centuries and in more specific articles which focused on the representations of the Passion of Christ from fixed to moving images and on their *effet de présence*.²³

Saint-Martin overall emphasized the relationship between the 19th century's illustrations for the Bible, such as those by Doré and by Tissot, and the early filmed *Passions*: a relationship passing through the history and the practice of the lantern slide shows and conferences, used by some priests to catechize and educate people, especially children and the popular mass, which arrived up until the attempts of certain church men to use cinema and early filmed *Passions* as a devotional means, even inside religious buildings.²⁴

Notwithstanding, the links between contemporary visual culture and the filmed *Passions* are numerous, and they are not only found among the artistic 19th century illustrations for the Bible, and not even only on a high and cultured versant.

Many early films about Jesus Christ, for example, reveal close relationships with the industrial, serial and standardized production of pious images that, in the French culture of that time, went under the name of *art sulpicienne* or *sulpicerie*, because they found their greatest market in the church of the Saint-Sulpice area, which we could currently call and recognize as *kitsch*.

References to these images, produced for the masses and with a naive and sentimental aspect, often recur in the films under discussion, both for the portrayal of single elements, such as angels and archangels, and for the conception of the entire tableaux, such as those of the *Sleep of the Baby Jesus*, the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* or the *Ascension*. [Fig. 7]

And apart from the iconographic level, an inspiration from the *imagerie sulpicienne* in early filmed *Passions* is also evident at the chromatic one. Remarks concerning colours recur often in the descriptions and in the, positive or negative, critiques of the industrial and serial production of the *art sulpicienne* of that period: the catalogue of the Maison Schulgen and Schwan, for instance, which diffused and publicized the paintings of the School of Düsseldorf in the mid-19th century, disapproved of *sulpiceries* as “images multicolores, enjolivées par toutes sortes de dentelles, guillichis et autres fanfreluches”,²⁵ and even the French writer Chateaubriand, when describing the little statue of the Virgin Mary he bought in Saint-Sulpice, remembered it as being dressed with a “robe de soie bleu, et garnie d’une frange d’argent”.²⁶

Considering such remarks, the similarities between the colourful aspect of the *sulpiceries* and the colours applied in different ways and technologies to the early *Passions* appear remarkable. In particular, *Passions* produced by Pathé during the 1910s and coloured with a special stencil method – the *Pathécolor* – that allowed the application of up to four colours at one time in one shot, show lively, brilliant yellows, greens, violets and blues, very close to the contemporary industrial and mechanical aesthetic. [Fig. 8]

²³ Isabelle Saint-Martin, *Voir, savoir, croire. Catéchisme et pédagogie par l'image au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 2003); Isabelle Saint-Martin, “L’effet de présence: entre image fixe et image animée, les représentations de la Passion (fin XIXe – début XX siècle),” *Chaiers d’études du religieux. Recherches interdisciplinaires* Numéro spécial “Monothéismes et cinéma” (2012), doi: 10.4000/cerri.1058.

²⁴ The most emblematic case in this sense is represented by the figure of the assumptionist Michel Coissac, responsible for the service of fixing and moving projections for *La Bonne Presse* and director of the review *Le Fascinateur*, dedicated specifically to the technical explanation of this practice and its cultural justification. See also: Jacques and Marie André, “Le rôle des projections lumineuses dans la pastorale catholique française (1895–1914),” in *Une invention du diable?*, 44–59; and: Pierre Véronneau, “Le Fascinateur et la Bonne Presse: des médias catholiques pour publics francophones,” 1895. *Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze* 40 (2003): 25–40.

²⁵ Bathild Bouniol, *L’art chrétien et l’école allemande avec une notice sur M. Overbeck* (Paris: Ambroise Bray – Schulgen et Schwan, 1856), 66.

²⁶ François-René de Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d’outre-tombe* (Paris: Gallimard – Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1951), I 36.



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

Such a relationship between the filmed *Passions* and the contemporary *sulpicienne* production appears obvious if one thinks of both as products of an industrial world. Even Richard Abel recognized that these kinds of colours, mainly those in Pathé's *Passions*, operate as "visual materials of desire in a new mass culture", as manifestations of a "modern consumer society", contributing to the birth of a "commercial aesthetic".²⁷

In contrast, the linking of the early filmed *Passions* to the contemporary aesthetic of Saint-Sulpice serves to reveal how much the films come from and belong to a popular and mass context. The *sulpicienne* art, like early cinema, was in fact thought of exactly for its popular meaning and use to be related to and useful for the religiosity of the mass. In the very extensive debate about its value, among all the critiques it generally received for its banality, "laideur", "faideur", "ignomie", or "simplicité grossière",²⁸ *sulpicerie* was recognized as being at least helpful for popular devotion, inasmuch as even a great enemy of that serial, standardized art such as Maurice Denis, who at that time was fighting for the renaissance of beautiful and authentic religious art, admitted in 1899 that "les images infâmes de la rue de Saint-Sulpice produisent sur les âmes des fidèles un effet aussi pieux que n'importe quelle belle œuvre gothique".²⁹

In the same simple and unsophisticated spirit, then, one can conceive the screening of the *Passions* in religious buildings and contexts as mainly industrial and serial products, based on the prototype's principle, adhering to simple and naive models in order to allow, if not to engender, feelings of worship and devotion among peasants, children, women and the mass.

The influence, however, of contemporary culture on filmed *Passions* does not come only from its low, *Saint-Sulpicien*, versant but one can also recognize and trace relationships with the highest art manifestations, related to the official *Salons* and to the religious painting of that time.

Julia Bernard, for instance, noted a similarity between a tendency of the religious French art of the 19th century and the cinema, in particular the *Passions* genre, of the same period.³⁰ She talks about the "hyper-mystic" tendency, born inside the Catholic conservative milieu of the Société de Saint-Jean and of the Salon des Champs-Élysées, whose main purpose was to renew the religious themes through colour and light pictorial effects, in a word, through a visual spectacularization. Such artworks like Gérôme's *La resurrection* (1895–1899), or Dagnan-Bouveret's *Le Christ et les disciples d'Emmaus* (1896–1897), [Fig. 9] tried to offer viewers a pictorial translation of supernatural or even non-rational states, such as the miracles, and provide the traditional Christian system of belief and representation with a new and modern emotionality, in both a spiritual and artistic way.

²⁷ Richard Abel, "Pathé's Heavenly Billboards," in *Il colore nel cinema muto*, ed. Monica Dall'Asta et al. (Udine: Università degli Studi di Udine, 1996), 56–76.

²⁸ Isabelle Saint-Martin resumes the main positions of this debate in *Art chrétien/art sacré. Regards du catholicisme sur l'art. France XIXe-XXe siècle* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014), 112–19.

²⁹ Maurice Denis, *Journal* (Paris: La Colombe – ed. du Vieux colombier, 1957), I, 152. More recently the French philosopher Jean-Luc Marion explained why the banality and the anonymity of the images could work better for devotion and worship's purposes: "Devant une Vierge de Raphaël, l'on s'écrit 'un Raphaël!,' mais devant une vierge sulpicienne, on reconnaît la Vierge elle-même." Great and famous artworks, he observed, push to the acknowledgment and the veneration of the artist and not of the represented subject, while, on the contrary, a standardized, serial, anonymous, even ugly image is well able to do so. Jean-Luc Marion, *La Croisée du visible* (Paris: Quadrige – Presses Universitaires de France, 2007), quotation on page 113.

³⁰ Julia Bernard, "Qu'y a-t-il dans une 'crise'? 'Problèmes' parallèles dans les mouvement spirituels et les images religieuses de la fin du XIXe siècle en France," in *Crises de l'image religieuse: de Nicée II à Vatican II*, ed. Dario Gamboni et al. (Paris: Éditions de la maison des sciences de l'homme, 1999), 233–37.

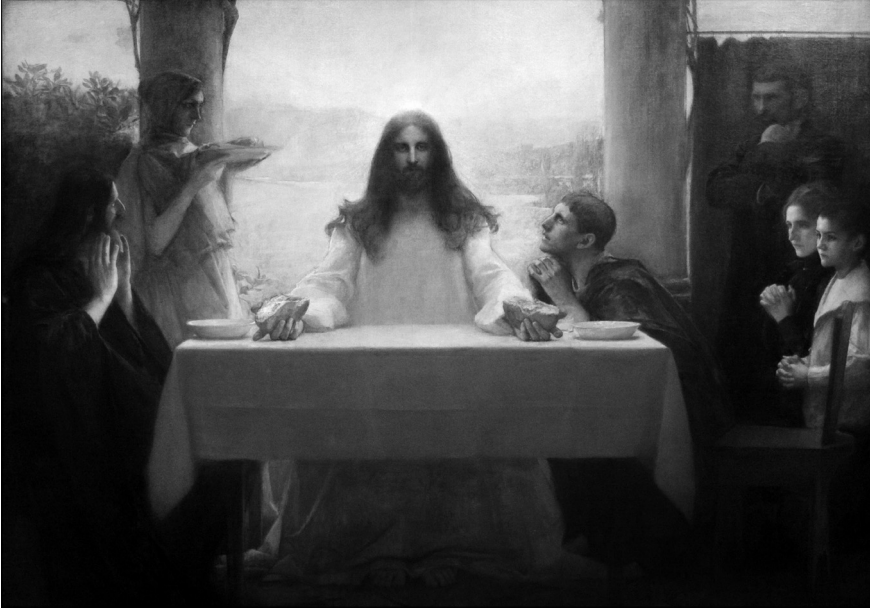


Fig. 9

This effort of visual spectacularization, attempted by the pictorial system, actually appears in close similarity, almost as a preview, to what cinema was about to realize with special effects. In fact miracles and supernatural moments, such as the *Holy Birth*, the *Resurrection*, the *Ascension*, are represented in films about the story of Christ through the same, or at least similar, modalities used in contemporary paintings, that is through visual effects in which the light, often tinted or toned, assumes the main role and functions as the attraction for the viewers. [Fig. 10, Fig. 11]



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

In contrast, the presence of contemporary religious artworks such as William Hunt's *The Shadow of the Death* (1873) or Mihály Munkácsy's *Le Christ devant Pilate* (1881) [Fig. 12] as models for the conception of the action and the space in certain early *Passions* – Hunt is quoted in Olcott's *From the Manger to the Cross* and in Antamoro's *Christus*; Munkácsy in Pathé's *Passion* of 1907 [Fig. 13] – allow one to deduce and outline a deeper relationship with the figurative art system of that time, even beyond the connection between the pictorial use and modulation of the light and the filmic special effects.



Fig. 12



Fig. 13

The case of Munkácsy, in particular, reveals how filmed and pictorial representations of Christ from the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century belong to the same visual culture, sharing the same problems, the same solutions and the same values.

The painting of Munkácsy is actually part of a trilogy, including *Ecce Homo* (1895–1896) and *Golgotha* (1883–1884), now at the Déri Museum in Debrecen. It is first of all, in comparison with the filmic representational system, interesting that these pictures are thought of as subsequent moments, so being connected in a temporal development, even though each one remains autonomous and self-sufficient.

Secondly, their enormous dimensions, almost five by seven meters, allowed for the depiction of full-sized figures, and therefore the integration of the fictional represented world into the real space. The main attempt of these paintings was to represent life, colours, movement, in a word, the real event.

The way in which these artworks were shown also seems significant when compared with the film's representational modalities and strategies. The art dealer Charles Sedelmeyer decided to exhibit them inside a theatrical setting, between curtains, with no noises from outside and with direct lighting, so as real events about to happen, and the contemporary press remembers how the viewers, entering the exhibition for the first time, were so moved that they took off their hats and began to cry.³¹

It is consequently no coincidence when a painting like this is used and quoted as a model in a film from the same period about the Passion of Christ. They had the same problems, they felt the same needs, and they tried to answer these problems and needs with similar strategies.

³¹ See for instance: Roger Ballu, "Le Salon de 1881," *La Nouvelle Revue* 31, May-June 1881; Emerich von Buckovics, *Christ before Pilate by Michel de Munkacsy* (Paris: John C. Rankin, 1883); Charles Sedelmeyer, *Michel von Munkacsy* (Paris: Sedelmeyer, 1914).

If one reads the critique of Munkácsy written by the Catholic reviewer La Sizeranne on the pages of *L'Université catholique* in 1890 after the 1889 Universal Exposition, it is apparent how the aim of representation which was founded on theatrical conception and which to get the most out of realism and naturalism and renew its power over the spectators through emotional spectacularization, was a common sensitivity of that time:

Ceux qui ont vu le Christ devant Pilate, il y a quelques années exposé à la galerie Sedelmeyer non pas dans un cadre mais entre deux colonnes qui semblaient appartenir au prétoire, n'oublieront jamais le saisissement éprouvé. [...] Les dix-huit siècles qui obscurissent pour notre imagination cette journée fatale avaient disparu, comme un voile de vapeurs qui se déchire et laisse apercevoir l'abîme... avec avidité on plongeait les yeux dans cet abîme, on interrogeait cette brutale vision avec la crainte qu'elle ne s'évanouît.³²

La Sizeranne is describing here a representation which actually works as re-presentation, or even that is able to make the represented subject present once again, taking place under the eyes of the viewers. This explains how cinema entered such a system which strives for a realistic and at the same time spectacular representation, and why, from the opposite point of view, the main figurative models for the conception of the space and the action in the filmed *Passions* were chosen exactly from that kind of art, realistic and dramatic at the same time, such as that of Doré, Tissot, Munkácsy, Hunt, Gérôme, Dagnan-Bouveret, von Uhde, even though each one was differently participating in and responding to the debate about the reality, humanity and accurate representation of Christ opened up by the publication of Renan's *La vie de Jésus* in 1863.³³

I am now, however, at the turn of, and at the end, of my argument. In fact if the art references and quotations in early filmed *Passions* find their deepest reason – beside the other practical, social and psychological reasons – in the cultural and historical legacy to the contemporary visual and artistic context, as manifestations and expressions of that culture, they at the same time reveal and provoke a rupture, or at least a crisis, of the same representational system and of the same culture, because of their novelty as a means and as a language.

Julia Bernard, and later Saint-Martin, remarked that such a crisis was already in operation in the pictorial representational system of the late 19th century. Munkácsy's paintings in fact, and all those of the same time born in a similar spirit, manifested the "double crisis" of the figurative art and of the traditional faith, and tried to respond and surpass it by extending their phenomenological effect, going beyond their traditional definition of easel paintings as a medium of communication and pointing towards a mass public through a visual spectacularization.³⁴

Walter Benjamin had, many years earlier, read the history of the last 19th century *Salon's* painting as a moment of crisis founded on the change of the relationship between art and spectators, this now being a mass public, and considered these visual formulations as "proto-cinematographic" attempts, although not successful and not achieved, to surpass the effects of an individual perception to reach the new, modern, consumer and industrial society's needs.³⁵

³² Robert de La Sizeranne, "L'art religieux est-il mort? Étude sur la peinture religieuse contemporaine à l'Exposition universelle de 1889, et spécialement sur les trois maîtres Hébert-Uhde-Munkácsy," *L'Université catholique* (1890): 36. Also quoted in Isabelle Saint-Martin, *Art chrétien*, 145.

³³ For this debate see Isabelle Saint-Martin, *Art chrétien*, 138–58.

³⁴ Julia Bernard, "Qu'y a-t-il dans une crise?" 213–17.

³⁵ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. Enrico Filippini (Torino: Einaudi, 2011), 24–36.

Early films about the Passion of Christ, consequently participated in and belonged to the same cultural and representational crisis. They pushed it even more in depth and definitely exacerbated it.

Submitting the sacred history and the artistic, fixed image through which that history has been represented thus far to the mechanical reproduction of the movement, in fact, meant assimilating them in a causal and temporal development. Such a possibility caused more than a problem to the representation of holy subjects because it entailed *materialization* and *realization* of them.

Certain films, such as the Pathé versions of the *Passion*, reveal all of their awkwardness when faced with a similar problem, and currently seem artless if not ridiculous. In the scene of the *Nativity*, for instance, the sudden apparition of the Baby Jesus in the cradle, with no physical contact with his mother, amazes his sacred parents as much as it probably amazed the audiences of that time, but leaves us embarrassed and incredulous. [Fig. 14, Fig. 15]

The history and the tradition, in fact, provide fixed images, or rather images in which the holy events such as the miracles are about to happen or have already happened. How does one represent that subject with a medium and a language ontologically founded on the flow of time and the realization of the actions? How does one do this without a loss to the sacred aspect and essence?

The recourse to the traditional art system and iconography for early *Passions* also functioned then as an attempt to resist the change and revolution that film introduced in representational norms and habits, this being the possibility or rather the necessity to show and reproduce *movement* and *time*.

In other words, the movement of the images, on the one hand, and the recourse to fixed or more static visual paradigms, such as those of the *tableaux vivants* and of art quotations, on the other hand, among the first filmed representations of the story of Jesus touched, to use Walter Benjamin's extremely famous expression, a problem about the *aura*, or rather about its disappearance and denial and about the attempt to maintain and preserve it.³⁶

David Freedberg has noted before us how Benjamin's concept of *aura* and the matter of its destruction or resistance in films is closely related to the movement of the images and to the temporal development and not just to reproduction and replica issues. It is impossible, in his view, to adhere to a filmic image in the same way in which one can adhere to a fixed image, because it is the "imprisonment of the presence" in a given, static representation that confers to the image its *aura*, its potential to be looked at, loved and worshiped as an idol.³⁷

It is no coincidence, in this sense, if *Christus* by Antamoro, which may be the *Passion* in which the quotations of artworks and the recourse to the *tableaux vivants* style reaches its highest point of awareness, is praised by the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*: "Against the realism mainly materialistic of the cinematographic art". It is stated, in fact, that Antamoro chose fixity against the movement of the images for the representation of the most sacred moment of the story of Christ: "In *Christus* the episodes occur through the reproduction, at the highest point, of an already famous artwork, conferring to the action a really artistic aspect and arousing in the viewers, with the contemplation of the beauty, all those feelings that the artist transfused in his work."³⁸ [Fig. 16, Fig. 17]

³⁶ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art*, 6–13.

³⁷ David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 231–35.

³⁸ L.c., *L'Osservatore Romano*, November 12, 1916, quoted in Riccardo Redi, *Il Christus di Giulio Antamoro e di Enrico Guazzoni* (Roma: Associazione italiana per le ricerche di storia del cinema, 2002), 52–54. The translation from Italian is mine. Also Coissac conferred the same importance to the fixed images because they are artistic



Fig. 14



Fig. 15

and able to communicate the ideal, they are “moral” and more appropriate for teaching and contemplation purposes, while the moving pictures are just useful to represent “life” and “flesh” (See: Jacques and Marie André, “Le rôle des projections”).



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

Additionally the conservative aspect of the *Passion* genre at the time or rather the fact that until their entry in the narrative system with Griffith, *Passions* maintained their primitive features and did not evolve along with the whole cinematographic language,³⁹ could be interpreted as a “desperate” attempt to resist to the destruction of the *aura*.⁴⁰ In other words, the language of the early filmed *Passions*, which is founded on few or no camera movements, long shots, no narrative and causal editing, no close-ups and no psychological characterization, made scholars and theorists talk about a “reactionary” form, but could also be read as the last way in which films tried to keep or adhere to traditional representation and preserve the same *aura* and the same value.⁴¹ Paul Warren even goes as far as believing and stating that the filmic representation of Christ is only “rightful” and “correct” in early cinema, when it still did not relate stories, because early cinema maintains that representation in its *natural, legitimate, institutional pictorial* place, thus in a respectful distance from the screen, insomuch as, in his view, the screened images became “pious images”.⁴²

In spite of these attempts, however, the representation of Christ in films, since its appearance always oscillates between ritual and spectacle, gradually and irreversibly entering a mass industry and society keen on spectacle.

When cinema found a way to assimilate that representation in a narrative form around 1916, through camera movements, changes in the shot scale, psychologism, *inter-* or *intra-*editing, the process of secularization of Jesus’s filmic image was accomplished, even though some elements of the *Passions* of the cinema of the early period, such as the *tableaux vivant* style and the explicit art references, continued to be a typical feature for any later cinematographic representation of Christ.

Such a process, however, provoked by the film system was perhaps already and irreversibly in operation since the very beginning of the genre of the *Passions* and from the own filming act, since it transformed the believers into spectators by offering them a technological, mechanical and reproduced image as an object of worship and devotion. It not only strived for but even hazarded to place itself inside a confessional context and into a religious space, next to other artistic religious expressions, since it asked people to pay a ticket to “see” Jesus, since, finally, it

³⁹ From the point of view of their linguistic features in relation with the larger history of films, scholars demonstrated and discussed how *Passions* at the same time belong to and differ from the paradigm of the cinema of the early period, that is the system of *attractions* in which the interest lies more in showing than in telling something, and how they do not evolve into a filmic narrative. See: Noël Burch, *La lucarne*, 151–71; Charles Musser, “Full-length Programs: Fights, Passion Plays and Travel,” in *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*, ed. Charles Musser (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1990), 193–223; Tom Gunning, “Passion Play as Palimpsest: the Nature of the Text in the History of the Early Cinema,” in *Une invention du diable?*, 102–11.

⁴⁰ In this passage of my analysis, I am primarily applying Benjamin’s idea of *aura* to the general concept of traditional and figurative representation, and to its static nature, rather than to a specific artwork’s concrete meaning, which the German philosopher was referring to more specifically in his study. I am very much conscious of the fact that the original and full sense of Benjamin’s *aura* lies in a laic and secular meaning of the artwork’s unique and unrepeatable existence, the *hic et nunc* status from which it derives *authenticity*. Talking however about religious representations and not just any representations allows us to apply Benjamin’s remarks on *aura* not just to the nature of the representations as artworks and to their role and place in modern society, but also to the content and the aim of those representations themselves, which is the *sacred* and its expression. In other words, applied to our cases, Benjamin’s laic and secular concept of *aura* consists of a blurring and almost coincides with a *religious* meaning, because the *hic et nunc* in these cases appear strictly related to the power and the ability to keep and express through visual means the divine mysteries of the Christian cult and faith.

⁴¹ Carles Keil, “From the Manger to the Cross: The New Testament Narrative and the Question of Stylistic Retardation,” in *Une invention du diable?*, 112–20.

⁴² Paul Warren, “Le Christ n’est pas à son aise au cinéma,” *CinémAction* 80 (1996): 48–55.

fatally substituted the conclusive formula of the Mass – “et in saecula saeculorum. Amen” – with the more laic and profane words “The End”.

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A Country with a Tiny History and Thick Lines? Memories of the Socialist Past in Slovak Post-Socialist Cinema¹

Abstract | It is a common belief among film critics and historians, that Slovak post-1989 cinema is reluctant to deal with the subject of the socialist past, namely with the post-Prague Spring era, which came to be known as “normalization”. The paper examines possible causes for the lack of cinematic representations of the socialist legacy and attempts to answer the question whether this is to be attributed to institutional and economic problems of film industry, which was literally fighting for survival, or to a specific kind of historical indifference on the part of Slovak cinema.

It further examines several Slovak films made after 1989 which are set in the socialist era or deal with its historical impact. It analyzes shifts in cinematic representation of state-socialism over the last twenty years and compares the Slovak cinematic approach to the communist past with films from other East Central European countries.

Keywords | cinema – memory – representation – Slovakia – state-socialism

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It has been a general belief among Slovak film historians and film critics that Slovak cinema lacks reflection of the past.² One of the dominant discourses of the 1990s and of the beginning

¹ This article was supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency under the contract No. APVV-0797-12.

² According to Václav Macek, already at the beginning of the 1990s “[...] a spiritual confrontation with the previous regime ceased to be topical, an analysis of the authoritarian system was exhausted. The revolutionary spirit had already vanished by 1992, reflections on the current state of affairs came to the forefront, not reminiscence of the illness called communism.” Václav Macek and Jelena Paštéková, *Dejiny slovenskej kinematografie* (Martin: Osveta, 1997), 491. Jelena Paštéková points to the fact, that before 1989 one of the ways to oppose totalitarian oppression was escape into the private sphere, which made it possible to disavow the establishment. After the fall of communism, a trend of films coming to terms with the past, similar to those of Polish and Hungarian films from the 1970s and 1980s, was expected, “[...] however, domestic pilot projects with such subject matter pointed to an earlier lack and rupture of self-reflexive public reflection and original stylistic choices and they soon became simple agit-props. The accelerated frequency of political events destroyed earlier dramaturgical preparation of scripts and the spontaneous energy of freedom did not favor personal involvement of filmmakers who patiently enforced their subjects and laboriously rejected forced corrections. An accelerated rhythm of life came to the forefront and overtook the speed of film production.” Jelena Paštéková, “Indexy totalitarizmu a pop-kultúrne intervencie v slovenskom hranom filme. Príspevok k medialite súčasného umenia,” in *Slovenská literatúra* 2 (2011): 109. Eva Filová comments on the cinematic reflection of the past in a very similar vein, when comparing the ways in which Slovak and Czech cinema represent historical events. She asserts that “[...] while Czech cinema shows a departure from recent tradition (for example by deploying self-reflexive devices: *Kawasaki's Rose*, *Protector*), in Slovak cinema we see a continuation of the stylistic principles of the 1980s and an overcautiousness in critical reflection on controversial corners of history (who would dare deal with Tiso, Hlinka or Dubček?).” Eva Filová, “Spoločne, každý sám – reflexia minulosti v slovenských a českých filmoch,” in *Současný český a slovenský*

of the new millennium – a period marked by a crisis in both the quantity and quality of film production – were debates on Slovak cinema becoming more and more enclosed in “hanging gardens”.³ The 1990s were dominated by stories concerning searching for one’s identity by means of reconciliation with one’s family roots, which were situated in isolated places with the contemporary reality only playing the role of a not particularly relevant background, or being suppressed by creating a bizarre micro-universe.⁴

Perestroika Accounts of State-socialism

Shortly before the fall of the Iron Curtain, several films made in Slovakia depicted the dark side of life under socialism and dealt critically with the tragic impact of communist power on individual fates. In *Curator of the Open-Air Museum* (*Správca skanzenu*, 1988) by Štefan Uher, an intellectual confesses his moral failure to his teenage daughter and explains why he abandoned his academic career and returned to his native country. *Sitting on a Branch I am Fine* (*Sedím na konári a je mi dobre*, 1989) by Juraj Jambisko tells the tragicomic story somewhere between fantasy and reality about the not particularly joyful postwar period. The film with a symptomatic title *The Right for the Past* (*Právo na minulosť*, 1989) by Martin Hollý depicts human destiny as a chess-piece on the large chessboard of history during the Stalinist era by portraying several model characters. A war hero who has returned from the eastern front has to fight for his own past. In the more liberal times after Stalin’s death he finally succeeds in furnishing proof of his military credentials and is rehabilitated and decorated with a badge of honor; however, he still doubts that it will ever be possible to publish his story in a book. These perestroika accounts of the past depict their heroes as victims that have been broken or deformed by the great wheel of history. They attribute key roles to major historical events such as the end of WW2, the communist coup d’état and the normalization period. The characters are firmly rooted in their past, which casts its clouds on their present. They can become reconciled with their past but they cannot change their present – all the changes come from the outside in the movements of great history.

The downfall of totalitarianism brought about the opportunity for outspoken criticism of the former regime and also the chance to follow the perestroika discussions on concealed chapters from the socialist past. The cinema of the 1990s did not, however, offer any fundamental reflections on the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the consecutive normalization era. These subjects have only gradually begun to be tackled in the new millennium. This reflection, however,

film – pluralita estetických, kultúrnych a ideových konceptů, ed. Luboš Ptáček (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2010), 98. Jana Dudková considers representation of the past within the broader context of national identity and states that after 1989 films about the past were no longer the main paradigm of dealing with national identity and that “[...] during the 1990s the past is often perceived as a blurred image, interfering with the life of those protagonists who did not experience it (*Tenderness, Passionate Kiss*)”. Jana Dudková, *Slovenský film v ére transkulturality* (Bratislava: VŠMU – OZ Vlna / drewo a srd, 2011), 23.

³ The term “hanging gardens of Slovakia” was used by Zuzana Tatárová in her review of the film *Blue Heaven* (*Modré z neba*, d. Eva Borušovičová, 1998) as an ironic allusion to the contemporary critical reception of films that followed the trend of *The Garden* (*Záhrada*, 1995) by Martin Šulík, which presented stories of searching for one’s identity by means of interpersonal relationships and were set in isolated and often idealized places. Zuzana Tatárová, “Visuté záhrady Slovenska,” *Kino-Ikon* 4 (1998): 75–76.

⁴ See also Katarína Mišíková, “O generacej mimoreči,” in *Současný český a slovenský film*, ed. Luboš Ptáček, 29.

has been perceived as insufficient or inadequate. Is this caused by the thick line that the Velvet Revolution drew after the past, or by a specific indifference of Slovak culture towards history?⁵

Is it because of disillusion caused by the fact that although the year 1989 changed the establishment and people gained long denied freedom, the economic transformation of society, marked by embezzlement affairs and mafia practice in politics, did not fulfill the ideals of equality? Or is it because in the accelerated course of history the need to adapt to new living conditions overshadowed the efforts to come to terms with the past? Or was the removal of socialist monuments accompanied by the removal of memory simply because more than 10% of the population were members of the communist party,⁶ many were secret police informers⁷ and even a number of tribunes of the Velvet Revolution received positive lustration reports?⁸

Direct answers to these questions revolve around broader sociological and historical contexts that are beyond the realm of cinema aesthetics, although they are connected to it. The various ways in which Slovak filmmakers deal with historical subjects indicate that there is a tendency towards softening the view on the socialist past by means of irony and/or metaphor and a tendency towards establishing more subtle bonds with tradition rather than with actual history.⁹ Cinema dealing with the past obviously does not need to directly depict a certain historical period. Recurring examples of films establishing more indirect connection with historical or cinematic tradition can be traced across over two decades of Slovak post-socialist cinema: Martin Šulík's creative dialogue with the New Wave directors Juraj Jakubisko, Elo Havetta and Dušan Hanák (in the films *Everything I Love* / *Všetko čo mám rád*, 1992/ and particularly *The Garden* / *Záhrada*,

⁵ The positive audience reception of four Slovak international co-productions with historical subjects, which in a remarkably short time span sought to celebrate or demystify popular figures from Slovak history speaks in favor of the hypotheses of Slovakia as a country without historical consciousness: *Bathory* (2008) by Juraj Jakubisko, *Gypsy Virgin* (*Cinka Panna*, 2008) by Dušan Rapoš, *Jánošík. A True Story* (*Jánošík. Pravdivá história*, 2009) by Agnieszka Holland and Kasia Adamik and *The Legend of Flying Cyprian* (*Legenda o lietajúcom Cypriánovi*, 2010) by Marianna Čengel-Solčanská. It is significant that these films deal with folkloric myths rather than with historic accounts: the "Bloody countess" Alžběta Báthory, the gypsy musician Cinka Panna, the romantic bandit Jánošík, who – as the legend has it – stole from the rich and gave to the poor, and the healer and inventor monk Cyprián. Representing the distant mythical past is somehow less painful and generally more popular than dealing with recent history, as the box office of *Bathory* suggests (with over 400,000 viewers it is the most successful film in the history of Slovak cinema. C.f. Miro Ulman, "Slovenská kinematografia v roku 2008". In: *Film.sk*, no. 6 (2009), http://old.film.sk/show_article.php?id=6057&movie=&archive=1).

⁶ Although the majority of leading professional positions in socialist society were dependent on membership in the communist party, there are only approximate estimations on the number of Czechoslovak communist party members. According to the report "We are Communists" presented by the general secretary of the Communist party of Czechoslovakia in 2011, the number of communist party members in 1989 was 1,701,085. See, for example, Miroslav Štěpán, "Jsme komunisté," <http://www.ksc.cz/Stánoviska%20KSC/referat.htm>, accessed March 20, 2015.

⁷ The Nation's Memory Institute (Ústav pamäti národa) made available the registration protocols of the secret police which comprise over 160,000 records of people, who between the years 1958 and 1990 worked for, collaborated with or were monitored by the secret police. See for example "Registračné protokoly agentúrnych a operatívnych zväzkov Štátnej bezpečnosti," <http://www.upn.gov.sk/regpro/>, accessed March 20, 2015.

⁸ Lustration was a process of examining political candidates' past collaboration with the secret police. The so-called "Lustration affair" accompanied the first democratic elections in 1990, when a number of political leaders were identified as secret police collaborators, among them Ján Budaj, the main tribune of the Velvet Revolution. C. f. Pavel Žáček, "Sachergate': první lustrační aféra. Nesnáze státní elity (nejen) se svazky Státní bezpečnosti," *Paměť a dějiny* 1 (2007): 50–81. This affair is also addressed in the documentary *Men of Revolution* (*Muži revolúcie*, 2012) by Zuzana Piussi.

⁹ Thus favoring the mode of cultural memory, dealing with mythical history, which according to Jan Assmann contrasts with communication memory, dealing with the recent past. C.f. Jan Assmann, *Kultura a paměť. Písmo, vzpomínka a politická identita v rozvinutých kulturách starověku* (Praha: Prostor, 2001), 46–53.

1995/), but also in his documentary films on New Wave cinema¹⁰); attempts at revival of folkloric genre formulas popular in the socialist era, as seen in films such as *Gypsy Virgin* (*Cinka Panna*, 2008) and *Dancing on Broken Glass* (*Tanec medzi črepinami*, 2012); thematic and stylistic inspirations drawn from the tradition of Slovak war film in *Meeting the Enemy* (*Rozhovor s nepriateľom*, 2007), etc. The problem of cinematic memory is quite broad, therefore this paper has to limit its scope to a specific area of dealing with the past. It concentrates primarily on thematic aspects of relating to the past and seeks to trace shifts in cinematic depiction of state-socialism in the post-1989 era.

Slovak Cinema's Right for the Past

An account of the external socio-political causes would not serve to explain why in other post-socialist countries, which experienced a similar development as Slovakia, films about socialism represent a considerable segment of their film production.¹¹ In contrast, in Slovakia only eight feature fiction films dealing with the period between 1948 and 1989 have been made. Non-fiction production concerning this period is represented by nine feature-length films. The subject of the socialist past resonates in two feature-length films composed of several short stories: one of them belongs to the realm of fiction, the other one is an anthology of short fiction, documentary as well as animation films.¹² Slovak filmmakers furthermore participated as minority producers in seven fiction, one animation and one documentary feature-length international co-production. This accounts for 29 films, which is approximately 15% of the overall production of approximately 190 feature-length films made after 1989. This does not seem to be a completely negligible ratio. If one takes into account, however, only major Slovak fiction production, the ratio is only 4.2%. The alleged lack of film depiction of the socialist past is therefore mainly caused by the almost suspended film production around the turn of the millennium, by neglect on the part of Slovak public television, which commemorated the 10th and 20th anniversaries of the Velvet Revolution with only short and medium-length non-fiction films, by limited Slovak participation in certain key films about socialism in the region (e.g. *The Unburied Man* /*A temetetlen halott*, 2004/ by the Hungarian director Márta Mészáros or *Fair Play* /2014/ by the Czech director Andrea Sedláčková) and partly also by preeminent interest of critics and audience in fictional cinema. The casting of Slovak actors in Czech films obviously cannot be considered a relevant creative input in dealing with the socialist past, and the importance of a Slovak producer in the role of

¹⁰ Portraits of the New Wave filmmakers (Juraj Jakubisko, Pavel Juráček, Martin Slivka), but particularly *25 from the Sixties or the Czechoslovak New Wave* (*25 ze šedesátých aneb Československá nová vlna*, 2010) and *The Czechoslovak Film Miracle* (*Československý filmový zázrak*, 2014).

¹¹ Let us, for example, consider the international acclaim of Romanian films such as *The Paper Will Be Blue* (*Hirtia va fi albastră*, 2006), *12:08 East of Bucharest* (*A cost sauna fost*, 2006) by Corneliu Porumboiu or *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (*4 luni, 3 săptămâni și 2 zile*, 2007) by Christian Mungiu. In both Czech and Hungarian cinema the number of fictional films dealing with the socialist past amounts to approximately 40 titles. See Radim Hladík, "Vážné, nevážené a znevážené vzpomínání v postsocialistické kinematografii," in *Film a dějiny 4. Normalizace*, ed. Petr Kopal (Praha: Casablanca – Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2014), 461 and Teréz Vincze, "S minulostí je třeba se vypořádat," *Cinepur* 85 (2013): 72.

¹² These numbers not only refer to period films, but also to films with contemporary subjects which deal with the problematic state-socialist past and/or the Velvet Revolution.

a minority co-production partner is also questionable.¹³ Nevertheless, recollecting the past in Slovak cinema of recent years has been far more frequent than it might seem.¹⁴

Commemorating the past of communist society was an important function of state-socialist cinema before 1989. The long-term dramaturgy plans created a demand for films on the occasion of diverse state anniversaries. By means of narratives about WW2, the Slovak national uprising, biopics about socialist heroes or chapters from the history of class struggle, cinema served to legitimize the power of the communist party in the service of the Soviet Union and also shaped the ethos of the past in terms of remembering in the present. Although the official portrayal of history had to be unambiguous, several films made during the liberalization era of the 1960s offered critical or even subversive accounts of the socialist past. Štefan Uher analyzed the trauma of collectivization within the context of national destiny in *Three Daughters* (*Tri dcéry*, 1967), Juraj Jakubisko demystified the legend of the liberation of Slovakia by the Red Army in *Deserters and Pilgrims* (*Zbehovia a pútnici*, 1968) and Alain Robbe-Grillet questioned the factuality of historical truth in *The Man Who Lies* (*Muž, ktorý luže*, 1968).

After 1989 the deetatization of the Slovak film studio Koliba, the defraudation of its property and the failure to create an alternative funding system for cinema resulted in the official impetus of cinematic memory being lost and the burden being left on private producers. As of 2009 the Audiovisual Fund (AVF) has been supplementing the concept of long-term dramaturgy. This does not mean, however, that committees of AVF have the means to actively commission films with a specific subject matter, but they can only stimulate certain trends by formulating long-term priorities for public financial support. In that same year Slovak Television signed “a government contract” with the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, which obliges the government to support public TV production by a certain annual amount. These measurements established an important institutional ground which is slowly but surely enabling a creative reflection on state-socialism in both film and television.

Who is consequently today the one to create a demand for the cinematic memory of the socialist past and why should we constantly commemorate the past, when the era of state anniversaries is finally over? Why should Slovak cinema defend its *right for the past* at present?

The answer to this question is suggested by memory studies and their concept of cultural memory, which Jan Assmann explains as a domain of fixation, communication and reproduction of cultural meaning. Culture as a complex of knowledge providing for identity is objectified in symbolic forms that preserve memories of the past and explain the present. If we conceive of memory as a form of reenacting the past, memories do not need to be complete, accurate or objective: “For cultural memory, the history of remembrance is relevant, not the factual history.”¹⁵

The concept of cultural memory has been further developed by Aleida Assmann, who is concerned with the activation and forgetting of cultural meanings. She proposes two complementary

¹³ Relevant creative input in Czech majority fiction co-production is quite rare – for example the six-part TV series *The End of Big Holiday* (*Konec velkých prázdnin*, 1994) which was directed by the Slovak director Miloslav Luther. A more remarkable example may be found in non-fiction TV films, in particular those produced by the production company Febio, founded by the Slovak filmmaker living in the Czech Republic Fero Fenič.

¹⁴ Recent account on cinematic representation of Slovak history, which deals exclusively with non-fiction film and analyzes the changes in rhetorics and representation of historical subject matters before 1989 and after demonstrates that reflections on history have been present in Slovak cinema, but always under the strong influence of the political and institutional background. Mária Ferenčuhová, “Medzi odmietaním a zabúdaním. Vzťah Slovákov k vlastnej minulosti očami slovenských dokumentaristov,” *Kino-Ikon 2* (2014): 63–79.

¹⁵ Jan Assmann, *Kultura a paměť*, 50.

concepts of function memory and storage memory. Function memory is a memory inhabited by meaningful elements connected into a coherent story and creating the basis for individual or collective identity. Storage memory is uninhabited memory, a collection of elements of a neutral value that are conserved by institutions such as archives, museums, libraries, etc. The relationship between function and storage memory is a dynamic one, they are conceived as two modes of memory. Assmann points out the close relationship between memory and identity, which after the fall of the Iron Curtain gained a new dimension in Eastern Europe. This event put an end to the era of “frozen memories”¹⁶ and aroused ethnic and national identity. Identity is shaped, however, not only, by the act of remembering, but also by the act of forgetting: “We define ourselves through what we collectively remember and forget.”¹⁷ Remembering the past is hence always driven by the present and its needs.¹⁸

What historical facts might Slovak cinema draw from in the process of co-creating a new cultural identity? Which memories could it bring forth and which rather leave to oblivion?

The change in the state establishment in 1989 initiated processes that led to another radical change in 1993. Czechoslovakia ceased to exist and two sovereign states were formed. In forming its cultural consciousness, the Czech Republic was able to draw from the tradition of Czech statehood (the Czech Crown and the 1st Czechoslovak Republic).¹⁹ The Slovak state was only born, however, in 1918 in Czechoslovakia and was articulated fairly slowly. The period of the Slovak State during WW2 is problematic in regard to its relationship to Nazi Germany and represents more of a trauma than a tradition worth relating for at least part of the population. The official relationship to sovereign history therefore did not draw from modern history, but rather from older history and myths, turning to the legacy of the early medieval Great Moravian Empire and the legend of the 18th century folk hero Jánošík. The division of Czechoslovakia more or less damaged the storage memory of Slovakia and remembering the socialist past hence had to give way to shaping a new national identity.²⁰ The situation was quite different in the former Eastern Germany, which after the unification sought for self-identification through the so-called *ostalgie*, i.e., positively tuned memories of pop cultural phenomena or artifacts from the socialist era. Slovak cinema after 1989 lacked a significant tradition of critical remembering of socialism. A prominent part of the artistic community also manifested a considerable antipathy towards the boom of nationalism. This antipathy is represented by the “hanging gardens” films of the 1990s

¹⁶ Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1999), 62.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Jacques Le Goff, *Paměť a dějiny* (Praha: Argo, 2007), 118.

¹⁹ The continuity between Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic is also articulated by the Czech national flag, which was taken over from the former Czechoslovak flag.

²⁰ In cinema it was meant to be formed by projects such as the TV film *The Prince* (*Knieža*, 1998) about the Moravian Prince Pribina or by much later (and with a different creative team) the accomplished film *Jánošík*, whose original producer Studio Koliba was a private company which defrauded film studios and received financial support from public sources of 22.5 mil. Slovak crowns. See Václav Macek, “1 297 254 000 Sk,” *Kino-Ikon* 1 (2010): 152. The legacy of the Great Moravian Empire as a source of national identity is associated not only with the era of Vladimír Mečiar and the early Slovak Republic but is still present in both public life and in the cinema. In 2010, only a week before the parliamentary elections, a massive bronze statue of the Moravian prince Svätopluk was erected at the Bratislava castle by representatives of the government of Robert Fico to commemorate “the king of ancient Slovaks”. This event aroused considerable controversy because of the historical inaccuracy and nationalistic context the statue invoked. Two non-fiction films touched critically on it: a short TV documentary *In the Shadow of King Svätopluk* (*V tieni kráľa Svätopluka*, 2012) by Jakub Julény and *Fragile Identity* (*Krehká identita*, 2012) by Zuzana Piussi. Juraj Jakubisko is currently working on a major international co-production project entitled *Slovak Epopee* (*Svätopluk*, to be completed in 2015), which also deals with the subject of the Great Moravian Empire.

that by depicting the relationship of the protagonists to their grandparents primarily relate of the golden era of the 1st Czechoslovak Republic. By means of citations, allusions and reminiscences, their authors relate to the poetics of the new wave and the 1960s.²¹

So what are the qualities of remembering the more recent past and what are the developments of the remembering process?

Directors Shooting History

Due to the discontinuity and fragmentariness of Slovak film production in the 1990s and at the beginning of the new millennium, it is questionable whether we are able to identify groups of historical films which would fit Robert A. Rosenstone's²² idea of clusters of several films connected by a specific subject or by the person of a single director, preoccupied with a certain historical phenomenon.²³ Rosenstone asserts that cinema has a tendency to deal with specific subjects in specific periods and that "[...] clusters of films made in certain periods could serve as windows onto exploration of particular ideologies or climates of opinion".²⁴ In Slovak cinema, the authorship cluster of historical film, or rather film dealing with history, could be represented by the work of Peter Kerekes in non-fictional film and the work of Juraj Nvota and Martin Šulík in fictional film.

Juraj Nvota: Young Heroes and Bitter Ostalgia

In his films *Music* (*Muzika*, 2007), *Confidant* (*EštéBák*, 2011) and *Hostage* (*Rukojemník*, 2014), Juraj Nvota deals with the period of normalization. Both *Music* and *Confidant* consist of a conflict of a young man with communist power, which leads to the deformation of individual fates. In *Music*, a young saxophone player experiences conflicts within his seemingly peaceful existence: if he wants to make music, he has to go through an ideological test; he wants his mind to stay free in the era without freedom only to find out that even freedom requires either a compromise or insanity.

In *Confidant*, a young radio amateur becomes an agent of the secret police against his own will. In order to make peace with his guilty conscience he helps illegal emigrants and later flees to Austria. Both of Nvota's films are close to the ostalgia trend and also embrace it by their genre of bitter comedy. They delve into various stereotypes in their depiction of the normalization era: policemen force young long-haired men to cut their hair, secret agents steal emigrants' property, people spy and eavesdrop on one other, everyone blackmails everyone else, dissidents are depicted as liberal groupies who relax by making completely benign jokes about the communist establishment, the only possible act of freedom is alcoholism and sexual liberty. These simplifications are also apparent in the latest of Nvota's normalization films, *Hostage*, and are even stressed by the juvenile main character. The film is narrated from the point of view of a boy who is brought up by his grandparents after his parents flee to Austria. The personal and the political, the anecdote and history, merge and what is left is merely a nostalgic memory of beautiful

²¹ This is not only the case of the aforementioned Martin Šulík, but also of several young debutants of the 1990s (e.g. Eva Borušovičová, Vladimír Adásek). See Katarína Mišíková, "O generačnej mimoreči," 30.

²² Robert A. Rosenstone, "Historical Film / Historical Thought," *South African Historical Journal* 48 (2003): 10–22.

²³ An attempt to apply Rosenstone's approach to Czech cinema can be found in a paper by Radim Hladík, "Vážné, nevážené a znevážené vzpomínání v postsocialistické kinematografii," in *Film a dějiny 4. Normalizace*, 461–75.

²⁴ Robert A. Rosenstone, *History on Film / Film on History* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 24.

childhood years spent in a dreadful era. Compared to other countries, Nvota's ostalgie version of the past appeared with a significant delay. This caused – primarily in the case of *Confidant* – the controversial critical reception and the call for a less morally compromising depiction of state socialism. This delay might also be the reason why Slovak cinema – unlike Czech cinema – has not been marked significantly by ostalgie, which has both theoretically and aesthetically become a problematic concept in recent years.²⁵

Martin Šulík: Little Stories of Little Country

Martin Šulík, in whose work the relationship between tradition and history is a key element (as shown in the films *Everything I Love*, *The Garden and Orbis Pictus*), did not specifically represent the socialist era in his films. He did, however, analyze the process of searching for the identity of his young hero engaged in a self-destructive erotic triangle in his feature debut *Tenderness* (*Neha*, 1991). This film seemingly takes place in a spacio-temporal vacuum.²⁶ It actually depicts, however, the past of a married couple by incorporating amateur footage depicting orgies by communist party members and addresses the subject of moral corruption of society with the socialist legacy.

In *Little Country* (*Krajinka*, 2000) Šulík draws from the tradition of folk oral history and conceives the 20th century history of Slovakia as a series of discontinuous stories, perhaps as some kind of parallel history. Socialist power intervenes in three stories: during the socialization of a private business, the persecution of priests and illegal emigration. In all these stories the big history in Slovakia is written by small stories: historical events function only as background for stories about common people and their relationships. The country is thus reduced to a small country, history into a story and the omniscient narrator states: “This country will never exist again. All that is left of it is a small country. No one remembers it anymore. Almost nobody talks about it. Slowly but surely it vanishes from the map. It is disappearing in front of our eyes until it disappears completely.”²⁷

In his contribution (*President's Funeral*) to the anthology film *Slovakia 2.0* (*Slovensko 2.0*, 2014), which aims at providing an account of Slovakia after two decades of state sovereignty, Šulík depicts the hopeless battle of an elderly couple with the windmills of the health-care system. By combining this storyline with a live TV transmission of the first post-communist president Václav Havel's burial and with dialogues, in which the woman in accord with popular opinion asserts that living in the communist era was better, the director confronts present day reality with the socialist past and post-1989 Czechoslovakia and thus renders the dynamics of contemporary reality.

²⁵ Ostalgie may be traced more distinctly in minority Slovak co-productions with the Czech Republic: *English Strawberries* (*Anglické jahody*, d. Vladimír Drha, 2008); *Identity Card* (*Občanský průkaz*, d. Ondřej Trojan, 2010); *Don't Stop* (d. Richard Řeřicha, 2012), and primarily in the TV documentary series *Socialist Fetishes* (*Fetiš socialistizmu*, 2014).

²⁶ This impression is also strengthened by the casting of the Hungarian actor György Cserhalmi and the Polish actress Maria Pakulnis in two of the three lead roles.

²⁷ *Little Country*, which premiered in 2000 two years after the rule of Vladimír Mečiar and four years before Slovakia's integration into the European Union and NATO, symptomatically refers to the period when Slovakia, under the spell of nationalism and Mečiarism, was literally “disappearing” from the map of Europe.

Peter Kerekes: Micro-History and Questioning the Collective Memory

Peter Kerekes takes a playful approach to depicting the past in his documentary films. He always examines the past through the prism of a specific subject depicted in a broader time horizon. In the film *66 Seasons* (*66 sezón*, 2003), he chose the chronotope of an old swimming pool in the eastern Slovakia city of Košice and the personal and family history which is connected with it. In the film *Cooking History* (*Ako sa varia dejiny*, 2007) Kerekes depicts the 20th century history of Europe from behind the oven, from the lee of a military kitchen. In both films the seemingly neutral environment of a swimming pool and a kitchen is portrayed as a model of the universe, in which miniaturized, but not insignificant versions of big history take place.

The collective project *Velvet Terrorists* (*Zamatoví teroristi*, 2013), which Kerekes made with Ivan Ostrochovský and Pavel Pekarčík, also deals with a specific phenomenon significant in terms of the quality of revolt against communism. The three antiheroes of this film were convicted of terrorist acts despite the fact that they had not killed anyone. The first one planned to blow up the tribune on the 1st of May annual celebration, but got drunk and fell asleep instead, the second one was preparing a presidential assassination, but was left in the lurch by Western secret services and the third one was placing bombs in communist display boards. All three portraits of these velvet terrorists let their protagonists to re-enact their memories and fantasies, thus erasing the line between factual history and subjective memory.

Kerekes's contribution to the film *Slovakia 2.0* is entitled *The Second Attempt* and deals with the military invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies of Slovakia. Kerekes attempts to save present-day Slovakia by inviting in the army of another country. He chooses Finland and handles the invitation letter to the Finnish president and the minister of foreign affairs. There is of course no result. In this film, history is not an object of reflection, but of playful interaction. The humorous but tragic punchline is derived from a TV report on the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army which the viewer watches together with the director and his grandmother.

The concept of Kerekes's films is close to Rosenstone's understanding of postmodern history: they are self-reflexive stories about what history means to the filmmaker/historian, they depict history from various points of view, evade the traditional narrative scheme and conventional narrative development. They employ humor, parody and absurdity, mix documentary with fiction, neglect any synthetic account of history and put forward the idea that the present is the only place for any representation and recognition of history.²⁸ Kerekes's memory of the socialist past is partly selective, partly nostalgic, but it never stops questioning its own mechanisms.

Post-Perestroika Accounts of State-socialism

It is not that easy to identify a thematic or generic clusters of films in a specific period of Slovak post-socialist cinema. However, certain trends can be traced based on what and when these films commemorated. The first cluster of films follows the perestroika critique of communist crimes and most of them were prepared for production before the end of socialism. *When the Stars Were Red* (*Keď hviezdy boli červené*, 1990) by Dušan Trančík is an epically conceived story, reaching from the end of WW2, through Stalinism and the Prague Spring to the occupation of Czechoslovakia. *The Camp of Fallen Women* (*Tábor padlých žien*, 1997) by Laco Halama, which was made several years later, is similarly conceived. It depicts life in a reeducation camp, where not only political prisoners and monks, but also prostitutes, were imprisoned and sentenced to

²⁸ Robert A. Rosenstone, "Budoucnost minulosti. Film a počátky postmoderní historie," *Illuminace* 1 (2004): 47–48.

forced labor. The plots of these films are driven not by dramatic changes but by historical events, which turns the characters into victims. They also indicate the connection between the 1950s and the evils of WW2. The documentary film *Stanislav Babinský – Life is an Uncompromising Boomerang* (*Stanislav Babinský – Život je nekompromisný bumerang*, 1990) by Ľubomír Štecko can also be included in this cluster, as it represents the failures of the socialist system. It deals with the scandal of state socialist property defraudation by top members of the communist party.²⁹

State-Socialism and “Mečiarism”

The second cluster of films deals with the socialist past primarily in connection with the era of the infamous Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar which was marked by boom of nationalism and mafia capitalism. They concentrate on the continuity of the communist power in post-1989 society. As with the films in the first cluster, these are collective stories which do not point to the past, but instead to the present. They also shift from the realism of the post-perestroika cluster towards alternative narratives and rhetoric forms, significantly combining the tragic and the grotesque. The films *Better to Be Rich and Healthy Than Poor and Sick* (*Lepšie byť bohatý a zdravý ako chudobný a chorý*, 1992) by Juraj Jakubisko and *Rivers of Babylon* (1998) by Vladimír Balco propose grotesque images of the transformation of the society after 1989. They are actually the only fictional depictions of the events of the Velvet Revolution in Slovak cinema.

Jakubisko narrates the story of two girlfriends – one dissident, one lover of a communist – who together strive to survive in the capitalist jungle abandoned by all the men in their lives: an emigrant, communist and dissident who suddenly turned out to be a confidant of the secret police.

In *Rivers of Babylon* a small dictator – obviously inspired by the figure of Vladimír Mečiar – develops a stunning career from a heating engineer to a hotel director thanks to his friendship with former members of the secret police.

Dušan Hanák's confrontation of communism and Mečiarism is even more specific. In his film *Paper Heads* (*Papierové hlavy*, 1995) he combines non-fiction archival footage from the socialist period with direct testimonies by imprisoned victims of communism and contemporary images of prisons and working camps. He does not introduce the names of the victims or the reasons for their persecution. This, together with the specific framing and composition of prison images, gives the film a universal dimension as a representation of the ideology of “paper heads”. Hanák also, in the form of a happening, stages a street procession of these paper heads and combines it with an inquiry into the subjects of freedom and disillusion with developments after 1989.³⁰ One of these paper heads has the appearance of Prime Minister Mečiar with boxing-gloves³¹ and one of the respondents to the inquiry asserts that the “second normalization” has begun.

²⁹ Stanislav Babinský was sentenced to 14 years of prison in 1987. He was released thanks to the amnesty of President Václav Havel in 1990 (together with approximately 80% of all the prisoners).

³⁰ The film was shot between 1990 and 1995. Mária Ferenčuhová notes significant differences between reactions by passers-by to these “paper heads” shortly after the Velvet Revolution and during Mečiarism. Mária Ferenčuhová, “Medzi odmietaním a zabúdaním. Vzťah Slovákov k vlastnej minulosti očami slovenských dokumentaristov,” 67.

³¹ Vladimír Mečiar used to present himself as a former amateur boxing champion.

Non-Fiction Retrievals of the Past

The third, most recent cluster of films is most heterogeneous with regard to the events remembered. It shows a significant shift from the depiction of the 1950s to the depiction of the normalization era as well as a general concern with confronting the past with the present. An exception to this trend is *A Step into the Darkness* (*Krok do tmy*, 2014) by Miloslav Luther, which is set in the 1950s. The construction of socialism and the Slovak national uprising serve as a background for the tragic story of a love triangle. Despite the fact that Luther justifies the characters' acts with private and psychological causes, he depicts the post-war era similarly to the post-perestroika cluster as a panorama of characters and attitudes. The film comes across, however, as already somewhat anachronistic in light of the generic and narrative shifts when remembering the past.

Preoccupation with the normalization era is represented not only by Nvota's films, but also by a documentary by Robert Kirchhoff *Normalization* (*Kauza Cervanová*, 2013). It is a rather heterogeneous film in terms of composition, which combines journalist reporting methods with observation and staging. It follows the traces of the rape and murder of a university student which occurred in the 1970s. The film's main concern is with, however, the course of the investigation and the conviction of the seven men whose guilt was never satisfactorily proved. In Kirchhoff's interpretation, this criminal case grows into an account of dysfunctional justice machinery which reaches its fingers from the normalization era into the present.

In a similar vein of poetics, Zuzana Piussi interviews several prominent figures of the Velvet Revolution in her film *Men of Revolution* (*Muži revolúcie*, 2012). The film confronts the sometimes dramatically different evaluations of revolutionary events by persons directly involved and in this mosaic of opinions formulates a confrontation of erstwhile ideals and present disillusion.

Confrontation of the past with the present is also the subject of historical, or more accurately historicizing, films from the collective work *Slovakia 2.0*. Apart from the two already mentioned works, these include *Rules of the Game* by Ondrej Rudavský. This animated film depicts the history of Slovakia in ten minutes from prehistoric times, through socialism to the present day. Anonymous, one-eyed creatures pull the ropes that spin the wheel of history, which is controlled by a group of powerful men – former communists, currently businessmen and politicians associated with the Gorilla political scandal.³² Rudavský's film differs from others in this cluster not only due to its animated form, but primarily in terms of the way it relates to the past. The present does not connect to the past through a specific event and its meaning, but all events are the same in their nature, because they are driven by the same great wheel of history.

Significantly different documentary reflections on the socialist past were introduced by the films *Lyricist* (*Lyrik*, 2013) by Arnold Kojnok, *Judge Me and Tempt Me* (*Súd' ma a skúšaj*, 2013) by Ivica Kušíková and *Salto Mortale* (2014) by Anabella Žigová. While *Judge Me and Tempt Me* deals with the dissolution of monastic orders in the 1950s and its historical meaning for a woman considering becoming a nun in the present day, the other two examine the socialist past through the lives of individuals. Kojnok's portrayal of a historian, who was spied on by the secret police under the name Lyricist, is a reflection on the history of Czechoslovakia. Žigová, in contrast, deals with the impact of past events on the present day and investigates the past of her deceased father who collaborated with the secret police.

The answer to the question as to how the cinematic memory of the socialist past has changed over the last two decades is that the era after 1989 was dominated by conventionally conceived collective stories about the communist crimes in the 1950s. The communist past soon became

³² This major political affair of recent years, leaked in 2011, contained shockingly straightforward evidence of close interconnectedness between politicians and business corporations and aroused the largest-scale civic protests after November 1989.

part of the depiction of social transformation and was temporarily neglected by the “hanging gardens” trend. The generic and authorial spectrum of historical reflection has been gradually broadening over recent years and instead of the trend of ostalgie bitter comedies, a documentary trend has come into prominence and introduced an accent of the relationship between the past and the present. This non-fiction “attack” is both generational and stylistic and favors interaction with the past over objective reflection.

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FILMS MADE AFTER 1989 DEPICTING / DEALING WITH THE SOCIALIST PAST			
	Fiction films	Documentary films	Minority international co-productions
1990	Keď hviezdy boli červené (D. Trančík)	Stanislav Babinský – život je nekompromisný bumerang (L. Štecko)	
1991	Neha (M. Šulík)		
1992	Lepšie byť bohatý a zdravý ako chudobný a chorý (J. Jakubisko)		
1995		Papierové hlavy (D. Hanák)	
1997	Tábor padlých žien (L. Halama)		
1998	Rivers of Babylon (V. Balco)		
2000	Krajinka (M. Šulík)		
2003		66 sezón (P. Kerekes)	
2004			A temetetlen halott (M. Mészárosz)
2007	Muzika (J. Nvota)		
2008			Anglické jahody (V. Drha)
			Gry wojenne (D. Jabłoński)
2009		Ako sa varia dejiny (P. Kerekes)	3 sezony v pekle (T. Mašín)
2010			Občanský průkaz (O. Trojan)
2011	EštěBák (J. Nvota)		Alois Nebel (T. Luňák)
2012		Muži revolúcie (Z. Piussi)	Don't Stop (R. Řeřicha)
			Ve stínu (D. Ondříček)
2013		Kauza Cervanová (R. Kirchhoff)	
		Zamatoví teroristi (P. Pekarčík, I. Ostrochovský, P. Kerekes)	
		Lyrík (A. Kojnok)	
		Súd ma a skúšaj (I. Kušíková)	
2014	Slovensko 2.0 (J. Herz, M. Šulík, P. Kerekes, P. Krištúfek, Z. Liová, I. Grófová, M. Suchý, O. Rudavský, V. Čákányová, M. Jelok)		Fair Play (A. Sedláčková)
	Krok do tmy (M. Luther)	Salto Mortale (A. Žigová)	
	Rukojemník (J. Nvota)		

Radio|

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Message in a Bottle or a Contribution to the Auditory Re-presentation of History through Radio Broadcasting and New Media

Abstract | The imaginary message in a bottle copies the name of the Best European Documentary Programme 2013. This metaphor is used to look at the reflection of history in radio and other auditive media projects and programmes that create various types of re-presentation of history. The author chooses a case study of radio programmes from 2014 when the whole of Europe commemorated the Great War centenary. The anniversary inspired many special projects sponsored by European broadcasting companies, international organisations as well as independent production companies and civic associations. This text offers several examples of how the accent changes in the mapping and re-presenting of history in the medium which does not have image at its disposal primarily but looks for ways to mediate the historical events in the most intense way through sound. The Internet and new media are important for this trend, enabling the creation of new interdisciplinary genres. The key part of the text concentrates on materials associated with the Great War (Czech Radio, Euroradio, the Guardian) but it looks for examples in other historical periods as well (Resounding Lidice 2012, Radioortung, Hackney Podcast). The forms of history re-presentation through auditory media are becoming increasingly sophisticated and are gradually ridding history of either unknown or taboo topics and topics which had long been ideologically distorted.

Keywords | radio documentary – Czech radio – Euroradio – European Broadcasting Union – the Guardian – history in radio – First World War – micro-history – sound design – audio-snapshot – GPS technology in radio – soundwalking

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The whole of Europe commemorated the Great War centenary in 2014. The auditory medium has scarce archive materials from the period. Nevertheless, the anniversary inspired a number of special projects sponsored by European broadcasting companies, international organisations as well as independent production companies and civic associations. Common features can be found in the use of visual materials, deployment of new media and a preference for strong stories of so-called micro-history taking place against the backdrop of turbulent historical events. In the concept of Milan Šimečka, stories of human life are the subject of micro-history. Turbulent historical events, struggles, aggression and revolution, sacrifices and betrayal, victories and defeats are present even in these micro-stories. While we tend to explain such events as consequences of high politics in the great history of wars, states and ideological fanaticism, in micro-history we explain them as the “consequences of motives which have accompanied human lives since time immemorial: love and hatred, belief and hopelessness, modesty and pride, ambition and weakness”.¹

¹ Milan Šimečka, *Kruhová obrana. Záznamy z roku 1984* (Köln: Index, 1985), 6.

The following text offers several examples of how the accent changes in the mapping and re-presenting of history in a medium which does not have image at its disposal primarily but which looks for ways to mediate historical events in the most intense way through sound. The Internet and new media are important for this trend, enabling the creation of new interdisciplinary genres. Although the key part of the text concentrates on materials associated with the Great War, I seek out examples in other historical periods as well. It is only natural that stories crop up in places where the time and media image of the events have introduced a certain kind of falsity, misinterpretation and ideologisation of history.

Message in a Bottle

Last year, the winning documentary of Prix Europa offered a strong war story together with the stories of individual people.² The Irish documentary film-maker Peter Mulryan came across sixty-year-old letters and reconstructed a touching wartime love story. At its beginning, on Christmas Day 1945, American serviceman Frank Hayostek stuffed a note into a bottle and tossed it from his troop carrier. Eight months later, Breda O'Sullivan, a young Irish milkmaid, found it on a beach in Ireland. She answered the message in the bottle and love was born. They exchanged letters between America and Ireland for six years. Frank eventually saved up enough money to buy an air ticket and one day finally met up with Breda. By coincidence the local and then the national newspapers found out about their story. What happened? A great deal of ballyhoo and the relationship became a transatlantic romance. During beach walks the two lovers were accompanied by journalists and eager readers waited for the love story to continue. It was a welcome diversion from the progress of the front and everyday war hardships. There was no happy ending, however. Breda and Frank continued to exchange letters for another seven years but their love gradually turned into a friendship which faded away. The story also, however, has an aspect of history re-presentation in it. While the dusty pack of letters sat in a box in the attic for over sixty years, hidden from the eyes of the public, the winds and water washed a more prominent trace of this story: a large stone that Frank had placed at the sea shore where Breda found his note in the bottle. This stone re-interprets the story and tells us that those who view the love story of Breda and Frank as banal are completely wrong. For Frank it was the love of his life which was ruined by long distance, differences in religious belief and unwanted publicity on the part of the media. At least this is what Mulryan's auditory work suggests. Reality, however, could have been much more prosaic. Perhaps Breda did not like Frank all that much. She was in all probability much more pragmatic and the long-distance relationship did not correspond with a country bigot Catholic's idea of an ideal match. The strong media story, in which Mulryan placed the wartime love, adds an important emotional charge to the documentary and offers the possibility to empathise with the heroes. At the same time, it satisfies the common curiosity of listeners who, trained by the media, were willing to forgive their newspapers and radio an acceptable level of overstatement as long as it was entertaining.

A number of similar stories can actually be found in the auditory documentation of the Great War centenary. Journalists and their inevitable interpretation and re-interpretation of historical events often played a key role in the stories. All the radio documentary authors had to do was search with patience.

² Peter Mulryan, *Message in a Bottle* (radio documentary programme), first broadcast 4 August 2012, accessed 11 November 2014, <http://www.rte.ie/radio1/doconone/documentary-podcast-message-in-a-bottle-frank-hayostek-breda-osullivan.html>.

The Great War and its Sound Image

The principle of trite everyday moments, from which listeners retrieve not only dramatic but also bizarre, funny, educational or touching stories of the Great War, is what the EURORADIO project submitted to its members from the European Broadcaster Union (EBU). Almost thirty contributions from a number of European countries were introduced as of February 2014 under the title “audio vignettes”. Audio snapshots were the genre of choice but authors had a great deal of freedom in the method of processing historical events. Laurent Marceau, project manager, explained that the project aimed at flexibility in terms of the share of fiction in each snapshot: “The idea was that the audio should evoke a particular moment, fictional or actual, that offers audiences a way to experience life in different countries as war became a possibility and then a reality.”³ The project has its own website, an interactive map and has been promoted throughout Europe. The standard of contributions varies, however, as does the level of their sound production and invention in bringing together the audio and visual elements.

Slovak Radio adopted, for example, a highly conventional approach. The snapshot by Peter Turčík offers a monological narration concerning the fate of a man who went through the Great War fronts.⁴ His grandson leafs through certain documents his grandfather left behind (postcards, a diary, permission to go on leave), bringing back memories of the past. In terms of sound, it is merely edited, with the simplified images showing several documentary photographs.

Sveriges Radio represented by Aldo Iskra sticks to the Euroradio assignment and in its documentary-fictional piece deals with Swedish neutrality during the Great War (*In the Sea of Black-Clad Men*). The visualisation rests on a single photograph, thus one can hardly speak of an audio-visual genre.⁵ Another unique aspect of the auditory documentary function is provided by a similarly simple image accompaniment. *Tyre* is a group of several war miniatures loosely connected in a short radio drama by Lavinia Murray. Fairly much in line with the building of dramatic situation principles, the author based her drama on auditory situations which are clearly defined in time and place. Together with the war heroes we are in a Red Cross vehicle under fire. We drink coffee with them during a short break in the middle of the attack. We hear the soldiers’ and rear guards’ reveries about what they will do when the war is over. The fiction in this particular case is based on the diary of Ysabel Birkbeck, a twenty-six-year-old ambulance driver. Around the year 1916 she was helping the wounded somewhere in Romania, close to the Eastern front, and later captured her experiences in visual art. This inspiration – literary and visual – was combined in a topical audio snapshot in 2014.⁶

The two Czech contributions are far from negligible in the context of the European auditory cooperation. Bronislava Janečková and Petr Mančal based their docudrama *The Death Car Driver*⁷ on the recent discovery of a diary of Leopold Lojka who was driving the car with the heir Ferdinand d’Este at the moment of his assassination.⁸ The ample sound composition,

³ “EURORADIO Launches ‘Europe 1914. Audio Snapshots from a Continent at War,’” June 12, 2014, accessed 26 October 2014, <http://www3.ebu.ch/fr/contents/news/2014/06/europe-1914.html>.

⁴ Peter Turčík, *My Grandfather Štefan*, accessed 26 October 2014, <http://vimeo.com/95453831?autoplay=1>.

⁵ Aldo Iskra, *In the Sea of Black-Clad Men*, accessed 26 October 2014, <http://vimeo.com/95410501?autoplay=1>.

⁶ Lavinia Murray, *Tyre*, accessed 27 October 2014, <http://vimeo.com/94828263?autoplay=1>.

⁷ Bronislava Janečková – Petr Mančal, *The Death Car Driver*, accessed October 27, 2014, <http://vimeo.com/94580056?=:1>.

⁸ The original discovery of the diary is credited to Stanislav Motl, a popular Czech author of the TV and radio series *Stopy, fakta, tajemství* (*Traces, Facts, Mysteries*). Even though the author works only with elementary radio means, does not have a pleasant voice, often records in amateurish conditions and his programmes are of variable sound quality, Czech TV and radio audiences love him. They watch every new edition eagerly and he achieves the highest ratings of all Czech documentary series. This can be explained by the great attraction of

bilingual script in Czech and German and a first-person narrative describe the key moments that started the Great War. It is a textbook example of re-interpretation of great history through small stories of anonymous people who had a chance to influence history at a certain moment. Whether they did so or not, many years later, in the light of events already past, they have become the objects of interest and speculation, sources of imaginary construction of history as part of the parallel history method.

The audio snapshot by Eva Blechová *Pro patria mori* is an *ars acustica* miniature re-interpreting war events, hardships, as well as weaponry and tactics. We follow two boys in a diegetic situation playing a computer war game simulating the battle of Verdun (1916).⁹ They talk about killing by shooting, gas and crushing with a tank. The point is a forced intermission which the game requires during Christmas time. During this time the Great War fronts grew quiet and the computer requires that the players do the same. The second track of the sound design (Ladislav Železný) is created out of voice and sound variations of a poem by Wilfred Owen “Dulce et decorum est”. The emphasis on the word “death” in the parallel sound layer works as an accompaniment to the boys’ computer game. While Owen describes the real horrors of the war, a hundred years later, the boys at the computer perceive the same events only as some sort of historical backdrop for a common computer “shoot’em up”. The visual aspect of the audio snapshot provides a simple computer game symbol of the gun-sight always cruising on the screen, looking for a suitable target. Another element of the audio drama visualisation is a stylised printed format of the poem. It zooms in and out, becomes out of focus, depending on the intensity of recitation. This is an advanced level of mixing *ars acustica* with animation with the aim of stirring emotions and mediating an auditory experience. The audio snapshot *Pro patria mori* resigns on accuracy of facts and provides only rough details of the battle of Verdun. It is a precise example, however, of what we call re-presentation of history and its current changes in the new media context.

The same principle is applied in the Serbian musical-documentary miniature *When the Saints Are Marching to Drina* about various vocal and instrumental interpretations of the famous march.¹⁰ Stanislav Binički composed it during World War I and dedicated it to his favourite commander in the Serbian Army, who had been killed during the famous battle in this area.

Battles of the First World War are one of the most prominent themes of the radio year dedicated to the centenary in Czech Radio.¹¹

Docudrama as a Way of Re-presenting Great War Battles

The Great War battles carried within them the strategic-tactical residues of the previous century when disputes were resolved in individual battles followed by reconciliation and the winner taking the spoils. Sound documents which are not necessarily authentic recordings but often reconstructions of history convincingly show how the huge technological advance in new methods of killing changed the ways in which wars were fought and how people paid for this knowledge with bloodshed.

the narration emphasizing the uniqueness, originality and priority in finding new historical cases, personages, and changes in established views.

⁹ Eva Blechová, *Pro patria mori*, accessed 27 October 2014, <https://vimeo.com/95336785>.

¹⁰ Predag D. Stamenkovic, *When the Saints Are Marching to Drina*, accessed October 27, 2014, <http://vimeo.com/95281765?autoplay=1>.

¹¹ The Czech Radio website offers complete information on the auditory materials prepared by Czech Radio for the centenary of the 1914–1915 events. *Před 100 lety. Život za 1. světové*, accessed 10 October 2014, <http://www.rozhlas.cz/pred100lety/oprojektu/>.

In the centennial year Czech Radio prepared six docudramas with a duration of between fifty and sixty minutes.¹² The authors' ambition was to offer "large sound screens through which the listeners will be caught in the middle of the battle operations".¹³ The authors compensate for the lack of authentic auditory materials by various levels of stylisation in which fiction fills the gaps in factographic passages enhancing the emotional effect of the documents.

The documentary by Daniel Moravec *Drina: tažení plné omylů* (Drina: Campaign Full of Errors, first broadcast on 19 September 2014) is also of interest. Following the tradition of excellent radio documentaries in the 1990s¹⁴ on historical themes the author provides a monumental fresco of a great battle which was actually a coincidence of lacking experience and poor military tactics. The strictly linear narration follows the chronology of events at a fast pace which never ceases over its 50 minutes. The author combines the historical reconstructions of one of the opening Great War battles with technical and geographical descriptions provided by two military historians. The journalist Egon Erwin Kisch interprets the view of the war from the bottom, from the trenches. In pictorial language with a sense for spine-chilling details he enables the readers and listeners to almost touch the paralysing fear and instinctive desire to survive. It seems that everything went wrong in this battle on the border between Austria and Serbia: inexperienced soldiers, the overambitious commander Oskar Potiorek, fierce defence of the attacked Serbian country, even the inappropriately high corn stalks as an unsuitable ground for keeping the battlefront. The description of the battle itself is as terrifying as the subsequent description of the field hospital or the dysentery epidemics in the encampment. Kisch asks about the meaning of the battle and immense human suffering without posing a single question.

Directors achieve the best effect in the documentaries thanks to the elaborate sound design (Miloš Kot, Petr Šplíchal) and the specially composed music pieces (Hubert Bittman). The varied music mix works like a good film soundtrack or stage music. It stirs emotions but does not stick out, it escalates tension but does not attempt to draw all the attention. The sound mostly underlines the words but also serves as an introduction to certain situations. Later it escalates and points them out, inconspicuously but intensely completing the impression of the documentary: a mouth organ playing its good-byes at the recruits' assembly point, the joyful expectation of the days to come perhaps still in the air, the exhausting journey to the front in the cattle car, from time to time accentuated with a long drawn-out whistle blow. And then there is the fatal proximity of firearms, hand grenades and heavy artillery guns with the breakneck escape of the surviving Austrians and Czechs from the battlefront, the thunder of horse hooves, the rumble of heavy vehicles. The soundtrack mediates an imaginary experience to the listeners and complements the diary notes of the soldiers, read memories, letters and postcards from the front, poetry reflecting the horrors of war. The invention of the sound master must have been as equally good as the creativity of the script writers in the precise meanings of Andrew Crisell's

¹² *Drina: Tažení plné omylů* (script Daniel Moravec, direction Vlado Rusko), *Poslední obraz. Bitva o Halič* (script Bronislava Janečková, direction Petr Mančal), *Bitva na Sommě. Masakr na území nikoho* (script Jitka Škápíková, direction Dmitrij Dudík), *Do posledního muže: bitva u Verdunu* (script Radka Lokajová, direction Vlado Rusko), *Bitva u Zborova* (script and direction Petr Mančal), *I země byla mrtvá. Bitva na Soči* (script Bronislava Janečková, direction Dmitrij Dudík). All programmes are available on the website of Czech Radio – <http://hledani.rozhlas.cz/iRadio/?stanice%5B%5D=%C4%8CRo+Vltava&porad%5B%5D=Radiodokument>.

¹³ Bronislava Janečková, "Drama tvorby dokudramat aneb Jak se válčí v týmu tvůrců cyklu 'Bitvy 1. světové války,'" *Svět rozhlasu*, no. 31 (June 2014): 39.

¹⁴ Czech Radio and documentarians needed to fill "the white space of history" including the topic of the First World War mainly in the years from 1990–1997. Communist ideology deleted many names and events. Documentary film-makers brought it back into the awareness of society (particularly the authors Karel Texel, Zdeněk Bouček, Osvald Machatka, Marko Tomek, Karel Nešvera and Zlata Kufnerová).

definition: “Unlike words, which are a human invention, sound is ‘natural’ – a form of signification which exists ‘out there’ in the real world.”¹⁵ The sound of the first tank made by the English had not been recorded and thus it was necessary to “invent” it for the purpose of the play. What sound could be made by a heavy awkward iron giant rolling among explosion craters at the top speed of six kilometres per hour? The sound of a hydroplane taking off from the sea and its subsequent crash into the water or the thunder of a fortress collapsing under gunfire were also highly demanding assignments.

The greatest fiction and the closest to the docudrama genre was Jitka Škápíková's work *Bitva na Sommě. Masakr na území nikoho* (Battle of the Somme. Massacre in No Man's Land).¹⁶ It describes the atmosphere of one of the bloodiest operations of World War I, the almost five-month battle of the Somme in which over a million soldiers were killed on both sides. The sounds of gunfire and explosions in the landscape open up the first passage. The expressive cries of British soldiers aiming at the German enemy together with the dramatic music serve to immediately evoke tension. The linear narration is based on the alternating female voice-over representing the narrator, the enacted passages and the narrative by the historian Jaroslav Beránek. The enacted passages are of two types. The first are dialogues between soldiers in which the author stirs the listener's imagination by working with ambient sounds and noises. In this manner the listener is drawn into the historical image through the presented situations. The second type are diary entries of soldiers read by actors. This enables the listeners to obtain a vivid picture of the horrors of war from the perspective of the participating human beings with all the fears, memories and physical hardships of the long battle.

The auditory docudrama, much more common in other parts of the world, has not yet found its proper place in the Czech Republic. There is a simple reason: drama authors do not seek out journalism or documentary themes and documentary film-makers are not familiar with the dramatic text rules. As has been the case in Denmark or Germany, for example, the future development will probably involve the hiring of documentary film-makers for radio work. The Czech series of docudramas on the battles of World War I clearly confirms the potential of this radio genre.

Auditory Re-presentation of History in the New Media

Important anniversaries are not the only time when it is apparent that the re-presentation of historical events is an essential part of radio programmes. New media are increasingly making use of historical events. Let us look at several examples which re-interpret historical events in various ways using new Internet and mobile application options and place them into brand new spatial and personal contexts.

Let us remain with WWI for the moment. The audio section of the British *Guardian* website is of particular interest. A team of authors under the direction of Francesca Panetta created a unique interactive documentary. Ten historians from ten countries provide a brief history of WWI. The soundtrack offers dynamically alternating short testimonies, explanatory comments and facts, excerpts from historical documents, correspondence, diaries and poetry. It resigns on a precise determination of authorship, instead the voices are used as a verbal linear commentary on certain matters of war and life during the battles. The word dominates but the sound and music tracks are also permanently established. Interactive maps and a number of unique footage from the battlefields all over the extensive British Empire together with the soundtrack

¹⁵ Andrew Crissel, *Understanding Radio* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 44.

¹⁶ First broadcast of the documentary on 12 October 2014 on Český rozhlas Dvojka.

combine to provide a thrilling experience. In terms of the visual aspect, it is quite comparable with a traditional documentary film which in the new medium is enriched with the choice of topic,¹⁷ repeated listening, switching between the watching of the documentary and reading the accompanying materials, viewing of galleries or searching for more information.¹⁸

For further examples we will return to the Czech Republic and move on from the topic of World War I. It is actually quite peculiar that the most remarkable Czech project designed for new media did not come from public radio but is actually the work of a small community of auditory arts enthusiasts: professional musicians, writers, sound designers and technologically savvy supporters of new genres in the new media environment. The Resounding project originated in 2010–2015 and takes us to the village of Lidice in the Czech Republic, introducing a historical event from World War II.

The Nazis burst into Lidice on the early morning of 10 June 1942. Men under 16 were shot dead at the local estate owned by Mr. Horák, women were dragged off to concentration camps and the children were killed with gas. Only a few women and children survived out of the 503 villagers.

Lidice was burnt down as the Nazis' response to the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, Reichsprotector of Bohemia and Moravia. Although this act encouraged the Czechs to continue fighting against the Nazis and lifted national pride, it also meant that hundreds and thousands of people were executed and a village was burnt to the ground. The story of Lidice is one of the key milestones in modern Czech history. The story was unfortunately adapted to suit the ideology during the Communist era.

The former village of Lidice is an empty valley which is protected by the government as a national cultural monument. The important things taking place there remain invisible.

The composer Lenka Faltýnková with her husband, the radio journalist Vilém Faltýnek, came up with the idea of searching for the real face of the village in order to reconstruct the fates of the individual families and their homes. They approached a young Czech playwright Tereza Semotamová who used facts, memories and notes found in the local chronicle to piece together 54 short dramatic scenes from the life of Lidice before 10 June 1942. Dozens of Czech actors dedicated their free time to making a recording which works on the GPS technology principle.¹⁹

The radio play on the history of the place was created as a mosaic, with fragmented structure of dozens of segments situated by their GPS coordinates into corresponding positions. The mosaic is specified by the terrain. The visitor walks through the landscape, intuitively "controlling" the selection of recordings through changing positions. They develop a unique composition of sounds and texts.

The Czech version of a site-specific auditory interactive drama is unique specifically due to it being situated in a place of piety, in a limited area. It inspires meditations about the memory of the place hiding under the surface. One could also speak of the archaeology of sound. Equally important as the randomly chosen selection of audio tracks is the silence which resounds as soon

¹⁷ In various bookmarks it is possible to play independently individual parts of the interactive documentary: 01 Origins, 02 Trenches, 03 Empires, 04 Fronts, 05 Slaughter, 06 Endings, 07 Aftermaths.

¹⁸ Francesca Panetta – Lindsay Poulton – Alex Purcell – Stephen Moss – Nabeelah Shabbi – Lily Brazier, *First World War. The Story of a Global Conflict*, *The Guardian*, first appeared 23 July 2014, accessed 19 September 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2014/jul/23/a-global-guide-to-the-first-world-war-interactive-documentary>.

¹⁹ *RESOUNDING 2012*. Script Tereza Semotamová. Director Thomas Zielinski. Music Michal Rataj. Software Jakub Doležal, Tomáš Hlušíčka. Created by Sonosfera (a civic association) on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Lidice tragedy. More information and references at the website *Rozeznění*, accessed 27 September 2014, <http://www.rozezneni.cz/?lang=en>.

as the visitor stops walking. The silence facilitates the co-authorship. The new technology calls for an activity on the part of the user quite different from what we are used to in conventional radio. The visitor and listener to the interactive drama determine the intensity and length of the auditory experience. Raymond Murray Schafer described this aptly in another context: “When you take your ears for a soundwalk, you are both audience and performer in a concert of sound that occurs continually around you. By walking you are able to enter into a conversation with the landscape.”²⁰ The walking and visual perception of the vast valley, which does not provide further visual stimulation, deepen the ability to perceive the individual fates of people long dead and create the shape of the burnt-down village in one’s own imagination.

In our search for “big” history presenting itself through small personal stories and everyday life we can move on to Germany at the time of the communist GDR. The Berlin project *Radioortung – Hörspiele für Selbstläufer* is yet another example of re-presentation of history through Internet and mobile technologies.

This is a newly developed radio format for mobile phones, designed and produced by Deutschlandradio Kultur. The stories are site-specific and non-linear in order to create an awareness of the everyday, often hidden interventions, into the listener’s life through localisation, data collection and storage. The plays can be experienced within the city using the free *Radioortung* App as well as online on an interactive map. As soon as the listener enters the active radius of an audio point, the radio drama begins to play. Unlike pre-composed audio walks, the user decides how he wants to walk through his own radio play, when he switches from one “acoustic bubble” to another, turns around, moves on, where he goes into depth and what he leaves out.

And what is it that you can listen to? The author of these miniature radio plays, Theatre Rimini Protokoll, had 50 kilometres of reports by Stasi, the German secret security service, to work with. They used them to re-create interrogations of certain persons, describe the tailing of people, tape wiring of phone calls and meetings, reports, denouncements, or forced signatures of cooperation. Based on these materials, the listener discovers what kind of events the employees of the state security service reported and how the exchange of information took place in the age before the digital revolution. A total of approximately ten hours of audio materials were distributed across Berlin. The city becomes accessible as an audible, highly subjective archive.

This project is part of the ever growing concept of soundwalking which was first defined by Hildegard Westerkamp in 1974.²¹ This term is understood less generally at present and can be defined as the borderline between radio journalism, feature, *ars acustica* and art. As the Berlin and Czech projects suggest, it typically has a sophisticated structure, with an effort to capture an authentic environment and shows tendencies toward sound visualisation. This is how the last project under discussion was built. The prize winning Hackney Podcast project stood at the origin of an effort to combine an artistic reflection on the present and the history of a specific city borough with the help of new technology.

The site exploring the spirit of the London borough of Hackney is a veteran among the auditory applications for iPhones. Creative artists of all kinds inhabited this formerly dilapidated dirty borough and brought it back to life with their Hackney Hear project which has received awards at a number of international forums. It had the longest time to evolve as it was conceived in January 2012 and therefore had the best web application and presentation.

²⁰ Raymond Murray Schafer, “The Vancouver Soundscape,” in *Soundwalking: Aural Excursions into the Everyday*, ed. John Levack Drever, Academia.edu (2009), accessed 28 October 2014, http://www.academia.edu/787689/Soundwalking_Aural_Excursions_into_the_Everyday.

²¹ “A soundwalk is any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment. It is exposing our ears to every sound around us no matter where we are.” Hildegard Westerkamp, “Soundwalking,” *Sound Heritage* 3, no. 4 (1974), accessed 28 October 2014, <http://www.sfu.ca/~westerka/writings%20page/articles%20pages/soundwalking.html>.

What does this have to do with the presentation of history? A great deal. Not only can you hear about the flooding of London in 1885,²² you can also visit an old coffee house through a docudrama. Like Harry Potter you can walk through the walls of contemporary Hackney cafés and enter Diagon Alley. There and back again. The comparison with the young wizard is no accident. People who have experienced the Hackney Hear project speak of it in an extremely lofty manner. At any one time three layers of sound can be heard: speech, binaural field recordings and music, creating a rich and impressive soundscape. The play on the edge between reality and fiction creates audio “ghosts” allowing one to be in the present and in the past at the same time.

This unusual presentation of a London borough’s recent history has another, no less important dimension. It is a community, with sharing and cooperation. No matter how alone one is while listening, his or her willingness to help the place demonstrably increases: helping with the development, recording other pieces into the mosaic. The community of authors who created the project, bringing into life the history of this borough, were able to bring people together through the auditory presentation.

Conclusion

The imaginary message in a bottle that opened this reflection travels swiftly through the auditory and new media space. It always finds a concrete story in the ocean of historical events which can serve to elucidate the meaning of a historical event through the eyes of a single participant. Three projects from Berlin, Lidice and London have revealed how contemporary auditory re-presentation of history works with the help of state-of-the-art mobile and GPS technology. There is no doubt that there will be a growing number of similar projects and that they will not only meet with support from among the youngest generation. The good old classics are still here, however: radio archives, old news, recordings, photographs and oral history, as can be seen with the number of programmes which European radios have prepared to celebrate the Great War centenary. In terms of their production, authorship, music and sound, small production companies are not able to create such large documentary screens. The ambitious project presented by Czech Radio in six one-hour docudramas on the theme of the First World War battles could not have been created without the support of a large broadcasting house, long-term dramaturgy, continuous script writing and directing work. The Euroradio project *Europa 1914* aptly shows the differences in the concepts of contemporary radio. The varying quality of contributions from EBU member states testifies to the varying level of invention but also the power of conventional radio genres as opposed to the experiments and technological skills of authors. It is not surprising that it was *The Guardian* and its audio section which prepared the technologically most advanced presentation of the 1914–1918 events even if it was not the largest project. It confirms the trend that the users are no longer interested in the producer of the programme, documentary or interactive drama. What the users want to know is whether they can play them on their smartphones anywhere and whether they can view them while listening.

The forms of history re-presentation through auditory media are becoming increasingly sophisticated and are gradually ridding history of either unknown or taboo topics and topics which had long been ideologically distorted. The events following the liberation of Czechoslovakia in May 1945, namely the events summarised under the term “the displacement of Germans”, could in this respect prove to be a major chapter. There have, however, only been limited attempts to

²² *The Hackney Podcast website*, accessed 19 September 2014, <http://hackneypodcast.co.uk/2011/07/edition-21-wild-hackney/>.

reconstruct the events thus far. Society as a whole has not yet found the courage to reflect on these drastic and tragic events.

There seems to be a great interest in telling everyday stories against the backdrop of great historical events, to personalise the great history through the fates of individuals. This has been achieved in a number of auditory programmes covering various historical events. Many others are still waiting for their radio re-presentation.

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Visual culture|

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Locating the Slavic Spirit: An Examination of the Czechoslovak Visual Synthesis and the Creation of National Representation

Abstract | This study explores the issue of possible comparisons between Czech and Slovak visual cultures from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of WWII, i.e., at a time when joint/specific national representation was constituted, and a search was on to form specifically a distinct mass culture and a representative, modern art style. It is focused on the extremely complex yet fascinating Czechoslovak situation where, on the one hand, Czech and Slovak cultures are distinct and hold their own, and on the other hand, one can trace between the two many remarkable connections and links, thematic intersections and motivic overlaps, often across different periods. Although the scope of this study may seem rather broad, the search for a “suitable” national representation which would meet the requirements of both the modern age and national demands was a persistent issue throughout the given periods. This study focuses on finding recurrent topoi, represented by specific images of Czech-Slovak synthesis, and on key temporal and spatial fragments, i.e., the turn of the 20th century and the 1920s and 1930s.

Keywords | folk culture – international industrial exhibitions – interwar culture – national representation – modernity

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This study explores the issue of possible comparisons between Czech and Slovak visual cultures from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of WWII, i.e., at a time when joint/specific national representation was constituted, and a search was on to form specifically distinct mass culture and a representative modernist approach to art. Having explored representations of Czechs in the multicultural and diverse environment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire during modernity, I have turned my attention to the extremely complex yet fascinating Czechoslovak situation where, on the one hand, Czech and Slovak cultures are distinct and hold their own, and on the other hand, one can trace between the many remarkable connections and links, thematic intersections and motivic overlaps (due amongst other things to the much-cited “import” of Czech artists to Slovakia), often across different periods. Although the scope of this study may seem rather broad, the search for a “suitable” national representation which would meet the requirements of both the modern age and national demands was a persistent issue throughout the given periods. This study focuses on finding certain recurrent topoi, represented by specific images (mainly paintings and films, from high and popular culture)¹ of Czech-Slovak synthesis,

¹ It consequently becomes clear that the transfers between Czech and Slovak visual culture, both syntheses and oppositions appear in advertisement, architecture, design, fashion and elsewhere. See Vendula Hnídková, *Národní styl: Kultura a politika* [National style: Culture and Politics] (Praha: VŠUP, 2013). Iva Mojžíšová, *Škola*

and on two key temporal and spatial fragments, i.e., the turn of the 20th century and the 1920s and 1930s, without attempting to be exhaustive. The individual sections will be divided by emblematic images which embody the issues in question and their development.

Within the Czech context, it is crucial to study the turn of the century because it was the time of the first modern images of “Czech” society and early debates over possible and necessary national representation, which also carried over into Slovak culture. The images of Slovakia were also being incorporated into this space and adopted as evidence of Slavic affinity. The desire for synthesis or mutual exchange sparked a passionate debate, during which the concept of Czechoslovakism was often used negatively (particularly in Slovakia). In this period which was rife with shifts in society, industry and technology, a basic form of ambivalence was also born – a constant tension between the old and the new, the progressive and the traditional, the techn(olog)ical and the handcrafted, the urban and the rural (as suggested by Benedict Anderson’s imagined community).² This ambiguity allows for the repetition of basic motifs in national representation which have persisted in Czech and Slovak cultures and establishes the main subject for this project. The tension between tradition and its rejection considerably influenced interwar culture and in many aspects draws on modernist trends. While the Czech interwar environment was marked by tension and mutual cooperation between popular culture and the avant-garde, in Slovakia the first expressions of modernity were only just arriving, the debate between modernism and the (im)possible avant-garde was beginning to take shape, and the basic ambivalence was being transformed into a conflict between the new-foreign and the traditional-domestic. While the nature of a new art for a new man was being debated, national subjects permeated the avant-garde and popular culture. Since the press was subject to various social, political and financial pressures, both cultures sought to find a different, ideal and representative medium that would be able to openly reflect on each nation and at the same time allow for a synthesis of all the requirements.

Czech-Slovak Synthesis I

The first symbolic image that begins the overview of national representations can be found in Wallachia, a region between the Czech and Slovak territory. A folk-style hostel and a restaurant was completed in Pustevny, a Moravian village close to the Slovak border in 1899. Fittingly, the place was called Libušín and was named after the mythical Czech queen Libuše who founded the Přemyslid dynasty. The positioning of this spatial image amidst individual ethnic groups and territories, in a non-space (also in the sense of *non-place*)³ which has no individual character and, which at the same time, has an exhibition and tourist function, make Libušín an ideal location for the synthesis of a variety of styles and traditions. Commissioned by members of an anti-German tourist club called Pohorská jednota Radhošť, the project was entrusted to the Slovak architect and ethnographer Dušan Jurkovič who was also involved in designing the pavilions for the 1895 *Czech-Slavonic Ethnographic Exhibition* in Prague. The interior was painted by Karel Štapfer, us-

moderného videnia: Bratislavská ŠUR 1928–1939. [The School of Modern Vision: ŠUR 1928–1939] (Bratislava: Artforum 2013). Lubomír Longauer, *Užitková grafika na Slovensku po roce 1918: I.: Modernost a tradície* [Applied Graphic Design in Slovakia after 1918: I: Modernity and Tradition] (Bratislava: Slovart 2011). *Nové Slovensko: (Ťažký) zrod moderného životného štýlu 1918–1949* [The New Slovakia: (the Difficult) Birth of the Modern Lifestyle 1918–1949] ed. Aurel Hrabušický (Bratislava: Slovenská národná galéria, 2011). Aurel Hrabušický (ed.), *Slovenský mýtus* [The Slovak Myth] (Bratislava: Slovenská národná galéria 2006), etc.

² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 11.

³ Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity* (New York and London: Verso, 1995).

ing elements of Wallachian and Slovak legends and a design by Mikoláš Aleš. Symbolically, the Libušín project connects Czech and Slovak myths, folk style and folklore richness which attempt to present and reinvent the Czech and Slovak national tradition for the new, modern age. This project hints at many of the typical features of Czech-Slovak modernity.

Modernity: Modern and Traditional

Jurkovič's exhibition experience has been mentioned for a reason. The space of (international) industrial exhibitions organized in Bohemia at the turn of the 20th century allows one to follow the search for modern national representation which oscillates between the new and the historical (as was the case with Libušín). The events in question were the first fully Czech *General Land Centennial Exhibition* (1891), *Czech-Slavonic Ethnographic Exhibition* (1895) and *Architecture and Engineering Exhibition* (1898). Exhibitions and fairs – fascinating, popular and widely attended heterogeneous spaces located in between time and space – provided an interdiscursive, inter-media and interdisciplinary showcase of images-attractions created over the course of a century. They also aimed at presenting “the most complete picture of the current technical development in the Czech region”⁴ and stirring up patriotic feelings.

In order to showcase the advanced development in the region and support the entrepreneurial spirit of Czech industrialists, the events featured the latest from Czech industry, engineering, science and culture. The fairs included state-of-the-art appliances that tried to mediate new experiences and allowed the visitors to see the up-until-then unseen or invisible and to hear the unheard or inaudible. There were experiments with electricity and electrical gadgets: an X-ray machine, a phonograph and even a film projector which later proved to be an important representational device.⁵ These events also served a patriotic purpose as they tried to make a semblance of continuity with the historical development of the Czech nation and, therefore, even showcased art which was much more traditional both in subject and form. Imagery that subscribes to national tradition was represented by traditional paintings, e.g., the 1898 fair included works by nearly four hundred Czech artists in the “art and retrospective” section that set out to trace the history of Czech art from the imitation of foreign models to “the awakening of the Czech national spirit”.⁶ A great amount of buzz was created by Václav Brožík's painting *Master Jan Hus at the Council of Constance* and by Jaroslav Čermák's *Episode in the Siege of Naumburg*. An overview of historical painting was supplemented by newer media, such as panoramas (Luděk Marold's *Battle of Lipany* presented in 1898) and dioramas (Mikoláš Aleš' *The Massacre of the Saxons under Hrubá Skála* displayed in 1895). In a very powerful fashion, these works captured momentous (and, in the latter case, fictional) scenes from the history of the Czech nation that, within the modern exhibition space, attempted to construct Czech identity and strengthen the feeling of affinity with national heroes.

⁴ Zvláštní otisk č. 1. Zprávy spolku architektů a inženýrů v království českém. January 1, 1898, art. 2.

⁵ For more about the media space of exhibitions, see texts written as part of the Visegrad grant: Kateřina Svatoňová and Lucie Česálková, “Between Painting and Illusion: (Im)material Imagery of Czech Modernity,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 10, no. 4 (2012): 383–406; Kateřina Svatoňová and Eva Bendová, “Iluzivní atrakce: Modernita jako prostředí pro hru a klam,” [Illusive Attractions: Modernity as a Setting for Play and Deception] in *Svět chce být klamán: Fikce a mystifikace v umění 19. století* [The world Wants to be Deceived: Fiction and Hoax in 19th Century Art] (Plzeň: Západočeská galerie v Plzni, 2013).

⁶ Zvláštní otisk č. 1. Zprávy spolku architektů a inženýrů v království českém. January 1, 1898, art. 2.

Such a portrayal of modern Czech society would be rather incomplete, however. The exhibitions also marked the peak of revivalist efforts, the final victory for Czechs who succeeded in hosting an internationally acclaimed event. Revivalist mindset and the movement towards the foundation of Czechoslovakia were also inextricably tied to close relations with other Slavic nations (to eventually include the idea of Pan-Slavism). At the time of the fairs, there was an interest in finding a way to link both national traditions (this alliance takes us back to the Libušn hall). While the Czech space could be represented by historical painting, Slovakia was an “ahistorical” nation,⁷ which up until the 1920s had not sought out its own representation and had to be presented in a different way. The Czech national revival and Slovakia’s “awakening” were characterized by their regard for the people and folk culture as the “archive” of national values and as the natural and authentic world. The fairs therefore showcased the “purest” wealth of both nations, namely in a specific transnational and transcultural synthesis⁸ of Slavic folk art and local folklore.

The interest in folk art, the Czech and Slovak countryside, traditional crafts, whether it be embroidery, ornaments or traditional (and non-traditional) folk costumes, and in displaying them has been popular since the Cyrillo-Methodian celebrations organised in the second half of the 19th century. This seemingly anachronistic collecting of handicraft followed an internal logic as it was precisely the focus on the archaic, the pre-linguistic and the pre-monarchic that was able to display national wealth, to help illuminate various Slavic cultures and venture to “the very source of folk individuality, i.e., national individuality.”⁹ Placing this folk art into an urban setting then allowed for a revival of culture as well as showing, strengthening and creating a continuity in terms of national tradition. To think of folk ornament and traditional costumes as anti-industrial would be mistaken since their emergence and ethnographic efforts were connected with applied art or ‘industrial’ museums. The definition of industry at that time was much broader, covering all technical and technological equipment, agricultural products and all endeavours that could “multiply material wealth and hence increase worldly well-being.”¹⁰ The interest in local arts and crafts did not contradict industrial progress and, just as with new technical inventions, folk culture could provide business, financial and social benefits.

These efforts reached a peak at the great industrial exhibitions in the late 19th century where ethnographic documents were displayed alongside the latest machines and gadgets. The *Centennial Exhibition* was complemented by an ethnographic exhibition entitled the Czech Village Home that included Czech embroidery and ornaments derived from folk art. The Czech Village Home was organized in part by the Czech Village Home Club¹¹ and by the National Embroidery Club which was founded in 1886 by Umělecká beseda (Arts Society) and its chairman, the painter Soběslav Pinkas, which did not view embroidery as merely part of the curriculum for girls. Folk embroidery was instead presented as “one of the purest expressions of national, not just folk, art,

⁷ *Slovenský mýtus: The Slovak Myth* (Brno: Moravská galerie, 2007), 8. See also Aurel Hrabušický (ed.), *Slovenský mýtus*.

⁸ Wolfgang Welsh, “Transculturality – The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today,” in *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, ed. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999), 194–213. For more on contemporary Slovak film in relation to transculturality, see also: Jana Dudková, *Slovenský film v ére transkulturality* [Slovak Film in the Era of Transculturality] (Bratislava: VŠMU, 2011).

⁹ Tereza Nováková, “Povznesení lidového průmyslu českého: Několik včasných slov,” [The Rise of the Czech Folk Industry: Several Remarks] *Rozhledy* 10 (1900–1901): 44.

¹⁰ “Průmysl” [Industry], in *Slovník naučný* [General Dictionary] (Praha: I. L. Kober, 1867), 1029.

¹¹ The Czech Village Home Club was chaired by the novelist Alois Jirásek, other members included the archaeologist Josef Ladislav Píč, the architects Jan Koula and Antonín Wiehl, the historian and ethnographer Čeněk Zíbrt, the founder of a large folk embroidery collection Josefa Náprstková and the art historian, art critic and ethnographer Renáta Tyršová.

the essence of Czechness and Slavness, a testament to the advancement and talents of a people that preserved its most precious treasure of national language under the village thatch roofs.”¹²

The exhibition was remarkably successful and helped to further promote folklore and the national heritage. Seven years later it also led to the founding of the Ethnographic Society for the Promotion of Folk Culture. As Libuše Heczková states: “It became a real trend and passionate admirers of folk culture were found everywhere.”¹³

Organized in 1895 as an initiative of Ferdinand A. Šubrt, director of the National Theatre, the *Czech-Slavonic Ethnographic Exhibition* aimed to prepare ground for the Czech-Slavonic Ethnographic Museum and raise self-knowledge “within the entire national tribe.”¹⁴ According to Josef R. Vilímek, “better self-knowledge should expand not only our local horizons but also raise our national self-confidence, awaken our unique culture and strengthen our entire national existence.”¹⁵ This approach was supposed to bring with it moral and economic benefits. The exhibition included industrial innovations, modern machines (the tram), devices (the telegraph, the photography camera, Edison’s kinetoscope and the phonograph, Kaiser-Panorama), attractions (the light fountain, maze), food industry (restaurants, pubs and wine bars) and folk crafts (embroidery, traditional costumes, wood, glass, ceramics) with this including Czech, Moravian and Slovak items. Slovak silk-embroidered costumes were considered “truly exquisite pieces in this exhibition.”¹⁶ The event also featured an open-air museum (which can be viewed as a simulacrum or a *tableau vivant*) connecting a village house from Bohemia and Western Slovakia which was designed by period artists and architects (including Jurkovič) as well as scientists. Although this exhibition was also successful and folk art was shown to be an active industry segment, folk culture never really became a style. Nonetheless, it continued to be used for national promotion at multiple (media) levels.¹⁷

Ornamental embroidery and folklore elements were to reappear in the debates over the true form of Czech national culture in the years to follow. There was a boom in exhibitions displaying traditional costumes, lace and embroidery during WWI. These provided an opportunity to briefly shed some of the loyalty that had to be maintained during the war, revisit one’s own traditions and strengthen the national spirit: “We can see in all fields of art that the artists, tired of the cosmopolitan air, are once again turning their attention to the pure sources of folk art. The Czech spirit embodies all art, which then becomes national art, and the Czech existence is in turn permeated with art, and reaches a new level of culture.”¹⁸ A great deal of emphasis was placed on the artistic value of traditional costumes and exhibitions included the work of Czech female artists. Local folk culture was viewed as a “wholesome” counterpart to modernist, international art. “A number of people in the modern world are terror-stricken at the mention of traditional costumes, especially all past and present fans of Cubism. While it is legitimate to

¹² Irena Štěpánová, “Jižní Čechy v expozici české chalupy 1891,” [South Bohemia in the Exhibition the Czech Village Home 1891] in *Čas výstavního ruchu: Studie a materiály* (České Budějovice: Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích, Historický ústav, 2005), 30.

¹³ Libuše Heczková, “Žena, národ, cizina,” [Woman, the Nation, the Foreigner] in *Z Prahy až do Buenos Aires: “Ženské umění” a mezinárodní reprezentace meziválečného Československa* [From Prague to Buenos Aires, “Female Art” and International Representation of Interwar Czechoslovakia] ed. Martina Pachmanová (Praha: VŠUP, 2014), 36. In this text, Heczková discusses in detail esp. the gender issue of folk national representation.

¹⁴ Josef R. Vilímek, *Vilímekův průvodce Národopisnou výstavou československou* [Vilímek’s Guide to the Czech-Slavonic Ethnographic Exhibition] (Praha: Josef R. Vilímek, 1895).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁷ Libuše Heczková, “Žena, národ, cizina,” 37.

¹⁸ Růžena Tillnerová, “O české módě,” [On Czech Fashion] *Světobzor* 15, no. 36 (1915): n. pag.

reject a bad replica of a folk costume planted artificially into an urban setting, a traditional dress is no museum artifact – it contains the soul of the people, it has its own poetry that wants to be expressed and acknowledged. There are people who like traditional costumes not so much for ethnographic or collector purposes but for their poetry.”¹⁹ Regression into the past also provided a certain refuge from the horrors of the war: costumes were viewed as “a part of the resurrected old idyll that brings back memories of the beautiful life of simple people who lived in harmony with the land and whose costumes were in harmony with the beauty of the fields, flowers, forests and meadows.”²⁰

The first important exhibition of this type, *Folk Culture Exhibition* (Výstava svérázu) which was organized in 1915 at the then most modern exhibition space in the Municipal House in Prague which opened three years prior to the exhibition,²¹ was a significant political event.²² Led by Renáta Tyršová, it was organized by the Folk Costume Society, Zádruha and a group of female artists who collaborated with Zádruha. Irena Štěpánová sums up the important associations of this event with industrial exhibitions: “The exhibition was meant to be a sort of spiritual continuation of previous exhibitions that included folk textile, embroidery and costumes. Renáta Tyršová’s leadership was also in the fact that the opening was set for May. The exhibition was planned to run till mid-May which was an almost magical date associated with Prague St. John’s Fair which would attract a number of villagers into the city who incidentally might visit various culture events as well. Both major exhibitions in the 1890s, the *Centennial Exhibition* and the *Czech-Slavonic Ethnographic Exhibition*, also opened during the St. John’s Fair.”²³ At the beginning of the war, museums and exhibition halls were involved in new debates over folk culture that were intended to demonstrate the unity and strength of non-Austrian citizens. These debates included ethnographers, linguists, collectors, teachers along with economists and sociologists, and led to the founding of the Society for the Support of Folk Culture.

The promotion of folk culture during the war also led to higher profits and higher domestic sales.²⁴ “Having used the proceeds from the previous exhibition [Folk Culture Exhibition] to commission new work from the embroiderers, the organizers accumulated a fair amount of valuable material and went on to sell it in order to ‘move things forward’. Yet it is up to our people to push our cause. As I [Renata Tyršová] have said, we must not regret spending money on such valuable items; we are in fact saving money, not to mention giving our support to a good cause.”²⁵ The interest in folk culture was not motivated merely by economic or political concerns, it was an effort “to make our social life, to some extent, a national consideration”²⁶ and as Tyršová

¹⁹ “Za novou modou,” [On New Fashion] *Světobzor* 15, no. 29 (1915): n. pag.

²⁰ “Ukázky krojů ze ‘svérázu,” [Costumes from the Folk Culture Exhibition] *Zlatá Praha* 34, no. 15 (1916–1917): 180.

²¹ Filip Wittlich and Otto M. Urban, 1912. *100 let od otevření Obecního domu v Praze* [100th Anniversary of the Municipal House in Prague] (Praha: Arbor vitae and Obecní dům, 2012).

²² Irena Štěpánová, “Kroje, svéráz, secese a Renáta Tyršová: Výstava svérázu v Obecním domě 1915,” [Folk Costumes, Folk Culture, Art Nouveau and Renáta Tyršová: Folk Culture Exhibition at the Municipal House 1915] *Lidé a města* 9, no. 2–3 (2007): 2–3, <http://lidemesta.cz/archiv/cisla/9–2007–2-3/kroje,-sveraz,-secese-a-renata-tyrsova-vystava-sverazu-v-obecnim-dome-1915.html>. Libuše Heczková, “Žena, národ, cizina,” 23–49. Cf. Renáta Tyršová and Amálie Kožmínová, *Svéráz v zemích československých* [Folk Culture in Czechoslovakia] (Plzeň: Mareš, 1918).

²³ Irena Štěpánová, “Kroje, svéráz, secese a Renáta Tyršová.”

²⁴ *Obzor národohospodářský* 20 (1915): 341–42.

²⁵ M. K., “Vánoční výstavka, Svérázu,” [Christmas Folk Culture Exhibition] *Časopis učitelů* 23, no. 8 (1915–1916): 130.

²⁶ A mission described for the exhibition of folk culture, esp. folk costumes, organized in 1915 at the Municipal House. *Obzor národohospodářský* 20 (1915), 341–42.

wrote, “[a] renewed movement supporting folk culture [...] in the second year of the war was the first bold expression of national, Czech aspirations”,²⁷ yet it also reflected a gender aspect – a concern for women’s employment and the effort to retain everyday dignity face to face with wartime shortages and constant frustration.

Czech folk culture exhibitions also included Slovak items, owing largely to their Slavic focus and political resistance to Germany or Austria-Hungary. The situation in Slovakia was quite different. Since modernity is closely tied with a developed or developing industry, its arrival was somewhat delayed in Slovakia. As a result, the basic tension between the traditional and the modern took place in the fine arts. Slovak modernity and its transformations made its full appearance concurrently with the heterogeneous situation of Czech culture in the interwar period. At the turn of the century, however, a symbiosis of modernist, European expression and, once again, Slovak national tradition emerged in Slovak art. Fine art was dominated by a synthetic transnational style that was created by the nationalization of style trends in Central Europe, i.e., Impressionism, Luminism and Naturalism, while retaining thematic ties to Slovak folk genres²⁸ (keeping in mind that national identity, and hence folk culture, are both rather heterogeneous terms²⁹). Painting depicting traditional values was strongly influenced by the work and cultural activities³⁰ of the Moravian painter Jožka Úprka who reworked Slovak ornamentation in the Art Deco style, capturing folk costumes and village scenes. While Úprka achieved the above-mentioned synthesis and a distinct style by reworking folklore ornament, colour scheme, artistic stylization, structures and patterns of folk costumes and thematic richness into Art Deco form, most of the other painters at the beginning of the century (Jaroslav Augusta, Emil Pacovský and others) preferred holding on to the already anachronistic Naturalism, which prevented them from reaching their declared goals.

Czech-Slovak Synthesis II

The persistence of the symbolic gesture in tying up the modern and the current with the traditional and the historical is further evident in *The Slav Epic* by Alphonse Mucha. Although the idea for the epic was conceived around the same time as early panoramas, dioramas and the film projector, it was created later, from 1910 to 1928, when it already seemed somewhat outdated. The monumental series of large canvases completed during the existence of Czechoslovakia refers to the ideal of Pan-Slavism and charts the history of Slavs. Like the paintings at Libušín, *The Slav Epic* is a transnational synthetic or living picture (*tableau vivant*) which combines traditional Slavic myths, historical achievements, national heroes, folklore and its ornaments.³¹ This cycle was also created at a time when the Czech and Slovak landscape witnessed early expressions

²⁷ Renáta Tyršová and Amálie Kožmínová, *Svéráz v zemích českých*, 78, quoted in Irena Štěpánová, “Kroje, svéráz, secese and Renáta Tyršová.”

²⁸ Marian Városov, *Martin Benka* (Bratislava: Tatran, 1981), 10–11. See also: Ján Abelovský and Katerína Bajcurová, *Výtvarná moderna Slovenska: Maliarstvo a sochárstvo 1890–1949* [Modern Art in Slovakia: Painting and Sculpture 1890–1949] (Bratislava: Peter Popelka – Slovart, 1997), esp. 64–73.

²⁹ Cf. Ladislav Saučín, *Slovenské maliarstvo, grafika a sochárstvo 1850–1900* [Slovak Painting, Graphic Design and Sculpture 1850–1900] (Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského, 1973), 28.

³⁰ The best-known event was the 1902 exhibition in Hodonín which included painters from Moravian Slovakia as well as a number of Slovak artists. The exhibition was a great success and played a major part in the concept of a common Slovak and Moravian cultural heritage, the foundation of the Austro-Slovak Artists Association, and the idea of Czechoslovakism.

³¹ For more see Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, *Alfons Mucha: Slovanská epopej* [Alphonse Mucha: The Slav Epic] (Praha: GHMP, 2012).

of the avant-garde and modernism, when technical production and reproduction were on the rise, and when the search was on for a medium that would be a suitable and truly modern representation of the Czech nation rather than an obsolete anachronism.

The Interwar Years: Avant-garde and Fundamental

The 1920s in Czechoslovakia were, to a great extent, marked by economic problems and various crises and failures, balanced out by an optimism from the newly achieved independence. The final and long-awaited formation of an independent state in the middle of postwar Europe brought with it numerous changes in society, art, media and culture. It was precisely the unstable and ever-changing environment which spurred the search for a new order and stability, as well as contemplations over a new form of national representation – the basis of national imagination.³² As a result, artists born at the turn of the century set themselves against prewar art and attempted to seek out models for art that would be truly new, Czech and functional in the newly founded state. A search was on for an alternative art that would go beyond the existing “-isms” of the old world.³³ Artists began to discover the periphery, the everyday and its poetic qualities, popularity and trendiness. They started applying authenticity of expression but also the slackening of formal rigour, which in its radical mode figured almost as a game. In the Czech context, new avant-garde projects co-existed with a blossoming popular culture, yet there were moments when the two seemingly antithetical tendencies overlapped. Slovakia was, on the one hand, processing imported avant-garde elements from the Czech side, and was also focused, on the other hand, on constructing its identity in the newly founded state and on defining Slovakia’s spiritual essence. Czech-Slovak relations were influenced by tensions between the centre (the Czech Lands, especially Prague) and the periphery (Slovakia) and the imbalance between their respective industrial and technological development, but also by mutual respect. Czech artists (including, for example, the painters Emil Filla, Josef Mánes, the novelists Vladimír Vančura, Adolf Heyduk, Karel and Josef Čapek, the filmmaker Karel Plicka and others) admired Slovakia as one massive open-air museum of folk culture and were fascinated by the natural and authentic world/people/landscape, while Slovak artists often received their education in Prague (e.g., Fulla and Galanda, among others) and “imported” their Czech, partly eclectic, avant-garde efforts back to Slovakia.

In the Czech landscape, the still fledgling film medium began to play a more important role as a possible representation of the Czech nation. Film was viewed as a new domain to be colonized which suited the goals of the new state, established both by the “avant-gardists” and “popularizers”. Film was flexible (it could express and adapt to different movements, genres and functions), mute and hence Czech-Slovak, modern (progressive technology that was fast, entertaining and attractive). It was also perceived as an alternative practice (i.e., an alternative to other cultural forms and art categories, as well as to the European and U.S. industry) and as collective and democratic (accessible to all). For the state and its institutions, film became the most influential power tool to strengthen the national consciousness, create and solidify Czech and Slovak tradition, build national myths and also bolster the domestic market. At the same time, film allowed for the continuation of the existing symbiosis between the old and the new that could link the national past and utopian concepts, and lay the foundations for a new image

³² See Kateřina Svatoňová, “Český filmový svět aneb hledání ideální podoby národního filmu,” [the Czech Film World or Searching for the Ideal Version of National Film] in *Kultura a totalita: Národ*, eds. Ivan Klimeš – Jan Wiendl (Praha: FF UK, 2013), 139–53.

³³ Karel Teige, “Poetismus,” [Poetism] in *Avantgarda známá i neznámá. Sv. 1: Od proletářského umění k poetismu 1919–1924*, ed. Štěpán Vlašín (Praha: Svoboda, 1971), 554–61.

of the Czech nation. Film assumed a significant role for many reasons, it was viewed as a new media, a cultural product and “project”, and as national representation.

A period of struggle for Czech film as a specific product of a new European state followed, and for Czech cinema, i.e., its own exhibition space.³⁴ The struggle subsumed Czechoslovak film in the 1920s since national differentiation was not yet particularly clear and Slovakia accepted Czech films as an alternative to Hungarian and Austrian films. Official polls and various periodicals at the time began discussing the issue of how to define Czech film and what formal and thematic shape it should satisfy and follow. There was a growing interest in films that made use of local cultural tradition (especially in adaptations of well-known literary works), Czech landscapes and historical locations.³⁵ The requirement to capture national landscape matched the construction of a nation and imaginary community that is not necessarily restricted by state borders. Landscape as a cultural product serves as a nation’s visual symbol that promotes easy identification and as an expression of national values.³⁶ Landscape was the most accented element in Slovakia. The Slovak film industry was not sufficiently developed, films were often amateur family movies or short news pieces. Charmed by Slovakia’s “naturalness” and genuine values, Czech film makers nevertheless focused on landscape as the symbol of healthy Slavness. As a different and modern medium, film was able to rescue the Slovak landscape from an outdated art style but not from the romanticism that gradually became a typical and desired image for Slovakia.

Apart from creating a romanticizing construct, Czech film also focused, thanks to film magazines in particular, on the mass audience or film magazine readers.³⁷ Magazines supported the idea that the reader/viewer is directly involved in the production of the magazine and hence in the development of the film industry. One of their main mottoes was that Czech film would receive a much needed boost if creative jobs in the film industry were filled by members of the Czech nation, not necessarily film professionals. This was in accordance with a frequently used statement, “film is art and will become a great art form because, like all great arts of the past, it was born of the people.”³⁸ Readers/amateurs were addressed by various magazine-organized contests and auditions – mainly for screenwriting and acting jobs – which claimed that Czech readers would save Czech film, Czech “actors” would return to cinemas and film stories would be dominated by genuinely national topics.

Magazines invited readers to send in their film scripts that would include historical topics or otherwise raise national awareness so as to turn film into a truly national medium. This “revivalist” practice that was invigorated by the newly obtained independence was fairly wide-

³⁴ In the postwar period, film was in crisis. The cinema of the 1920s was sufficiently established to allow for a reflection of its history and a critique of the existing practice but attempts at designing new regulations failed repeatedly due to an inadequate industrial and technical background and due to the (then unfortunate) reliance on the defeated German industry. Film entrepreneurs tried to break away from this dependency and distributors tried to replace their stock of German prewar films with films from Allied countries. The Czechoslovak film market soon became one of the most diverse in Europe. Initial enthusiasm from imported films, esp. from the U.S. began to wane around 1922 because the film market was so saturated that there was little room for new local films or for appropriate exhibition of imported films. See also: Ivan Klimeš, *Kinematografie a stát v českých zemích 1896–1945: Kapitoly k tématu*, [Cinema and the State in the Czech Lands 1896–1945] Unpublished habilitation thesis (Praha: FAMU, 2007). Jiří Havelka, *50 let československého filmu: Sbírka statistického a dokumentačního materiálu* [50 Years of Czechoslovak Film: Statistics and Documents] (Praha: Československý státní film, 1953).

³⁵ Národní archiv, fond Ministerstvo vnitra – stará registratura, k. 210, sign. 1918–1924, 9/283/70.

³⁶ Miroslav Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody* [Nations are not Born by Chance] (Praha: SLON, 2009), 258–65.

³⁷ Kateřina Svatoňová and Markéta Lošťáková, “Pojďte k filmu! Role zábavných periodik při formování (obrazu) českého (mezi)válečného publika,” [Enter Film! The Role of Popular Film Magazines in the Formation of (the) Image of) Czech (Inter)war Film Audiences] *luminace* 24, no. 1 (2012): 5–23.

³⁸ J. Fast, “Kino je umění zrozené z lidu,” [Film is Art Born of the People] *Český filmový svět* 3, no. 1 (1923).

spread. As early as 1920, *Československý film* organized a contest for a Czechoslovak libretto that was supposed to use elements of Czech history or the national literary heritage.³⁹ A company called Lloydfilm also held a contest for “the best local film ideas related to Czechoslovakia (pre-history, cultural history, etc.) which have an international significance”.⁴⁰ There were also competitions to support specific fields of the Czechoslovak industry or national defence; for instance, a contest for “the best original idea (synopsis) for a film script that would stress the benefits or usefulness of the [Czechoslovak] aviation industry”.⁴¹

Resistance was supplied by Czech avant-gardists who declared that they wanted to get closer to the public but in fact remained at a rhetorical and elitist level. Avant-garde authors considered film an ideal medium but were extremely critical of the film output, labelling it as amateurish and provincial and hoping that inspiration would come from abroad to help jump-start Czech cinema. The majority of screenplays remained on paper but certain film makers who were from the avant-garde circles or had an avant-garde leaning (e.g., Vladislav Vančura, Martin Frič, Gustav Machatý and Karel Plicka in particular) sought out a new and modern approach to film, once again using traditional motifs – the Czech and Slovak landscape, local folklore and national myths (e.g., *Faithless Maritz*, 1934; *Ecstasy*, 1933; *Jánošík*, 1935; *Through the Mountains, Through the Valleys*, 1929; *The Earth Sings*, 1933).⁴²

A different, distinct concept of avant-garde film was designed by Zet Molas, a virtually unknown female artist of the Czech avant-garde. She opposed Teige by claiming that Czech film should not be merely criticized in a time of crisis but that it needed some help. She came up with the idea that film should be a synthesis of the old and the new, the progressive (in form) and the traditional. Her main objective was to discover a national film. The search could easily lead across different periods and film genres, even if they ranked as popular entertainment, because Molas believed that even in those tiers one could find a new, modernist approach to art. According to Molas, tradition and history subjects did not have to be discarded since historical films could seek to find moments in history that fit a modern sensibility. There was also no need to reject national ornaments, folk costumes, folk art, embroidery or the forms of old towns, as all of these could be used to establish a brand new visual language – since “we [Czech film makers] have a sufficient amount of national feeling and remarkable history coupled with an intensive power of expressive invention”,⁴³ to be able to create remarkable works of art and it is also desirable to be loyal to our Slavic roots and we could ask: “Where is the Slavic spirit? Where should we look for it to have some idea of the spirit of the Slavic people?”⁴⁴

While Czech film makers expanded their efforts to Slovakia to form “Slovak national cinema” and exploit the exotic landscape, Slovakia was involved in debates over the shape of Slovak

³⁹ “Soutěž na filmové náměty,” [Film Idea Competition] *Divadlo budoucnosti* 2, no. 4 (1921): 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ *Český filmový svět* 5, no. 10 (1927): 13.

⁴² This article does not address the relationship between avant-garde artists and films, which have more of an international focus. For further information, see Branislav Chroma, *DAVisti a film* [DAVists and Film] (Bratislava: Slovenský filmový ústav, 1983). Viktoria Hradská, *Česká avantgarda a film* [the Czech Avant-Garde and Film] (Praha: Československý filmový ústav, 1976). Lucie Česálková – Petr Ingerle, *Brněnský Devětsil a multimediální přesahy umělecké avantgardy* [The Brno Devětsil and Multimedia Crossovers of the Artistic Avant-Garde] (Brno: Moravská galerie, 2014).

⁴³ -ol, “Vývoj našeho umění,” [The Development of our Art] *Český filmový svět* 3, no. 4 (1924): 6. The abbreviation -ol is usually attributed to Bohumil Smola, despite the fact that it was used more often by Zet Molas.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 5. The possibility of using elements of folk art as inspiration for new works of art and for defining a national style was a widely debated issue at the time; the debates generated extremely diverse, often radical, reactions. For more related to architecture, see Vendula Hnídková, *Národní styl: Kultura a politika* [the National Style: Culture and Politics] (Praha: VŠUP, 2013). See also -ol, “Vývoj našeho umění,” 5–6.

film or, to be more precise, over the Czech-Slovak synthesis. In a telling text, Richard Matzner suggested that Czechs take care of the technical and professional aspects of film production, while Slovaks could contribute their romantic soul, music that included numerous exotic motifs, directing that would upset the bourgeois mentality of Czechs, and their good taste in fashion. According to Matzner, this was the only possible way to form Czechoslovak cinema and a distinct Czechoslovak brand name.⁴⁵ Plicka's film *The Earth Sings* could be considered one such attempt, although Matzner's text remained critical and reactions in Slovakia were mixed. Negative reviews called the film folklore kitsch,⁴⁶ a simplistic ode to hardy lads and rosy-cheeked lasses.⁴⁷ Ivan J. Kovačević urged film-makers to abandon this type of "adulatory hymns" and focus on contemporary topics.⁴⁸ Kovačević argues, "We must keep in mind that the best films are based on everyday subjects, on 'life as it is.' Our only chance at success is to work together selflessly. Let us not worry about the technical aspects; Czech film professionals can help us in that department. Yet we must not allow them to also determine the ideological agenda of Slovak film. It is only up to us to establish one if we want to prevent our beauty from being exploited. [...] Slovak cinema must be infused with the rhythm of Slovak life that is the only path to success at home and abroad."⁴⁹ Although *The Earth Sings* might have been an ethnographic document of the "exotic" ("all dressed up in traditional costumes") culture, it also served to reinforce the awareness of national pride and the need to create national representation. *Jánošík*, another "folklore" film, received better reactions. Plicka was initially chosen to direct the film but failed to obtain backing and newspaper articles soon began reporting that the film version of this great national myth would be helmed by Martin Frič.⁵⁰ Frič, an accomplished and popular film-maker who, like Plicka, drew on the influence of the Russian avant-garde and Czech cinematography and exterior photography traditions, now added a much more commercial accent to his work, namely the principles of American genre film.⁵¹ As a result, *Jánošík* became an eagerly anticipated film event that became a true hit following its release. Unlike *The Earth Sings*, Frič's film received only accolades, both from the critics and audiences. Paľo Bielik who played the main protagonist contributed to the film's success as he represented an ideal national hero suitable for "export". *Jánošík* fit the bill as a truly Czechoslovak film, as described by both Matzner and Kovačević. And it was once again a Czech film-maker who made a cinematic reply to the ethnographic ode *The Earth Sings*, also shot by a Czech film-maker and received acclaim. For many Slovak critics, *Jánošík* was not exploitative or kitsch but instead served a suitable emblem of national representation.

Slovak film found its own form only at the end of the 1940s although the determining values of "national representation" had already materialized through a different media. While applied arts – design, stage design, typography, advertising, etc. – and photography focused fully on modern expression (also due to the influence of Czech artists, esp. Czech avant-gardists) and tried to shed folklore traditions (fittingly, a teacher at the School of Arts and Crafts had the fol-

⁴⁵ Richard Matzner, "Poslanie Slovenska v čs filmu," [The Role of Slovakia in Czechoslovak Film] *Kinema* (1933).

⁴⁶ Vladimír Clementis, "Je Plickov film folkloristickým gyčom?" [Is Plicka's film folklore kitsch?] *Dav* 6, no. 10 (1933): 169.

⁴⁷ For the topic of the reconstruction of the "star potential of Slovak actors and locations see Petra Hanáková, "Hviezdy pod Tatrami," [Stars under the Tatras] *Kino-Ikon* 18, no. 1 (2014).

⁴⁸ Ivan J. Kovačević, "Slovenský film?" [Slovak film?] *Kinema* (1933).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Petra Hanáková, *Paľo Bielik a slovenská filmová kultúra* [Paľo Bielik and Slovak Film Culture] (Bratislava: Slovenský filmový ústav, 2010), 15.

⁵¹ Ibid., 18.

lowing motto: “To take the folk costume off Slovakia.”),⁵² fine art focused on the connection to “the romantic soul” and its search for the spiritual essence of Slovakia, which later served as inspiration for Czech artists, e.g., Emil Filla as shown in the conclusion below.

This outline suggests that to define modern expression, modernism or avant-garde art is as problematic as a definition of Slovak or Czech imagery. National representation and the search for a new art has been accompanied by numerous difficulties, tensions and heated debates, as well as by many shifts and a great amount of ambivalence. Is not Slovak fine art, mostly rejected for not being modern enough, close to Zet Molas’ functional concept? Is it not true that Slovak modern art has managed to satisfy the appeals of Czech avant-gardists that art must come from the people and from the everyday and operate at this level? Are not the migrations of artists in the Czech-Slovak space the basis for a possible Czech-Slovak synthesis and total art?

Czech-Slovak Synthesis III

The last representative images that point out the persistence of nationalist needs, folk style, modern painting techniques and methods, and that also show the need for a transnational Czechoslovak synthesis, are Emil Filla’s paintings from the late 1940s. In an attempt to locate a new “totality” at the time of avant-garde movements, Filla created a series of monumental paintings based on folk songs and ballads, using folklore ornaments, the colour scheme of local folk costumes and central mythical figures. Filla was among those who believed that in order to find authentic expression, one has to rely on one’s own tradition (unlike the French avant-gardists who resorted to the exoticism of far-away places) and rework it into a new expression (Cubist, Expressionist). His ideas were close to those of Hans Neumann who claimed that folk art was not creative but reactivated forgotten values out of which it was born. According to Neumann, folk art was a collection of fundamental images and their meanings (and as such, it is an alternative to politically “corrupt” official art⁵³), that can best form the basis of one’s own original expression. Filla began making paintings inspired by both Czech and Slovak folk songs, national ballads and myths as of 1936.

While Filla’s monumental painting, associated in terms of its scope and synthetism with Libušín and *The Slav Epic*, closes this overview of selected Czech-Slovak national representations and recurrent topoi in the visual cultures of both nations, the fascinating search for mutual affinities will continue.

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⁵² For more see Lubomír Longauer, *Užitková grafika na Slovensku po roce 1918: I.: Modernost a tradice and Nové Slovensko: (Ťažký) zrod moderného životného štýlu 1918–1949*, ed. Aurel Hrabušický.

⁵³ Emil Filla, “O umění lidovém a umění oficiálním,” [On Folk and Official Art] in Emil Filla, *Práce oka* [The Work of the Eye] (Praha: Odeon, 1982), 133–39. Cf. Vojtěch Lahoda, *Emil Filla* (Praha: Academia, 2007).

Facing the Faceless: The Erased Face as a Figure of Aesthetic and Historical Experience¹

Abstract | Two unique texts which are crucial for the cultural history of the face were published in 1919: “The Uncanny” by Sigmund Freud and the short story “The Erased Face” by the Czech author Richard Weiner. While Freud depicts his failure to recognize his own face in the mirror, Weiner’s text focuses on the image of a head-like “oval stub” devoid of any human features except the eyes. The paper deals with the phenomenon of disfiguration, both in the context of the peculiar aesthetics of “formless” and in relation to “broken faces” (*gueules cassées*) who suffered massive facial injuries in World War I. The central image of a face without a face is interpreted as an intermedial figure which connects literary, visual and historical memory while heralding the aesthetics of the post-modern portrait, especially in paintings by Francis Bacon, rendering identity through deformation. The narrative and images of losing one’s face are further discussed in connection with contemporary psychoanalysis.

Keywords | affect – broken faces – disfiguration – face – Francis Bacon – formless – *gueules cassées* – literature in relation to the visual arts – portrait – Richard Weiner – uncanny

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“As I believe, the affects are the primary motives of man, and if, as I also believe, the face is the primary site of the affects, then the face is the man.”
(Silvan S. Tomkins, *The Phantasy Behind the Face*, 1975)

The analogy of man and face outlined in the introductory quotation has a remarkable milestone in 1919. In the first year after the end of World War I, when there was finally sufficient time to take stock of the war frenzy after the hectic months following the signing of the armistice in the train car at Compiègne, two exceptional texts were published whose affiliation is as close and at the same time as remote as the cities of their origin. While Sigmund Freud published his essay “Das Unheimliche” (The Uncanny) in Vienna, Richard Weiner published a prose collection entitled *Škleb* (The Grimace)² in Prague. The short story “Smazaný obličej” (The Erased Face) included in the collection outlines a figure that was seen for the first time on such a massive scale in the war years; the image of a face without a face. While Freud analyses a mental dread, a sense of something familiar and yet dreadfully foreign, experienced upon looking into the mirror, Weiner conceives a disfigured phantom devoid of the contours of a human face. Both use their own specific means to capture the moment of a failure to recognize a face, either their

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² The collection of eight short stories carries the laconic subtitle: “Stories.”

own or belonging to someone else; a failure experienced by dozens of thousands of surviving victims at the front lines of the Great War.

The Motion of Writing and Composition

In his short story “The Erased Face”, Richard Weiner releases a phantom, a scary being lacking a face, a name as well as an origin. The only thing that makes this “oval stub, without a nose, without a mouth, without ears, even without hair, reminiscent of the scheme of a painter’s mannequin”³ human is the constant presence of eyes, piercing eyes that haunt both the narrator and the reader of the text. Over the course of the narrative, the phantom takes on various forms as does the language which shapes it, permanently commenting on itself. However, the question is to what degree Weiner’s language actually creates these phantasmic images. In other words, to what degree does it sovereignly construct them and to what degree does it instead represent their imprint, a verbal matter captured during its making. The latter possibility is indicated by the permanent volatility and variability of the literary language relating to particular images and motifs as well as by the modality of writing which strikingly copies the movement of erasing. The disfigured and gradually re-figured appearance of the phantom as well as his name are born progressively over the course of the narrative which reveals the main figure of the face as a scene of a clash between form and formlessness.

In terms of composition, the text of the short story has a dramatic structure. The act is divided into five scenes which follow each other chronologically as well as thematically. Their sequence is not controlled by causal logic, however, but by the logic of certain *affective switches*. The common denominator of these scenes-apparitions always consists of the encounter of the narrating protagonist with a strange and phantasmic gaze, oscillating between the physical presence of eyes and the elusion or disappearance of the subject they belong to. The first scene captures the encounter of the narrator and the mysterious, foreign and yet familiar eyes at the National Theatre in Prague. The moment arouses terror in the observing subject while bringing back a memory of a strange anecdote recently told by the narrator’s father: “What struck me the most, however, was what the eyes were telling me there at the parterre: their unusually widened pupils were screaming at me that they had nothing to do with me.”⁴ In the second scene, which will be the main focus of my text, a disfigured phantom, “*an erased face* with motionless living eyes which is too terrifying for the horror to become even more intense”,⁵ appears during the imagined melody and rhythm of Mozart’s opera *Don Giovanni*. The remaining three scenes depict the encounters with the phantom and passing by it in various variations and urban settings, with the phantom appearing as a phantasmic object of desire or as the narrator’s own doppelganger.⁶

The act is preceded by an extensive prelude (taking up approximately one third of the short story), with its genre ranging from a sort of a meta-narrative exposition through an epistemological essay to a manifesto of its own poetics.⁷ Wedged between this overture and the

³ Richard Weiner, “Smazaný obličej,” [The Erased Face], in *Spisy I. Netečný divák a jiné prózy. Litice. Škleb* [Collected Works I. The Indifferent Spectator and Other Prose. Furies. Grimace] (Praha: Torst, 1996), 331.

⁴ Richard Weiner, “Smazaný obličej,” 327.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 331.

⁶ For more detail about the theme of the doppelganger in Weiner’s work, see Steffi Widera, *Richard Weiner. Identität und Polarität im Prosafrühwerk* (München: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2001), esp. 71–79 and 227–62.

⁷ The inseparable character of these strategies is aptly pointed out by Weiner’s sensitive interpreter Petr Málek who writes that “in almost all of Weiner’s texts, a certain unsystematic poetics is formulated by a reflection of the narrative act.” Petr Málek, “Alegorie a melancholie. K Weinerově poetice marnosti,” in *Melancholie moderny* (Praha: Dauphin, 2008), 86.

above-mentioned “scenes-encounters”, a seemingly banal narration of the narrator’s father tells about the protagonist’s brother disappearing from a cinema hall without any explanation. Ephemeral at first sight, the story becomes a key element over the course of the narrative, not due to its trivial plot and even plainer explanation but for the way it is narrated and for the way it adumbrates the symptomatic character of Weiner’s writing in a sentence uttered by one of the characters: “I felt as if he somehow suggested that though he does tell the truth, a *different explanation* would be possible, as well, despite the fact that the one he gave corresponded to the truth completely.”⁸

The Affective History of Switches: The Epistemology of Weiner’s Prologue

Let me discuss the epistemological potential of Weiner’s prologue. Not only does it provide the entire narrative with proverbial “drawing pins”⁹ but it also introduces a radical and original concept of history, emphasizing the “terrible points determining the curve of life” which, “even though they may seem isolated, accidental and insignificant, are the buoys sticking out of the ocean of life”,¹⁰ rather than the causal interplay of cause and effect, chronology and logical concurrence. These dramatic moments merge in a porous spatio-temporal tissue labelled by Weiner as the “*history of those inexplicable switches*,”¹¹ an affective history, with the text of “The Erased Face” standing out as one of the key chapters.

As the caustic prologue written during the war days accentuates the “terrible points” in personal as well as general human life stories, calling for a history of “inexplicable switches”, the context of one of the bloodiest massacres in human history taking place at that time can hardly be ignored. It is known for a fact that Weiner experienced the war front himself and saw its horrors with his own eyes which severely damaged his mental health.¹² The terms denominating the horrifying moments of irrational and incomprehensible twists, which had an essential and often devastating impact on personal lives as well as on history in general, are based on a similar metaphorical field that is currently used by visual and literary theorist Ernst van Alphen, who has used the phrase “pain points”¹³ to grasp the cultural-anthropological experience of various tragic historical turning points, primarily the Shoah. Moreover, the interpretation of Weiner’s text within the intentions of a particular historical context would also be logical with respect to his previous short story collection *Lítice* (Furies, 1916) which renders the psychological and affective dramas of the protagonists balancing on the verge of death on the battlefield as well as in the hell of the trenches.¹⁴ However, regarding the way his own texts approach a similar cau-

⁸ Richard Weiner, “Smazaný obličej,” 326.

⁹ The metaphor comes from the introductory passage of the prose text “Lazebník” (The Barber, 1929), alluding to the strongly conceptual character of Weiner’s writing, providing the readers with a considerable freedom of interpretation as well as a significant role in co-creating the shared world, ranking these prose writings among texts that will be labelled as “writerly” (scriptible) by Roland Barthes several decades later. “Literally speaking: I want to write frames. Let the readers fill them in themselves.” See Richard Weiner, “Lazebník” in *Spisy 2. Lazebník. Hra doopravdy* [Collected Works 2. The Barber. The Game for Real] (Praha: Torst, 1998), 95.

¹⁰ Richard Weiner, “Smazaný obličej,” 318–19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 321.

¹² For more detail about the author’s nervous breakdown in January 1915 and his recurrent depressed states see Marie Langerová, *Weiner* (Brno: Host, 2000), 42.

¹³ See Ernst van Alphen, *Art in Mind: How Contemporary Images Shape Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹⁴ Jindřich Chalupický aptly excludes this prose collection from the genre framework of war literature which gives an account of the life of the soldiers on the battlefield in the whirl of the war conflict. “Since war represents

salinity, this connection would be too obvious. Similarly to other passages in the short stories in *Škleb*, here too Weiner's language calls for a *figural* reading, linking the metonymies of "terrible points" and "inexplicable switches" with the mimetic representation of the lived world as well as with the performativity of writing. As gradually revealed in the prologue, these performative and meta-poetic figures allude to sources that are much more fragile and ephemeral than great historical events:

Oh, if the history of those inexplicable switches that our intentions succumbed to were written; if it were possible to put in words why it was that you, who were just about to strike the strings of the heavenly harp, started a cacophony of some crazy harmonicas instead; if it were possible to – if not name, then at least grasp by some kind of human sense – that tiny little thought which made your exquisite joy turn into disgusting dolour, just like milk, for no obvious reason, curdles, falling apart into slimy lumps of curds; or why your gloom has suddenly dissolved into pure buoyancy, just like the starch gel, without any cause, melts into an opalescent oily liquid - - - what a history would *that* be!¹⁵

Inner excitement, quivers that are subtle yet fatal in their consequences, shifts from one emotion and emotional state to another, a sudden invasion of disharmony into harmonic tones, euphoria dissolved into an amorphous and disgusting affective clot; but, in contrast, sharp edges of sorrow abraded into joy – could the hidden history of affects be depicted more aptly?¹⁶ Due to its repeated emphasis on the formless affective mass and its various metaphors, Weiner's prologue represents a remarkable counterpart to the call of Georges Didi-Huberman conceived at the turn of the 20th century concerning the "history of symptomatic intensities" (*histoire des intensités symptomatiques*), sharing many common traits with it:

I imagine a history of imperious and sovereign exceptions that would develop the countersubject of the visual in a melody of the visible, a *history of symptomatic intensities* — "button ties" (*points de capiton*), moments fecund with powerful fantasy—in which the expanse of the great mimetic fabric is partially rent. This would be a history of the limits of representation, and perhaps at the same time of the representation of these limits by artists themselves, known and unknown. This would be a history of symptoms

an external circumstance; a scenery in which a completely exceptional, untypical, peculiar life story takes place." Jindřich Chalupecký, "Richard Weiner," in *Expresionisté* [Expressionists] (Praha: Torst, 1992), 17. Despite the fact – or probably because of it – that Weiner's front line experience turned his life upside down forever, bringing him to the verge of madness, as constantly stated by Weiner's biographers, his war texts do not dwell upon the depiction of combat and the suffering of others, but instead shift their attention to certain parallel events, to an affective and reflective *privatissimum* to which all external facts are subordinate.

¹⁵ Richard Weiner, "Smazaný obličej," 321.

¹⁶ My usage of the term "affect" is based primarily on the concept of Ernst van Alphen who introduces it in his study on affective operations in art in relation to contemporary psychology and cognitive research as well as to the texts by Gilles Deleuze as an energetic intensity caused by a sudden event producing reflection and imagination along with an emotional and physical reaction. Since they are transmissible between the artwork and its recipient, affects are strongly *relational*, without carrying a particular and nameable content or meaning and without corresponding to a common understanding in personal emotional life, which distinguishes them from the easily nameable and comprehensible feelings as well as purely subjective and personal emotions. See Ernst van Alphen, "Affective Operations of Art and Literature," *ES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 53/54 (2008): 21–30. I also draw on the brilliant and highly inspirational work of Eugenie Brinkema who stresses the importance of reintroducing the close reading and the formal analysis of the affects in artistic representations. For her, any individual affect is "a self-folding exteriority that manifests in, as, and with textual form". Contrary to the oft repeated claim, the affect should not be treated "as a matter of expression, not as a matter of sensation for a spectator" but rather as an event of desubjectification and a disembodied "*repli* that does not reply". See Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 25, 36.

in which representation shows what it is made of, at the very moment that it agrees to strip itself bare, to suspend itself and exhibit its flaw.¹⁷

In his two works *Devant le temps* (Before the Time, 2000) and *Confronting the Images* (1990), exploring the symptomatology of images under the patronage of three great figures of “anachronistic thinking” Walter Benjamin, Aby Warburg and Carl Einstein, Didi-Huberman, also rejects the logic of causality, chronology and representation as mechanisms determining the understanding of the history of images as well as history as such. Similarly to Weiner who objects to the “objective” ignorance of accidentality and seemingly meaningless phenomena and events, Didi-Huberman calls for an art history that will examine not only visible and rationally comprehensible evidence but primarily the symptoms and symptomal processes which represent a certain unconscious of images, their irrational and often contradictory reverse side.

In Didi-Huberman’s notion of the unconscious processes of images, the *symptom* represents a moment of disruption and an invasion of something unknown which comes – or rather occurs – unexpectedly and usually at an inconvenient time. In his most apt definition of a symptom, Didi-Huberman refers to Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), conceiving it as a certain creative violence committed upon the iconography and classic imitation of the body; i.e. a *disfiguration* which literally turns the problem of the image in the sense of mimetic re-presentation inside out, as “figuring consists not in producing or inventing figures but in *modifying figures*, and thus in carrying out the insistent work of a disfiguration in the visible”.¹⁸ The epistemological and narrative figures of Weiner’s “The Erased Face” perform this very act of disfiguration, gouging out the known and familiar to the very edge of recognition. This disfiguration, however, cannot do without its counterpart, the act of *refiguration*, which saves the blurred surface of the face as well as the narrative from irreversible decomposition.

The Rhythmic Work of the Formless and the Act of Disfiguration

Despite the fact that Richard Weiner’s fascinating text has the form of a rather brief short story, its narrative, motivic and primarily epistemological variety are deserving of much more space than can be provided in this paper.¹⁹ I will therefore focus merely on the central figure of the

¹⁷ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images. Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, trans. John Goodman (Philadelphia: Penn State University Press, 2005), 194. Lacan’s term “point de capiton” denoting a place of semantic agreement where “signified and signifier are knotted together” is also translated as “quilting point” in various English editions which is why I also mention the French term. See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar. Book III. The Psychoses, 1955–56*, trans. Russell Grigg (London: Routledge, 1993), 268.

¹⁸ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images*, 209.

¹⁹ Most interpreters of Weiner’s works tend to focus on his second creative period, starting with the publication of his poetry collection *Mnoho nocí* (Many Nights) in 1928 and ending with the extensive editing of the prose series *Hra doopravdy* (The Game for Real, 1933) including the texts “Hra na čtvrcení” (The Game of Quartering) and “Hra na čest za oplátku” (The Game for the Honor of Payback) at the end of 1931. Apart from two poetry collections, he also wrote the extensive prose-manifesto *Lazebník* subtitled “(Poetika)” (Poetics) at this time. It is primarily due to Weiner’s renowned interpreter Jindřich Chalupecký that Weiner’s prose texts included in the collection *Škleb* are most frequently – and rather repetitively – labelled as “expressionist”, which is even more surprising as Chalupecký himself rather accentuated Weiner’s broad theme of “the absolute irrationality” of human fate understood as “metaphysical alienation”. See Jindřich Chalupecký, “Richard Weiner,” in *Expresionisté*, 24–25. The second essential interpretation axis follows Weiner’s continuation of modern abstract painting and the avant-garde, primarily its constructivist method and cubist visuality. See Vladimír Papoušek, “Hroucení euklidovského prostoru (‘Prázdná židle’),” in *Dějiny nové moderny. Česká literatura v letech 1905–1923*. Ed. Vladimír Papoušek et al. (Praha: Academia, 2010), 318–31.

erased face in the outlined constellations of the year 1919 and on the creative potential turning both into the past and the future. The second encounter, with the desire for the foreign and yet familiar eyes leading to a terrifying vision of an erased face, is initially imbued with an atmosphere of domestic banality. Upon his return back home from the theatre, the narrator sits down to eat his cold dinner alone, sinking into his armchair and watching the white painted door leading right into the stairway.

I am calmly chewing my bread, watching the door, without a thought. My fingers are drumming on the armrest. I am suddenly surprised by counting the strokes of my fingers. One – two – three – four – five; one etc. I want to stop but I cannot. I am angry. I want to stop but I cannot. I am angry. I finally say to myself that if I stop drumming I will stop counting, too. I do so. But I regret it; as an odd, mocking thought is born, insinuating something about the weakness of will. I start drumming again while observing with irritation that I am unable to stop counting. Counting then becomes stabilized in a rhythmic alternation I deliberate on. Suddenly my reflection slips into an automatic résumé: the rhythm of the music from Don Juan, the arrival of the dead commander.²⁰

The exposition of the dramatically exalted passage resulting in a scene of the apparition of a faceless phantom occurs unintentionally, without conscious control. An essential role is played by the way the phantom is named and thus portrayed as well as by the way he is brought on to the scene. His arrival is not simply depicted but rather gradually *formed* out of emptiness, his contours being born simultaneously with the transition from the unconscious to consciousness, through the rhythm of his own body and through musical association. The unintentional rhythm and its unwitting counting, representing a music motif, attains its full meaning immediately afterwards, as it becomes clear what the seemingly innocent drumming of the fingers engendered. The uncontrollable, sinister rhythmic stream first attains the contours of a musical movement accompanying the arrival of the phantom from the other world and then culminates in a visible and disturbing form; a stub with eyes.

I wanted. My eyeballs bulged out of my eye sockets. They were staring at the door. I know that what I see there is not behind it but I cannot not see it. He is behind the door. [...] Yet I know clearly that only the eyes matter; only the eyes are important, whereas the remaining part of the man seems to be there just so the eyes have a place to be. [...] But then the door became holey and immediately in front of me [...] I can see eyes. Real, living eyes; that slightly jelly-like matter where, as we know, the human soul resides; *that is to say a vision*. This time it is just the eyes and nothing but them. Actually...! They are embedded in a head. But the head is nothing but a fleshy, oval stub, without a nose, without a mouth, without ears, even without hair, reminiscent of the scheme of a painter's mannequin. This *erased face*, with its motionless living eyes; that is too terrifying for the horror to become even more intense.²¹

Thus the protagonist's world is disturbed by a deformed face shaped out of its original formlessness, a figural sketch; or, to put it in other words, a figure in the state of its birth, growing out of a combination of bodily rhythm, terror and a musical motif. At the given moment, it is insignificant whether it is a sort of a persecution complex, an illusion or a real mutilated face. The new figure of the phantom has been formed by means of the dramatic melody and by the very bare rhythm of the protagonist's body. The unintentional and initially unconscious drumming of the fingers, as disturbing as the intrusive counting the protagonist tries to stop – as if he knew that it augured badly for him – develops into a rhythmic alternation evoking a dramatic musical passage from the second act of Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* (1787) where the dead commander arrives from the other world at the blasphemous invitation of a profligate whom he

²⁰ Richard Weiner, "Smazaný obličej," 330.

²¹ Ibid., 331.

takes to the realm of death with him after an initial effort to bring him to his senses. The monumental rhythm of a funeral procession, growing into an irregular, rapid and at times completely disjointed rhythm, merging with the vocal counterpoint of voices shouting one other down, nervous strings and the thunder of percussions, does not function as a mere associative element or dramatic overture to the following scene but as an independent affective-sensory medium as well as a creator of reality.²²

What is this fleshy stub, lacking human organs, vital orifices, protrusions and skin, whose human character is nevertheless demonstrated by the presence of eyes and the shape of its head? Its terrifying appearance, the name of which – *the erased face* – Weiner does not forget to highlight graphically, makes even the language of the narrative stumble (“that is too terrifying for the horror to become even more intense”) and its material, physical presence denies that it could be a mere mental image. This invites a question what was it that the protagonist *could* have seen when facing the faceless face and what can the reader see in this respect? The moment of the apparition of the phantom causes a shock whose sensory and affective intensity produces an entire range of new forms and images, inspiring possibilities of reflection that go beyond the narrative focus of the text.

The same thing can be said about Weiner’s stub that was uttered by Didi-Huberman about the “beautiful rag”, a remnant of the simple white drapery in Poussin’s painting *The Triumph of Pan* (1636): “It is disturbing as far as the fate anthropomorphism is subjected to is concerned: the human form, the shape of the human body has dissipated from it.”²³ The principle or act of disfiguration, employed in Weiner’s text to compose literary images as well as verbal matter, cannot be considered without the term of *formless*; which, in relation to the psychoanalytical works by Pierre Fédida²⁴ and the visual-anthropological reflection of Didi-Huberman, can be defined as the dialectic process of the appearance and disappearance of forms, their permanent growth and their placement on the boundary between the visible and the invisible, the knowable and the unknown. Although the semantic expression might evoke that, this is in no way a mere destructive elimination leading to the absence of form or a transformation into indiscernible, mushy amorphousness, but rather a dynamic process of the *work of the formless*, which was aptly depicted by Didi-Huberman, in relation to the “gay visual science” of Georges Bataille, explored on the pages of the revue *Documents* between 1929 and 1930, as a disturbing internal decomposition of form and figure that is at work right in their hearts, as a force of constant deformation and a process of the opening of form.²⁵

²² The constitutive role of rhythm in the creation of reality is also emphasized by the philosopher and visual artist Milija Belic: “As an order of movement, rhythm has the power to create forms, since every movement is a material movement. Rhythm thus becomes a form that is being born right now, a dynamic form prone to change and transformation at any moment.” See Milija Belic, *Apologie du rythme: Le rythme plastique: prolégomènes à un meta-art* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002), 14–15.

²³ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Ninfa moderna. Essai sur le drapé tombé* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 30.

²⁴ Fédida conceives the formless “not as an absence of form or its loss but as a setting into motion what shows as a form but for a moment and further as the “motion of producing an image, without ignoring the forms of its representation which seems to be expelled out of its center”. See Pierre Fédida, *Par où commence le corps. Retour sur la régression* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 18–19.

²⁵ Cp. Didi-Huberman, *La ressemblance informe ou Le gai savoir visuel selon Georges Bataille* (Paris: Macula, 1995), 135. It should be pointed out that Didi-Huberman’s dynamic concept considerably shifts the meaning of Bataille’s original entry in the Critical Dictionary, a regular section of the magazine *Documents*, entitled “Formless” (*Informe*), developing its procreative and metamorphic potential. In other words, the absence of form becomes formal “overdetermination”. Bataille’s original entry reads as follows: “A dictionary begins when it no longer gives the meaning of words, but their tasks. Thus *formless* is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing have its form. What

It is utterly essential for the concept of formless that it is an event rather than a term. It is an event that brings formlessness into form, using it to produce a new and yet unknown form out of it and through it. These new forms and “pseudo-forms”, however, are endowed with a *memory* of their original form which survives in them. It is the outlined dialectic of form and formless that makes the emerging figure turn into something foreign, disturbing and “dissimilar”.

Seeing the Reverse Side of the Face: The Uncanny and the Formless

Richard Weiner composed the text of “The Erased Face” at the same time when Sigmund Freud was working on his essay on “das unheimliche”. Both works come from 1919 and both share the encounter with the “disturbingly foreign” image of a face and a fascination with the familiar yet horrifyingly unfamiliar gaze, cast by eyes placed on a faceless stub and later in various incarnations on the inexplicable “erased” face in Weiner’s case and by eyes gouged out of their eye sockets (a motif from the short story “Sandman” by E. T. A. Hoffmann) as well as by his own and at first unrecognized reflection in a mirror in Freud’s case.

By means of an etymological interpretation, Freud presents the term “unheimlich” as the opposite of the meaning of the words “heimlich” (familiar, homely) as well as “heimisch” (native), explaining it as “that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of the old and long familiar”.²⁶ It thus represents a certain affective nuance “among instances of frightening things”,²⁷ requiring a moment of surprise, a physically experienced moment of terror which could be probably compared to the effect of a shiver running down one’s spine. What was once homely (*das heimische*), now has an effect that is uncanny (*das unheimliche*). Unheimlich thus denotes a reality that has been familiar to mental life since time immemorial, however, it was alienated by the process of displacement. Upon its return, we do recognize the given object and yet it feels “unheimlich”.

According to one of Freud’s interpreters Anneleen Masschelein, this text is actually a “theoretical novella”, transcending by far its original psychoanalytical framework, as opposed to an exact scientific study. This is why the concept of the uncanny should be revealed rather through fiction, on the basis of the affective experience of the reader.²⁸ “I could not doubt it. They were foreign eyes, yet those foreign eyes were telling me something familiar”,²⁹ Weiner writes in a close and yet completely unconscious resonance with Freud’s famous passage in which the psychoanalyst depicts how he glimpsed the mirror image of his own face in a sleeping car compartment, mistaking it for the foreign face of an “intruding” double. In Weiner’s text, the oscillation between the foreign and yet familiar corresponds to the present dialectic as well as the mercurial temporality between figure and disfiguration, between losing and regaining form. In both cases,

it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All of philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is, a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand, affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only *formless* amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit.” Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess. Selected Writings 1927–1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 31.

²⁶ Sigmund Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917–1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 220.

²⁷ Sigmund Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’” 241.

²⁸ Cp. Anneleen Masschelein, *The Unconcept. The Freudian Uncanny in Late-Twentieth-Century Theory* (New York: Suny Press, 2011), primarily 102–119.

²⁹ Richard Weiner, “Smazaný obličej,” 327.

the given dialectic is initiated by a gaze and since I have discussed the memory of form above, it is now time to introduce another case of a gaze that oscillates between observing a horrifying object and turning to oneself and one's own face.

Whether the link is a conscious or an unconscious one, an essential literary model for Weiner's text can be seen in a fragment from *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* from 1910, with an originally innocent coffee-house scene turning into a terrifying scene of a head deprived of a face.

The woman sat up, frightened, she pulled out of herself, too quickly, too violently, so that her face was left in her two hands. I could see it lying there: its hollow form. It cost me an indescribable effort to stay with those two hands, not to look at what had been torn out of them. I shuddered to see a face from the inside, but I was much more afraid of that bare flayed head waiting there, faceless.³⁰

Apart from the emphatic poetics of dread reminiscent of the appearance of Weiner's phantom, the essential transgression of the gaze takes place here. The laconically described, chillingly dreadful situation of the dislocation of a face – a moment where the valid anthropological order is drastically transgressed – forms the figure of the encounter of the subject and the object. The hollow skin of the torn off face suddenly changes from the observed object into a space entered by the subject of the narrator. The entire scene is focalized from the point of view of the I, struggling between two regimes of looking; between the inquiring gaze of both a surgeon and a voyeur, longing to see the gaping residuum of this separation, however, trying to tame his fascination; and the careful observation of what the gaze could not avoid: the inside of a face, the hollow skin clutched in the palms. While the narrating protagonist deals with his fears ("I shuddered to see a face from the inside, but I was much more afraid of..."), the text leads the reader to the very places where the protagonist's eyes do not dare to look, to the very stub of "that bare flayed head waiting there, faceless". Thus the face is torn off by the swift movement of both the protagonist and writing while its reverse side is placed on the dissecting table of the text by the narrator-anatomist. Despite this havoc – or perhaps because of it – the whole scene is penetrated by the gaze of the groping reader-physiognomist returning to the thus far averted face; the face peeping out between the fingers. One can say that in Weiner's text (just as in Rilke's), this rescuing gaze is taken by the narrating protagonist who does not linger with the terrifying, disfigured phantom, rather seeking the gradually appearing face in his desire for form.

Images of a lost, erased or disintegrated face are found outside the reservoir of literary imagination as well. In the passage about a face which remained stuck in the palms, Rilke suggests a similar question as Weiner does: what to call this mutilated stub and how to render the experience of those looking at it? The burning question of what a faceless head is has also been asked by the contemporary psychoanalyst Sylvie Le Poulichet. In her work aptly entitled *Psychanalyse de l'informe* (Psychoanalysis of the Formless, 2012), she demonstrates how the feeling of loss or erasure of one's own face, in connection with depersonalization and dream life, pursues many psychiatric patients. In psychoanalysis, formlessness represents unconscious pathological processes related to the fluctuating identity and the resulting symptomatic formations, ranging from a temporary loss of perception of one's own face or the shapes of one's own body to feelings of self-absorption or partial necrosis of the bodily limbs. What is essential is that the author does not perceive these symptoms as a permanent state but rather as a dynamic process, with "one thing constantly changing into its opposite and confirmation becoming identical with denial;"³¹ which

³⁰ Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 7.

³¹ Sylvie Le Poulichet, *Psychanalyse de l'informe: Dépersonnalisations, addictions, traumatismes* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009), 11.

is why she focuses primarily on the examination of mental transformations in her method called “clinic of formless”. When experiencing unconscious formlessness, patients frequently undergo an identification of anxiety, experiencing it as a decomposition and disintegration of the mortal frame, as a decomposition of their own self. Under these circumstances, a look into the mirror does not mean the possibility of self-confirmation of one’s stable appearance but a fear of seeing the disintegration of one’s own face.³²

In the light of psychoanalysis, the figurality of a decomposed face attains another dimension which can also be seen in the etymology of the German word “das Gesicht” and the French “le visage” coming from the Latin word *visus*, linking the seen object to the very act of seeing. The known face starts losing its form, becoming misshaped, “defaced”, revealing something that the subject was never to see. The process of disfiguration thus reveals the fundamental meaning of the face for the performed (artistic) as well as purely internal (mental) imagination, as it represents the place which makes us recognizable both to ourselves and to others as well as the source of vision. If this place; a centre of all sensory receptors; a scene of affects; a residence of vision; starts deforming and disappearing (as is the case with Weiner) or showing its reverse side (as shown by Rilke), the gaze experiences formlessness. This phenomenon was described in 1955 by Jacques Lacan in connection with Freud’s famous dream of Irma’s injection (1895):

There’s a horrendous discovery here, that of the flesh one never sees, the foundation of things, the other side of the head, of the face, the secretory glands *par excellence*, the flesh from which everything exudes, at the very heart of the mystery, the flesh in as much as it is suffering, is formless, in as much as its form in itself is something which provokes anxiety. Spectre of anxiety, identification of anxiety, the final revelation of you are this – *You are this, which is so far from you, this which is the ultimate formlessness.*³³

Although Lacan does not once mention the name of Bataille in his commentary on the dream which “can see the reverse side of the face through the open mouth”,³⁴ the term of formlessness continues his material way of seeing things, i.e. formlessness as the possibility of form, as a terrifying and disturbing, anxious and, one could say, *unheimlich* gaze at the reverse side of a familiar thing, as a latency of man himself. The look at the diseased human tissue, the formless, suffering flesh, subjects the viewer to an appalling experience; not only as he views, as Lacan writes, what we never see but also because it is this very formlessness that represents a necessary part of our identity. In this light, the face turned inside out represents a sort of a synecdoche of the compact though formless self. No matter how this formlessness is unambiguously identified with the state of anxiety and moreover formed by a dream, it captures a more universal aporia: in our form, we are at the same time “*this which is the ultimate formlessness*”.

The Mutilated Ruins of the Face: Inside a War Wound

Attracting a terrified and in a way forbidden gaze, the reverse side of the face emerges in front of us in several positions; as an extreme possibility of imagination, a pathological experience of the human psyche as well as a peculiar latency any subject observing their or someone else’s face is exposed to. The figure of Weiner’s erased face includes, however, one more prefiguration which is closely – whether directly or indirectly – linked to the author’s particular experience from the front lines of World War I; a head whose face was torn off by a war “accident”.

³² Sylvie Le Poulichet, *Psychanalyse de l’informe*, 31–32.

³³ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II: the Ego in Freud’s Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954–1955*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 154–55.

³⁴ Pierre Férida, “Voir la chair,” in Évelyne Grossman, ed., *Corps de l’informe. Textuel*, no. 42 (2002): 56.

With a mitigating cynicism as well as with a certain collective familiarity, the term “les gueules cassées” or “broken faces” has become established, denoting the wounded soldiers from World War I who brought home a mutilated face or what was left of it along with a traumatic experience from the battlefield. In her work *Gueules cassées de la grande guerre* (1996), the philosopher and historian Sophie Delaporte explores this historical experience, which has been suppressed to a certain degree, both from the perspective of general history and medical history and from the socio-anthropological perspective. She follows the victims of the war wounds from the moment they left the battlefield through the long and complicated medical procedures they had to undergo before they were transported to the closest surgical department to their difficult returns home. Apart from a description of surgical interventions, complications related primarily to the poor hygienic conditions in the military hospitals and the absolutely insufficient state of medical equipment, she also puts an emphasis on an explanation of the procedures of the reconstruction of the face which are now considered one of the milestones in the development of reconstructive and plastic surgery.

Along with the medical aspects, Delaporte pays no less attention to the psychological impact of the injury on its victims; the crucial changes to their behaviour and emotional reactions during the treatment. What is crucial for these reflections is the depiction of the first contact with themselves upon looking into the mirror as well as their meeting with their family and close ones and the consequent more or less successful socialization and re-integration in post-war society. It is understandable that the integration brought along great difficulties as those who were wounded in the battlefield have lost an essential part of their identity; the most human part of their body; their “visa du visage”, which is what Jacques Prévert called the evidence of their physical appearance.³⁵

Perhaps nobody can depict this appalling experience more accurately than the actual witnesses to the war events, whether they were soldiers, bearers of the wounded or the medical staff who were often completely shaken by looking at the “monstrous heap of torn flesh”, as one of the victims put it. It was the bearers who were mostly subjected to the first contact, bearing the wounded from the battlefield in the dark so as to avoid becoming targets themselves. No matter how sufficiently they were instructed, they could not have been prepared for the dreadful spectacle provided by the look at the smashed, torn off or completely missing faces:

He is dead. But the other one isn't. And that's a great pity. What! A single grenade splinter can inflict such a wound?! Oh, hide that hideous face, hide it. I'm averting my eyes but I've seen it and I'll never forget it, even if I were to live until hundred. I've seen a man who had a bleeding hole instead of a face. Without a nose, without a face, all that disappeared, except for a wide cavity at the end of which the organs of the pharynx were moving. Without eyes, just shreds of eyelids hanging in the void. Hide that mask of horror [...] and the other one, the one with a marten's profile who has lost his lower jaw, too.³⁶

It is difficult to add anything to these lines without exposing oneself to the accusation of cynicism or a rhetorical reduction of reality, in comparison with which any verbal description seems to pale and which many prefer to close their eyes to. However, this worry concerns not only the period opinion that “the daily slaughters in the trenches on the Western Front”, as Susan Sontag aptly puts it, “seemed to many to have exceeded the capacity of words to describe”.³⁷ To the same degree, it also applies to the accusation of the “aestheticization” of the horror of one of the most

³⁵ Sophie Delaporte, *Gueules cassées* (Paris: Agnès Vienot Editions, 2004), 175.

³⁶ Bernard Lafont, *Au ciel de Verdun* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1918), 10–11. Cited after Sophie Delaporte, *Gueules cassées*, 43.

³⁷ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 25.

bloody carnages of human history, a “fetishization” of its images and denotations³⁸ as well as a suspicion that someone would dare to see this evidence of despair and pain as something else but an effort to bear witness to the given event and write it down faithfully.

Just like any other experience, this experience of the real, also – to put it in Lacan’s terms – imprints itself into the imaginary and the symbolical in a certain way and is necessarily formed and stylized as such. The language is therefore not represented in a neutral tone here, the witness account does not do with merely naming the horror. The witness, on the contrary, attempts to grasp what it has seen not in a reverential, stark and illustrative way but rather in a dynamic and – I hope this term may be used here – *stylized* way. The rhetorical figure of repetition along with a rapid parataxis, with the overlapping layers of the description of the devastated face and the purely subjective account, is intensified even more by the effect of the metaphorical “mask of horror”, the description of a face reminiscent of a crater gushing blood as well as the merciless comparison to an animal.

Excelling in casual stylization and metaphorical practice, the next witness account is a depiction of a patient by a nurse who later published her war memoirs of working as a front nurse in her book *Hommes sans visage* (Men Without Faces, 1942): “The whole face looks like a freshly ploughed field; for the similarity to be complete, the suction tube goes through two holes that seem to have been artificially dug into this tormented soil.”³⁹ The material imagination nourishes the language as unambiguously as the effort to capture, name, describe and convey not only the terrifying scene – the scene of an anguished face – but also the modality of perspective. The description also captures the position of the observer whose sovereignty is furrowed by the seen image as well as by the written language just like the anthropological anchoring of the reader of these lines is.

In her memoirs, Henriette Rémi also quotes one of the voluntary young nurses who suddenly stood “face to face with the most gruesome thing I have ever seen (...). Twenty men with wounded faces, twenty monsters, men who have almost nothing human left about them, bodies bearing the mutilated ruins of a face.”⁴⁰ The depicted horror concerns both the seen wounds and the possibility that the observer herself might turn into something similar: “His jawless face comes closer to me. I step back and the terrible half of the face keeps getting closer to mine.”⁴¹ What comes into play again is the experience of the *unheimlich* gaze shown by the literary images of Rilke and Weiner. The horror of this possibility of one’s own face, the identification with the mutilated and unrecognizable appearance of the face, which represents a deformed object as well as a place where one’s gaze (in the better case) meets the still human gaze of the other or turns from this gaping wound back to the shape of one’s own face, thus belongs to literature as well as to the world.

³⁸ What I am alluding to is a recent polemic concerning the problem of representation of the supposedly undepictable, inconceivable and unnameable horrors of the Shoah which culminated after the photography exhibition entitled “Mémoires des camps” for which Georges Didi-Huberman wrote a catalogue text in 2000. Its core consisted of four secretly taken photographs of members of the Sonderkommando at the Auschwitz concentration camp from August 1944. Didi-Huberman summarized the necessity to not only show these pictures but primarily to reflect on them, along with his stance concerning the accusation of the “fetishization” of the image, for which he was strongly criticized primarily by the psychoanalytically focused authors Gérard Wajcman and Elisabeth Pagnoux, in his book with the uncompromising title *Images malgré tout* (Images in Spite of All, 2003). For more detail about this polemic, see David Bathrick, Brad Prager, Michael David Richardson, *Vizualising the Holocaust: Documents, Aesthetics, Memory* (Rochester: Camden House, 2008), 124–30.

³⁹ Henriette Rémi, *Hommes sans visage* (Lausanne: SPES, 1942), 42; cited after Sophie Delaporte, *Gueules cassées*, 68.

⁴⁰ Henriette Rémi, *Hommes sans visage*, 36; cited after Sophie Delaporte, *Gueules cassées*, 164.

⁴¹ Ibid.

The Face of War: Ernst Friedrich and His Atlas of Horror

In the context of the history of the phenomenon of “gueules cassées”, a pioneering feat has been achieved by the book *Krieg dem Kriege* (War Against War, 1924) by Ernst Friedrich, pacifist and founder of the Anti-War Museum in Berlin, who has confronted this neglected and so far rather marginalized circumstance of World War I with merciless frankness, providing a detailed description of war brutality forever imprinted in the devastated faces of wounded soldiers and publishing photographs of the surviving as well as the deceased victims in his book dedicated “to all war profiteers and parasites, to all war provokers”⁴² whose universality is accentuated by its quadrilingual edition in German, English, French and Dutch. “True heroism lies not in murder, but in the refusal to commit murder,”⁴³ Friedrich writes in a caustic preface, calling for simple humanism and love for one’s neighbour, appealing to the conscripts as well as their wives to refuse military service; for he knows too well “that the killing machine has a gender, and it is male”;⁴⁴ and ironizing the propagandistic slogans concealing their militant bestiality involving sending dozens of thousands of young men to their glorified death through a patriotic and heroic rhetoric. This instigating prologue is followed by a shocking spectacle, a sort of atlas of horror, conceived by Friedrich primarily as a warning against any future coquetry with war.

The individual pictures of dead bodies, shot, torn by an explosion, charred or entangled in barbed wire, as well as photographs of frozen and emaciated men, dead raped women, crowded trenches, mass graves and scenes capturing an execution by shooting or hanging – often under the supervision of an executioner grinning from ear to ear – are interspersed in a contrasting way and with utmost irony with portraits of majestically posing commanders and pictures of newly conscripted “proud family fathers” as well as with Friedrich’s sarcastic comments. These are followed by photographs of war invalids with missing limbs and prostheses and finally, in a section entitled “The Face of War”,⁴⁵ a series of photographs of anonymous or identified “gueules cassées” with a brief description of their diagnosis and the following surgical intervention. “Show these pictures to all men who still can think! He who then still believes in this mass butchery, let him be locked up in a madhouse, let us avoid him as we do the plague!”⁴⁶ Friedrich appeals in the text preceding the pictures.

In the photographs presented in the section “The Face of War”, we see 27-year-old soldier Otto Dorbritz whose nose and upper lip were torn off by a mine in October 1918. To make an artificial substitute, tissue was amputated from his forehead, arms and ribs; the total number of surgeries was 112. On the following page, there is the head of a young man with a slightly open toothless mouth, with the left corner of his mouth running as far as the cheekbone. As the book was written in the post-war days, Friedrich states that thousands of these victims are still in hospitals and their treatment is not drawing to an end even after several dozen surgeries. Metal worker Karl Marzahn’s lower jaw, teeth and tongue were torn off by a grenade explosion. Substitutive tissue was taken from his forehead and chest. Some of the seriously mutilated “didn’t allow themselves to be photographed as they feared that their relatives who had not seen them again would either collapse at the sight of their misery, or would turn away from them in horror and disgust.”⁴⁷ Other photographs offer an appalling view of men with torn off jaws and chins, torn off noses and without eyes in various stages of surgical intervention.

⁴² Ernst Friedrich, *Krieg dem Kriege* (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2004), 21.

⁴³ Ernst Friedrich, *Krieg dem Kriege*, 23.

⁴⁴ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 6.

⁴⁵ Ernst Friedrich, *Krieg dem Kriege*, 194–217.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 201.

Although it was possible to comfort ourselves with the comments about the ongoing treatment and recognize the human form of the faces despite their substantial deformations and missing parts while leafing through this “atlas”, the photograph of non-commissioned officer D., wounded on May 20, 1915⁴⁸ shows an image that completely shatters this human form: extending from the bridge of the missing nose through the mouth ripped in half to the chin, a deep wound stretches along the left profile, lined by shreds of torn skin, literally a crater, leading our gaze along the remains of bare and mashed organs to complete darkness. The viewer’s shocked gaze fixed on at the wound, with all attempts to name it seeming inappropriate, meets the eyes of the wounded man looking away from the camera. What is left of the human form of the face is the beard on the right side of the face, the eyebrows and the eyes. The last photograph captures an unknown man in profile, with most of his face missing and with darkness literally splitting his mouth open from the lower lip to the eyes in a triangle form.⁴⁹ The picture is preceded by Hindenburg’s infamous quotation “War agrees with me like a stay at a health resort.”⁵⁰

A mask of horror, a bleeding hole, a monstrous heap of torn flesh... Needless to say, all these phrases can only evoke the agonizing experience of a face to face encounter with these mutilated faces. The shock of looking at these scenes, but also of merely imagining them, quickly turns from the observed to the observer, shaking our anthropological certainty, an anchoring in a certain human form, order and cohesion. Face to face with these images, the observer is seized by an avalanche of emotions and affects; deep compassion alternates with horror and physical repulsion as well as with shame of one’s voyeurism, which arrives every time we observe somebody else’s suffering, seized by horror yet unable to avert our eyes; which is most probably inevitable in case of such scenes, as observed by Sontag.⁵¹ The sight of somebody else’s suffering is mixed with a deep fear concerning our own appearance; the horror of the possibility that our face, too, might turn into a similar formless mass. We are thus subjected to the power of images; which, according to Jill Bennett, “have the capacity to address the spectator’s own bodily memory; to *touch* the viewer who *feels* rather than simply sees the event, drawn into image through a process of affect contagion”.⁵² The contours of the human face are violently deformed, transformed and mutilated into a deep open wound, which, however, still has the form of a human face.

From Deformation to Appearance: Francis Bacon and a Parting from Figurativeness

The potential of the figure of an erased face is by far still not exhausted by an outline of its historical and cultural history, imprinting the traumatic experience of war wounds into its image, by the encounter with Freudian uncanny and by the literary archetypes of modernism. While the figure may be approached through the historical constellations of 1919, its further facets can equally be revealed by a contemporary perspective reflecting the artistic expression which – chronologically speaking – came only after it. Apart from the fact that Weiner’s text can be perceived as a manifesto of the aesthetics of formless *avant la lettre* (as it was published ten years before Georges Bataille turned it into a fundamental founding text of his subversive

⁴⁸ Ibid., 211.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 217.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 216.

⁵¹ “In each instance, the gruesome invites us to be either spectators or cowards, unable to look.” Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 42.

⁵² Jill Bennett, *Emphatic Vision. Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 36.

materialist thinking in *Documents revue*), the disfigurative process he employs to capture the phantasmic face, allowing its affective force to form his literary language, also heralds the form of a post-modern portrait which approaches the depiction of figure, face and identity primarily through the techniques of deformation.

Speaking about the faceless face and the deformation of the physiognomy of the human head to the edge of recognition, mention should be made of an artist from the second half of the 20th century for whom any other portrait but a torn, erased or blurred one would be out of the question, the artist being Francis Bacon. Figuration for Bacon was inseparable from the processes of *disfiguration*, the less his painted faces copy an external model, the more his heads represent a scene of the collision of deforming forces, the place of a creative quarrel: "It's an attempt to bring the figurative thing up onto the nervous system more violently and more poignantly," Bacon says in an interview.⁵³ As far as "the figurative thing" is concerned, here, too Bacon is the finest theorist not only of his own creative processes but also of the dialectic of form and formlessness which he captures with precise laconicism when related to portraying people: "What I want to do is to distort the thing far beyond the appearance, but in the distortion to bring it back to a recording of the appearance."⁵⁴ As in Weiner's case, the formless is not conceived as a conceptual decomposition leading to abstraction, non-figuration or informal but rather as a deforming force disfiguring and decomposing contours to the very edge of recognition, to the borderland between horror and fright, while refiguring them into new forms and constellations. This refiguration affects not only the visual representation and the verbal depiction but also those who face it, be they viewers of Bacon's painting, readers of Weiner's text or the protagonist to whom the disfigured face appeared.

Let us focus on Bacon's opinion that deformation conveys an image with greater urgency, nourished by his anti-realist effort to "distort people into their appearance".⁵⁵ In his inspiring work on Bacon's painting art, Gilles Deleuze sees the common denominator of these figural (not "figurative") and deforming forces in what affects the nervous system as directly as affects do and what he defines by the term *sensation*. According to Deleuze, the essence of Bacon's works consists in capturing the invisible forces which set any discernible form in motion and which affect us in a completely radical way: "In art, and in painting as in music, it is not a matter of reproducing or inventing forms, but of capturing forces. For this reason no art is figurative."⁵⁶ Unlike figuration in the sense of representation or depiction, denoting a form which relates to the represented object, *figure* denotes a form perceptible by the senses related to sensation.⁵⁷ These sensations represent a dynamic affective force which moves forms from one place to another, transmitting this motion to the perception and corporeality of the viewer.

When facing Bacon's paintings, as well as Weiner's "Erased Face", we are infected, in other words, by their sensations, affected by their figural events, while the memory of our bodies is penetrated by a substantially foreign element. The fact that Deleuze sees the *sensation* as "the agent of bodily deformations"⁵⁸ does not mean, however, that Bacon completely abandoned the figurative aspect of the painted figures. Whether observing his series of screaming popes from the late 1940s and early 1950s (inspired by Vélasquez's portrait of Pope Innocent X) or the portraits of the painter's friends (Lucien Freud, Isabel Rawsthorne) and his lover George Dyer,

⁵³ David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact. Interviews with Francis Bacon* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 12–45.

⁵⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London: Continuum, 2003), 40.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

made between the mid-1960s and early 1970s, we are still facing a human figure, despite all the deformation and violent decomposition of its anatomic and physiognomic features. It is as if Bacon found himself precisely on the border between the necessity of maintaining figuration and the development of disfiguration; or, “at the very moment when the figure asserts its intention to break away from the figurative”.⁵⁹ Using a slightly different vocabulary, the formless again comes to the foreground – inconceivable without its tension between the construction and deconstruction of the figure – whose traces, both in the case of Weiner and Bacon, are distinctly imprinted primarily in a specific mode of representation which I would choose to call an *erased portrait*.

Revisiting Weiner’s text and its affective “history of inexplicable switches” for the last time, the argument linking the historical experience and the product of imagination seems clearer now. It is not the point that when writing “The Erased Face”, Richard Weiner had a traumatic experience of the front-line, which made it more than probable that he had seen the dead and the wounded, with bodies torn by grenades, faces that were torn off, burned or corroded by poison gas. My argument seeks neither an eyewitness testimony nor a written record of a memory. What matters is that the erased face represents a figure which combines this undeniable historical experience with the *unheimlich* imagination of a deformed face, while this imagination also has its cultural history as well as aesthetic memory. Looking face to face with what was left of the face is a moment of trauma, horror and shock which cannot be helped by closing one’s eyes; at the same time, this gaze is endowed with an ability to provide tangible and visible contours to this terrifying formlessness. Facing the faceless thus gives it a new face. That is exactly what Weiner’s affective writing does, elevating the formless to a creative force producing new though deformed forms in motion.

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⁵⁹ Ibid., 27.

Book reviews|

Jan Švankmajer: Dimensions of Dialogue / Between Film and Fine Art

Review by Luboš Ptáček

František Dryje, Bertrand Schmitt, and Ivo Purš, *Jan Švankmajer: Dimensions of Dialogue; Between Film and Fine Art* (Jan Švankmajer: Možnosti dialogu; mezi filmem a volnou tvorbou). Prague: Arbor Vitae, 2013. 512 pp.

On the occasion of the *Jan Švankmajer. Dimensions of Dialogue* exhibition, which took place in Prague and Olomouc, an extensive catalogue was published which represents the author's visual, theatre and film production. This broad scope has a natural justification, as many of the typical themes and techniques can be seen throughout Švankmajer's work regardless of the art form, and they are even so interconnected that it is much harder to explain them by themselves. The catalogue was published in Czech and English versions, and the graphic design and quality of texts (as well as the price of the book) is a match for any top foreign publication on visual art. The Arbor Vitae publishing house did not resort to a unified template, and the book fully respects the peculiarity and uniqueness of Jan Švankmajer's production, not only in terms of the texts but also in its graphic form.

The catalogue was named after Švankmajer's animated film from 1982, and its title not only captures the author's multi-form artistic involvement and the principle of his production, but also characterizes the basic principle of the catalogue itself since, in addition to the three authors-theorists, the book also provides the reader with Jan Švankmajer's artistic manifestations and explications. An additional plane of dialogue plane is revealed, although admittedly fairly supra-interpretative, in a comparison with other publications devoted to Švankmajer, e.g. *The Cinema of Jan Švankmajer: Dark Alchemy* (1995, 2008) a collection compiled by Peter Hames, from the Director's Cuts series by the publishing house Wallflower Press, which is approached as a classic academic collection of analyses and interpretations.

The catalogue is dominated by six studies by Bertrand Schmitt, divided into three themes. Three chapters entitled *Detailed Annotated Biography I.–III.*, divided by the years 1970 and 1990, are devoted primarily to analysing and interpreting Švankmajer's films, whereby life stories form more of an appendix. Another two of Schmitt's texts *A Return to the Roots of Staging: King Stag* [Kráľ jelenem] and *Jan Švankmajer and Emil Radok's Johannes Doctor Faust: From Primitive Myth to a Crisis of Civilization* are devoted to theatre production, and document the fact that Švankmajer's creative output really cannot be divided according to artistic form, which is also confirmed by Schmitt's final essay *Fine Art from the Years 1958–1988*, where the writer describes the author's work in great detail and ranks it within the context of the entire modern visual artistic style of the 20th century.

František Dryje, in a similar manner as Švankmajer, stubbornly persists in his surrealistic view of the world, which he does not deny in his academic texts and manifestos either. This is why the artistic interpretation of Švankmajer's production, with the simple and striking name *Jan Švankmajer, Surrealist*, is also written in a surrealistic spirit and documents Švankmajer's connection with Surrealism in four basic spheres (artistic style, psycho-analytical interpretation, a distrust of power and a search for the essence of artistic imagination). Ivo Purš's study

The Kunstkamera as Švankmajer's Microcosm interprets the echoes of Rudolphian mannerism in a style similar to Dryje's text.

The studies complement the overview of exhibitions, list of theatre and film productions, and the bibliographical overview of selected book and magazine studies, which not only documents Švankmajer's position in world cinema but also reveals the debt of Czech film critics and historians, since much more has been written about the author abroad.

The graphic form of the book deserves a separate paragraph as it engages interest with merely the cross-section of the initials **jš** on the external grey cover, under which is hidden an earthen head with a raw pork tongue sticking out, from the film *Dimensions of Dialogue*. The book contains a large number of quality reproductions which depict shots from films, Švankmajer's fine art, but also personal photographs from both filming and family life. The Manneristic inspiration is also evident in the trivial graphic "offence", whereby individual texts, notes and photograph descriptions are differentiated from one other by various font sizes and types, page colour, and their diverse line wraps. The authors of the graphic concept are Bertrand Schmitt and František Dryje while the graphic design was carried out by Pavel Zelenka.

Jan Švankmajer achieved fame primarily due to his artistic techniques, which were based on Surrealism. The book presents him, however, as an original author, whose work and theoretical contemplations go beyond the boundaries of this style. The reader, just like the viewer of Švankmajer's films, should not allow themselves to be confused even though the catalogue leads them to it. The emphasized principles of play and imagination are firmly fused with the author's attitude to life, which makes him an existentialist artist. And behind the lightness and imagination of the presented games stands systematic and strenuous work. The author's tenaciousness, even obstinacy, is thereby connected with humility and a willingness to engage in dialogue, both with others and with himself.

Film and History

Review by Milan Hain

James Chapman, *Film and History*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 181 pp.

James Chapman's *Film and History* was published in 2013 as part of Palgrave Macmillan's *Theory and History* series edited by Donald MacRaild. Other titles in the series include *Biography and History*, *Cultural History*, *Narrative and History* and *Postmodernism and History* to name only a few. Chapman's contribution aims at being an accessible introduction for both students and teachers to the complex relationship between the medium of film and history/historiography.

In the book's "Introduction" Chapman explains why there has been a preference for film theory over film history for many years. It was not until the late 1970s/early 1980s that film history emerged as an accepted discipline within film studies. Most scholars at present agree that films are cultural artifacts that have to be studied and evaluated with respect to the specific historical contexts of their production and consumption. Chapman also briefly compares film history with other histories and states that it is both like and unlike other types of history: "It shares with other branches of history the aim of showing what has happened and attempting to explain how and why it happened as it did." (p. 4) Film history makes use, however, of extremely specific primary sources, these being, apart from written materials (production records, correspondence, scripts, publicity materials, trade journals, etc.), the films themselves. This sometimes poses truly unique problems. The study of the silent film era is hampered not only, for example, by the lack of proper documentation, but also and especially by the fact that approximately 75% of pre-1930 films are believed to be permanently lost.

The book is further divided into six chapters with the first serving as a useful outline. Chapman provides the reader there with "a brief history of film history", starting with the pioneer historians Robert Grau, Terry Ramsay and Lewis Jacobs and ending with so-called new film history which emerged in the mid-1980s. The author distinguishes between "standard version histories", focusing on a handful of geniuses (Porter, Griffith) and their landmark achievements (*The Great Train Robbery*, *The Birth of a Nation*), and "revisionist histories", which since the 1970s have questioned many of the assumptions of the former. Chapter Two focuses on the most common approach to studying cinema, this being the aesthetic approach that treats film as an art form. Chapman describes two traditions that dominated classic film aesthetics: the formative (Hugo Münsterberg and Rudolf Arnheim in Germany, Soviet filmmakers and theoreticians Sergei Eisenstein and Lev Kuleshov, etc.) and the realist (Siegfried Kracauer and André Bazin). He summarizes the accomplishments and limitations of the *auteur* theory and its variants and concludes the chapter with David Bordwell's historical poetics of cinema.

The following chapter concentrates on approaches which treat cinema as an ideological apparatus and film as an instrument of ideology. Chapman demonstrates how the theories of the Frankfurt School, Louis Althusser, Claude Lévi-Strauss and others evolved in the late 1960s into Film Structuralism and Semiotics and, later, into Feminism, Postcolonialism and Queer theory. He then presents several of the tenets of these approaches using the example of the Third Cinema, the idea of a radical alternative film culture which emerged in Latin American countries around 1968.

Chapter four deals with the ways film can be used as a historical source, telling us something meaningful about the time at which it was made. While the value of documentary films and

newsreels was identified relatively early on, fictional films were ignored by classical historians for many years. The situation began to change in the late 1960s and early 1970s with several important events (“Film and the Historian” conference in 1968) and publications (*Film and History* journal published since 1971) leading the way. A number of film scholars at present study fictional films as valuable historical documents.

Closely related to this line of inquiry are approaches that treat films as a social practice, reflecting the societies in which they are produced and consumed. These are the subject of chapter five. Chapman demonstrates how popular fictional films have often been studied as “mirrors” reflecting the prevailing values, opinions and dispositions of the society at a given time. Additional critics and historians have focused on film genres which are said to fulfill important ideological functions in the sense that they straighten out otherwise insurmountable contradictions (related to class, gender or race). The concluding chapter provides an overview of the historical sociology of film which asks questions such as “Who makes films and why?” or “Who sees films, how and why?” The three main branches of historical sociology focus on histories of production (histories of film studios or individual films), histories of reception and histories of audiences or movie-going.

Film and History is an excellent starting point for those who want to gain a familiarity with the subject. It is a comprehensive and lucidly written introductory text that can be utilized in film studies courses by teachers and students (both less experienced and advanced). Each chapter follows the same structure in which a concise outline of the given approach is followed by an appropriately selected case study (Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane* for the aesthetic approaches, *film noir* for the “Film as a Social Practice” chapter, etc.). There is also a useful glossary of important terms and subjects and each chapter is complemented by tips for further reading.

One minor objection that can be raised against the book is that Chapman is obviously not unbiased. In the text he continuously favors film history over film theory and at times, particularly in chapter three entitled “Film and Ideology”, his disdain for certain approaches and personalities (Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault) surfaces. This is not a new objection, however, as Chapman himself has acknowledged that over the years he has “acquired a reputation as a trenchant advocate of ‘history’ against ‘theory’” which he has “never quite shaken off”. (p. viii) Furthermore, as his book repeatedly demonstrates, no history – including this “history of film history” – can be completely impartial and objective.

Conference
reviews|

The Birth of the Tramp: A 100th Anniversary Celebration

Review by Milan Hain

Bologna, Italy, 25–28 June 2014

www.cinetecadibologna.it/100charlot_eng

Cinemas saw the première of the film *Kid Auto Races at Venice* in which Charles Chaplin appeared in the tramp costume for the first time in February 1914. He was sporting a moustache, wearing a jacket that was too tight, baggy pants, and an ill-fitting bowler hat, as well as an essential stage prop in the form of a walking stick. Even after his phenomenal success, Chaplin remained faithful to the tramp character over the following months, thereby creating one of the most easily recognizable icons in the history of cinema. Cineteca di Bologna, the main organizer of the annual *Il Cinema Ritrovato* festival, and Association Chaplin, an organization founded in 1996 by Chaplin's descendants, decided to commemorate this significant event by organizing a four-day international conference on the 100th anniversary of the birth of Chaplin's tramp. The event took place on the Bologna film archive premises, between the 25th and the 28th of June 2014.

The conference itself was preceded by an evening screening of four of Chaplin's films on Piazza Maggiore, the main square in Bologna. The chosen titles, screened with a live musical accompaniment by the Orchestra del Teatro Comunale di Bologna led by conductor Timothy Brock, were intended to remind the audience, in a nutshell, of the development which the tramp character underwent over the course of the First World War. The afore-mentioned groundbreaking film *Kid Auto Races at Venice* was accompanied by the films *A Night in the Show* (1915) produced for the Essanay company, *The Immigrant* (1917) from Chaplin's extremely prolific period with the company Mutual and *Shoulder Arms* (1918) created under agreement with the distribution company First National. All of the films were shown in digitally-restored versions, with the restoration work having been carried out in the film archive laboratories in Bologna.

The main part of the conference commenced on Thursday the 26th of June with a short speech by the long-time director of the Bologna film archive Gian Luca Farinelli. He consequently handed the floor over to the eminent historian and Chaplin biographer David Robinson, who had prepared a keynote speech entitled "100 Years of the Tramp and the Influence of the Music Hall on Chaplin's Work". Robinson presented the results of his research which he also summarized in the recent publication *The World of Limelight* (Cineteca di Bologna, 2014). The main subject of interest of both the presentation and the book is the film *Limelight* (1952), which Robinson considers a sovereignly personal and largely autobiographical work, reflecting the world of Chaplin's artistic roots. The fact that work on *Limelight* constituted an extremely intimate process for Chaplin is also evidenced by the fact that he conceived the story with unprecedented care over several decades, allegedly from the time of meeting dancer Vaslav Fomich Nijinsky in 1916. The same film was also the central theme of Robinson's hour-long conversation with actress Claire Bloom, who played the main female role in it over sixty years ago. Bloom spoke about Chaplin's directorial procedures, and particularly about working with the actors. According to her recollections, Chaplin played all the acting bits himself first, and afterwards expected a perfect imitation of every one of his movements. The actress also refuted rumours from the audience that Chaplin

was inefficient and wasted time. The majority of the takes were allegedly recorded over two or three sessions and only in exceptional cases did the takes have to be repeated several times.

The first day of the conference was in large part characterized by the symbolism of that critical year of 1914. The part entitled “Birth of the Tramp”, with contributions from Bill Finney, Frank Scheide and Hooman Mehran, similarly analysed the tramp’s début, including Chaplin’s transfer from the tradition of the English music hall to American slapstick comedy. An even more in-depth historical account came from Chaplin’s descendants from his marriage to Oona O’Neill, Michael and Josephine, who described the family pedigree of Hannah Harriet Pedlingham Hill, Charlie’s mother.

The most remarkable points of Thursday’s programme included screenings of films which Chaplin did not contribute to as an author, but which may have influenced his work. Historian and curator Mariann Lewinsky prepared a three-part programme entitled “What Chaplin Saw” composed of silent films from the time Chaplin himself was beginning his film career. A similar direction was taken by the British Film Institute historian Bryony Dixon, who in a one-hour block entitled “Chaplin’s Circle” projected, and commented on, several archive shots of music hall artists, which were intended to represent the various directions in which Chaplin’s career may have developed, had he not ended up with the film company Keystone through a series of fortunate circumstances.

Not all the contributions turned to the past, however. François Confino presented ambitious plans for a Chaplin museum which will be built in Vevey in Switzerland on a plot of land where Chaplin spent the last twenty five years of his life (the anticipated date of opening to the public is spring 2016). The main conference organizers, Kate Guyonvarch and Cecilia Cenciarelli, allowed participants to look into Chaplin’s archive, currently available to interested persons in the Bologna film library premises, which includes thousands of various items including scripts, photographs, letters, production documents, drawings, promotional brochures, etc. The selection from Chaplin’s papers forms the basis for the lavishly illustrated publication by the TASCHEN publishing house, which has been released in September 2015 under the title *The Charlie Chaplin Archives*.

Friday’s conference programme opened with a plenary presentation by Lisa Haven from Ohio University in Zanesville. Haven dealt in detail with Chaplin’s connection to American alternative culture over the years 1952–1977. During this period, Chaplin and his tramp became an important source of inspiration for Beatniks and other ideologically-affiliated authors. Chaplin’s name can be found in a number of poems by Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Gregory Corso. In addition, Ferlinghetti’s renowned San Francisco bookshop and publishing house City Lights Bookstore was, as we know, named after Chaplin’s film *City Lights* (1931). The Beatniks saw the tramp character and his author’s personality (which began to be very politicized from the mid-1930s and came into conflict with American society after the Second World War) as anarchistic, rebelling against conventions, which is why they looked up to both of them as models.

No less stimulating was the contribution block entitled “Chaplin, the Film-maker”. The presentation, by the French historian Francis Bordat, appeared to be a defence of Chaplin’s directorial style, which allegedly was neither primitive nor haphazard, as some have claimed. This thesis was followed up on by Charles Maland, who used studio records from *City Lights* to demonstrate Chaplin’s “neurotic effort to achieve perfection”. In a fascinating Power Point presentation, John Bengtson demonstrated how Chaplin used the historical locations of Los Angeles and Hollywood in his early films. And finally, David Tothoroh spoke about the career of his grandfather, the cameraman Roland Tothoroh, who shot all of Chaplin’s films, from his work in the company Mutual in 1916 to *Monsieur Verdoux* from 1947.

Contributions about Chaplin's influence across the world were divided into two blocks. In the first, Ono Hiroyuki spoke about Chaplin's reception in Japan before the Second World War. This was immediately followed by Zhiwei Xiao who summed up the mutual relationship between Chaplin and China. The Australian documentary-maker Kathryn Millard presented the phenomenon of Chaplin imitators dealing with this in the film *The Boot Cake* (2008) which was also shown during the conference. The second block was composed of my contribution about Charles Chaplin's star image in Czechoslovakia and a presentation by postgraduate student Geraldine Rodrigues from the Sorbonne in Paris on the screening of Chaplin's early films in France.

Friday also included a discussion with the acclaimed British director Mike Leigh, led by the historian and documentary film-maker Kevin Brownlow. Leigh considers himself an admirer of Chaplin despite the fact that his directorial approach is diametrically opposed to Chaplin's. This can best be demonstrated by their work with actors. While Chaplin demanded exact, disciplined acting based on the precise co-ordination of choreographed movements, Leigh supports improvisation and spontaneous expression amongst his actors and views the film character as a result of mutual co-operation.

The programme on the final day of the conference was a little more modest, as that afternoon all of the premises had to be vacated for the opening screenings of the 28th annual *Il Cinema Ritrovato* festival. Definitely worth mentioning, however, were conversations with the authors of the Oscar-winning film *The Artist* (2011), director Michel Hazanavicius and actress Bérénice Bejo, or the four contributions on Charles Chaplin's influence on other film-makers: Federico Fellini, Raj Kapoor, Jacques Tati and the authors of American cartoons. The most extensive space was granted to University of Chicago professor Yuri Tsivian, who in his presentation spoke about Chaplin's relationship with the Russian artistic avant-garde. The final evaluation was entrusted by the organizers to another special guest, the director Alexander Payne.

Although Chaplin is undoubtedly one of the most-discussed personalities in film history, most of the fifty conference participants were able to look at his work in a fresh and original manner. Chaplin's oeuvre was reappraised, related to new contexts and examined against the background of recent discoveries in the archives. In addition, the increasing accessibility of Chaplin's personal papers promises that research activity over the coming years will not let up.

The organizers also managed to open the event to the general public. Discussions with authors, film screenings, a poster exhibition, a special children's programme, theatre performances – all of these confirmed that the conference does not have to be merely a closed affair for a small circle of academics. It can instead serve as an attractive event, where researchers freely mix with active film-makers, enthusiastic film fans, and even parents and their children.

Screenwriting Research Network

Review by Jan Černík

7th International Conference

Potsdam, Germany, 17–19 October 2014

The seventh annual Screenwriting Research Network international conference took place at Film University Babelsberg, Potsdam, Germany. The impressive university building, which included three cinema-like rooms, served as an excellent venue for the entire conference.

The travelling conference returned to Europe after a period of two years (Sydney, Australia 2012 and Madison, Wisconsin, USA 2013). The primary reason for the travelling format is the dissemination of the network throughout the world. The Screenwriting Research Network does not have one centre but unites researchers from all over the world.

The number of papers increased just as in previous years (approximately sixty in 2013 and around ninety in 2014). Although the growing number of papers indicates growing interest in the Network, it also means that the organizers had to combine papers in panels taking place simultaneously. There were three panels running concurrently this year and the participants at times had the impression that they were missing out on two thirds of the conference programme.

The main topic of the conference was “Screenwriting & Directing Audiovisual Media” which is broad enough. The extent of the topic was demonstrated to the participants on the very first day. The keynote speaker Milcho Manchevski talked as a practitioner about the development of his films. The following panel was opened by Ian W. MacDonald with a paper concerning problems of subjectivity and screenwriting. He focused on the individuality of the screenwriter and with this kind of macro-problem also proposed a cognitivist or neurological approach. Adam Ganz focused in the afternoon of the first day on separate words and the prosaic style in screenplays, tackling issues of narration (telling the story) and notation (indicating shot composition, editing strategy, etc.). The focus on separate words is a kind of micro-problem which screenwriting studies deals with as well.

The papers by practitioners and scholars represented the two main groups of papers at the conference. Jarmo Lampela’s paper was, for example, based on his own experience and represented a screenwriting method involving collaboration between the director/screenwriter and actors. He described his method step by step and summarized the pros and cons using the specific example of a film which has been produced utilizing this method.

The thematic range of theoretical and historical papers reached from particular texts and authors to larger concepts. Christine Lang talked about the interpretation of *Mulholland Drive* by David Lynch. She rejected interpretations based on psychoanalytical and gender studies and instead attempted to search for the key to understanding the film through visual dramaturgy.

Sally Potter’s creative process (both screenwriting and directing) was evaluated by Jill Nelmes. The thirty-plus-year career of Potter is distinguished, according to Nelmes, by a playfulness in style and content and experiments with narration.

David Moorehead focused on the genesis of *Eyes Wide Shut* by Stanley Kubrick. This case study based on archival documents and correspondence enabled him to identify screenwriting as a gateway to conceptualizing cinematic adaptation in general.

There were two more keynote speakers apart from Milcho Manchevski. Jutta Bruckner in her stylized speech talked about (auto)biographical narration and Brian Winston focused on TV documentary. All keynote speeches were based on practical experience.

There is one more problem related with the large amount of papers. Programme delays caused that discussions were often extremely short or non-existent. This was unfortunate because discussion can substantially enrich every panel. A good example was Panel 12: Debating Writing. Miranda Banks talked about the situation in the *The Screen Writer* journal after WW2, Claus Tieber evaluated the screenwriting practice of the Indian authors Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar within the context of 1970s politics and contemporary narrative strategies and Raffaele Chiarulli presented his research focused on the three-act structure in 1930s screenwriting manuals. These papers were followed by a discussion (kicked off by the last paper) about the historical development of the three-act structure phenomenon.

Papers with similar topics were presented across panels. Even the main topic of the conference signifies that authorship in various forms was predominant. Papers either focused on particular authors (Panel 2: Auteur-Film) or on a group of filmmakers (Panel 17: Screenwriting in France and “Politiques des Auteurs”). One of these topics was computer games and new media screenwriting (Panel 6: Storytelling for Games and Panel 16: Writing for New and Cross Media). Mirko Stojkovic and Michael Wellenreiter, for example, dealt with role playing games screenwriting. Jeff Rush was concerned with two models for structuring serial stories (emergent and progressive). Serial narration also had a prominent place in James Mavour’s paper in the form of a web series in Panel 16. In this panel Margaret McVeigh presented her concept of cinematurgy for new media. Michael Geidel and Annkathrin Wetzel talked about specific writing and directing methods for education using new technology and media.

Another example of topic overlapping across more panels was screenwriting for documentaries. Brian Winston talked about it in his keynote speech and Panel 10: Documentary Film was fully devoted to exploring this topic in some depth. Jouko Altonen presented differences between observation documentaries and documentaries based on diaries or archives. Thomas Balkenhol focused on Turkish documentary.

The seventh year of the Screenwriting Research Network conference was a highly prestigious event. There are challenges for organizers in the future concerning the growing number of papers and related demands on venues. Although the conference programme might seem fragmented it is the network which links all these topics related to screenwriting in audiovisual media.

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