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IMAGES IN HISTORY

Towards an (AUDIO)VISUAL historiography



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Images in History

TOWARDS AN (AUDIO)VISUAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

EDITORS:

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Konferenser 99

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ABSTRACT

The outcome of an international symposium taking place on 27–28 April 2017 at the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in Stockholm, this anthology can be read from either end. At one end, a number of essays addressing the question of how pictorial, especially photographic, representations can and have been understood either as historical artefacts or as sources of knowledge about the past. In a nutshell, images in history. Turn the book over again and continue reading. At the other end, an equal number of contributions – texts as well as images – that approach the same question from the reverse angle: how pictorial, especially photographic, representations can themselves be used to convey a new and different understanding of the past. In another nutshell, history in images. Taken together, the two parts of the volume are intended, each from its own perspective, to prepare the ground for a new historical (sub)discipline, viz. (audio)visual historiography.

Keywords: (Audio)visual, film, history, images, methodology, photography

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PETER ARONSSON & BIRGITTA SVENSSON

Introduction: Images in history

Throughout the history of historiography runs a series of concerns. Many stem from the gap between an idea of an independent reality of historical events needing exploration with legitimate methods, and its mediation and adaption. Others stem from the challenges of how to avoid being overwhelmed by the multitude of facts and to be able to select findings of importance to the unfolding of history itself and relevance to the age of narration and mediation. A constant fear prevails that history is slipping away and we are not given a true or vivid enough representation to meet these concerns. We can follow the debates over centuries¹ which might lead us to conclude that there are no answers to be given on these levels of inquiry, but we would rather state that there is a demanding need for reinvigorated investigation due to changes in history. Among these are the expansion of societal uses and mediations of histories parallel to the exploration of these by a widening array of academic disciplines. In an academic world of successive turns, we will here observe them as responses to fundamental historical changes. The possibilities for transmedial narration have exploded in recent decades as has the concurrent existence of historical facts and narratives. To paraphrase Krustjov: history seems to be far too important to be dealt with by historians only. Obviously, there are urgent issues to be answered on how a wider array of media is being mobilized in the making of history and historiography.

The outcome of an international symposium which took place on 27–28 April 2017 at the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in Stockholm, this anthology can be read from either end. Turn the book over, and you will find a number of contributions – texts as well as images – addressing the question of how pictorial, especially photographic, representations can be used to convey a new and different understanding of the past. In a nutshell, *history in images*. Continue reading, and you will discover an equal number of essays that approach the same question from the reverse angle: how pictorial, especially photographic, representations

can and have been understood either as historical artefacts or as sources of knowledge about the past. In another nutshell, *images in history*.

In contrast to the reverse side of the anthology, this part is organized chronologically, as often dictated by the historical perspective.

In the first contribution, the eminent historian Carlo Ginzburg unfolds a densely associative argument where the numbered paragraphs – a stylistic signature, from the very first, of the Italian historian’s work² – come to resemble so many Chinese boxes: departing from the scholarship of the British connoisseur Philip Pouncey, his essay deftly moves on to Pouncey’s role model Roberto Longhi, then to Longhi’s polemic against the philosopher Benedetto Croce, then to Croce’s own debate with fellow philosopher Giovanni Gentile, then to ... Drawing on, among many other sources, the evidence provided by Longhi’s private copy of Croce’s *Aesthetics*, Ginzburg reveals the art critic’s vivid and, at first sight, extravagant language to be “rooted, more often than not, in a long tradition which went back to local erudites and ultimately to the artists themselves” (and here, the author almost seems to echo his own account, in *The cheese and the worms*, of the deep historical roots of the miller Menocchio’s seemingly exceptional world-view). Along the way, he also takes the opportunity to return, if only from an oblique angle, to long-standing preoccupations such as the mutual intertwinement of words and images, the cognitive dimension of literary style, and the possibility – *malgré tout* – of translation.

Close on Ginzburg’s heels, the contribution of artist Maria Lantz – on the pioneering “criminologist” Alphonse Bertillon and his method of identifying criminal suspects with the help of so-called *bertillonages* – can almost be read as a brief addendum to the Italian historian’s classic essay on ‘Clues’. But how on earth did the daughter of the city physician of Stockholm, a girl of solidly bourgeois upbringing, end up on one of Bertillon’s index cards?

Like Lantz’s impressionistic sketch, the next two contributions both deal with Swedish cases. In ‘Displaying science: Photography, ethnography and national history’, curator and art historian Louise Wolthers delves into the case of the 1929 International Photography Exhibition at the *Kunsthalle* in Gothenburg. Against the background of a general discussion of the relation between photography and historiography, the essay presents us with another set of Chinese boxes: an installation photograph from the exhibition leads to a portrait by photographer Borg Mesch – which, in its turn, leads to another portrait of the same subject, a Sami woman named Maria Huuva, a portrait that was never exhibited but instead discarded by Mesch. Along the way, Wolthers demonstrates how the gazes of the historian, the ethnographer,

and the racial biologist all intersect in what Ginzburg has famously termed “the evidential paradigm”.

After that, ethnologist Karin Gustavsson reconstructs the itinerary of photographer Börje Hanssen, a student and assistant of the legendary art historian Gregor Paulsson, as he wandered the streets of Helsingborg, camera in hand, in July 1943. With the help of unpublished material from the archives of the Nordic Museum in Stockholm, the reader is invited to follow in the photographer’s footsteps, to see what he saw and, crucially, to understand what he *thought* that he was seeing. By exploiting the tension between Hanssen’s images and written captions, Gustavsson provides a perspective on the “thought style” prevalent in Paulsson’s circle as well as on the role of photography in the ethnographic research of the time.

The following four contributions all approach the question of “images in history” from different vantage points than that of the historical discipline narrowly conceived. First, anthropologist Marcus Banks shifts the frame, geographically as well as chronologically: from Sweden in the interwar period to Jamnagar, a city in Gujarat, India, from the 1980s onwards. Drawing on his own long-standing work on (and with) the city’s Jain minority, his essay forms a reflection on the relation between history and anthropology, the uneven distribution of photographic technologies, the highly variable role of photography in society – and, perhaps most importantly, the narrative structure of historical consciousness. History, he concludes, is best conceived “not as a series of certain and stable events, but as a confection of aspirations, doubts, and uncertainties”.

Next, ethnologist and museum curator Helene Larsson Pousette reviews her own professional experience with contemporary collecting, a practice that has much in common with Banks’ anthropological method. From a field study of lay-offs at the Ericsson factory in Norrköping, by way of a museum development project in post-communist Serbia, to a recent exhibition at the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm, a variety of commonplace objects – a red folder, a whistle, ten tons (!) of soil – take on new and sometimes unexpected meanings by being placed in a transdisciplinary perspective. If Banks stressed the narrative dimension of historical consciousness, Larsson Pousette rather emphasizes its material underpinnings.

Then, media artist and political activist Michelle Teran turns the spotlight on the performative aspect of images in a contemporary context. With Ginzburg’s work on political iconography as a springboard, Teran constructs a visual essay where imagery from the 2015 municipal elections in Madrid and Barcelona are juxtaposed with propaganda posters from the Spanish Civil War. Drawing on David Graeber’s notion of “prefigurative politics”, she argues that – under the right circumstances – images can offer “alternative collective identities that are powerful, inclusive, and propose a

rational organization of life on the basis of social justice". In this regard, her approach also resonates with that of Ariella Azoulay in the other part of this anthology.

Nearly last but not least, the contribution of Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback entails a fourth shift of disciplinary perspective, this time to a philosophical point of view. With an epigraph from Paul Celan setting the tone, her essay evolves into a contemplation of the paradoxical nature of images and their current overabundance. Alluding to the thought of, among others, Walter Benjamin, Vladimir Nabokov and Paul Valéry, Sá Cavalcante Schuback proposes to regard the image, not in terms of representation, but rather of *migration* – "between the visible and invisible, the touchable and untouchable, being and non-being". Here, the resonance with the present moment that was already palpable in Teran's visual essay is further intensified.

Finally, the very last contribution to this part of the anthology is also an attempt to tie up the loose ends of the volume as a whole. In his "mathematical parable", the historian Andrej Slávik takes Ginzburg's microhistory and Azoulay's "potential history" as waymarks leading into the largely uncharted terrain of (audio)visual historiography. To join him on that venture, turn the book over and continue reading.

The purpose of the symposium was to relate to the work of Carlo Ginzburg on microhistory, anthropology and clues in methodology, at the same time as showing into which paths the collaboration between artists and historians could lead. His work has inspired cultural research to both investigate and narrate dimensions of life and history felt to have been hidden in more general historiography of recognized powerful actors. In doing so it also questioned the very idea of where the important processes of history happened and should be uncovered. It combined the idea of primacy of culture in the Annales school with an eye for the unexpected detail which inspire researchers on the hunt for both relevance and a unique contribution to the academic community.

The result has been successful in opening new perspectives which permeate this book. Most of them relate to the writings of Carlo Ginzburg. He has shown in several works such as *Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes: Clues, myths, and the historical method*³ how important details are to provide insight into new worlds and different cultures and approaches. His knowledge method urges us to follow the concrete, individual and distinctive in history. By searching for seemingly insignificant images, symptoms and clues, this method can provide the key to understanding previously hidden contexts. This is achieved by closely examining the traces and by discussing the probability that the traces lead correctly and create a believable story.⁴ If you read your material in a new way and look on it differently and distinctively, it can also offer

new knowledge. It can lead you to the unexpected, apparently insignificant and silent, which can have the potential to reveal what we already think that we know – but in new ways. In what is often perceived as obvious and natural, norms are hidden that affect everyday life and constitute rules and habits.

Ginzburg also identifies the important parallelism between history (in the two-fold sense of process and narration, of *res gestae* and of *historia rerum gestarum*) and the photograph.⁵ The importance of images has sometimes been compared to the eyewitness. At the same time, however, they are sometimes silent and require great demands of interpretation and knowledge. Photographic portraits have in many cases formed a normative imagery that has become the guiding principle for different people's ability to create identities. This normative image use began in the late 1800s as Lantz shows in her article. It also played a major role in locking people up into different identities in the photographic documentation made by anthropologists at the beginning of the 20th century.

Ginzburg has also reflected on and highlighted the importance of the connections between anthropology and cultural history. For instance, in the article 'The inquisitor as anthropologist' he compares the two and sees something common between them, that they create texts dialogically in the sense that Bachtin has described about Dostoevsky's writing. Trial records are comparable to the image and text documentation collected by an anthropologist. The trial from the inquisitor and the transcript from the anthropologist are both field notes describing rituals and myths.⁶

It is also important to stress that Ginzburg dismisses the prevailing relativism of historical truth as intellectually, politically, and morally lazy. He referred to Donna Haraway's concept of "situated knowledges", however underlining that artefacts and facts are a powerful rhetoric at the same time as they are incompatible with proofs. Still the idea of historical proof is what is important in our findings. In his Postscript to Natalie Zemon Davis's book on *Martin Guerre*, he writes about proofs and possibilities, discussing why the exceptional can shed light on the usual and normal.

Ginzburg, who in several works showed how important the detail is to provide insight into new worlds, approaches and cultures, in his article here discusses what images provide for understanding. By focusing on the concrete, individual and distinctive, his knowledge method shows how he, like Sherlock Holmes, examines the traces as a key to understanding previously hidden contexts. He is also a *detective* in his paradigm of *sign-reading*, the interpreting of clues, presented in *Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes: Clues, myths and the historical method*.⁷ He has taught us a lot about archives, and sign-reading has been used by police scientists and criminal anthropologists in identification processes where one individual is distinguished from another, which in turn has taught us a lot about societies and the meaning of archives.⁸ In his

latest book he discusses in a thoughtful way how historical events relate to a much longer prevailing, lengthier history⁹ in a way that can be compared to Assman and Czaplicka's discussion on the meaning of cultural memory.¹⁰

Each discipline in the humanities developed a set of methods and a body of doxa, emphasizing its peculiarities to form a professional discipline but at the same time contributing to a division of labour in the making of shared ideas of nature, humanity, society and individuality. The humanities disciplines did of course interact in the academic and public spheres, and in an established form through the making of institutional heritage and a system of museums where they meet not only each other but also political demand and public sensibilities in a multimedial setting.¹¹ With the digital expansion in a globalized world this dynamic sets the agenda for a new set of enquiries where imagination once again is investigated in a trans-disciplinary and trans-institutional exchange. Disciplinary refinement is one necessary source of scientific success, that needs to be met with enhanced capacity for exchange.

When new boundaries for social science were established during the latter part of the 19th century, it became evident what value the truth has and where the boundaries of knowledge lay. New observation and registration techniques produced new knowledge about people's lives. This is primarily about a kind of individualization technique – about the art of recognizing and separating individuals. A new kind of social memory took shape during the late 19th century. It was no longer a matter of the art of remembering, but about how memory shapes the personality, something that eventually became a social and politically important issue.

In the same way as ethnology and cultural historians during this time demarcated folk and landscape types, buildings and tools, the modern institutions demarcated different types of human life and for each of them the people who were considered to belong there.¹²

Social documentation in its early photographic form has often been regarded as a more realistic mediator of reality than other images. The realistic aura of photography makes the viewer think they see a less-interpreted and processed reality than for example meets them in the form of the text. What we see in the picture, however, is equally dependent on the cultural context, similar to how we embrace a text. The realism of photography has the effect of assigning a certain look, a particular view or a particular image meaning. This is an observing, documenting and recording gaze, which certainly already existed in the 18th century but fully developed only during the latter part of the 19th century.¹³ This can be compared to what Ariella Azoulay addresses in her article as unbounded archival violence, where the archive plays a normalizing

role. The photograph as testimony and social document goes hand in hand with the emergence of the other methods of observing, documenting and registering in the latter part of the 19th century. However, the photograph may play the most important role. English art historian John Tagg describes how the 1870s became the first decade when the photograph was used to document different individuals. An enormous expansion in its use at the major English prisons such as Wandsworth and Pentonville began at the same time as photographic surveys of living conditions in working-class areas were carried out and private organizations undertook photographic documentation of poor children. The gazes were aimed at the poor, the criminal, the colonized people and the sick, but also against women and workers. They were made passive objects for the new knowledge, and when the gaze was directed towards them, they were forced to give out some kind of signs that could symbolize them. With the help of photography, they became obliterated and locked in some sense, and had difficulty changing the classification and identification that was attributed to them. People's bodily expressions were personalized and attached to papers that became equal to the "truth" about them.¹⁴ But the camera is never neutral: it works in the field and the historical situation where it is used and participates in the representations and truths created there.

Although Aspelin's daughter's meeting with Alphonse Bertillon and his so-called "*portrait parlé*", as Lantz shows in her article, presents exciting questions, it was anatomy professor Gustaf Retzius who introduced the "*bertillonagen*" in Sweden in the late 1880s, after being presented to Bertillon at the Paris Criminal Anthropological Congress. He wrote about it in the press and a longer presentation is available in the 1889 edition of the journal *Hygiea*. Retzius describes Bertillon's original purpose with his method, as Lantz also demonstrated, to systematize the thousands of photographs held by the Paris police. Eventually Bertillon found four measurements to be the most important in the identification method: the length of the head, its width, and the length of the left hand and left foot. The method was used for the first time in 1883 in Paris, and during the same year it made possible the identification of 49 individuals who operated under false names. The fact that there was some pre-judgement of those who underwent the measurement method is shown by Retzius's description of an arrested person, who appeared at the congress. He found that this person "had an unpleasant appearance and was a strong middle-aged man with a black moustache, black hair, bushy eyebrows ... scornful-looking eyes ...". The article in *Hygiea* concludes with a comprehensive account of the five measuring devices needed to perform the measurements: a curved circle, a large angle hook, a small angle hook, two-degree metre dimensions, and a graduated square white wiper cloth. They could be ordered by mail order from Paris at a cheap price.¹⁵

The photograph was not only an image, but also a standardized personification. The photographic technique made it possible to distinguish and combine. At the same time as the photograph attributes an individualization, it also contributes to a standardization. It showed special individuals and group affiliation by also communicating knowledge about which place the individuals had in society.¹⁶ The rhetoric that the photograph could reproduce was about precision, calculation, measurement, and evidence. Individuals were turned into an object for a specific form of power exercise. They were deprived of the ability to speak, to say, to act, and to tell their own story, as Wolthers also shows in her article.

NOTES

- 1 Anthony Grafton, *What was history? The art of history in early modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Peter Aronsson, *BeGreppbart - Historia* (Malmö: Liber 2011).
- 2 Cf. Andrej Slávik, 'Microhistory and cinematic experience: Two or three things I know about Carlo Ginzburg', in *Microhistories*, eds. Magnus Bärtås & Andrej Slávik (Stockholm: Konstfack, 2016), 45–46, 54.
- 3 Carlo Ginzburg, *Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues, myths, and the historical method* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).
- 4 See also 'Proofs and possibilities. Postscript to Natalie Zemon Davis, *The return of Martin Guerre*', in Carlo Ginzburg, *Threads and traces: True, false, fictive* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2012).
- 5 Carlo Ginzburg, *History, rhetoric, and proof* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1999).
- 6 Carlo Ginzburg, 'The inquisitor as anthropologist' in *Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues, myths, and the historical method*, ch. 4, p. 141.
- 7 Ginzburg, *Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues, myths, and the historical method*.
- 8 Ginzburg, *Threads and traces: True, false, fictive*.
- 9 Under the *Pathosformeln* in Preface in Carlo Ginzburg, *Fear, reverence and terror. Five essays in political iconography* (London, University of Chicago Press / Seagull Books, 2017).
- 10 Jan Assmann & John Czaplicka, 'Collective memory and cultural identity', in *New German Critique* 65, 1995, 125–133: "The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image." (p. 132).
- 11 Peter Aronsson & Gabriella Elgenius, eds., *National Museums and nation-building in Europe 1750–2010. Mobilization and legitimacy, continuity and change* (London: Routledge, 2015).

12 Birgitta Svensson & Anna Wallette, *Individer i rörelse. Kulturbetona i 1880-talets Sverige* (Stockholm: Makadam förlag, 2012).

13 Martin Jay, *Downcast eyes. The denigration of vision in twentieth-century French thought* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1993). Cf. Wolfram Hartmann, Jeremy Sylvester & Patricia Hayes, eds., *The colonizing camera: Photographs in the making of Namibian history* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1999).

14 John Tagg, *The burden of representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 91. Cf. Ginzburg in *History, rhetoric, and proof*.

15 Gustaf Retzius, 'Alphonse Bertillons antropometriska metod att identifiera brottslingar', *Hygien: Festband med anledning av tidskriftens femtioåriga tillvaro 10*, Stockholm 1889.

16 Birgitta Svensson, 'Kategoriseringarnas tidevarv', in Bo Stråth, *Sveriges historia 1830–1920* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2012).

CARLO GINZBURG

On small differences

Ekphrasis and connoisseurship

to Enrico Castelnuovo
parole non possono dire
(Pietro Toesca, oral tradition)

Reading images: the metaphor embedded in this expression implies, if taken literally, that images are texts, or comparable to texts.¹ This approach has been repeatedly pursued, with questionable results. An alternative, less simplistic route will be suggested here, arguing that our relationship with images always implies a verbal mediation of some kind. Even the connoisseur – a laconic art historian, as Erwin Panofsky defined him or her – tacitly relies upon words: the words of *ekphrasis*, of description.² Reading images means, first of all, to translate images into words, to describe them. Let us look at this process, and at its implications, more closely.

1. My case study will begin with Philip Pouncey, the British connoisseur – a recognized authority in the field of Italian drawings. A volume published in Italy collects his (usually dense and short) contributions in three languages.³ Four catalogues, based on exhibitions which took place, respectively, at the Fitzwilliam Museum, the Louvre, the Uffizi, and the British Museum, celebrated Pouncey's triumphs as a connoisseur.⁴ The introductions to those catalogues invariably mentioned an attribution which achieved a quasi-exemplary status, becoming an epitome of Pouncey's uncanny gifts as well as a model for the connoisseur's practice. Here is a telling comment by John A. Gere, who co-authored with Pouncey the two-volume catalogue of the drawings by Raphael and his circle preserved at the British Museum:⁵

It may be asked, how does an artistic personality reveal itself? In addition to the Morelian criteria presented by such secondary physical features as the form of hands or ears, there are individual patterns of composition and grouping into which the draughtsman falls unconsciously and which are as unmistakable as a writer's choice of words and the cadence of sentences; and above all there is the psychology of the artist as expressed in nuances of facial expression.

A classic example of the last type of attribution is that of the study of a crouching nude man by Bastianino [...] which had lain unnoticed for more than two hundred years among the anonymous sheets at Christ Church. No drawings from the hand of this obscure Ferrarese imitator of Michelangelo were known when Mr. Pouncey remarked that “if Bastianino had made drawings, this is exactly the kind of drawing that one would have expected from him”. The suggestion was triumphantly confirmed by the discovery in a painting by Bastianino of the figure for which the drawing undoubtedly served as a study.⁶

A footnote concerning the last remark. The drawing (*Fig. 1*) is covered by a square grid (*quadrettatura*): a device used by painters to transfer their drawings into larger surfaces, either on walls or on panels or on canvases. According to a Ferrarese erudit, Bastianino was nicknamed “Gratella” (i. e. grid) since he had rediscovered this forgotten device.⁷

Philip Pouncey’s attribution has been described several times – by John Gere himself, by Nicholas Turner, by Evelyne Bacou, by James Byam Shaw – more or less in the same words. But as soon as we read Pouncey’s article devoted to Bastianino’s drawings, we are confronted with a somewhat different version.⁸ Here Pouncey remarked:

We became aware of Bastianino’s stylistic originality to a large extent thanks to the way in which Roberto Longhi [in his *Officina ferrarese*, 1934] brilliantly presented his concept concerning Bastianino’s quality (a concept later developed by Francesco Arcangeli): this allowed us to share his poetic vision inhabited by “ash-grey and foggy titans”.⁹

The same words – *titani cinerei e nebbiosi* – which Longhi had used to evoke Bastianino’s paintings surface again in the description of Pouncey’s encounter with the Christ Church drawing:

In this case my attention was attracted by the bizarre physical appearance, as well as by the subtlety in which the body had been shaped, conveying not only its massive character but also, to a certain extent, the atmosphere which it inhabits. He is not only a “titan” but a “foggy titan”.¹⁰

The next step, i.e. the identification of the painting based on the drawing – a detail from an altarpiece by Bastianino representing the *Last Judgement*, originally at Rovello Porro, now in Ferrara’s Certosa (*Figs. 2–3*) – was not made by Pouncey himself but by Myril, his wife.¹¹ The disappearance of her name from the later accounts of



Fig. 1. Bastianino (Sebastiano Filippi), *Study of a Nude Man*, date unknown. Christ Church Gallery, Oxford (JSB no. 908). Courtesy of The Governing Body of Christ Church, Oxford.

Pouncey's attribution may be ascribed to sexism, shared, apparently, by some distinguished art historians, both male and female.¹² More puzzling is the disappearance, in the aforementioned remarks, of Pouncey's crucial reference to Longhi's *titani cinerei e nebbiosi*. Compared with the detailed, vivid account I just quoted, Gere's comment looks disappointingly vague: "Such feats of divination [like Pouncey's] seem miraculous, but they are achieved only by a prolonged and single-minded absorption in the subject."¹³



Fig. 2, left. Bastianino (Sebastiano Filippi), *Last Judgement*, 1578. San Christoforo alla Certosa, Ferrara. Courtesy of Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.

Fig. 3, right. Detail from Fig. 2.



What we came across is indeed something more specific: a mental process in which, incidentally, the artist's psychology – which Gere mentioned as a crucial element of the attribution practice, regarded as a kind of empathy – played no role whatsoever. Pouncey's act of recognition had different roots, which reveal (I will argue) some of the theoretical implications of connoisseurship. Let us look at the case more closely.

2. Sebastiano Filippi, nicknamed Bastianino, was born in Ferrara around 1532, and died in 1602; his father, Camillo, was also a painter. Bastianino shows up at the very end of Roberto Longhi's *Officina ferrarese* (1934), a book conceived as a detailed commentary to a great exhibition held in Ferrara in 1933: it has been republished several times with substantial additions.

In one paragraph, amounting to 16 lines in the first edition of *Officina ferrarese*, Longhi identified Bastianino, virtually unknown outside Ferrara, as "the greatest poet of Italian mannerism after El Greco", and concluded that his "ash-grey and foggy titans" (*titani cinerei e nebbiosi*) will hopefully make him, in a near future, the favourite artist of some "young critic".¹⁴ Pouncey must have read those lines in his mid-20s (he was born in 1910, being 20 years younger than Longhi). Although his note on Bastianino's drawings was published much later, Pouncey had engaged himself in a dialogue with Longhi's *Officina ferrarese* a long time before – in fact, since

his very first essay, 'Ercole Grandi's masterpiece', which came out in *The Burlington Magazine* in 1937. With the help of X-rays – a technology rarely used by art historians at that time – Pouncey developed Longhi's argument on the dual authorship of the Pala Strozzi (Fig. 4), suggesting that the unnamed artist involved in the altarpiece, along with the more famous Lorenzo Costa, was Gianfrancesco Maineri.¹⁵ In his *Ampliamenti nell'Officina ferrarese* (issued in 1940) Longhi answered at length, rejecting Pouncey's identification – which is still widely regarded as the most likely. (The debate is still open).¹⁶

Thirty-five years later, Longhi's four words used to depict the work of Bastianino – "ash-grey and foggy titans" – paved the way to Pouncey's attribution of the Christ Church drawing. How was this sequence possible? To answer this question one has to address a crucial element of Longhi's work: his dense, vivid literary style, which contributed (along with his extraordinary gifts as a connoisseur) to his almost legendary fame among 20th-century art historians. But in the English-speaking world the name of Longhi has remained, beyond the specialists' circle, virtually unknown (two recent translations notwithstanding). In a recent, and in many ways symptomatic book, entitled *The books that shaped art history: from Gombrich and Greenberg to Alpers and Krauss*, Longhi's name is not mentioned.¹⁷ Too much of a connoisseur, perhaps, for the editors of a book whose introduction dismissively refers to "the minutiae of connoisseurship" – an allusion to Berenson's *Drawings of the Florentine painters* to which an essay is devoted.¹⁸ Moreover, and more importantly, Longhi's highly idiosyncratic language created an obstacle which prevented a more widespread impact being made by his work: a price to be paid by his use of literary style as a cognitive tool.

3. This last point, which is crucial from a theoretical point of view, was made by the great Romance philologist Gianfranco Contini in a series of essays devoted to Roberto Longhi, considered as the most prominent master of Italian 20th-century prose.¹⁹ I will try to unfold the implications of Contini's dense, often cryptic remarks, following a path opened up by André Chastel, in an essay devoted to Longhi as a genius of *ekphrasis*.²⁰

A large amount of research has been devoted to *ekphrasis*: a rhetorical genre based on the description of works of art, either real or imagined.²¹ In ancient Greece, where the genre emerged, *ekphrasis* focused on *schema* – a broad notion which included what

Fig. 4, right. Lorenzo Costa and Gianfrancesco Maineri, *Virgin and Child with Saints*, ca. 1498–1500. National Gallery, London.



we usually label “iconography”.²² Longhi reinterpreted the genre, as Chastel pointed out, creating “verbal equivalences” of works of art (a quote from Longhi, as we will see): descriptions which – we might say, relying upon the ancient Greek terminology – aimed to convey not only their *schema*, but their *ergasia*, their stylistic features as well.²³ For Longhi, attribution often came at the end of *ekphrasis*, as a conclusion of it.²⁴

4. The expression “verbal equivalences” (*equivalenze verbali*) had been used by Longhi himself to define his own method in an early, polemical review, published in 1920. The passage is well known, but it deserves a further analysis.

But first of all, some information about its intellectual context. In his *Aesthetics* (1902), a book which had a deep impact on philosophical debates, in Italy and elsewhere, Benedetto Croce had insisted on the deep unity of art: its media (verbal, pictorial, musical and so on) were irrelevant, insofar as the critic’s aim was to identify the lyrical core of specific art works.

In 1912 Longhi objected that the “new aesthetics” (that is, Croce’s) diluted the concreteness of pictorial style into vague, psychological categories.²⁵ Some years later, in 1919, in an essay entitled ‘The history and criticism of visual arts and its present conditions’, Croce mentioned Longhi as a *temperamentvoll* (as the German say) writer – influential, competent and highly intelligent – but rejected his argument (without naming him) along with the “bizarre idea of an art criticism competing with art and expressing it through a new medium”.²⁶ Longhi answered, in 1920, in a review of Enzo Petraccone’s posthumous book on Luca Giordano, the Neapolitan 17th-century painter. Petraccone had addressed some criticism to Longhi’s essay on Mattia Preti; but the real target of Longhi’s oblique rejoinder was Croce, who had introduced Petraccone’s book.²⁷ Here is Longhi:

We believe that it is possible to create specific verbal equivalences of specific visual experiences; equivalences which may have a quasi-genetic dimension, in so far as they replicate the way in which a work of art has been created and expressed. We do not know whether this is a translation – and since it has been demonstrated that translations are impossible, we hope that this would not be the case – but since a personal involvement is inevitably associated to historical knowledge, we believe that our approach may have a role in a methodically sound historical criticism of visual arts.²⁸

In a brilliant essay Cesare Garboli emphasized the ironical overtone of Longhi’s remark on the impossibility of translation, unfolding some of its implications.²⁹ But to fully appreciate the irony we must identify its target: Benedetto Croce’s rejection of the very possibility of translation, put forward in his *Aesthetic* – a book whose full title

read: *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale* (*Aesthetic as science of expression and general linguistic*).³⁰ For Croce, the identity of aesthetic and linguistics implied that both deal with unique phenomena. Since (as the linguists say) there are no identical words, no synonyms, no homonyms, translations are (Croce argued) rigorously impossible. Those who, like myself, believe in the possibility of translation, would describe this radically idealistic position in Saussurean terms, as follows: for Croce (and especially for the early Croce) language coincides with *parole*; *langue* should not be taken into account, being a mere fiction, not a reality.

Longhi, as we have seen, insisted that his “verbal equivalences” of visual works of art were indeed translations: a remark which had positive, not only polemical, implications. Here I am, once again, following in the footsteps of Cesare Garboli. In another fundamental essay on Longhi’s early intellectual development, Garboli wrote: “In the morphology of Italian idealism, the very peculiar variation introduced by Longhi, i.e. a contamination of materialism and idealism” is remote from Croce’s philosophy: in fact, it can be regarded as a version of Giovanni Gentile’s philosophy (*idealismo attuale*). “I don’t know,” Garboli commented, “if, and to what extent, and up to which date, Longhi read Gentile. But this is not so important”.³¹

Something more will be said on this issue in a moment; but first, a general remark. For more than 50 years the Italian philosophical scene was dominated by Croce and Gentile – first as friends, later as enemies. Their theoretical divergences became also political (and more bitter) with the emergence of fascism – a movement, then a regime, strongly supported by Gentile (who became its official philosophical representative) and opposed (after an initially benevolent attitude) by Croce. The divergence between Croce and Gentile, which had emerged in 1913, was in 1920 still restricted to the theoretical domain. One of the issues on which they debated was translation. In my view Longhi must have read Gentile’s essay ‘Il torto e il diritto delle traduzioni’ (“The right and wrong of translations”) first published in the opening issue of *Rivista di cultura*, printed on 15 April 1920.³² Gentile initially agreed with Croce’s argument on the impossibility of translations but then, with a typical dialectical move, turned it upside down: we always translate, insofar as every act of reading (or of thinking somebody else’s thought) is a translation. Originals do not exist: a conclusion which Gentile developed in other texts, arguing that the past, as an objective entity, distinct from the act of thinking, does not exist.

The echoes of this debate are still with us. In an essay entitled ‘Reading is like translating’, Hans-Georg Gadamer mentioned the old Italian motto *traduttore-traditore*, “translator-traitor” (which he ascribed to Croce) and then argued (following Gentile, although without mentioning him) that reading a text, including texts written in our mother-tongue, always implies a translation.³³ A comment on contemporary herme-

neutics and translation would take me into a different direction. Let me go back to Longhi; more specifically, to the “contamination of materialism and idealism” Garboli detected in Longhi’s thought.

5. I will try to clarify this issue relying upon some (so far, strangely unexploited) evidence: Longhi’s library, which is preserved, along with his splendid collection of paintings, in Florence, at the Fondazione bearing his name. Longhi used to underline passages and to scribble comments (occasionally in shorthand) on the margins of the books he owned. A copy of the third edition of Croce’s *Aesthetics*, published in 1908, allows us to follow at a close distance the response of the young reader (Longhi, born in 1890, must have read it first in his 20s; then again several times, certainly in 1941).³⁴ Some of the passages most heavily underlined deal with Croce’s aforementioned argument, rejecting the distinction among arts (poetry, painting, music and so forth) as theoretically irrelevant. In a typical passage Croce remarked that Aristotle was right in saying that the difference between poetry and prose cannot be identified in an external feature like verse. “Poetry and prose yes but poetry and painting no”, Longhi noted.³⁵ These laconic words pointed at a profound theoretical divergence. For Croce art was an all-encompassing category of the spirit, defined as identity between lyrical intuition and expression; but expression should not be confused with the intuition’s physical embodiment, or extrinsecation (*estrinsecatione*). Longhi’s impatience with this argument suddenly erupts in his marginal notes. When Croce (implicitly echoing, once again, Aristotle) wrote: “Aesthetic judgement on a work of art is totally unrelated to a judgement on the artist’s morality”, Longhi sarcastically commented: “Therefore when the painter materially paints and ‘extrinsecates’ [*estrinseca*] he is merely a practical man!”³⁶ *Materialmente dipinge*, “materially paints”: what Croce regarded as a mere empirical phenomenon – the materiality of the object – was at the centre of Longhi’s approach, both as a connoisseur and an art historian. In fact, without this commitment to the object – *that* object, located in a definite space and time, having specific physical features – connoisseurship would be unthinkable.

But Longhi’s peculiar mixture of idealism and materialism must be looked at in a much larger historical framework. Many years ago, in an essay which dealt (among many other things) with Giovanni Morelli and connoisseurship, I pointed out that we usually take for granted a dichotomy between texts and (certain) images, which is on the contrary the outcome of a silent, long-term cultural trajectory. On the one hand, we assume that a text (or a number) will remain the same in whatever medium, in whatever handwriting, in whatever font is reproduced; on the other, we assume that a reproduction of a painting by Raphael or Rembrandt cannot, by definition,



Fig. 5. Piero della Francesca, *The Battle between Constantinus and Maxentius*, ca. 1452–1466. Basilica di San Francesco, Arezzo. Courtesy of the Soprintendenza Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio per le province di Siena, Grosseto e Arezzo.

replicate the original. On the one hand, we have invisible texts; on the other, visible objects.³⁷ I advanced this argument long time before coming across the impatient remarks Longhi scribbled on the margins of his own copy of Croce's *Aesthetics*. Longhi's stress on the materiality of the painterly object implicitly pointed out at the different status of poetry, on which Croce's definition of art was based.³⁸

In his youth Longhi was briefly tempted by a version of extreme formalism which ostensibly ignored names and chronology. After a few years (as I argued elsewhere) he chose a very different approach, focusing on names and chronology.³⁹ But his passionate commitment to the materiality of the object, as well as to the possibility of using “verbal equivalences” as an indispensable interpretive tool, never failed.

6. My comments about *ekphrasis* may have recalled Michael Baxandall's reflections on the same issue. In this case, convergence does not imply independence: Baxandall was well aware of Longhi's work, which he repeatedly praised in strong terms – especially notable in a writer known for his laconic restraint. In his essay on 'Jacopo

Sadoleto's *Laocoön*' Baxandall wrote: "all criticism lives with co-presences, whether something like the Bible or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, or just other criticism – as, for example, anyone intending to discourse on Piero della Francesca will have to do with the co-presence of Roberto Longhi".⁴⁰

Here texts (the Bible, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) are compared to pictures (Piero's frescoes). But in the same essay, as elsewhere, Baxandall pointed out that 1) *ekphrasis*, a verbal description (should we say "verbal equivalent"?) is a necessary tool of art criticism; 2) that "language is not very well equipped to offer a notation of a particular picture". Baxandall mentioned two reasons for this inadequacy: 1) language is "a generalizing tool"; 2) it is "temporally linear": true, "if a picture is simultaneously available in its entirety, *looking* at a picture is as temporally linear as language", but at a completely different – indeed, incompatible – pace.⁴¹ (I would add a third reason: language is discrete, a picture is a continuum).⁴² "What one offers in a description" Baxandall concluded, commenting upon *ekphraseis* provided by writers as distant as Libanius and Kenneth Clark, "is a representation of thinking about a picture more than a representation of a picture".⁴³ Might we also add: a translation?⁴⁴

I am trying to create a bridge between Baxandall and Longhi (Baxandall as a reader, and to a certain extent a translator, of Longhi). Retrospectively, I am tempted to read Longhi's *ekphraseis* as an experiment aiming to overcome the inadequacies of language emphasized by Baxandall. Let me recall a famous example – Longhi's description of one of Piero's frescoes in Arezzo: *The Battle between Constantinus and Maxentius* (Fig. 5), first published in his 1914 essay 'Piero dei Franceschi e le origini della pittura veneziana' (Longhi was 24). Longhi was so fond of this page that he quoted it again twice: 1) in a series of notes, published only posthumously, delivered in the same year in Rome, to a class of secondary school students (later one of them became his wife: Lucia Lopresti, better known as Anna Banti, her pen name); 2) in his book on Piero della Francesca, published in 1927. In the latter instance, the self-quotation (put in quotation marks) was followed by a short, half-ironical, half-distancing comment, which I will quote as well. Here is Longhi:

"Slow, sure irrigation of the meadows of the painting. A huge expanse of horses and men, in the nearly flat low relief of color. Reiterated foreshortenings, flattened breasts, fragmentated knees, rounded hooves, perfectly semicircular rear profiles. Round wells of form stagnate, blotchy barren hills compose a patchwork, shafts and lances leave their

Fig. 6. Titian, *Pesaro Altarpiece*, 1519–1526. Santa Maria dei Frari, Venice.
Photographer: Didier Descouens (Wikimedia Commons).



marks, in liquid ivory amber ebony, upon one side of a blue field of sky roofed with light-edged clouds; while, on the other is hung out to dry, softly, with no linear borders, the victory banner of the defeated general: a banner without which, I think, the Pesaro family would have had no banner, at least in art; lances, without which the lancers at Breda would still remain, I believe, unarmed – in painting!

And, O you incorruptible spheres of pale felt! Stay poised upon the pewter of those helmets, until, light-dazzled, you become, upon the blue breasts of heaven, medals – awarded for coloristic valor!"

In such words did I once attempt to express, even if in an overly romantic style, the effect made by this great painting.⁴⁵

An exercise in purely formal description? Yes and no. The subtext and allusions of Longhi's dense page reveal the perspective from which he approached Piero della Francesca's fresco – taking the word "perspective" in a metaphorical but also literal sense, since the description obviously echoes Cézanne's famous remark in his letter to Émile Bernard, dated 15 April 1904: "to treat nature in terms of the cylinder, the sphere and the cone, everything put in perspective, so that each side of an object, of a plane, leads to a central point".⁴⁶ The allusions to Titian's altarpiece for the Pesaro family (Fig. 6) and Velázquez's *The Surrender of Breda* (Fig. 7) point at a historical trajectory which from Piero della Francesca to Giovanni Bellini (only indirectly evoked) ends with Cézanne. Equally important is the very opening of the description, marked by a series of nominal sentences: a linguistic device whose main feature, as Émile Benveniste argued in a famous essay, is the absence of temporal connotations inevitably associated to verbs.⁴⁷ Nominal sentences could work (I would argue) as a compromise between the linearity of verbal language and the non-linearity of pictures.⁴⁸

7. The sentence from which I started – *titani cinerei e nebbiosi*, "ash-grey and foggy titans" – can be also reworked as a nominal sentence. Moreover, it is – like Longhi's *ekphrasis* of Piero della Francesca's *Battle* – densely metaphorical: "ash-grey", "foggy". But this metaphor had a long history, which went back to another remarkable Ferrarese painter: Carlo Bononi (born in 1569, died in 1632). In commenting upon the work of Bastianino, a master from the previous generation, Bononi wrote: *[egli] an-nebbiò con suo gusto particolare quanto mai dipinse, e pretese così di unire i colori* – a passage I would translate as follows: "he obfuscated [literally, covered with fog] all his paintings, following his particular taste, and aiming to blend the colours" – i.e. to avoid sharp transitions between colours.⁴⁹

Here we have a painter talking about another painter, using a painterly jargon – the idiom of the workshop, a linguistic domain which we know only partially, some-



Fig. 7. Diego Velázquez, *The Surrender of Breda*, ca. 1635. Museo del Prado, Madrid.

times indirectly. Later erudites from Ferrara developed Bononi's words, using similar metaphors to describe Bastianino's work: "[he] covered his paintings with a light veil, to obfuscate it"; "[he] used to cover his works with a foggy veil that obfuscates them, making them easily recognizable [*un velo nebbioso che lo adombra e lo fa facilmente riconoscere*]".⁵⁰

We are back to the metaphor Longhi used to define Bastianino's peculiar art: *titanici cinerei e nebbiosi*, "ash-grey and foggy titans". As we have seen, Longhi's ekphrastic language, sometimes dismissed as a personal aesthetic response to paintings, was in fact rooted, more often than not, in a long tradition which went back to local erudites and ultimately to the artists themselves.⁵¹

8. It is helpful to remind in this context the Greek etymology of the word “metaphor” (*meta-phorein*), which is literally replicated, in Latin, by the word *translatio* – hence, translation. In order to translate a pictorial style into words – into verbal equivalents – one has to rely upon metaphors (mostly synaesthetic).⁵² But can metaphors have a referential dimension? This looks like a paradoxical question, in the light of the well-known attack launched, especially in 17th-century France, against metaphor: a rhetorical trope which the Classicist taste rejected as irrational. But as Francesco Orlando, the Italian critic, pointed out, metaphors can also be the starting point of a mental experiment (“as if”).⁵³ This is why, I would argue, Longhi relied upon literature (as Cesare Garboli remarked) “as if it were a science”.⁵⁴ Two “as-ifs” reinforcing each other: metaphors (as well as, in a more general sense, literature) have a cognitive power, in so far as they build up a model of reality – including realities still to be experienced. (A model – *not* a mirror image.) Pouncey’s brilliant attribution of the Christ Church drawing to Bastianino shows the experimental, predictive quality of Longhi’s ekphrastic metaphor.⁵⁵

This is, in many ways, an extreme case: but it throws some light on a widespread (and still insufficiently explored) phenomenon, i.e. the manifold role played by words in connoisseurship – as well as, on a more general level, in visual appreciation. As Michael Baxandall remarked in his book on Quattrocento Italian painting, “the only practical way of publicly making discriminations is verbally”.⁵⁶ Words mediate between painting and experience: visual experiences, social experiences of all kind. We speak about paintings; they resist words; we insist, we speak again. *Parler peinture*, as the French say, is a never-ending activity.

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NOTES

¹ In September 2013 I presented a different version of this paper at the Bard Graduate Center, in a seminar directed by Peter N. Miller: I thank him for his generous hospitality. Many thanks are due to Maria Luisa Catoni for her comments and critical remarks on the present revised version. Many thanks to Henry Monaco for his linguistic advice. Many thanks to Luisa Ciammitti who guided me through the maze of Ferrarese writings about art. The essay as it appears here is a slightly shortened version of the text published in *Visual History* 2 (2016), 11–29.

² Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the visual arts* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1955), 20.

³ Philip Pouncey, *Raccolta di scritti (1937–1985)*, ed. Mario Di Giampaolo (Rimini: Galleria, 1994).

⁴ Julien Stock & David Scrase, *The achievement of a connoisseur: Philip Pouncey: Italian Old Master drawings* (Cambridge: Fitzwilliam Museum, 1985); Musée national du Louvre, *Hommage à Philip Pouncey: L'oeil du connaisseur: Dessins italiens du Louvre* (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1992); Gabinetto disegni e stampe degli Uffizi, *Philip Pouncey per gli Uffizi: Disegni italiani di tre secoli*, eds. Marco Chiarini, Gianvittorio Dillon & Annamaria Petrioli Tofani (Florence: Olschki, 1993); Nicholas Turner, *The study of Italian drawings: The contribution of Philip Pouncey* (London: British Museum Press, 1994). Cf. Nicholas Penny, *The sixteenth century Italian paintings*, vol. 1, *Paintings from Bergamo, Brescia and Cremona* (London: National Gallery, 2004), 384–385.

⁵ Philip Pouncey & John A. Gere, *Italian drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum: Raphael and his circle*, 2 vols. (London: British Museum, 1962).

⁶ John A. Gere, introduction to Stock & Scrase, *The achievement of a connoisseur*, [ix–x] (cf. Fig. 7). See also James Byam Shaw, *Drawings by Old Masters at Christ Church, Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), no. 908, pl. 549; idem, ‘Philip Pouncey – a celebration’, *Burlington Magazine* 127: 992 (November 1985), 761 (and illustrations on p. 763).

⁷ Cesare Cittadella, *Catalogo istorico de' pittori e scultori ferraresi, e delle opere loro, con in fine una nota esatta delle più celebri pitture delle chiese di Ferrara*, 4 vols. (Ferrara: Pomatelli, 1782–1783), vol. 2, 124–125.

⁸ Philip Pouncey, ‘Disegni del Bastianino’, in *Raccolta di scritti*, 139–146 (originally published in *Arte illustrata* 5 [1972]). When he came across the Christ Church drawing Pouncey was apparently unaware of the *Saint Sebastian* at Brera, which had been identified as ‘Bastianino’ by its previous owner, Filippo Acqua: see Luisa Ciammitti, ‘Un collezionista marchigiano del Settecento: Filippo Acqua’, in *Disegni emiliani dei secoli XVII–XVIII della Pinacoteca di Brera*, ed. Daniele Pescarmona (Milan: Mazzotta, 1995), 31–48, esp. 46–48.

⁹ Pouncey, ‘Disegni del Bastianino’, 140.

¹⁰ Pouncey, ‘Disegni del Bastianino’, 141.

¹¹ See Myril Pouncey, ‘Philip Pouncey: Témoignage d'une vie’, in *Hommage à Philip Pouncey*, 17–22.

¹² Shaw, ‘Philip Pouncey’ is an exception.

¹³ John A. Gere, ‘Philip Pouncey, 1910–1990’, in *Lectures and memoirs: Proceedings of the British Academy* 76 (Oxford University Press, 1991), 537.

¹⁴ Roberto Longhi, *Officina ferrarese* (1934), in *Edizione delle opere complete di Roberto Longhi*, vol. 5 (Firenze: Sansoni, 1968), 89. Francesco Arcangeli, born in 1915, also identified himself,

initially, with the “giovine critico”: see *Il Bastianino* (Ferrara: Cassa di risparmio di Ferrara, 1963), dedicated “al mio Maestro Roberto Longhi” (5).

15 Philip Pouncey, ‘Ercole Grandi’s masterpiece’, in *Raccolta di scritti*, 3–16.

16 Roberto Longhi, *Ampliamenti nell’Officina ferrarese* (1940), in *Opere complete*, vol. 5, 152–154. See Cecil Gould, *National Gallery catalogues: The Italian sixteenth century schools* (London: National Gallery, 1975), 77–80.

17 Richard Shone & John-Paul Stonard, eds., *The books that shaped art history: From Gombrich and Greenberg to Alpers and Krauss* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013). On p. 218, n. 20 the reader will find a reference to Longhi’s correspondence with Berenson (hence the absence of an entry in the index). On the absence of an adequate reception of Longhi’s work in the English-speaking world, see David Tabbat, ‘The eloquent eye: Roberto Longhi and the historical criticism of art’, *Paragone Arte* (July–November 1996), 3–27 (also as an introduction to Roberto Longhi, *Three studies: Masolino and Masaccio – Caravaggio and his forerunners – Carlo Braccesco* [Riverdale-on-Hudson, New York: Stanley Moss-Sheep Meadow Press, 1996]).

18 Shone & Stonard, *The books that shaped art history*, p. 5. The essay (by C.C. Bambach) on Berenson’s *Drawings of the Florentine painters* is on pp. 31–41. The choice is heavily unbalanced towards the English-speaking world. If we include art historians forced to emigrate to it, we have only three chapters (of a total of 16) devoted to art historians belonging to non-English linguistic traditions (Émile Mâle, Heinrich Wölfflin, Hans Belting).

19 Gianfranco Contini, *Altri esercizi (1942–1971)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1972), esp. 101–110 (‘Sul metodo di Roberto Longhi’, 1949), 111–122 (‘Longhi prosatore’, 1955), 123–126 (‘Per la ristampa del Piero’, 1964); idem, ‘Per Roberto Longhi’, *Paragone Letteratura* 21: 244 (June 1970), 3–5; idem, *Ultimi esercizi ed elzeviri (1968–1987)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1988), esp. 347–368 (‘Memoria di Roberto Longhi’, 1973), 107–122 (‘Rinnovamento del linguaggio letterario’, 1976, esp. 112–114).

20 André Chastel, ‘Roberto Longhi: Il genio dell’“ekphrasis”’, in *L’arte di scrivere sull’arte: Roberto Longhi nella cultura del nostro tempo*, ed. Giovanni Previtali (Rome: Editori riuniti, 1982), 56–65.

21 The literature on this topic is very large (and rapidly expanding). See Svetlana Alpers, ‘Ekphrasis and aesthetic attitudes in Vasari’s Lives’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23 (1960), 190–215; Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: The illusion of the natural sign* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); W.D. Lohr, ‘Ekphrasis’, in *Metzler Lexikon Kunstsissenschaft: Ideen, Methoden, Begriffe*, ed. Ulrich Pfisterer, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2011), 99–104. On the relationship between *ekphrasis* and *enargeia*, see Krieger, *Ekphrasis*; Carlo Ginzburg, ‘Description and citation’, in *Threads and traces: True/false fictive* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 7–24.

22 Maria Luisa Catoni, *La comunicazione non verbale nella Grecia antica: Gli schemata nella danza, nell’arte, nella vita*, 2nd ed. (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008).

23 Catoni, *La comunicazione non verbale*, 196–197, quoting a text by Arrian of Nicomedia (95–175 AD).

24 Chastel, ‘Roberto Longhi’, 58.

25 Roberto Longhi, ‘Rinascimento fantastico’ (originally published in *La Voce*, 1912), in *Edizione delle opere complete di Roberto Longhi*, vol. 1: *Scritti giovanili, 1912–1922* (Florence: Sansoni, 1980), 3–13, esp. 3. Also quoted by Cesare Garboli, *Scritti servili* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989), 180.

26 Benedetto Croce, ‘La critica e la storia delle arti figurative e le sue condizioni presenti’ (1919),

republished in *Nuovi saggi di estetica* (Bari: Laterza, 1926), 261–280, esp. 268–269, with the appendix ‘Per una migliore critica delle arti figurative’, 281–285.

27 Enzo Petraccone, *Luca Giordano*, ed. Benedetto Croce (Naples: R. Ricciardi, 1919), esp. 4–9.

28 Roberto Longhi, review of Petraccone, *Luca Giordano* (originally published in *L'Arte*, 1920), in *Opere complete*, vol. 1, 456.

29 Cesare Garboli, ‘Longhi scrittore’ (1980), in *Pianura proibita* (Milan: Adelphi, 2002), 11–25, esp. 16. Longhi’s essay was not written in 1919 (see Garboli, ‘Longhi scrittore’, 15) but in 1920: one year difference which is, I argue, not irrelevant.

30 Benedetto Croce, *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale* (Bari: Laterza, 1922), 160.

31 Cesare Garboli, ‘Breve storia del giovane Longhi’ (1988), in *Scritti servili*, 165–207, esp. 204–205.

32 Giovanni Gentile, ‘Il torto e il diritto delle traduzioni’, republished in *Frammenti di estetica e letteratura* (Lanciano: Carabba, 1920), 369–375. The issue of *L'Arte* in which Longhi published his review of Petraccone’s book was dated January–April 1920.

33 See Norbert Mátyus, ‘Il dibattito di Croce e Gentile sulla traduzione’, in *Benedetto Croce 50 anni dopo / Benedetto Croce 50 év után*, eds. Krisztina Fontanini, János Kelemen & József Takács (Budapest: Aquincum Kiadó, 2004), 443–449, referring to Hans-Georg Gadamer, ‘Lesen ist wie Übersetzen’, in *Ästhetik und Poetik*, vol. 1: *Kunst als Aussage* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 280–285 (first published as ‘Leggere è come tradurre’, *MondOperaio* 19:2 [1988], 119–121). I have been unable to find any trace of a direct knowledge of Gentile in Gadamer’s writings. Garboli, who detected the Gentilian flavour of Longhi’s early writings, also paid homage to Gentile (without naming him) in commenting upon his own translation: Molière, *Tartufo*, trans. Cesare Garboli (Turin: Einaudi, 1974), xv–xvi. See also Garboli, ‘Croce e Gentile’ (1988), in *Pianura proibita*, 26–34.

34 Benedetto Croce, *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale* (Bari: Laterza, 1908), 485: “1941 [minus] 75 [=] 1866” (the year of Croce’s birth). On the right margin Longhi noted that Croce wrote his first theoretical essay, ‘La storia ridotta sotto il concetto generale dell’arte’, when he was 27.

35 Croce, *Estetica* (1908), 532.

36 Croce, *Estetica* (1908), 136.

37 Carlo Ginzburg, ‘Clues: Roots of an evidential paradigm’, in *Clues, myths, and the historical method*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 96–125, esp. 107; idem, ‘Invisible texts, visible images’, in *Coping with the past: Creative perspectives on conservation and restoration*, eds. Pasquale Gagliardi, Bruno Latour & Pedro Memelsdorff (Florence: Olschki, 2010), 133–144, 157–160.

38 In 1942, in a letter to Croce, Longhi wrote that he was working on an essay with the title ‘Unità teoretica e storica delle [tre] arti figurative’ (the title of a series of lectures delivered in 1922–1923 and never published). Longhi asked for Croce’s help, arguing that there was “una perenne diversità di ‘condizione storica’ tra poesia ‘figurata’ e poesia ‘per verba’”, an element which supported “l’autonomia della storia dell’arte in confronto a quella della poesia”. In his answer Croce reaffirmed his own thesis on the unity of art: “non credo possibile distinguere e giustapporre o contrapporre le due serie, come poesia e pittura o in altrettali modi. Come definire l’una e l’altra mercé di caratteri propri ed originali? A desumere questo carattere dal così detto mezzo fisico non bisogna pensare, perché non è concepibile passaggio alle nostre classi-

ficazione estrinseche o fisiche". See Roberto Longhi, 'Omaggio a Benedetto Croce' (1952), in *Edizione delle opere complete di Roberto Longhi*, vol. 13; *Critica d'arte e buongoverno, 1938–1969* (Florence: Sansoni, 1985), 251–255.

39 Carlo Ginzburg, 'Datazione assoluta e datazione relativa: Sul metodo di Longhi' (1982), in *Indagini su Piero: Il Battesimo, il ciclo di Arezzo, la Flagellazione: Nuova edizione con l'aggiunta di quattro appendici* (Turin: Einaudi, 1994), 149–161.

40 Michael Baxandall, 'Jacopo Sadoletto's *Laocoön*', in *Words for pictures: Seven papers on Renaissance art and criticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 98–116, esp. 114. See also *idem*, 'The language of art history', *New Literary History* 10 (1979), 453–465.

41 Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of intention: On the historical explanation of pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 1–11, esp. 3. See also my introduction to Michael Baxandall, *Episodes: A memorybook* (London: Lincoln, 2010).

42 Garboli, 'Longhi scrittore', 19.

43 Baxandall, *Patterns of intention*, 5.

44 Cf. Contini, 'Longhi prosatore', 115.

45 Roberto Longhi, *Piero della Francesca* (Riverdale-on-Hudson, New York: Stanley Moss-Sheep Meadow Press, 2012), 40. See also *idem*, *Breve ma veridica storia della pittura italiana* (Florence: Sansoni, 1980), 128.

46 Paul Cézanne, *Correspondance*, ed. John Rewald (Paris: Grasset, 1937), 259 (letter to Émile Bernard, 15 April 1904). Translation from *idem*, *The letters of Paul Cézanne*, ed. Alex Danchev (Farnborough: Thames & Hudson, 2013), 342.

47 Émile Benveniste, 'La phrase nominale' (1950), in *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 151–167, esp. 159.

48 Aby Warburg, *Frammenti sull'espressione: Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer pragmatischen Ausdruckskunde* (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2011), no. 234 (89; trans. p. 244), dated 3 February 1892: 'Kunst. Urtheil ohne Copula'.

49 Cittadella, *Catalogo*, vol. 2, 145.

50 See Girolamo Baruffaldi, *Vite de' pittori e scultori ferraresi* (Ferrara: Taddei, 1844–1846), vol. 1, 446; Camillo Laderchi, *La pittura ferrarese: Memorie* (Ferrara: Servadio, 1856), 119. Since Laderchi (who acknowledged his debt towards Baruffaldi: see vol. 3, 139–140) quoted a slightly more extended text, he must have had access to some evidence left by Bononi – possibly mediated by another erudite, Giuseppe Scalabrini, who was Bononi's relative.

51 Petraccone, *Luca Giordano*, 8. But see Cristina Montagnani, *Glossario longhiano: Saggio sulla lingua e lo stile di Roberto Longhi* (Pisa: Pacini, 1989), which has no entry for "nebbiosi".

52 Maria Luisa Catoni has pointed out to me the relevance of a passage in an Oxyrhynchus papyrus opposing soft and hard performance of the same dance in a Greek comedy: see her comment in *La comunicazione non verbale*, 180–181.

53 Francesco Orlando, *Illuminismo, barocco e retorica freudiana* (Turin: Einaudi, 1997 [1982]), ch. 3, esp. 78–79. The chapter is entitled 'Che la metafora può non essere la regina delle figure'.

54 Cesare Garboli, 'Longhi scrittore', in *Pianura proibita*, 13.

55 The predictive potential of metaphors in scientific models is stressed by Mary B. Hesse, 'The

explanatory function of metaphor', in *Revolutions and reconstructions in the philosophy of science* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), 111–124, esp. 122–123. An earlier version of this paper was delivered in 1964: see eadem, *Models and analogies in science* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), 157–177.

56 Michael Baxandall, *Painting and experience in fifteenth century Italy: A primer in the social history of pictorial style* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 36.

MARIA LANTZ

Mugshots*

A day in March 1879. The only reason the 26-year-old Alphonse Bertillon entered the premises of the Paris Police Prefecture was entirely due to the fact that his father, utterly tired of his son's dissolute lifestyle, had arranged a position for him as a records clerk with the police. Perhaps, thought the reputable father, statistician Louis-Adolphe Bertillon (1821–1883), the sight of individuals from the dregs of society could bring the black sheep of the family to a realization of his essentially privileged life. And get him to pull his socks up.¹

After a failed sojourn as a student in England, young Alphonse had returned to his home town of Paris, which was characterized by the influx of people escaping the rural agricultural crisis. Civil registration and the social control of Parisians were sometimes non-existent and chaotic, not least due to the fact that many records had been burned under the Paris Commune. Anyone older than 22 could assume any identity at all, as the majority of birth certificates issued before 1859 had been lost in the fire. The anonymity in Paris was not only a perception, incidentally a perception intimately associated with the modern city, but also a troublesome reality for all authorities, not least the police. They always seemed to be one step behind the criminals. On top of the misery, the spirit of the day also meant that more and more people were being classified as criminals: vagrants, anarchists, prostitutes, revolutionaries. In principle, every member of the Lumpenproletariat was a potential criminal and a social threat. But how to find out who really belonged to the bands of thieves and crooks? How to recognize those who had picked pockets, been involved in subversive activities, or even had had blood on their hands?

The 1800s debate on the essence, causes and perpetrators of crime was an international discussion. Was the misfit a patient or an evil enemy? A person marked by circumstances or genetically predestined? Affected by environment or heredity? Then, as now, this was argued based on the disciplines that could be applied to the criminal,

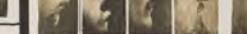
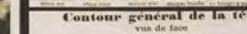
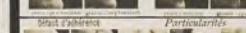
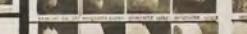
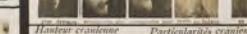
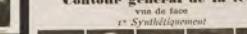
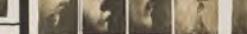
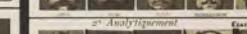
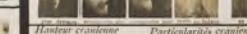
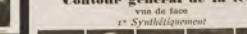
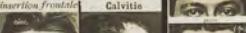
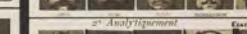
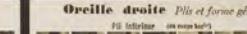
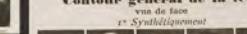
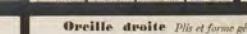
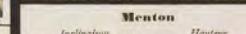
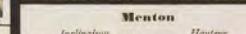
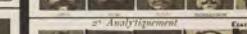
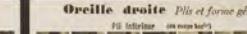
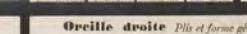
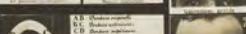
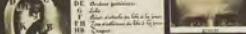
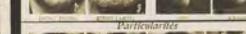
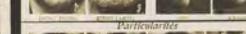
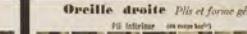
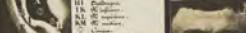
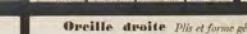
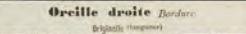
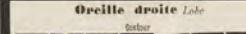
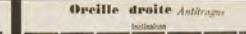
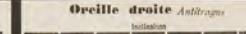
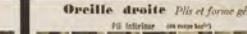
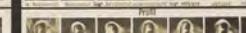
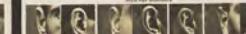
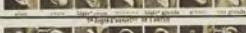
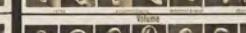
who became a testing-ground for the new sciences – medicine, the early sociologists, ethnologists, mathematicians, statisticians and biologists. Then as now, there were repeat offenders who were the focus of their interest. The notorious criminal – who was he or she?

The Paris police did not have the time to ponder why the thief had turned into a recidivist. They were busy trying to prove that he or she was one. Time and again, they knew they had had the thief in for questioning before, but every time the villain gave a new name, and their real identity was impossible to prove. In the light of this, Alphonse Bertillon's new work with the Paris police was tedious and frustrating in equal measures. Bertillon filled in columns with descriptions, all arbitrary and vague, and impossible to use as evidence in court. After eight months he could no longer stand it. But he had had an idea, and instead of leaving the police he wrote a report to his superior, Prefect Louis Andrieux. Bertillon's idea was based on a calculation of mathematical probability. The method was to measure every individual at eleven different places on the body – total height, length between the arms, the length of the head and hand and ear, etc. With eleven measurements, the probability of two people having the same result was one in four million.

The Prefect found the reasoning incomprehensible, perhaps because it came from a young employee, albeit the son and brother of famous statisticians, but perhaps also for that very reason. What place did such exercises have at a site of detention? The police did not deal in statistics but in reality. Bertillon was given a dressing-down, and the method was not even tested. But a couple of years later, the pensioned-off Andrieux was succeeded by one Monsieur Camescasse. He showed interest in Bertillon's ideas, which had now been refined even further. With the addition of two photographic images, one from the front and one from the side, always taken with the same lens, at the same distance, with the same lighting conditions and against the backdrop of a measurement system, it was possible to visually and subsequently read and measure the individual characteristics in detail. Similar images had been tested in the United States (by Allan Pinkerton), but without any standardization. They could therefore only be used in connection with wanted posters and not for identifying unknown persons. France also had pictures of criminals. But as long as the images were not taken under the same conditions and categorized, they were largely useless.

Fig. 1. Alphonse Bertillon, *Tableau synoptique des traits physionomiques*, ca. 1909. Gelatin silver print. Twentieth-Century Photography Fund, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

**TABLEAU SYNOPTIQUE DES TRAITS PHYSIONOMIQUES
POUR SERVIR A L'ETUDE DU "PORTRAIT PARLE".**

Front			Nez			Lèvres			Contour général de la tête		
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
											
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In 1882, under Camescasse's leadership, the now 28-year-old Bertillon was given a department of his own. For three months, everyone who was arrested was systematically photographed. The first recidivist was discovered in February 1883. A certain Monsieur Dupont seemed familiar, and after consulting the archive, which now consisted of 81 carefully organized boxes, they found the image of a Monsieur Martin, who three months earlier had been arrested for the theft of two empty bottles. When Dupont, who first denied the accusations of a previous arrest, was confronted with his picture he confessed immediately. And he openly added that yet a third name was his real one "if you hadn't already worked it out".

The portrait of the detained offender is a curious object. Unlike the bourgeois portraits that were so popular in the late 1800s and taken in a studio environment, with the photographer together with his model creating an image, a mugshot is photographed under duress. The slang for "face" and the slang for "photographing" – "mug" and "shoot" – points out the power, even the violence, involved in the act of making the image. The photographic portrait, which had hitherto lauded what the camera had depicted – the portrait as a bourgeois ceremonial idea of an elevated self – now had a reversed effect. The portrait of the offender also has a ceremonial function, but a stigmatic one. The way in which the forced act of photography takes place is in itself repressive, a punishment. The photograph could – apparently – be both honouring and humiliating.²

Furthermore, the offender's photograph is evidence based on recognition rather than argumentation. The photograph is a "silent witness", a witness who cannot be interrogated, who cannot be refuted. This means that the photograph came to be an entirely new category of evidence, with the indexical sign being ushered straight into the courtroom.³

Bertillon's method with measurements of the body and photographs of the face came to be given the conventional name of *bertillonage* (*Fig. 1*). Unlike criminologists, whose interests at this time were in the general aspects of criminals, Bertillon never had any such interests. He might instead be described as a "criminologist", one that made sure that the individual criminal could be described.⁴ Eventually, the cards were further supplemented with information about tattoos, scars and other physical injuries and with space for fingerprints. The uniqueness of every fingerprint was something that Scottish missionary doctor Henry Faulds had discovered in Japan, but only in the late 1870s when he saw an old clay pot with prints from fingers.⁵

The factor that in time limited the benefit of the *bertillonage* archive was its own effectiveness. Once you had mastered the routine of photographing the prisoners, the material produced grew quickly but also became increasingly unwieldy. The enormous volume made it slow to search through the material. This was despite the fact

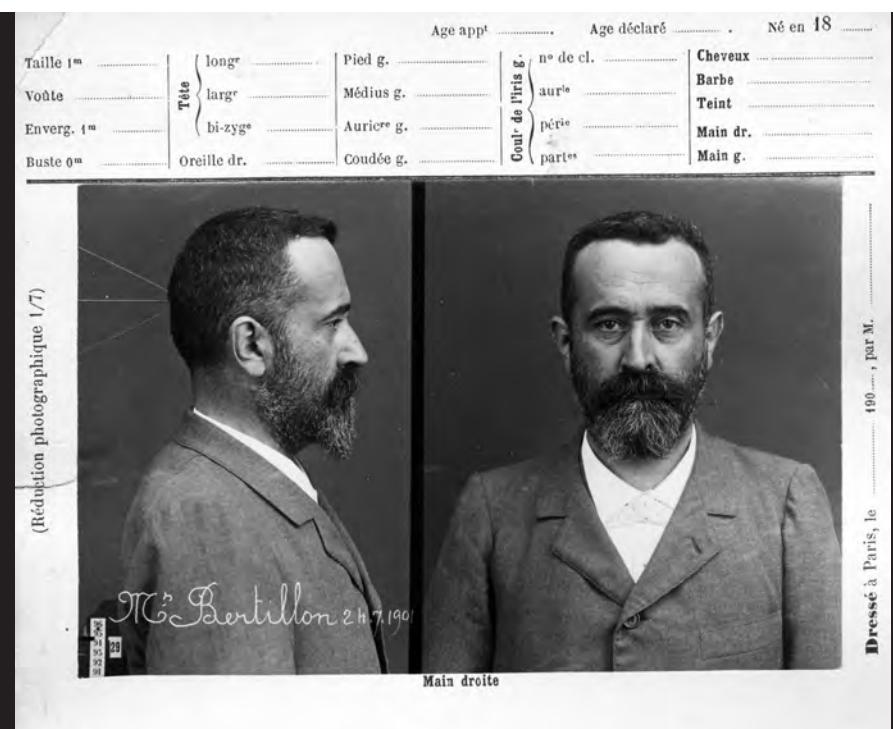


Fig. 2. Bertillonage of Alphonse Bertillon. Private collection.

that Bertillon had created a sorting system with the assistance of another statistician, Quetelet,⁶ that could arrange up to 100,000 documents in a network of boxes. How could one possibly navigate all this material?

The search criteria in the initial search were three for each sex: above average height, around medium height and below average height. This was followed by a series of subdivisions. Within ten years, from 1883 to 1893, they had reached the maximum volume. Among the 100,000 images of male prisoners and 20,000 female, Bertillon had “infallibly been able to link 4,564 of these to previous crimes”.

Despite the fact that the bertillonage had by around 1900 reached the limit of manageability and effectiveness in a major (and criminal!) city like Paris, it was after all a system that had proved more effective than all other attempts to get to grips with

		Age app ^t	Age déclaré	Née en 18
Main droite	Zyges			
Main gauche	Médius g.			
Taille 1 ^m	Oreille dr.			
	Auric. ^e g.			
		Coat de l'Iris g.	n ^o de cl.	Cheveux
		aur ^e	aur ^e	Teint pos
		pér ^e	pér ^e	Se ^e
		part ^e	part ^e	
				
				
				Dressée à Paris, le 27 mai 1905, par M.
<p>35 15555656 OTGelle Aspelin 22.5.05</p>		287		
		Main droite		
<p>à Mademoiselle Aspelin avec toutes les excuses du coupable Alphonse Bertillon</p>				
<p>27 mai 1905</p>				

Fig. 3. Bertillonage of Signe Aspelin. Private collection.

repeat offenders. And even if the search paths today are different, the information more diversified and the images now in colour, it is basically Bertillon's method that still fills police archives in this century – albeit in digital form.

Around 1890, the rumour of the bertillonage's supremacy spread from town to town in Europe and the United States. In Paris, Bertillon had now established his own "academy" that taught the bertillonage method to police chiefs and medical examiners from all over Europe, including from Sweden.

In 1899, Mauritz Aspelin, city physician in Stockholm, was commissioned by the Over-Governor to travel to Paris for “anthropometric studies” under Bertillon, whose title at the time was “Director of the Police Prefecture’s identification department”. Dr Aspelin’s responsibilities included medical care in Stockholm’s prisons and the city’s autopsies. Aspelin and Bertillon became good friends, and when Aspelin’s daughter Signe Aspelin was to study art in Paris a few years later, it was the Bertillon family she visited.

That was how Alphonse Bertillon came to photograph Miss Aspelin as a dyed-in-the-wool offender (*Fig. 2*). The year was 1905. Miss Aspelin not only got to bring the photograph of herself home to Stockholm, but also a self-portrait of Alphonse Bertillon (*Fig. 3*) as a souvenir. He was 48 years when the picture was taken and he is posing as the accused. Clearly, they were both engaged in role play, a lark. The bourgeois salon is replaced with the place where thousands of villains had once sat ... a moment of titillation, play, a game. But why did Alphonse Bertillon write *Avec toutes les excuses du coupable* to Miss Aspelin? Why these “excuses from the guilty”? What had taken place, what “crime” had actually been committed? Some mysteries require far more insight than what the photograph can offer ... and some riddles must be allowed to remain unsolved.

*

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NOTES

- * Many thanks to Professor Fredric Bedoire, heir to the unique bertillonages of Mademoiselle Aspelin and Monsieur Bertillon.
- 1 The account builds mainly on the following sources: ‘Aspelin, Johan Mauritz’, in *Sveriges läkarhistoria ifrån konung Gustaf den I:s till närvarande tid*, ed. Axel Widstrand, vol. 1 (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1930), 107–108; Aris Fioretos, ‘Fantombilden’, *Ord & Bild* 1 (1996); Michel Frizot, ‘Body of evidence: The ethnophotography of difference’, in *A new history of photography*, ed. Michel Frizot (Köln: Könemann, 1998); Allan Sekula, ‘The body and the archive’, *October* 39 (Winter 1986), 3–64. Parts of the argument have previously appeared in Maria Lantz, ‘Kontroll, makt, motstånd: dokumentära strategier – och möjligheter’, *Ord & Bild* 5 (2010).

² Something that we are constantly reminded of in war zones such as Iraq and Syria. Both the images of prisoners in Abu Ghraib and IS films of executions are examples of the act of photography as part of punishment and/or humiliation. Perhaps the images are also collected trophies. But in the work of the police, it is a matter of a sanctioned method whose purpose is something other than punishment or humiliation, but where this is a side effect. Today, however, mugshots have taken on cult status: see the collection at <http://www.mugshots.com> (accessed 2 March 2018), which includes Bill Gates' mugshot. Gates was arrested when he was a young Greenpeace activist.

³ Indexicality refers to a sign effected by its referent, like a footprint in the sand "points to" the foot that made the imprint. Or the knife that carved a heart in the trunk of a tree – the heart not only points to someone being loved, but also to the knife that fits the grooves it carved. At this time, photographs of crime scenes were already in use at trials, not as evidence for identification but as "memory aids".

⁴ Francis Galton, cousin of Charles Darwin, was among those who used multiple exposure of up to ten images of criminals to obtain an average picture of a criminal type.

⁵ In fact, Faulds was not the first one to make this discovery: see e.g. Carlo Ginzburg, 'Clues: Roots of an evidential paradigm', in *Clues, myths, and the historical method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 121–123.

⁶ Adolphe Quetelet, a statistician and social engineer who firmly believed in the positive development of the human race by restricting aberrant behaviour and as far as possible encouraging a norm – both physically and in terms of lifestyle – that he felt he was able to depict through his statistical surveys. As Allan Sekula points out, it is the traces of Quetelet's thinking that we see in the fees and policies of US insurance companies and among stock market analysts: see Sekula, 'The body and the archive', 19–23.

LOUISE WOLTERS

Displaying science

Photography, ethnography and national history

In 1929 the newspaper *Göteborgs handels- och sjöfartstidning* arranged an international photography exhibition at Göteborgs Konsthall (Gothenburg Art Gallery). With its diversity of both “pictorial” and “scientific” photographs, the exhibition offers an opportunity to approach the interwar period in Sweden through the displayed cluster of clues generated by the medium’s versatility and ubiquity. In the following, an installation image from the scientific section of the exhibition will serve as an example of the photographic visualization of ethnography and, in turn, its related discipline: history. But first a few notes about photography’s general role in the research and writing of history.

PHOTOGRAPHY AS HISTORY WRITING

The photographic medium has since the mid-19th century been inscribed and applied in a complex of historical temporalities. Primarily due to its indexical character, it has been used as a tool for objective and precise historical evidence and described as a potential source of unique reliability for future historians. The technological developments that early on increased the medium’s accessibility and expanded reproducibility also prompted initiatives such as the Society for Photographing Relics of Old London (1875), the Société Française des Archives Photographiques, Historiques et Monumentales (1879) and the British National Photographic Record Association (1897), which created photographic documentations of national historical artefacts for both educational and preservation aims.¹ Furthermore, photographers engaged internationally in discussions of the medium’s ground-breaking potential to create an exact and complete image of society. The ultimate goal was to produce, collect and archive photographic portraits – from the élite in power to the lowest social classes

– for a visual, social and ethnographic record that would serve as a direct source and knowledge production for future historians.²

Simultaneously with such discussions – and as part of what Carlo Ginzburg terms the evidential paradigm³ – portrait archives were conceived and developed in various sciences, most notably with British anthropologists John Lamprey and Francis Galton, and French criminologist Alphonse Bertillon.⁴ The latter’s registering of society’s “others” – through a systematic police archive of ID photographs (supplemented with measurements and notes with characteristic physical details) of criminals and suspects – not only provided a forensic and scientific tool for research, police and the law; it also served as a disciplinary device, as a negative reflection of the law-abiding part of society, which were thereby affirmed as the norm. As Allan Sekula points out, the physiognomic and phrenologic paradigms “shared the belief that the surface of the body, and especially the face and the head, bore the outward signs of inner character” – hence photography could serve as scientific proof.⁵ In Sweden the medium was applied in the anthropological and eugenic surveys of Dr Herman Lundborg, who established the Swedish State Institute for Racial Biology in 1922. He had been collecting photographs of Nordic, Sami, Baltic and “other” *types* since the turn of the century, and based on these he arranged the extensive *Svenska folktyper* (“Swedish popular types”) exhibition and subsequent publication in 1919.⁶ Here, photography not only served as scientific documentation but also as affective propaganda.⁷ Lundborg’s work was a direct source of inspiration for contemporary German scientists in the development of Nazi eugenics. A further and less-contested example of a typological portrayal of a society on national historical level is August Sander’s German project *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (“People of the 20th century”). Begun in 1922 as a way of conveying the physiognomy of an age, the project included the book *Antlitz der Zeit* (“Face of our time”), which was published the same year as the international photography exhibition in Gothenburg.⁸

Parallel to the early documentary initiatives by photographers, archivists, scientists and the state, the development of a historical science in the late 19th century was guided by the drive to objectively convey past events “as they actually happened”.⁹ This would be reached through a rigorous source criticism that served to establish an accurate reconstruction of the event’s historical context.¹⁰ Some historians even referred to photography as a metaphor for the ultimate, reliable historical representation: as an automatic witness it would offer a direct imprint and visualization of the past.¹¹ In this sense, the photograph’s materiality would be ignored in favour of its referent, allegedly providing a first-hand view into the historical context. Subsequently, photographs were included in later historical studies and representations of the 20th century as predominantly referential illustrations (particularly in the popular history writing and the social history genre of the 1970s). But the medium was not

thoroughly researched within critical historiography as an actual, potential source with its own methodological challenges, until several representational turns in the humanities spurred new approaches to both photography and history. Regarding the latter discipline, the complicated relationship between historical reality and evidence is discussed by historians such as Carlo Ginzburg. During the last decades this discussion occurs particularly within cross-disciplinary studies by historians of photography, ethnography, anthropology and related social sciences. One such historian is Elizabeth Edwards, who has developed nuanced methodologies and theories about the role of photography as historical document, source and representation.

Returning to the indexicality of photography, which – for better or for worse – has long been seen as the dominating characteristic of the medium when discussed in a historiographical framework (albeit not its only characteristic), the photograph refers or points to something within the image frame. However, any specific intentional claim or assertion, which would be analysed in a historical source criticism, is difficult to establish, as are questions regarding the voluntary or involuntary status of a piece of evidence or clue.¹² The main inquiry will therefore often revolve around how to *tame* photography's many possible meanings (its polysemy), how to *anchor* a photograph in specific contexts, and how to determine *what* the photograph *points to* – and *how*.¹³ Furthermore, as a material object (a picture) it also holds potentially valuable physical traces of the past, and as a reproducible image it might have circulated, engaged in and affected several historical contexts. The fact that the photograph can point to various contexts and temporalities is what makes it a special source. As Edwards writes: "Two figurations of context co-exist; what we might call the 'containing' or 'originating' (of who, what, why and when?) and the 'dense context' – which, while not originating or linked to the reality effect of the photograph, emerges through the relations of the photographs." The two contexts, she further notes, "exist in a dialogical relationship playing out the drama of the images' creation and their various, subsequent performances as objects of and for interpretation. As such, context is creative, suggestive and provocative."¹⁴ In the following, a similar dense and suggestive understanding of context will be brought into play around the installation image from the International Photography Exhibition in Gothenburg – or in Swedish: *Internationella fotografiutställningen i Göteborg* (IFUG).

THE DISPLAY OF SCIENCE

From the late 1890s onwards, both national and local photographic societies in Sweden were active in organizing increasingly expansive exhibitions. It was the two Gothenburg photographers Petrus Pramm and Anders Karnell who initiated the



Fig. 1. Interior view from the International Photography Exhibition in Gothenburg (IFUG), October 7, 1929. Kamerareportage.

1929 exhibition together with the newspaper *Göteborgs handels- och sjöfartstidning* (GHT).¹⁵ As was typical for the period's larger exhibitions, Nordic and International sections presented portraiture and art/pictorial photography¹⁶ ranging from early pictorialist aesthetics to the later formal experiments of new objectivity. Another large part of the exhibition was dedicated to a broad and diverse conglomerate of "scientific photography". With the aim of showing photography's employment and potential in the vast cross-disciplinary field of science and technology, the section included examples of photography as a tool in areas such as ethnography, archaeology, astronomy, tourism and criminology – as well as examples of commercial, aerial and micro, X-ray and colour photographs. The conjuncture of these highly varied topics was facilitated by the versatility of the photographic medium, whose capacities as both visual documentation and channel of scientific truth seemed limitless.

One of the few existing documentation photographs from IFUG (Fig. 1) shows three men working with the installation of a part of the scientific section, where the disciplines of ethnography and archaeology are displayed side-by-side.¹⁷ With its various details and clues, the image offers additional insight and points to contexts other than the small exhibition catalogue. The camera lens has focused on gestures that are part of the management and preparation for the viewer's gaze: namely the hands cleaning the glass plates to cover the smaller size photographs arranged on the podium. The horizontal presentation, which allows for a closer study of the photographs, is not seen in the installation of the Nordic and International sections, where the aesthetic quality of the pictures is enhanced with mountings in passepartout and frame. In the scientific section however, the images are displayed with only minimal mediation, seemingly offering a direct access to the photographed subject, which the viewer in turn is encouraged to examine and scrutinize. This suggests a forensic quality and potential of the images, which can be said to unite the evidentiary status of disciplines such as criminology, medicine and physics with the social and historical sciences such as ethnography and archaeology.

In the installation photograph the men handling the images and preparing them to be studied are themselves being subjected to various gazes – first and foremost the photographer's but also those of the individuals pictured in images on the wall, which will eventually also meet the gaze of the anticipated exhibition viewer. The images displayed in the ethnography section are all undated in the catalogue and not clearly identifiable on the installation photograph, but as visual clues they might be traced and lead us to further "dense" contexts. The majority of the ethnographical pictures are of Sami people taken by the well-known photographer Borg Mesch. It is possible to recognize a larger, central image as a portrait of the young woman Maria Huuva from Kaalasvuoma (Fig. 2), and today it has migrated to the Kiruna city



*Fig. 2. Portrait of Maria Huuva, Kaalasvuoma, 1906 (exhibited at IFUG).
Photographer: Borg Mesch. Kiruna kommunens bildsamling.*

image archive, where it is dated to 1906. Wearing traditional Sami clothing and hat, Maria Huuva is photographed in front of a backdrop, probably in Mesch's Kiruna studio. However, the portrait differs from the many celebratory or "pictorial" portraits in the non-scientific section, which is stressed by Maria Huuva's lack of photogenic posing. Her pose can be interpreted as an expression of non-compliance both towards the original photographer and – in a dense reading – towards the exhibition handlers and viewers.

THE COLONIAL GAZE

At the IFUG in 1929 Maria Huuva's portrait was displayed with another 18 photographs by Mesch, including portraits of the Sami writer Johan Thuri and "Maria Sunna with her two boys".¹⁸ Apart from named sitters, Mesch also exhibited more generic photographs of Sami¹⁹ – for instance on skis and in their camp. Through the ethnographic categorization they are all represented "scientifically" as general types – just as the other exhibited photographs in the genre (from Sulawesi and Kilimanjaro).²⁰ None of the photographs are dated – rather the subjects from Indonesia, Tanzania and Sápmi are represented as embodying an indigenous "pastness". Thus, these photographs and their representation at IFUG belong to the colonial fixation of indigenous citizens in a state of non-presence that belong to an exotified past rather than contemporary progress.²¹ The historicizing image of Sami corresponds to stereotypical images in the period's popular culture and to the political discourse of the Swedish majority that sought to promote the idea of the Sami as locked to the nomadic traditions and the past in order to prevent influence and participation in the development of Swedish culture.

As the only photographer represented in two parts of the exhibition, Borg Mesch also showed 14 photographs from the Sami landscape in the tourism part of IFUG's scientific section.²² Mesch embodies the figure of the photographer-explorer, branding and nourishing the myth about himself as a pioneer in both photography and exploration.²³ By around 1900 he had accompanied officials to Sápmi and photographed the expansion of the national railway for mining purposes, which were part of the Swedish industrial colonialization of the North. As an active and engaged photographer and spokesperson for the national tourist society, Svenska Turistföreningen (STF), his photographs, which were published in books, papers, shown at exhibitions and sold in stores, played a decisive role in distributing and disseminating captivating images from the area. In his studio he offered tourists the opportunity to be photographed in traditional Sami clothing as a souvenir, and in 1926 Mesch was

awarded a medal for his “pioneering work as mountain photographer [*fjällfotograf*] in Lapland” by STF.²⁴

Mesch was also awarded first prize and a diploma for his portraits of Sami subjects at the earlier-mentioned Herman Lundborg’s exhibition of Swedish “popular types” in 1919.²⁵ Only a few of those are studio portraits and the majority were originally taken outdoors, but in the exhibition and subsequent publication they were cropped and stripped of polysemiotic traces in order to be presented as “clean” eugenic-style visual records. The physiognomic details of the portrait would then lend itself to be interpreted by the phrenology “connoisseur” – the racial biologist.

LOOKING BACK

Borg Mesch’s ethnographic portraits in the scientific section of the 1929 exhibition are clues to various other contexts and uses in related disciplines such as the racial biology of interwar fascism, where they were presented as visual proofs. But they also open up for more suggestive contexts. The Kiruna image database, which holds the majority of Mesch’s – scanned and digitized – photographs, reveals that he took at least one other portrait of Maria Huuva on the same occasion in 1906 (Fig. 3). Here her face is slightly blurry as she is looking down, as if not prepared for being photographed. The gesture not only accentuates the interpretation of the exhibited portrait as evoking a sense of unwillingness or declination.²⁶ Maria Huuva’s inward, almost reclusive expression also alludes to a different kind of portraiture, which defies the ideal of the physiognomic facial imprint; rather it is a dignified portrayal of a thoughtful woman of secluded integrity. The second portrait, which most probably was deemed unsuccessful by Mesch (considering both the style of his other photographic works and the fact that it was never published by him), could have fitted in with the pictorial portraits in the “artistic” part of the 1929 exhibition. Thus, it reminds the contemporary viewer that the alleged “ethnographic” qualities of the Maria Huuva portrait exhibited in the scientific section depend on the enabled gazes.

Returning once more to the photograph from the installation of the scientific section, it documents the careful staging of looking at ethnographic images, where visual traces can be examined in the search for scientific knowledge. However, a detailed textual anchoring of the images is not provided, in contrary to the photographs displayed in the archaeological genre, where date and place are mentioned in the catalogue. Within the ethnographic discipline photography’s polysemy allowed the allusion to a primitive exoticism camouflaged as objective science. The installation image conveys the process of assembling photographic clues or metonymies in a temporally meaningful context, and thus it points to the semiotic status of photography as



*Fig. 3. Portrait of Maria Huuva, Kaalasvuoma, 1906 (not exhibited at IFUG).
Photographer: Borg Mesch. Kiruna kommunens bildsamling.*

historical clue or sign and to the viewing process as an active, interpretative agent in what we with Ginzburg could call the evidential paradigm.

A photograph, which qua its reproducibility is prone to travel and circulate in various contexts, acquires meaning from these contexts, just as it performs as context and offers meaning to other texts. Its various temporary anchorages are part of the dense context of the unstable, photographic source. Therefore, the historical potentials of a photograph are almost incomprehensible in so far as its reproducibility allows it to migrate, engage and exchange historical meaning with new networks. The details of the installation photograph from the 1929 exhibition allow cross-temporal readings and inquiries into the production and perception of a “scientific” national history.

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NOTES

¹ See e.g. Elizabeth Edwards, *The camera as historian: Amateur photographers and historical imagination 1885–1918* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012).

² See for instance the discussion among Danish photographers inspired by international initiatives: ‘Fotografiens betydning for historien’, *Beretninger fra Dansk fotografisk forening* 15 (1881), 227–232.

³ Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, myths, and the historical method* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 120ff.

⁴ See Maria Lantz’s contribution in this volume.

⁵ Allan Sekula, ‘The body and the archive’, in *The contest of meaning: Critical histories of photography*, ed. Richard Bolton (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 347.

⁶ Herman Lundborg, *Svenska folktyper: bildgalleri, ordnat efter rasbiologiska principer och försett med en orienterande översikt* (Stockholm: Tullberg, 1919).

⁷ Ulrika Kjellman, ‘To document the undocumented: Photography in the scientific practice of physical anthropology and race biology’, *Journal of Documentation* 72:5 (2016), 813–831.

⁸ August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit. Sechzig Aufnahmen Deutscher Menschen Des 20. Jahrhunderts, with an introduction by A. Döblin*, München: Transmare Verlag (1929).

9 The famous dictum of showing the past as it really was (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*) was coined by the German pioneering historian Leopold von Ranke, who has been seen as “the father of historical science”. It is however important to note that Rankean method, idealism and historical philosophy cannot be reduced to naive positivism – on the contrary, for neo-idealist historians in Germany, von Ranke’s objectivity was a way to grasp the general ideas through the unique and individual. See George G. Iggers, ‘The image of Ranke in American and German historical thought’, *History & Theory* 2:1 (1962), 18–24.

10 See e.g. Carlo Ginzburg, ‘Checking the evidence: The judge and the historian’, *Critical Inquiry* 18:1 (1991), 83.

11 One example is Danish historian – and former pupil of von Ranke – Kristian Erslev, who in his book on history writing (*Historieskrivning*, 1911) used the photograph as an allegory of a direct historical representation, uncorrupted by any human mediation.

12 Ginzburg, ‘Checking the evidence’, 84.

13 Roland Barthes, ‘The rhetoric of the image’, in *Image, music, text* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977).

14 Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw histories: Photographs, anthropology and museums* (Oxford & New York: Berg, 2001), 109.

15 See Internationella fotografiutställningen i Göteborg (Göteborg: *Göteborgs handels- och sjöfartstidning*, 1929). Apart from the small exhibition catalogue, only sparse documentation exists from the Gothenburg exhibition, and it has not been found particularly remarkable by later art and photography historians. Rather, the Swedish art and photography historical canon has focused on similar international photographic exhibitions at Liljevalchs konsthall (the Liljevalch’s Art Gallery) in the capital Stockholm (1924, 1934 and 1939).

16 The Swedish term *bildmässig fotografi* can be translated to “pictorial photography”.

17 From the now-digitized GHT image archive, available through <http://kamerareportage.se/bildarkivet> (accessed 22 March 2018). The men are named in the database (none of them is S.E. Ohlson, the commissioner of the scientific section).

18 Titles from the IFUG exhibition catalogue. The installation photograph does not allow for a clear identification of the images, but Mesch took several photographs of both Thuri and of Sunna and children during the first decades of the 20th century.

19 The catalogue uses the then common but today considered derogatory term *Lappar* (“Lapps”).

20 Sekula, ‘The body and the archive’, 352.

21 See also Edwards, *Raw histories*.

22 Called *Lapplandsbilder* (“Images of Lapland”) in the catalogue, where it is also noted that further landscape photographs by Mesch are for sale at the exhibition.

23 See Borg Mesch & Ossian Elgström, *Fjällfotografen Borg-Meschs äventyr bland Lapplandsfjäll* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1929).

24 Cit. Svante Hedin, *Fjällvråken Borg Mesch: Fotografpionjär bland samer, rallare och mäktiga landskap* (Enskede: Nya vyer, 2001), 186.

25 Herman Lundborg and the Swedish State Institute for Race Biology exhibited photographs (including what were categorized as Nordic, Finnish and “Lappic” types) in the scientific sections of the International Photography exhibitions at Liljevalchs konsthall in 1924 and 1934.

26 There are other accounts of Mesch photographing the Sami against their wishes: see e.g. Mesch & Elgström, *Fjällfotografen Borg-Meschs äventyr*; Maja Hagerman, *Käraste Herman: Rasbiologen Herman Lundborgs gåta* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2015), 108–109.

KARIN GUSTAVSSON

What Börje Hanssen saw

A walk through Helsingborg, July 1943

During a few days in July 1943, the Swedish scholar Börje Hanssen walked around in Helsingborg with a camera and photographed streets, buildings and backyards.¹ The 26-year-old Hanssen had completed his studies in economic history and political science, among other subjects, and was at the time working on a project led by the professor of art history Gregor Paulsson under the title “Swedish environment under free trade and democracy”. Paulsson’s aim was to depict the development of Sweden’s living conditions and urban environments from the 1840s to the 1940s. He had engaged the services of a group of young co-workers who carried out studies in a number of different towns and smaller urban areas, and Helsingborg in southern Sweden was one of the empirical examples that had been chosen. Hanssen had first come to Helsingborg in the summer of 1942, when he worked together with one of Paulsson’s students, the art historian Elias Cornell. Cornell also worked in Helsingborg for a time in 1943, but the photographic work covered in this article was carried out by Hanssen alone. With Hanssen’s photographs from Helsingborg in 1943 as an example, I will discuss how knowledge of a place arises.

Paulsson’s major project was undertaken between 1942–1950 with a total of around 20 co-workers and resulted in a publication in two parts, the first of which was published in 1950 under the title *Svensk stad. Liv och stil i svenska städer under 1800-talet* (“Swedish town: Life and period styles in Swedish towns in the 19th century”). The second part, *Svensk stad. Från bruksby till trädgårdsstad* (“Swedish town: From foundry village to garden city”) was finished in 1953.² The project had changed character to some extent from its original anthological concept to become a synthesizing monograph, and the end timeframe was no longer the 1940s but rather the turn of the 20th century. Its knowledge-based content is still current, for example the historical description of the epoch of industrialism in Helsingborg that is presented in *Svensk stad* is still the most thorough to have been produced to date.³ However,



Fig. 1. "Kullagatan southward from EPA on a Monday afternoon." Photographer: Börje Hanssen. Nordic Museum archives.

with the odd exception, Börje Hanssen's photographs are not included in *Svensk stad*, although his contribution to the final collection of books was still significant – he was the author of around 40% of the text.⁴ *Svensk stad* dealt mainly with the time from the 1840s to the beginning of the 20th century, which is why photographs from the 1940s were not particularly of use. It would take a while, but *Svensk stad* would eventually come to be recognized as a classic work, the content of which represents authoritative knowledge about the cities and towns depicted as well as the process of Swedish urbanization.⁵ The result of Hanssen's photographic endeavours, around

100 pictures with associated captions, can now be found in the archives of the Nordic Museum. The photographs are dated, and the time of day they were taken is also given. In the summer of 1943, as in the previous year, Hanssen focused on documenting and analysing homes and public environments, two of the fundamental aspects of Paulsson's project. But he also had an assignment to conduct a "retail study" which encompassed, among other things, a comprehensive study of the shops along Kullagatan in the town centre.

WALKS THROUGH HELSINGBORG IN THE SUMMER OF 1943

On the afternoon of Monday, 12 July 1943, a warm summer's day with clear skies, Börje Hanssen found himself at the EPA department store, from where he observed Kullagatan in a southerly direction. The street was a commercial centre in the town, with a long line of shops and companies located in street-level retail premises and on the upper floors of the buildings. In one of Hanssen's photographs (*Fig. 1*) we see the relatively narrow street in shadow. Four women are walking alongside one other in the middle of the street, with another woman riding a bicycle in the opposite direction. A number of shop signs can be seen, and on the right of the picture there is a building with large display windows on the ground floor. Looking at this photograph today, one is struck by the lack of cars, and perhaps also by the very narrow pavements. Anyone familiar with Helsingborg's current city centre will note a number of buildings that no longer exist, as well as the fact that the street had pavements in 1943 – today it is a pedestrian thoroughfare and has the same paving on the same level over its entire area. In his caption Hanssen writes:

Kullagatan southward from EPA on a Monday afternoon. The pavements are narrow, and it is just as common for people to walk on the street itself as on the pavements. A more or less total lack of through traffic contributes to this tendency.⁶

The EPA department store adjacent to Kullaplatsen (now known as Konsul Olssons plats) is the point of orientation to which a reader of the text is expected to relate, although this building is not actually visible in the picture, and we are left to envisage it behind the photographer. One reason why Hanssen specifically mentioned the EPA department store in his caption could be that it was a relatively large and well-known building in the town, along with the fact that EPA, the only department store in the town centre, was of great importance to Hanssen in his survey of the town's retail environment. In the caption to another of the photographs from Kullagatan (*Fig. 2*) it is "the entranceway to Hedströms" that is the point of orientation.⁷



Fig. 2. "The entranceway to Hedströms." Photographer: Börje Hanssen. Nordic Museum archives.

Hedströms was a very well-known and long-established merchant house, with warehouses and a shop adjacent to a side street where the Hedström family had their residence on the floor above the store. This family-owned business, which had existed for several generations, was in many ways the antithesis of the modern EPA department store next door, and was a point of orientation in the town in terms of both space and time.



Fig. 3. "Illustrates the old shell around the new content." Photographer: Börje Hanssen. Nordic Museum archives.

A while after he had photographed Kullagatan's pedestrian traffic, Hanssen found himself alongside an older two-storey timber-framed building a bit further southward (Fig. 3). This building was probably built sometime during the first half of the 19th century, and it had captured his attention due to the disparity he found himself observing between the building's older framework and the visibly older construction of the second-storey façade, on the one hand, and the modern ground-floor display

windows on the other. In his caption he writes in argumentation for his choice of subject: "Illustrates the old shell around the new content."⁸ The new content in this case was a modern-furnished boutique with premises on both the ground floor and first floor of the building.

Hanssen explains the aim of his photography to an intended reader, and in doing so he perhaps also clarifies questions for himself by putting his observations in print. In this particular instance he was looking to depict the phenomenon of a new business having moved into an old-fashioned environment, where the building's exterior, in this case a low timber-framed building, does not correspond with the modern character of the business. This was a topic to which he returned at a number of locations during his camera-based journey through Helsingborg. In his caption to the previous photograph from Kullagatan, Hanssen had noted the people who were walking in the middle of the street. However, even though a number of people are visible on the pavement in this photograph, along with a parked bicycle, Hanssen has chosen not to comment on these. In this way it also becomes clear exactly what his subject was in this particular picture, namely the building and the different time strata that it represented, not the people who were moving through the town or their various modes of transportation.⁹

Two days later, on the afternoon of Wednesday 14 July, which was also a sunny day, Hanssen paid a visit to the northern part of Kullagatan. On this occasion it was not retail environments but rather residential environments that held his attention. He went into the backyard of no. 50 Kullagatan, looked up at the brick house that dated from some decade in the 19th century about which he was unable to be more precise, and took a photograph (*Fig. 4*). In his caption he writes: "People live on all of the floors. An incredible constructional conglomeration in the town centre that dates from the 19th century."¹⁰

Thereafter he went into the backyard of no. 48 Kullagatan and took two photographs, with three children in focus (*Fig. 5*). In his caption he notes two things: there was little space available for the children to play, and there was an outhouse. Here and in the backyard next door, it was not the modern commercial town, represented by EPA just a stone's throw away, that was the focus of Hanssen's interest, but rather another, old-fashioned Helsingborg, with buildings constructed without rules or regulations, and with an outhouse in the backyard, next to which children played without any organized apparatus. His caption reads: "Backyard interior at Kullagatan 48. Children play in the cramped backyard. The door to the latrine can be seen."¹¹

Hanssen took one more photograph on this day, of Arnhamska gården (a well-known property owned by the Arnham family) adjacent to Stortorget, where Kullagatan ends. As with the timber-framed building he had photographed a couple



Fig. 4. "People live on all of the floors." Photographer: Börje Hanssen. Nordic Museum archives.

of days earlier, Arnhamska gården also embodied different time strata in one and the same construction, as Hanssen noted: "To the side of the courtyard the timber-framed buildings remain: a warehouse and a dwelling, while outside a completely different picture is shown."¹²

This interest in time-related disparities in the urban environment is a recurring theme in Hanssen's material from Helsingborg, both in relation to retail environments and residential environments. He noted major differences between the street



Fig. 5. "Backyard interior at Kullagatan 48." Photographer: Börje Hanssen. Nordic Museum archives.

façade and the backyards. Modern display windows on the ground floor but an older façade and construction technique on the floors above were reflections of how the norms, ideals and actual needs of different time periods had an impact on the physical environment. The environments which Hanssen observed in the 1940s – cramped backyards, buildings put together in haphazard fashion, an outhouse in the yard, and trade courtyards with warehouses – would disappear in conjunction with the major urban transformation that took place during the 1960s and 1970s, and the tone of



Fig. 6. "Monstrous villas." Photographer: Börje Hanssen. Nordic Museum archives.

Hanssen's descriptions reveal his negative attitude to such environments, a view that was widely shared by society at large.

The district of Olympia, just to the east of the town centre, is characterized by large Art Nouveau villas, most of them built as multi-family homes at the start of the 20th century. Börje Hanssen came to Olympia on a Saturday afternoon (Fig. 6), a week or so after photographing Kullagatan. In a caption from this day he writes about "monstrous villas" surrounded by the most minimal of gardens, and he also notes that

the street was deserted. It is obvious that he did not like what he saw. When Börje Hanssen visited this district he saw an architecture that he felt lacked value. The buildings also represented a style of construction that had been more or less illicit at the time they were erected. When the area was first built up during the earliest years of the 20th century there were no plans in place to regulate the construction process, and the property developers had exploited the plots of land to the maximum, with nothing but profits in mind; although Helsingborg's city planners were quick to react and prepared plans that would entail restrictions on how large buildings were permitted to be. When Hanssen was there in 1943, some 40 years after the buildings had been erected, the constructions were still felt to be controversial. In the early 1940s it was the garden city, with single-family homes surrounded by gardens intended for the use and pleasure of their owners, which had become the ideal; not the dense settlement still to be found in Olympia.

WHAT BÖRJE HANSEN WROTE

Hanssen's captions are sometimes very brief, sometimes long and descriptive. Another of the participants in the *Svensk stad* project, Marita Lindgren-Fridell, wrote in an essay in 1980 about how, during the work, she had written detailed captions with reasonings about the subjects of her photographs, and how these could have sufficed as independent elements in the presentation of the project's material, but for the fact that there wasn't enough space for them in the final version of *Svensk stad*.¹³ Lindgren-Fridell's description of how she worked gives context to Hanssen's pictures and captions. His way of working was not unique but rather part of a method practised by a number of Paulsson's co-workers. And it was not just the method that was common among them, but also the way of viewing, analysing and writing about the environments that they studied. The group involved with Paulsson's project can be likened to what the Polish philosopher of science Ludwik Fleck called a stable thought collective, a phenomenon that arises when individuals in a group exchange thoughts and ideas in creative discussions. Ideas are formed within the group in a collective style of thinking that otherwise could not have emerged for the individual persons; in other words the group is a prerequisite for the production of the ideas and thoughts that steer a common project.¹⁴ As part of such a thought collective, Hanssen saw what his taskmaster Paulsson and the others in the group saw. Paulsson was strongly influenced by contemporary American urban sociology and had written the Swedish preface to the American sociologist Lewis Mumford's *The culture of cities* from 1938, which was published in Swedish in 1942.¹⁵ The perception of the buildings in the district of Olympia to which Hanssen gave expression, and his thoughts about

the cramped backyards in central Helsingborg, were part of the group's common style of thinking, influenced and shaped by both Mumford and Paulsson. Nor were Paulsson and his project group isolated from the rest of society, with their style of thinking well in keeping with the general perceptions and spirit of the time.

Börje Hanssen depicted Helsingborg through a combination of pictures and texts. The question is: would Hanssen have been able to describe Helsingborg's buildings, living environments and retail environments without his photographic images? Or would the photographs, without the attached captions, have been able to guide a viewer searching for knowledge about Helsingborg's environment at that time? The purpose of the captions can be viewed as a way of guiding the reader's attention in the right direction, of getting the reader to see what Hanssen himself had seen.¹⁶ But even if the captions as such were intended, in edited form, to be part of the *Svensk stad* publications, the actual writing of the captions was just as much a part of Hanssen's own process of knowledge production, since they gave him the opportunity to process what he had observed in the field, in combination with what he had learned from literature and archives.

The combination of pictures and texts provides a modern observer of the material with insights into both what Helsingborg was like in the 1940s, and a clear guide to Hanssen's own world of visions and thoughts in 1943, something that neither the pictures on their own nor the texts on their own could have achieved. The photographs and captions together provide a great deal of knowledge about what Helsingborg was like in 1943, but they are just as meaningful as sources of an understanding of Börje Hanssen's own views on construction, history and urban development, as well as his interpretation of the assignment he was charged with in Helsingborg. By reviewing what Börje Hanssen chose to note in his captions and, equally significantly, what he chose *not* to note, it is possible to analyse that which was of importance to him when he took his photographs, and perhaps even what it was that he actually saw.¹⁷ Hanssen's captions can be viewed as an expression of his own knowledge process, in which he has selected certain aspects of Helsingborg and observed them through his lens, after which he has processed his observations in text. In this way the camera becomes not only a tool for reproduction, but also a tool for seeing, which helped Hanssen to discover different phenomena in the town's physiognomy.

WHAT DID BÖRJE HANSEN ACTUALLY SEE?

Hanssen wandered between different time strata in a limited area in the centre of Helsingborg, between the almost pre-industrial dwellings and backyards and the modern retail environments just a stone's throw away. When the photographs were

developed in the summer of 1943, they were for him sources of information that complemented other materials he used to be able to depict the various conditions that then existed in Helsingborg. Today, 75 years later, his photographs also represent sources of knowledge about the research process of the time. The subject of the photographic image is constant, it does not change, but as a source of information a photograph is constantly changing over time, since a viewer of the photograph reads new meanings into it.

A recurring theme in Börje Hanssen's captions is the disparity between the town's contemporary pursuit of modernity, and its pre-industrial past. A modern-day observer with access to all of his material could interpret it as him seeing the whole of the industrial epoch through his camera lens. What he actually saw in 1943 was a rapidly changing town whose process of change was so important and interesting to depict that he was also very keen to write a dissertation on it a couple of years later.¹⁸ 75 years on, the photographs that resulted from Börje Hanssen's work in Helsingborg are of great value as documentation of what the town was like in the summer of 1943. But they are also documentation of Hanssen's work method and way of thinking at the time, whereby he falls in with a then-prevalent style of thinking.

When Hanssen worked in Helsingborg, photography as a technology had existed for almost exactly 100 years, and photographic imagery was an established medium that had gained a great many areas of use and application. Within technology and science as well as the social sciences and the humanities, the camera was a given instrument, and the photographic image was frequently used for a number of different purposes. The *Svensk stad* publications are extremely rich in illustrations of various kinds, including maps, reproductions of older paintings and drawings, and older and more recent photographs. The images in these publications represent a way of mediating knowledge on the same terms as the printed text. Börje Hanssen carried out his camera-based wanderings through Helsingborg with the aim of capturing the town's various characteristics at the time. His material – in the form of photographs and captions – was intended to be part of a greater context, and was never meant to stand alone. And even though Börje Hanssen's photographs remained, with one exception, unpublished, they were still of great value to the man himself, and the knowledge process of which they were an important part was of great significance for the final text that was eventually published in *Svensk stad*. The knowledge about Helsingborg that is contained and presented in these books is still of immense value and interest, and the creation of that knowledge was thanks to Hanssen's photographic work.

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NOTES

- 1 Hanssen worked in Helsingborg during the summers of 1942, 1943 and 1944, in the middle of World War II. To a modern reader of his notes and letters, it may seem odd that the ongoing war is never referred to in his texts, especially as Helsingborg is situated at the coast of Öresund, only 4 kilometres from Denmark which was then under German occupation.
- 2 Gregor Paulsson, *Svensk stad: Liv och stil i svenska städer under 1800-talet*, 2 vols. (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1950); idem, *Svensk stad: Från bruksby till trädgårdsstad* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1953).
- 3 Henrik Widmark, *Föreställningar om den urbana världen: Identitetsaspekter i svensk stadsbild med exemplet Helsingborg 1903–1955* (Ph.D. thesis: Uppsala University, 2007), 193.
- 4 David Gaunt, 'Börje Hanssens betydelse för Svensk stad', in *Perspektiv på Svensk stad: Staden som forskningsobjekt 1950–1980: En skrift från projektet Svensk stadsmiljö, byggande och boende under de senaste hundra åren*, eds. Thomas Hall & Ingrid Hammarström (Stockholm: Akademilitteratur, 1981), 25.
- 5 Anders Dahlgren, 'The *Svensk stad* (Swedish town) project: Architectural history in action', *Konsthistorisk tidskrift* 85:1 (2016), 76–84.
- 6 Photograph in the Nordic Museum archives, Gregor Paulsson's collection, vol. 3. This and the following captions are all in the Nordic Museum archives, Börje Hanssen's collection, vol. Fr:3. Translation by the author.
- 7 Photograph in the Nordic Museum archives, Gregor Paulsson's collection, vol. 3.
- 8 Photograph in the Nordic Museum archives, Gregor Paulsson's collection, vol. 3.
- 9 Karin Gustavsson, 'Fotografens blick och betraktarens syn', in *ETN: Etnologisk skriftserie* 8 (2013), 7–20; eadem, 'Kunskap ur tomrum: Närläsning som etnologisk metod', in *Kulturmiljö: En etnologisk metodbok*, eds. Lars-Eric Jönsson & Fredrik Nilsson (Lund: Institutionen för kulturvetenskaper, Lunds universitet, 2017), 121–136.
- 10 Photograph in the Nordic Museum archives, Gregor Paulsson's collection, vol. 3.
- 11 Photograph in the Nordic Museum archives, Gregor Paulsson's collection, vol. 69.
- 12 Photograph in the Nordic Museum archives, Gregor Paulsson's collection, vol. 69.
- 13 Marita Lindgren-Fridell, 'Minnen från arbetet med *Svensk stad*', in *Perspektiv på Svensk stad: Staden som forskningsobjekt 1950–1980: En skrift från projektet Svensk stadsmiljö, byggande och boende under de senaste hundra åren*, eds. Thomas Hall & Ingrid Hammarström (Akademilitteratur, Stockholm, 1981), 23.
- 14 Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and development of a scientific fact* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 45, 102–103.

15 Lewis Mumford, *The culture of cities* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1938); idem, *Stadskultur*, trans. Leif Björk & Åke Malmström (Stockholm: KF, 1942).

16 Magnus Bremmer, *Konsten att tämja en bild: Fotografiet och läsarens uppmärksamhet i 1800-talets Sverige* (Lund: Mediehistoria, Lunds universitet, 2015), 14.

17 Gustavsson, 'Kunskap ur tomrum'.

18 Karin Gustavsson, 'Utkanten av *Svensk stad*: Material och människor, arkiv och böcker', in *Utkanter och marginaler: 31 texter om kulturmiljöer: En vänbok till Birgitta Svensson*, eds. Marianne Larsson, Anneli Palmsköld, Helena Hörnfeldt & Lars-Eric Jönsson (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2015), 229–239.

MARCUS BANKS

Photography, memory and affect

Two fragments from the history of an Indian city

INTRODUCTION

Discussing the writing of *The cheese and the worms* (1976), Carlo Ginzburg notes that his work “does not restrict itself to the reconstruction of an individual event; it narrates it”. He goes on to point out however that he was not attempting to emulate the omniscient narrator of the late 19th-century realist novel, but rather to construct a narrative that contained “the hypotheses, the doubts, [and] the uncertainties” of both the narrator and the narrative’s subjects.¹ In an earlier essay, Ginzburg likens the Inquisitor in the Friuli witchcraft trials to an anthropologist, one who places the lived reality of the other (however absurd it may seem, as in the case of *benandanti* who claimed that their spirits travelled at night to battle witches bent on causing harm to the crops) into dialogue with their own experience of the world.²

Inspired by Ginzburg, this paper is an attempt to understand the presentation and representation of history through photography, drawing upon the responses of a set of interlocutors I have known for over 30 years to two sets of photographs I presented to them in the spring of 2017. The paper also draws inspiration from the photographic theorist and visual activist Ariella Azoulay’s notion of the civil contract of photography; Azoulay argues that “the civil contract of photography does not bind the photographed person to the photographer”, rather, that all “signatories” to the photographic act can produce images of each other, and can contribute to the inventory of images available to all parties.³

This paper is thus an enquiry into both “history” and “photography”, but also into anthropological method. As a social anthropologist I have the luxury that most historians do not have: that is, entering into dialogue with the subjects of scholarly enquiry using the documents – textual and visual – that can suture them into social narratives which in due course become historical narratives. Menocchio, Ginzburg’s

miller subject in *The cheese and the worms*, and the *benandanti* whose trial testimonies formed the subject of his 1966 monograph *The night battles* (1983 in English) can never answer back, for they have no voice across the centuries other than what the trial transcripts record. Similarly, the Palestinian subjects of photographs discussed by Azoulay at various points in her work are participants in what she calls the political ontological process of photography, but over which they may have no control – for example, being labelled “refugees” in a photograph from 1948, when in fact at the time the photograph was taken they were not refugees (though many of them would eventually become so).⁴

PHOTOGRAPHING THE 1980S

I made my first research trip to the western Indian city of Jamnagar in the early 1980s, to conduct ethnographic research on a minority Indian religious group, the Jains.⁵ I visited annually for the next decade or so, gathering further data on religious practice and deepening my ties with my research participants. Until 2017, my most recent trip had been in 2000. On each trip I took a camera and shot many hundreds of photographs.

At the time of my first visit to Jamnagar almost no one I met owned a camera, apart from professional wedding photographers, and few people owned any photographs apart from their own wedding album (where relevant) and perhaps a few studio photographs taken of themselves with family or friends to mark an occasion such as a birthday. My research participants in those days were almost all men, almost all merchants and shopkeepers. There were few cameras for sale in India in the 1980s, and film and processing were expensive, but most of my research participants could have afforded a camera and associated costs if they had wished. With one exception, from a fluctuating group of 20–30 research participants, none chose to do so. On a recent trip to Jamnagar (in 2017) very little seemed to have changed.

One or two men today maintain small personal photographic and document archives, not in a professional sense, but as a collection of material objects kept in albums or shoe boxes in a cupboard, or on a shelf in their shop. To the best of my knowledge there is no photography club in Jamnagar,⁶ and local citizen photography hasn’t really taken off in Jamnagar – except for mobile phone photography.

Over a number of fieldwork visits to the city in the 1980s and early 1990s, I took several hundred photographs – both black and white and colour transparency – of the town and its inhabitants. Many of my photographs (e.g. *Fig. 1*) were of religious processions and temple events, as these were the focus of my doctoral and postdoctoral research, but I also took many “cityscape” images, and casual, unposed shots of

people in their homes and on the streets. None of my research participants expressed any interest in my photographic practice, except occasionally at events such as weddings when people might stand up straight and pose for the camera (though many didn't) but no one objected to it either (except in some temples, where photography is forbidden).

Christopher Pinney notes a similar indifference towards what one might term documentary photography in the small town of Nagda in central India, at about the same time: "very few people in Nagda [...] request to be photographed in the actual space of Nagda".⁷ Pinney states that street or documentary photography only happens serendipitously in India, when a commercial studio photographer captures what we might call *vérité* or *actuality* images during the course of an otherwise choreographed street event, such as a wedding procession. However, Pinney appears to be referring only to images captured by commercial studio-based photographers, paid to create images of the ceremonies under the direction of the social or religious communities featured. He does not discuss any documentary photographs he may have taken himself and how they were understood by the residents of Nagda.

During the 1980s and 1990s, on return visits to Jamnagar I would usually bring with me copies of photographs of individuals and present them to them. However, I did not do this systematically and I did not interview research participants about the images; I brought them simply as gifts.

In 2017 I made a field trip to India for a different project, and decided to visit Jamnagar while I was in the country. I had not visited the city in over 17 years, though I had maintained sporadic contact with some of my informants from the 1980s. I took the opportunity to conduct some photo-elicitation interviews based around my own photographs from the 1980s and 1990s. Those I interviewed were either known to me directly, or were children or young relatives of people I had known 30 years earlier.⁸

Several of my research participants understood the "task" of the photo-elicitation exercise to be to help me identify places (rarely people) depicted in the photographs. For example, one man, on the day after our interview, took it upon himself to take me on a tour on the back of his motorbike to as many of the locations in the old city (which is where almost all of my previous research had been) that we had identified the previous evening, so that I could re-photograph them. He, as it were, repurposed my photo-elicitation exercise into a kind of temporal-geographical recovery project that would help reunite me with sites I had not visited for decades.

What was most striking about these photo-elicitation interviews however was the degree of polite indifference all my interviewees showed, a continuation as it were of the indifference they showed when I took the photographs initially. All sat with me in very familiar environments, usually at their home or place of work, and with no

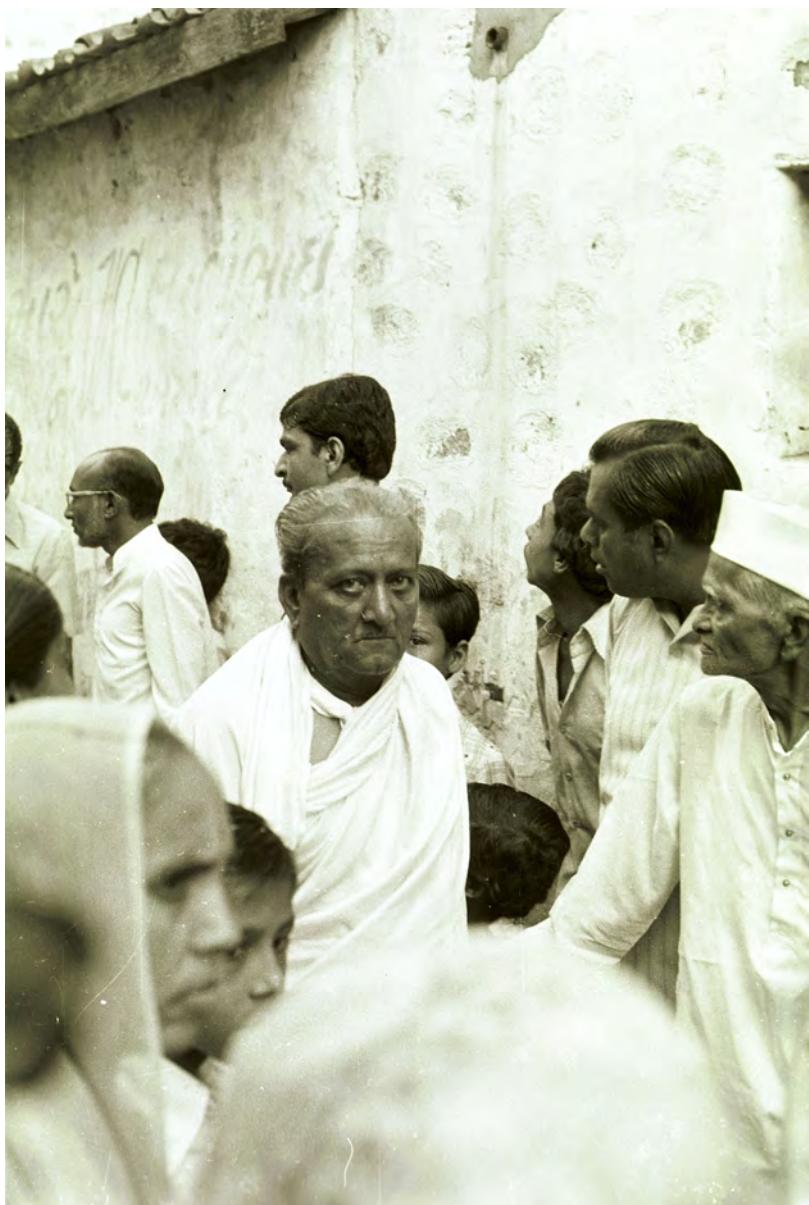


Fig. 1. Jain procession, Jamnagar, 1985. Photographer: Marcus Banks.

time pressure, and politely listened while I explained what I was doing: I said I wanted to talk about the past, and what changes had taken place in the city – and in their lives – over the years. Yet although I showed my interlocutors images of people and places from up to three decades earlier, including images of themselves, their kin and their neighbours, no-one expressed any interest in revisiting or recalling the past, or in constructing any narratives that brought the past into the present.

One possible cause for this indifference (but not, I think, the principal one) might be methodological. The few people I knew in Jamnagar who owned photographs from the pre-digital age – such as the amateur archivists that I mentioned earlier – owned battered and dog-eared prints, and in the case of colour prints, these were faded and dull. In contrast, I was showing 30-year-old but bright and vivid images to my research participants on a state-of-the-art iPad, and they navigated the photographs with the finger-on-screen swiping motion familiar to all owners of a smart phone (which the majority of them were). In short, my interviewees' direct analogue experience of “old” photographs, did not prepare them for the viewing experience of the “old” photographs I was showing them on the iPad.

The literature on photo-elicitation, including work that I have contributed myself,⁹ generally presents the method as one yielding positive results, allowing informants to open up and share memories that a simple face-to-face interview might not allow. However, nowhere in the methodological literature have I encountered reports of sheer indifference to photographs used in the course of photo-elicitation interviews. I had expected my photographs to provide the stimulus for the exploration of “visual microhistories”, the springboard for a co-production of knowledge by myself and my interlocutors, much in the same way as Ginzburg saw the inquisitor and trial subjects co-producing knowledge (but without the coercive context, obviously). Instead, my interlocutors declined the opportunity. As the co-production of knowledge – at least, the co-production that I was seeking – did not take place, it is difficult to give examples. Responses from my interlocutors ranged from simply flicking through the images in silence concluding with an anodyne remark such as “very nice”, or “nice photos”, to occasional attempts to identify locations (but very rarely, as noted above, people).

It is often remarked that while history and social anthropology have many parallels in approach and method, the one factor that divides them is that – by and large – historians' research subjects are generally not available for interview, while anthropologists' research subjects generally are. Yet in this case, a group of friendly and available research subjects declined or were structurally unable to engage with the past, and therefore to construct or co-construct narratives about it.

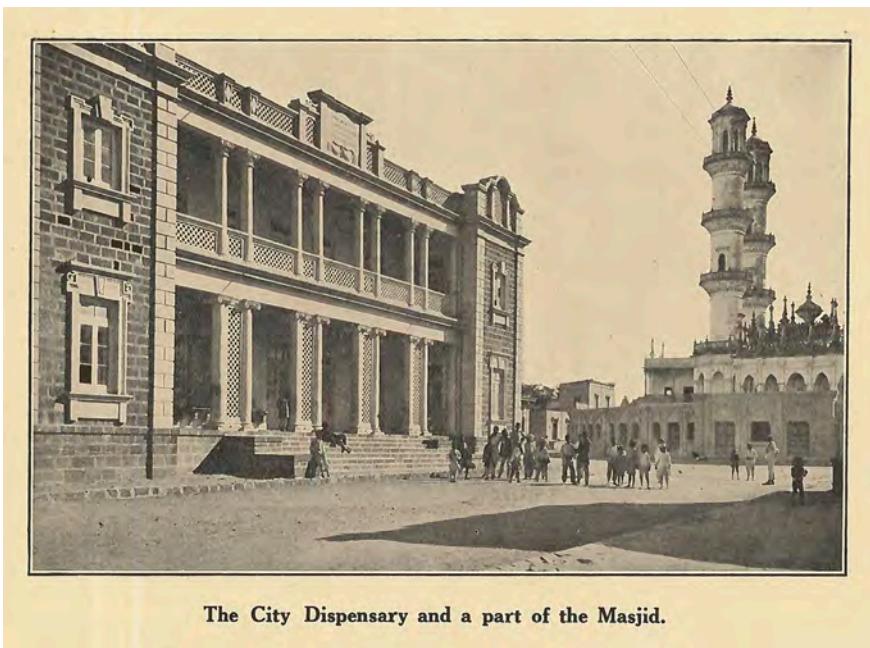
PHOTOGRAPHING THE 1920S

As well as my own fieldwork photographs, I also had on my iPad a set of 20 photographs (photographer unknown) scanned from a book published in the 1920s. The book, *Jamnagar: A sketch of its ruler and its administration*, by Naoroji M. Dumasia, had been published as an attempt to defend the then king of Jamnagar, Ranjitsihnnji, against accusations that he had been profligate with the kingdom's finances.¹⁰ The photographs in Dumasia's book (e.g. *Fig. 2*) document a number of building projects and infrastructural improvements made by Ranjitsihnnji over the preceding decade or so, in an attempt to demonstrate that he had spent the kingdom's finances wisely and for the good of the citizens. In place of the crooked narrow streets and chaotic bazaars of the centre of the old town, Ranjitsihnnji had introduced wide boulevards and tidy shopping arcades. He constructed an electricity station, a medical dispensary, and paved roads.

Initially, I casually showed these to some of my interlocutors after I understood the "official" photo-elicitation session to have concluded. These photographs were generally received with a great deal of interest; indeed the interviewees' engagement with these images in contrast to their indifference to my own photographs – no matter the age of the interviewee – was palpable.

My interviewees eagerly flicked back and forwards through the images and – when there were others present – would hand the iPad over to them and ask them to note some detail or other. The locations of the photographs were not in doubt as they were all captioned, so the location-guessing exercise that some of my interviewees had brought to the viewing of my own images did not apply. Instead, they commented on how smart all the new buildings looked and the new fine wide boulevards, then looking pristine and clean, now choked with traffic. There was particular interest in a photograph of a new dispensary, given by Ranjitsihnnji to the civic authorities, as the building was currently being demolished to be rebuilt as a modern clinic for the public good.

I was puzzled by this behaviour – why did people show more interest in photographs from a time before any of them were born, and of people they did not know (for example, pointing out the turbans worn by some merchants in one of the photographs), than in photographs of themselves and their families in very familiar surroundings?



The City Dispensary and a part of the Masjid.

*Fig. 2. The City Dispensary, ca. 1920, from Naoroji M. Dumasia's Jamnagar (1927).
Photographer unknown.*

CONCLUSION

The contrast between the two sets of photographs, and my interlocutors' response to them, is sharp, but the reasons for the differing responses lie outside the photographs themselves. In both cases, my research participants saw themselves, the photographs and – to an extent – the photographers, in a conversation about history, and in particular what matters in history.

My own photographs, taken in the 1980s and early 1990s, represented a dull and economically stagnant period in the city to my interviewees. Although some of my research participants 30 years earlier had claimed that they enjoyed the “peace” of Jamnagar (compared to the hubbub of Bombay, for example), it is likely that many of my (then) unmarried male research participants were bored a lot of the time. There was no television reception in the city, and the cinema was expensive for anything other

than occasional visits; for the most part my mid-20s male research participants spent their evenings hanging around street corners smoking and drinking tea.

The economic stagnation in Jamnagar rested in part on a decision by the state and federal governments in the 1960s to not allow strategically significant industry to be located in the city, as the city hosted (and still does) bases for all three armed forces and was judged to be vulnerable to attack because of its proximity to the border with Pakistan. For similar reasons, there was also a ban on the erection of buildings of over three storeys, to allow free airspace for the airforce to fly. The city also had a history of out migration, beginning in the late 19th century, when many of the city's merchants took the opportunity of the Pax Britannica to migrate, first to Bombay and then on to the British colonies in east Africa.

In contrast, the 1920s represented to my interlocutors a time of excitement and change – a “real past” as one of them put it – which none of them had experienced but which they had heard about from parents or grandparents, and the presence of which – in the form of buildings and boulevards – lay all around.

My photographs – of processions, of temple rituals, of street life – were of entirely familiar events, and worthy of little more than polite interest. A photograph of a person in a street, going about their daily affairs, or a person in the temple conducting daily worship, had little traction and provided little impetus for narrative imagining. My interlocutors had experienced these activities on a quotidian basis in the 1980s and 1990s, but in the images there was no “punctum” in the Barthian sense, still less an encouragement to invoke Azoulay’s “civic contract”.

To me, these photographs were intensely interesting because they formed a very important component in the development of my career, but this was of very little interest to my research participants, many of whom never really understood the concept of academic research.

The Dumasia photographs however could be and were narrativized, seeming to represent as they did the start of a story that all my interlocutors knew. This was a time of booming prosperity, indexed by the fine new buildings that Ranjitsihaji had erected. In fact, Ranjitsihaji's reign, and that of his successor, Digmijaysihaji, did not bring any significant advance to the citizens of Jamnagar¹¹ and, as noted above, by the 1980s the city was economically stagnant. In that sense, in accordance with Ginzburg's remarks on the narratives of history with which I opened this paper, my interlocutors narrativized history, not as a series of certain and stable events, but as a confection of aspirations, doubts, and uncertainties.¹²

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NOTES

- 1 Carlo Ginzburg, 'Microhistory: Two or three things I know about it', in *Threads and traces: True false fictive* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 204.
- 2 Carlo Ginzburg, 'The inquisitor as anthropologist', in *Clues, myths, and the historical method*, new ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 144.
- 3 Ariella Azoulay, *The civil contract of photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 123–124.
- 4 Ariella Azoulay, *Civil imagination: A political ontology of photography* (London: Verso, 2015), 224–226.
- 5 Jamnagar is a city of around half a million people (2011 census). It is not on the foreign tourist trail, but is known locally for the manufacture of small brass parts, a distinctive form of tie-and-dye textile production, and its many Jain temples. Jainism is an ancient religious tradition, originally a philosophical school rather than a religion, roughly coeval with Buddhism. Until the late 19th century it never left its Indian homeland, and even then, only with Jain people as they migrated: it is not a proselytizing religion and does not seek converts. Many older Jain men in India today are merchants, shopkeepers and traders, though many younger Jain men and women have entered the professions. For an account of the lives of the Jains of Jamnagar in the 1980s, see Marcus Banks, *Organising Jainism in India and England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).
- 6 Amateur photographic clubs are popular elsewhere in India, such as Mussoorie in the far north of the country, notably documented by David and Judith MacDougall in their 1992 film *Photo Wallahs*.
- 7 Christopher Pinney, 'Notes from the surface of the image: Photography, post-colonialism, and vernacular modernism', in *Photography's other histories*, eds. Christopher Pinney & Nicolas Peterson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 212.
- 8 In all I formally interviewed nine men, between the ages of 25 and 60; a variety of other research participants viewed the photographs in less formal settings, or were present during one of the more formal interviews, and occasionally interjected. The total number of photographs I used in the interviews varied between 20 and 40.
- 9 E.g. Marcus Banks, *Using visual data in qualitative research* (London: Sage, 2017).
- 10 Naoroji M. Dumasia, *Jamnagar: A sketch of its ruler and its administration* (Bombay: Times Press, 1927). Jamnagar, like many principalities in the western peninsular region of Kathiawad

in what is now Gujarat State, retained a degree of autonomy during British colonial rule. Nonetheless, Jamnagar (also known as Navanagar) was also under the overall jurisdiction of the British, who could – and did – step in if they thought the kingdom was being misruled or that there were financial abuses, as in the case of Jamnagar under Ranjitsinhji. See Simon Wilde, *Ranji: A genius rich and strange* (London: Kingswood Press, 1990), 235–236.

¹¹ “Ranjitsinhji, like the majority of the princes [...] had never seen their primary responsibility as improving the welfare of their people.” Wilde, *Ranji*, 235.

¹² Ginzburg, ‘Microhistory’, 204.

HELENE LARSSON POUSETTE

Unfolding as a curatorial practice

In the mid 1800s many national museums were created to manifest new knowledge of that time, and to support the development of national identity through common narratives, traditions, images, and symbols. National museums classified their collections according to the norms and values of that period, and these classification systems are still in use. Thus, the politics and norms of the 1850s continue to affect research and museums' content even today. Museums' idealization of certain narratives can show their power to create and interpret local, regional or national history. Not collecting certain narratives can also betray a political intention.

The collection of objects, and the gathering of knowledge about these objects, are the core of museums' activities and the source of their professional knowledge. A large number of these objects have complex origins and rich biographies. In addition to saying something about their function, they can relate to other objects, to other times, and to larger implications, including social values and symbolic meanings. Instead of pinning down the assumed essence of the objects, their multidimensional character and relationships can be highlighted.¹

In our institutions and collections a lot of knowledge is hidden. By including perspectives of people who think in different manners, such as artists and practitioners from other disciplines – we can unfold and discover the invisible and the forgotten.² By working in an interdisciplinary way – bringing together artists, historians, archaeologists, and writers – we can also bridge the gap between theory and practice, and create contexts that allow for new ideas and new knowledge. With trust and respect for each other's different ways of understanding the world, we can tackle more difficult and complex issues.

I became interested in museum collections because of the potential to reveal existing knowledge not apparent to us. In this article, I will give some practical examples of the unfolding of knowledge in collections through interdisciplinary practices, field-

work in archives and the development of methods for self-reflection. I will investigate contemporary collecting as a way of approaching complex shifts in society, and I will also reflect on museums' and artists' contemporary collecting as a method for investigating both personal and difficult issues in society.

CONTEMPORARY COLLECTING

Because of a curiosity and desire to unfold diverse perspectives on society, I studied ethnology at Stockholm University. Inspired by Samdok (short for *samtidsdokumentation*, “contemporary documentation”), the Swedish museums’ network for contemporary collecting, I developed an interest in contemporary collecting as a way of visualizing power and social structures. How museums collect contemporary objects and narratives is an issue that has preoccupied Swedish cultural-historical museums since the 1970s. The Samdok network sought to document our recent history in words, images and objects.³ Although Samdok no longer exists in its original form, the network and their undertakings have inspired generations of ethnologists both in Sweden and internationally. Today the network is organized in Dokumentation av samtida Sverige (DOSS, “Documentation of contemporary Sweden”) and the International Committee for Collecting (COMCOL), part of the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

A current example of a contemporary collection is the documentation from the terror attack in Stockholm in 2017. On Friday, 7 April at 14.53, a man in a truck drove at high speed down Drottninggatan in central Stockholm. Five people were killed and many more were impacted physically and psychologically by the attack. I myself had just crossed Drottninggatan and was at a nearby train station, where chaos and panic arose when someone claimed that the station was under gun-fire.

The City Museum and Stockholm County Museum immediately started collecting private photographs and narratives relating to the event. They launched a specific site where they invited the public to upload their material, photographs and comments.⁴ The documentation was directly linked to new legislation in Sweden. From 1 July 2017 it became unlawful to photograph a person in a vulnerable situation without permission. Due to the forthcoming legislation, images of injured people and dead bodies were blocked on digital media in Sweden just a few hours after the attack.

The issue of abusive photography is complex. Every day images of dead bodies from events such as the war in Syria are published on international web sites. Even though we need images that show the devastation in conflict-affected countries, and we need images as evidence of war crimes, we also must respect the individual’s rights to integrity in vulnerable situations.

FIELDWORK IN NORRKÖPING

It was such a blow. That was nothing we had expected. It was like a great emptiness. And terrible destruction. Then all those thoughts came – to be out of work, what's going to happen, what will come? Can we do anything to make things better in any way? Then after sitting on it for a while, we felt that we had to do something, we had to fight.⁵

This quotation comes from a contemporary collection that I and a dozen other students at the Department of Ethnology at Stockholm University conducted when the Ericsson company closed its offices and factory in Norrköping in 1997. We, the students, had organized ourselves in protest against our department's decision to remove fieldwork from our course, and Norrköping City Museum responded to our self-initiated request for fieldwork assignments. We interviewed a number of employees at Ericsson in October 1997, one week before they received their notice of termination, and again in March 1998, when 535 people were forced to accept redundancies. In our first interviews, the conversations were characterized by sadness, anxiety and fear, but also determination.

Now, first of all, we are going to wait for the redundancies. And that is the subject of most of our conversations and thoughts, but if you look beneath the surface, you see that there is a lot of anger over what happened. You get pissed off by the way Ericsson's management acted, and that anger still exists. That anger is present all the time.⁶

One of the objects we collected during our documentation was a red folder (*Fig. 1*). From four o'clock in the morning to six o'clock in the afternoon on 21 October 1997, the staff were called in to see their manager and receive a folder with the notice of termination. The folder was A4-sized, red, and impossible to hide. We were told about the shame that this folder created when the staff left the manager's office and had to walk through the workplace without being able to hide it.

Those of us who made the documentation were shaken by the personal stories of worry and despair. We were also moved by the resistance of the employees in the face of the factory's closure. During the process of writing the book *Varsel: Om mänskorna, arbetet och framtiden* ("Notice: About the people, the work and the future"), we also discussed of what changes the event in Norrköping were a sign. During the same year VolvoAero in the small city of Arboga with 14,000 inhabitants had terminated more than 600 employees, and outsourcing became a well-known concept in Sweden. The people we interviewed in Norrköping suggested that Ericsson had blamed the factory closure on globalization and international competition, but the

staff also felt that it was a first step towards major social changes, that were too complex to understand at the time.

The fieldwork in Norrköping taught us many things. One is that individual stories can reveal a bigger picture. We zoom in and get personal reflections on someone's life, and then we zoom out and see trends that permeate the whole of society. Sometimes these tendencies can be linked to global structures that are difficult to detect but which can be linked together – in this case outsourcing to low-income countries with cheaper labour, the changing role of trade unions, jobs that disappear, and unemployment and changing politics as a result.

Now 20 years later, I think we could have interpreted the event in Norrköping in many other ways. We were stuck with the idea of the value of work, but what would happen if we would change focus and break with the ideas we have? Hard to say, but most important is that our collection of stories, objects and photographic documentation is today one of Norrköping City Museum's largest contemporary collections, available for future research and interpretations. Had it not been for a group of passionate students and an equally passionate museum official, this documentation would not exist.

THE DIAMOND PEOPLE

Some artists investigate events in a similar manner to that of an ethnologist's contemporary collecting – through interviews, photographic documentation, observa-



Fig. 1. "Information on termination! Ericsson Telecom AB – Norrköping." Photographer: Anne Wastesson Jonsson, Norrköping City Museum.

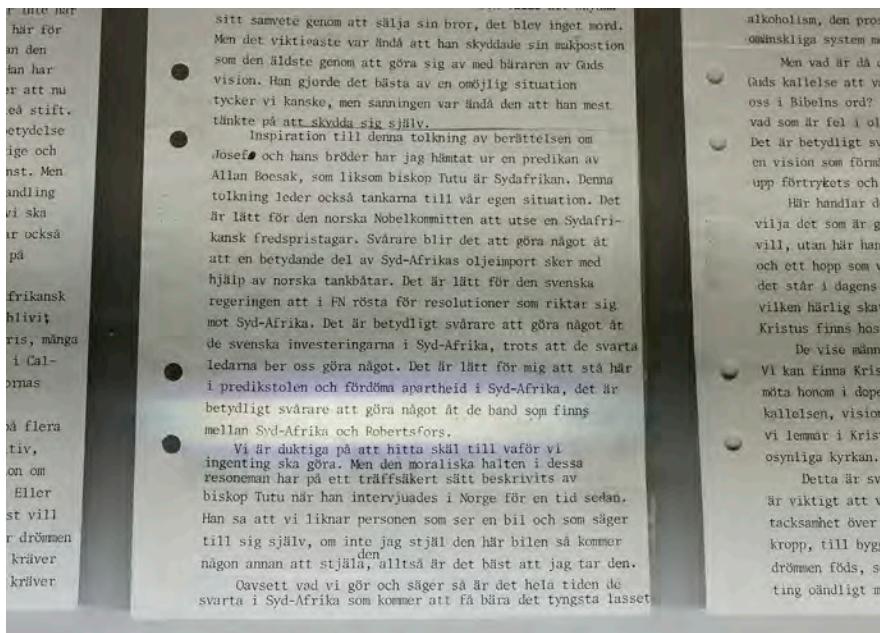


Fig. 2. Installation view of *The Diamond People Project, 2005–2015*, Sara Jordenö (2015). Photographer: Hendrik Zeitler, GIBCA.

tions and collecting of objects. One example is the work *The Diamond People Project, 2005–2015* by the artist Sara Jordenö, that incorporates documentation of a South African diamond factory in Robertsfors, northern Sweden, and also a sermon. The local priest decided to preach on morality and ethics, and he asked his assembly if it was right to work for a South African company during the apartheid era. The priest's speech forced the town's residents to take a position on whether it was more important to provide jobs for the people of Robertsfors or to show solidarity with the black majority in South Africa. This existential issue caused major conflicts in the community, as the diamond factory was the community's largest workplace. In 2015, the diamond factory was finally closed and its production moved to Ireland. Jordenö, who worked at the factory as a youth, followed the impending closure for ten years. She documented people's stories during the lead up to the factory's closure and she reflected on her own role as an artist. In 2015 Jordenö showed this work at

the Gothenburg International Art Biennale and the priest's sermon was included in the exhibition (*Fig. 2*).

Jordenö's work of art captures people's stories of sorrow and resistance, but also reveals the changes that Sweden faced and is still facing. Factory closures have depopulated parts of the Swedish countryside and the difference between urban and rural areas has grown. Both the contemporary collection in Norrköping and Jordenö's artwork document a working-class identity that is gradually changing. It is also about two countries affected by internal struggles and global influences.

THE EU SUMMIT IN GOTHENBURG

It is essential for museums to dare to take risks, to dare to seek out difficulty, to join with visitors in highlighting areas and routes that are otherwise in the shade or in complete darkness. If the museums are to function as society's memory, they cannot leave it to the media to document the more problematic parts of history.⁷

On 14 to 16 June 2001, around 50,000 people from across Sweden gathered in Gothenburg to take part in demonstrations on the occasion of the European Council summit. During the summit, discussions included the expansion and future of the EU, the ongoing crises in the Middle East and Western Balkans, the climate change and the Kyoto Protocol. In addition to EU heads of state, the President of the USA, George W. Bush, was in attendance.

The demonstrations during these three days were the most extensive seen in Sweden for several decades. For many, this became a traumatic experience. In total, 53 police officers and 90 protesters were injured, around 530 people were arrested, 80 of them later prosecuted. Reports were filed against 170 police officers, five of whom were charged (though none were convicted), and the chief of police was charged with deprivation of liberty (but was acquitted in the court of appeal). Following these traumatic events, the Swedish government initiated a national inquiry to investigate the actions of police management during the demonstrations.⁸ The inquiry was also intended to offer a number of suggestions for changes to the right to demonstrate. As a result, a new law came into force in 2005, which prohibits participants in demonstrations from completely or partially covering their faces in a manner that impedes identification.

Protesters, the police and those living in Gothenburg were not the only ones affected by the events. People all over Sweden were following what happened via the media. After the demonstrations, I was present at several public debates regarding the



Fig. 3. Collage of images from the 2001 event in Gothenburg. Photographer: Olle Wallgren, Riksutställningar.

role and responsibility of the media. Many major newspapers received a great deal of criticism for having chosen, almost exclusively, to cover the violence in the streets and not show the peaceful demonstrations in which almost 50,000 people took part. The media focused on the violence of the perpetrators, the senselessness of the vandalization, and the suffering of the innocent victims, but they mostly left political causes out of their reports. One policeman I later interviewed said, "Why is no one asking why thousands of people are protesting? Which issues concern them so much that they are travelling from all over the country to Gothenburg?"

At this time, I was working as a curator for the Swedish Travelling Exhibitions.⁹ As the demonstrations had affected people over the entire country and had resonated in many debates, we thought this was an important moment in history. The media's

one-sided view of the demonstrations also created great frustration and powerlessness that affected both the inhabitants of Gothenburg and subsequent political debate. By collecting different people's stories and objects, we wanted to let many voices be heard and show many perspectives on the protests (*Fig. 3*). The idea to create a contemporary collection was born.

An exhibition was produced, consisting of three modules. One of them highlighted a number of individuals through their stories and through objects associated with the summit. Two ethnologists, myself included, interviewed police officers, hotel owners and protesters, among others. One woman was trying on shoes in a shop when she suddenly noticed the violence outside on the street; a dog leash led to the story of a man who was leaving town with his dog just as the streets became covered in broken glass; a police helmet told the story of a police officer who was surrounded by protesters and lost contact with his superiors; a father associated an anorak with the story of how he was informed that his son had been shot by the police; and a menu presented the story of a designer of culinary experiences who was planning a luxurious dinner at a castle on the outskirts of Gothenburg for the finance ministers present at the EU summit. The second module displayed moving images from news broadcasts, from the EU summit itself and from the protests, as well as newspaper headlines. In this part of the exhibition we wanted to stimulate a discussion on the media's role and its responsibilities in the face of such an event. The third module was a small house used as a working space. Anyone could leave their contribution to the event in a letterbox, through a text message, or by speaking with one of the museum's personnel, usually an ethnologist or an educator, who was present in the house for several hours each day.

In November 2002, the exhibition *Summit* was launched in collaboration with the Gothenburg City Museum, in a public space on the largest avenue in Gothenburg. After that, the exhibition was shown in eight towns across the country, over a period of almost nine months. In each new location, the modules were installed in strategic positions in the cities. In addition, debate days, film screenings and related exhibitions were arranged in the organizers' own premises. All the material that was collected during the tour was deposited at the Gothenburg City museum. Today this material constitutes one of the museum's contemporary collections and is available in the museum for research. On several occasions, museums from different regions of the country have borrowed parts of this collection to include in their exhibitions.

SERBIA AND THE BALKAN CONFLICT

Can contemporary collecting help us engage with difficult issues in society? I want to argue that it can. When I worked as a cultural attaché in Serbia (2009–2012), I soon realized that the museums promoted one common narrative about World War II and few museums had archives covering the war in the Balkans during the 1990s. Instead it was ideologically motivated artists that created archives about the wars, using methods similar to contemporary collecting. Based on my previous experiences, I initiated and led a five-year project on museum development that included methods for contemporary collecting on difficult topics. The project included conferences, workshops, expert exchanges, residences and a publication, and involved museum staff, artists, educators, activists and researchers from both Serbia and Sweden.



Fig. 4. Whistle used during the demonstrations in Belgrade, Serbia, 1996–1997. Photographer: David Sapire.

It was difficult to discuss the conflict during the 1990s with my Serbian colleagues, but it turned out that through objects, people could reflect on their experiences. The objects became *memory vessels* of a difficult past, and personal experiences became part of a narrative of a country and a region erupting and transforming. In 2010, a whistle was presented in one of the workshops (Fig. 4). The whistle had been used during the demonstrations against Milošević at the end of his regime in the 1990s and 2000 when thousands of people demonstrated, blowing their whistles. The whistle was not just connected to a story of resistance. It was also a personal story of a young women who had just had a child. During the workshop this woman spoke of politics, the war, and individual and collective resistance, and she also spoke about a specific situation: She had been alone with her baby in her aunt's house in Belgrade's suburbs



Fig. 5. Public discussion on nationalism in 2016 (with Hans Ruin, Minna L. Henriksson, Lawen Mohtadi, and Qaisar Mahmood). Photographer: Katarina Nimmervoll, Swedish History Museum.

when a bomb hit the chemical factory just a kilometre away, while the child's father was in Belgrad, reporting for foreign media. It was a story of fear for her own, her child's and her husband's lives. It was also a story of fear for the future. Her story evoked strong images that have stayed with me since then.

HISTORY UNFOLDS

In January 2015, I was employed as curator and artistic director for the project *History Unfolds* at the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm, which opened in November 2016. The project was an attempt to reveal how history is created and used, and to examine the museum structure and collections. The project consisted of several

parts: the contemporary art exhibition *History Unfolds – Contemporary Art Meets History* and an exhibition of museum objects, *A Reflection*. The project also included a programme of events, collaborations, an educational programme and a publication.

By the spring of 2015 we started developing methods for joint reflection, which contributed to the momentum of the project. Artists, researchers, writers and journalists led public tours in the museum's permanent exhibitions with the task of highlighting issues that caused friction or were considered absent. The guided tours questioned, for instance, how minorities are described in the exhibitions, or commented on how the museum's exhibition design could impede the development of alternative perspectives of history. The guided tours were followed by public discussions on a range of topics such as Sweden's colonial past, nationalism, migration, freedom of speech, and religious cultural heritage (*Fig. 5*). These conversations were put on the museum's website and have also contributed to the museum's internal procedures for updating the permanent exhibitions.

The exhibition *A reflection* incorporated around 30 objects from the museum's collections, chosen in order to illustrate the tensions between conscious and unconscious creation of Swedish history and national identity. Today many museums often highlight narratives of those previously unrepresented in museums. In this project, however, I did not want to confirm the norm of exclusion and alienation. Instead, we made visible how those who historically belonged to the norm created the museums, collections and defined history and heritage. In this way we hoped to destabilize the construction of history, and, through the objects, unfold hidden stories. By adding different perspectives to the museum's objects, the connotations changed, which highlighted the potential of the museum's collections, depending on time and context. It is therefore important to stress that this exhibition, with its choices and gestures, is also part of contemporary history making.

To the main part of the project – the contemporary art exhibition – we chose ten artists whose practice has often explored and revealed the interpretation of history.¹⁰ Five new site-specific art works were produced. The artists researched using unconventional methods and formulated new questions about the collection, and offered alternative perspectives through their works. A condition for this exploration was their collaboration with the museum's researchers, archaeologists and educators. All the artworks contributed to an investigation of the museum's activities, and their presence allowed us to reflect on the museum's interpretations and valuation of its collections. Because the art works were integrated into the museum's existing exhibitions, they interacted in various ways with the museum's architecture and exhibited objects (*Fig. 6*).



Unlike museums' responsibility to work with knowledge based on facts, artists have no obligation to convey facts. Through their investigations they can broaden our perception and give us new perspectives, which in turn lead to new thoughts. The artists can also ask uncomfortable questions about a material and interpret unexpected events in a different way. Artists are also the obvious authors of their works, while museum officials or curators in cultural history museums are often anonymous.

FOUR EXAMPLES

Within *History Unfolds* we exhibited the American photographer Susan Meiselas' work *Mediation* (1982), which was based on her book about the revolution in Nicaragua in 1978–1979. The artwork explored the contrast and interaction between a historical process and how its images are appropriated (Fig. 7). The central narrative consisted of pages from Meiselas's book with her images and text. Shown in parallel were torn pages from magazines that published Meiselas's work. How the photographs are read and understood by the viewer is largely defined by the magazines, which alter and sometimes betray the photographer's meaning. These tend to compress history and exaggerate the dramatic rather than show the everyday moments. The exotic, symbolic and violent become thematic. Another parallel narrative were Meiselas's "rejects" consisting of colour xerox copies. By also displaying the *not selected* images, the complexity of each moment was more accurately represented, giving a fairer sense of the flow of life. Meiselas's work made us reflect on how images can be used to serve different interests, and how they become iconic symbols that are used globally to represent a historical event. As museum professionals we need to draw attention to the fact that images – sometimes manipulated – are increasingly important in the creation of history today.

During the first half of the 20th century, the definition of who was Swedish was based on a systematic race science that emerged in Europe in the early 19th century. These theories were prominent at the time when many of Sweden's museums were founded. *Unfolding Nordic Race Science* was a collaborative multidisciplinary project by the visual artist Minna L. Henriksson and the archaeologist Fredrik Svanberg, dealing with the topic of race science in the Nordic countries. The collaboration had two outcomes: an art installation by Henriksson and an academic text by Svanberg.

Fig. 6. Installation view of Prayer (Stockholm), James Webb (2016), a sound installation comprising recordings of prayers and vocal worship from Stockholm. Photographer: Katarina Nimmervoll, Swedish History Museum.



Fig. 7. Installation view of *Mediations*, Susan Meiselas (1982). Photographer: Katarina Nimmervoll, Swedish History Museum; Fig. 8 (right). The artist creating the wall drawing for *Unfolding Nordic Race Science*, Minna L. Henriksson (2016). Photographer: Katarina Nimmervoll, Swedish History Museum.

The artist's wall drawing (Fig. 8) was a survey of central figures in the Nordic countries between the 1850s and 1945, included anatomists, collectors of human remains, institutions, museums, and patrons, as well as artists who produced images of the constructed white Nordic race and the "exotic others". Although race science lost its legitimacy after the end of the Second World War, we can still experience stereotypical staging in the museums today based on the idea of race. Until around 1970 there was a display at the Swedish History Museum that consisted of skulls categorized into long and short types. This classification was originally developed by the anatomist Anders Retzius and was a central aspect of the idea of the race science hierarchies that placed the "Nordic long-skulled race" at the top.





Fig. 9. Film still from *The Gold Room – An Answer to Jorge Luis Borges's Text "The Scandinavian Destiny"*, Esther Shalev-Gerz (2016).

Based on classification systems, museum objects have often been fixed to an origin, a place and a narrative. The objects in the museum can, however, be linked to people, places and events in large parts of the world. Their multidimensional character, aesthetic values and relationships need to be dealt with in greater depth. Objects also change when they are taken out of their context and become museum objects and part of a collection. When the objects are examined in different research projects and set aside in exhibitions, the meaning changes again. In her work *The Gold Room* (Fig. 9), Esther Shalev-Gerz invited ten people to tell stories by using objects as memory vessels. She asked five historians at the museum to unfold the possible stories of a specific object that they had selected from the museum collection, questioning the forms of discourse legitimized in the field of history. The other five participants were people who had recently found refuge in Sweden. On the long journey of their flight they needed to make very careful decisions about what they brought with them. These objects became individual by being identified as someone's object, each with its own history, unlike the objects that are kept in museums, which usually become representatives of a certain type of object. Shalev-Gerz chose to pair up the rather dry scientific narratives of the historians with the stories of the refugees, an approach that encourage a fresh reading of the anonymous objects in the collection. She transforms the mute, shiny Gold Room in the museum into a new kind of laboratory of cultural objects, of stories and destinies. It becomes a room that documents journeys, communication and cultural contact between people, in particular between Scandinavi-



Fig. 10. Tons of Dust, Dušica Dražić (2016). The artist (foreground) and the archaeologist Inga Ullén.
Photographer: Katarina Nimmervoll, Swedish History Museum.

ans and the Arab world, long before Sweden became a nation.¹¹ Shalev-Gerz's work visualized the museum's sometimes narrow view of the objects and their potential narratives. Her work also challenged the museum's classification, but also the interpretation and displays of the objects in the exhibitions.

The Swedish History Museum stores about ten tons of soil samples from archaeological sites in Sweden and Sápmi from Stone Age to modern times, dating from the second half of the 19th century up to recent years. The soil carries an immense amount of data whose value is difficult to determine. The majority of the specimens have not yet been processed, but they are stored with the idea – or hope – that they will be analysed in the future. Few of the staff members at the museum knew about the samples, and even fewer believed that soil samples had any value. In close collaboration with the archaeologist Inga Ullén, the artist Dusica Dražić started investigating the collection (Fig. 10). She became interested in the poetry of the archive: bags, boxes, jars filled with earth. Dražić imagined all these samples as part of a nation. By calling the soil Swedish, the notions of a nation state, its borders, and the ownership

of land was brought to the fore. The connection between soil and national identity is also often reflected in symbolic acts such as kissing the soil, taking soil with you, and wanting to be buried in the soil where you were born. Dražić's artwork *10 Tons of Dust* raised a series of questions about the soil's biological content, about geography, and about the way people lived in the past. But her work also revealed an important issue in relation to the new Swedish Museum Law of 2017, which makes it possible for museums to dispose parts of their collections.

REFLECTIONS

It is impossible to collect everything: certain representations have been selected and others have been neglected. Some narratives have been prioritized above others, but will this not always be the case? What we can do is create visibility around the museum's structures and create transparency around authorship and purpose. There is every reason to unfold the museum's complex collections. They carry many exciting opportunities that can allow unexpected and new knowledge.

The *History Unfolds* project developed during a time of extremes – surges in refugee flows with subsequent changes in migration policy, Brexit, terrorist attacks, a US presidential campaign, and reports of increased threats and fake news on social media. In the autumn of 2017, during the last months of the exhibition, the overwhelming #metoo movement had a profound impact, not only on individuals but also at a structural level, in Sweden and in other parts of the world. Some of these events will be defined as crucial historical events. It is important to reflect on the fact that choices are made that will affect both what is remembered in the future, and what is overlooked and forgotten.

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NOTES

- 1 Fredrik Svanberg, 'Unfolding the collection', in *History Unfolds – Contemporary Art Meets History*, ed. Helene Larsson Pousette (Stockholm: Historiska, 2017).
- 2 The term "unfolding" was used by Helene Larsson Pousette in connection to the exhibition project at the Swedish History Museum, meaning to illuminate different layers of meaning within a museum collection and of specific objects that have not been given attention or discussed.
- 3 The Samdok network is most extensively documented in Eva Silvén & Magnus Gudmundsson, eds., *Samtiden som kulturarv: Svenska museers samtidsdokumentation 1975–2000* (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2006). For accounts in English, see e.g. Anna Steen, 'Samdok: Tools to make the world visible' and Barbro Bursell, 'Professional collecting', both in *Museums and the future of collecting*, ed. Simon J. Knell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).
- 4 'Dokumentation 14.53', Stockholm County Museum, accessed 28 March 2018, <https://dokumentation1453.tumblr.com>.
- 5 David Sandberg & Cajsa Lagerkvist, eds., *Varsel: Om människorna, arbetet och framtiden: Ett fältprojekt* (Stockholm: Nefafält, 1998), 22.
- 6 Sandberg & Lagerkvist, *Varsel*, 29.
- 7 Eva Silvén & Anders Björklund, 'Detecting difficulty', in *Svåra saker: Ting och berättelser som upprör och berör*, eds. Eva Silvén & Anders Björklund (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2006), 255.
- 8 Göteborgskommittén, *Göteborg 2001: Betänkande*, Statens offentliga utredningar 2002:122 (Stockholm: Fritzes offentliga publikationer, 2002), <http://www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2002/01/sou-2002122>.
- 9 The Swedish Travelling Exhibitions was a governmental agency producing and promoting travelling exhibitions, between 1964 and 2017.
- 10 In alphabetical order: Jananne Al-Ani, Meriç Algün Ringborg, Elisabeth Bucht, Dušica Dražić, Minna L. Henriksson, Hiwa K, Susan Meiselas, Esther Shalev-Gerz, James Webb, and Artur Źmijewski.
- 11 Hans Ruin, 'The gold room', in *History Unfolds – Contemporary Art Meets History*, ed. Helene Larsson Pousette (Stockholm: Historiska, 2017).

MICHELLE TERAN

From the plazas and beyond

A visual essay

Spring 2015. The streets, balconies, and walls of Barcelona and Madrid were aflame with political imagery put forth by a loose network of creatives in preparation for the upcoming municipal elections. The *Movimiento de Liberación Gráfica de Barcelona* ('Graphic Liberation Movement of Barcelona', MLGB), *Movimiento de Liberación Gráfica de Madrid* ('Graphic Liberation Movement of Madrid', MLGM), and *Madrid con Manuela* ('Madrid with Manuela', MconM) platforms – composed of designers, illustrators, filmmakers and video activists, visual artists, photographers and musicians, journalists and hackers – focused their creative efforts to support two upcoming mayoral candidates.¹ Each candidate represented a revolutionary municipalist platform: a new model for progressive city governance which based its organizational structure and participatory decision-making process on the experiences gained from the 15-M (Spanish Occupy) and affiliated social movements. Ada Colau, a prominent activist well known in the national and international spheres for her unceasing work around the fight for the right-to-housing, was the running candidate on the *Barcelona en Comú* platform. Colau was one of the founders of the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* ('Mortgage Victims Platform', PAH), a formidable anti-eviction movement which she helped found, and also acted as the principal spokesperson for the campaign. In Madrid, Manuela Carmena was put forth as the mayoral candidate for the *Ahora Madrid* platform. Carmena, a retired lawyer and former member of the Communist Party of Spain, had the distinction of her fight against corruption in courts during Francoism.

Contributions of aesthetic proposals to the Barcelona campaign began through active recruitment of professionals – coming from the fields of graphic design, illustration, advertising, and publishing – who were interested in volunteering their skills to support the candidacy. The movement quickly went viral, and many others joined the project, particularly when activities spread from Barcelona to Madrid.²



Fig. 1. "Ada Colau & Manuela Carmena: desde las plazas y más allá!" ("Ada Colau & Manuela Carmena: from the plazas and beyond!"). Internet meme, 2015. Author unknown (MconM).

The *Madrid con Manuela* platform, which started as a closed Facebook group between ten friends, quickly grew to 1,000 members in a matter of days, then an additional 2,500 members the following week.³ Other groups formed via Facebook, WhatsApp, email, Telegram, etc., which produced hundreds of online images, gifs, proposals for actions and campaigns, of every imaginable variation, the more quickly executed the better. Collages, computer graphics, drawings, memes, films, songs and



Fig. 2. Cristóbal Arteche, “Les milicies us necessiten!” (“The militias need you!”). Poster, 1936;

Fig. 3. Performance action by Supervivienda, *V de Vivienda* (“H for Housing”) campaign, Barcelona, 2007. (Comment: “Ada Colau, trying on the gala dress she will wear during her inauguration as mayor of Barcelona.”) Screenshot: November 19, 2017, 1:09 PM.

poems circulated through social media, then moved to urban spaces. Banners hung from balconies, slogans and images were projected on city walls, and posters were plastered on every surface imaginable. Flash mob actions, improvised festivals, parades, ad hoc troubadours, and other street actions became a daily occurrence.⁴

The aim of this visual essay, however, is not merely to look at how art and design played a role in shaping the political imagination in the Colau and Carmena campaigns. This profusion of imagery is part of a long history of political iconography.⁵ This essay focuses on a particular subset of images created during the excitement of the electoral process which culminated in both women becoming mayors of two of the most important cities in Spain. Here we find an assemblage of superheroes, soldiers, action figures, revolutionaries, and other icons taken from popular culture who assume militant, combative poses that issue challenges through direct provocation.

Following pages: Fig. 4. “¡No pasarán!” (“They shall not pass!”). Poster, 1936. Author unknown; Fig. 5. “Manuela. La alcaldesa que acabó con el Madrid corrupto” (“Manuela. The mayor who ended corrupt Madrid”). Internet meme, 2015. Author unknown (MLGM / MconM); Fig. 6. “Ahora Madrid. No me voy a ninguna parte. Me quedo aquí y pienso causar todo tipo de problemas” (“Madrid now. I am not going anywhere. I am going to stay here and and am thinking about causing all kinds of trouble”). Internet meme, 2015. Author unknown (MconM).

¡No pasarán!





AHORA MADRID



LOS GATOS YA VAN NECESITANDO
UNA HEROÍNA



Fig. 7 (left). “Los gatos ya van necesitando una heroína” (“The cats are already needing a heroine”). Poster, 2015. Author unknown (MconM); Fig. 8. Ada Colau and Xavier Trias. Internet meme, 2015. Author unknown (MLGB).

The intention, therefore, is to consider these revolutionary gestures, and how they are enacted, mimicked and propagated vis-à-vis gendered bodies.

Anarchist and anthropologist David Graeber (cited in Sholette, 2017) proposes a relation between the aesthetic imagination and what he refers to as “prefigurative politics.” A prefigurative politics suggests that in order to imagine the kind of society that we wish to create, we must first engender the conditions in the present state that embodies such aspirations. The imaginative conjuring of a social alternative finds its way through the aesthetic proposals for alternative values and notions of the political.⁶ Future visioning becomes embroiled in the present and played out in how bodies come together – who is visible, who participates, how collective deci-



Fig. 9. "Por la republica. Hacia la liberacion de la mujer" ("For the republic. Towards women's liberation"). Poster for *Unión de Mujeres Republicanas Revolucionarias* (Union of Revolutionary Republican Women), ca. 1936–1939. Author unknown.

sions are made, shared, and implemented, etc. – but also in how contemporary art and aesthetics come together in envisioning alternatives towards a more equitable and non-alienated society.

The multitude of Republic recruitment posters that appeared during the first few months of the Spanish Civil War provides such an example. The strong visual presence of the *milicianas* (female militants) within the graphics campaigns reflected changing gender roles and considerations of acceptable behaviour of women in Republican Spain. Both women and men were urged to take combat positions along the front lines.⁷ A majority of *milicianas* joined ranks with the anarchist (CNT) or Marxist (POUM) militias because of their progressive non-hierarchical stance, and egalitarian and democratic approach to decision-making.⁸ This call to arms finds its way once again in the *Supervivienda* figure, a super-hero(ine) that marked one of the more visible campaigns of the *V de Vivienda*⁹ ('H for Housing') movement, in which the current mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, played a dominant role.¹⁰ In May 2006, an anonymous email circulated on the web, calling all young people in cities throughout the country to demand the right to decent housing. *Supervivienda* – donning a superhero cape and mask – would barge into candidates' rallies during the 2007 municipal elections in order to denounce the commodification of housing and the superhuman efforts that citizens must undertake to survive in increasingly expensive city spaces. Early campaigns established around the right-to-housing struggle led to the highly influential PAH movement, where women have played a prominent role.¹¹

“The social process of imitative encounter,” writes Tony D. Sampson, “actualizes desire and transforms it into social invention.”¹² It is the imitative encounter that takes desire – such as the desire for a social alternative – and transforms it into different models and adaptations for ways of living.¹³ What begins as a micro-event or action gets taken up, mimicked, repeated, passed on, repeated, adapted, repeated, passed on, etc., which leads to the potential realignment and reorganization of an entire social field. Small innovations can, therefore, have potentially wide-spread, transformative effects. This short essay suggests that the depiction of women as propagating agents within political events points to tendencies within the feminization of politics,¹⁴ in which the active presence of women in decision-making spaces is the key to social transformation. Together they offer alternative collective identities that are powerful, inclusive, and propose a rational organization of life by social justice.

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NOTES

- 1 'MLGB. Movimiento de Liberación Gráfica de Barcelona', Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/mlgbarcelona>; MLG-Madrid (@mlg_madrid), Twitter account, https://twitter.com/mlg_madrid; MconM 'Madrid con Manuela', Tumblr account, <http://madridconmanuela.tumblr.com> (all accessed 2 May 2018).
- 2 The MLGB began in September 2014, the MLGM in April 2015.
- 3 Movimiento de Liberación Gráfica de Madrid and Movimiento de Liberación Gráfica de Barcelona, *Al final ganamos las elecciones* (Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2017), 7–39.
- 4 Bernardo Gutiérrez, 'Diez claves sobre la innovación de la #ManuelaManía', *Yorokobu*, 23 May 2015, <https://www.yorokobu.es/diez-claves-manuelamania>, accessed 04.01.2018.
- 5 Carlo Ginzburg, *Fear, reverence, terror: Five essays on political iconography* (Greenford: Seagull, 2017), 137–155.
- 6 Gregory Sholette, *Delirium and resistance: Activist art and the crisis of capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 27.
- 7 Lisa Lines, 'Female combatants in the Spanish Civil War: Milicianas on the front lines and in the rearguard', *Journal of International Women's Studies* 10:4 (May 2009), 170–171.
- 8 Martha A. Ackelsberg, *Free women of Spain: Anarchism and the struggle for the emancipation of women* (Oakland: AK Press, 2005), 95–96.
- 9 *V de Vivienda* as an allegory for *V for Vendetta*, as pointed out by Melissa García-Lamarca in 'Reconfiguring the Public Through Housing Rights Struggles in Spain', in *City Unsilenced: Urban Resistance in Public Space in the Age of Shrinking Democracy*, eds. Jeffrey Hou & Sabine Knierbein (New York: Routledge 2017), 44–55.
- 10 For background, see Amador Fernández-Savater, 'Interview with Enmedio (eldiario.es)', (interview date 7 June 2013), <http://www.enmedio.info/en/entrevista-con-enmedio/>, accessed 2 May 2018.
- 11 Adrià Alemany & Ada Colau, *Mortgaged lives: From the housing bubble to the right to housing*, trans. Michelle Teran & Jessica Fuquay (Los Angeles: Journal for Aesthetics & Protest Press, 2014), 85–89. The book is available for download at <http://joaap.org/press/pah/mortgagedlives.pdf>.

12 Tony D. Sampson, *Virality: Contagion theory in the age of networks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 24–26.

13 Michelle Teran, *Confessions of an online stalker* (2015), http://www.ubermatic.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/futureguides_web_sm.pdf, 309–315, accessed 04.03.2018.

14 Laura Roth & Kate Shea Baird, ‘Municipalism and the feminization of politics’, *ROAR Magazine* 6 (Summer 2017), <https://roarmag.org/magazine/municipalism-feminization-urban-politics>, accessed 12.02.2018.

MARCIA SÁ CAVALCANTE SCHUBACK

The migration of the image

Und was wären dann die Bilder?

*Das einmal, das immer wieder einmal und nur jetzt und nur hier Wahrgenommene
und Wahrzunehmende.*

(“And then, what would the images be?

What is perceived and is to be perceived once and always again once, and only here
and now.”)

Paul Celan, *Der Meridian*¹

We live in a world saturated with images. Everything appears as image and nothing seems to exist without an image. Images abound, and nothing is left out of sight. On the one hand, everything that was once invisible and unseen can now be made visible and exposed for the screen of the world. On the other, every image becomes the site of manipulation, exploitation, and simulation. The same image serves both as evidence and concealment of truth. If during past centuries, images have had the double task to render present the absent and to render visible the present, today images render the present void of presence and the exposed visible invisible to itself. Too much imagery of what is being and happening serves to make us blind and eyeless to what is being and happening. The more we see of images, the less attention we pay not only to what is shown in the image but above all to the very nature of the image. In a world obfuscated by the spectacle of images we no longer know what an image is. It is undoubtedly an urgent task to sharpen our critical knives in order to pierce the spectacle of images today, to find new critical tools to read the too-visible manipulations and exploitations of images. However, today the problem is not so much that behind images there are unseen messages and codes but precisely the contrary, namely that it is because the manipulation happens so clearly before the eyes that no one sees it. If images seem to steal the real from the real, if in every image, the fiction of truth and the truth of fiction converge, this is due not only to the ways images are produced, used and exchanged, but to the very nature of the image. This means that a critique of

the alienating power of the image needs to engage not only with the mechanisms of power and powerlessness of and in the world today but also with the question about the nature and the poetics of the image, in the sense of the enigmatic working ways of migrating between the real and the unreal, the visible and the invisible, being and not being at stake in the image. Thus images are perhaps nothing but this migration.

Through the centuries, the question about the nature and essence of the image has been answered, at least in the western culture, through the key concept of representation. Since ancient times, the image has been defined by the relation with what it images. The image represents, presents something anew, existent or nonexistent, so that its value has been considered from the degree of fidelity or not to what it represents. The image can therefore be more or less trustworthy, true or realistic. The image carries an inherent duplicity thus, as image, it is both material – a drawing at the wall of a cave, a sculpture in marble, a painting on a canvas, and an image on the screen – and immaterial, thus what is drawn, sculptured, painted, imaged is there but immaterially. The image is the extraordinary realm of unreal realities and real unrealities, of visible invisibilities and invisible visibility, of material immaterialities and immaterial materiality. Looking, for instance, at Francisco de Zubarán's *Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose*, we see the most intense presence of lemons, oranges and a rose, but we cannot touch them, "they are alive but cannot harm me", we could say quoting some words by Aby Warburg.² They are unreal realities appearing in the real reality of a canvas. Indeed, in each image, a *noli me tangere*, a "don't touch me" is being continuously stated, thus in the image, the real put in front of the observer is at the same time drawn away from him, as what cannot be touched as these things but only as this painting.³ The challenge of the image is not merely the one of a fictional world besides the real world but of a fictional real world, of a real fictional world inside the world.

The innumerable debates about mimesis and representation that pervade the history of philosophy and aesthetics from ancient times and through modernity is grounded in an understanding of the image as what reproduces the real and as such as a producer of reproductions. This understanding derives from a technical view of the world, in which things themselves are "images", in the sense of reproductions of ideas, models or projects. But different from a technical object, images reproduce something producing a duplicated but nonetheless untouchable world. It reproduces the world producing a quasi-real world. The image is something quasi-real, something between the real and the unreal. The image of something is as image visible and touchable but the imaged thing in an image becomes visible but nonetheless untouchable. Besides this general view of the image as production of a quasi-reality through the reproduction of a reality, the image has also been seized as the force to render present what is absent. It also implies the idea of a substitution, replacement and even

of consolation, thus in the place of the emptiness of an absence, the image alleviates, lightens the lack through its virtual or quasi-presence. This paradigmatic view of the image as reproduction and the capability to render present what is absent expresses a very basic experience of the image, namely the experience of losing out of view the image turning all attention to what is being imaged. Looking at Zubarrán's *Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose*, the attention tends to fix on the lemons, the oranges and the rose forgetting the painting qua painting, its material support, indeed letting the very act of imaging pass into oblivion.⁴ What happens with an image also happens with a word. Saying lemon, orange or rose, we turn immediately our attention to lemons, oranges and roses and forget the simple fact that we are saying these words, that they are words. Words and images share the event of an attention that turns away from the whole action of attention – the word, the image, when turning the attention toward what is being said, what is imaged. In the word, the event of the word becomes paradoxically unheard; in the image, the event of the image becomes paradoxically disregarded.

The image presents a double movement rather than a double world. It renders the absent real present and at the same time it becomes itself almost invisible in everything that it renders visible. The "almost" is here decisive. Thus no one ever confounds the image with the real, the appearance with existence, even in the most elaborate *trompe l'oeil* or high-tech simulation. The gap between the image and the real, the appearance and existence is what makes possible on the one hand the vision of the image as image but on the other the alienation and oblivion of both the image and the real. Aware of this duplicity or ambiguity of the image, the possibility to pierce with an image the alienation of existence that results from a world saturated with images, in such a way that the image can appear as what renders present the present instead of distancing it from itself, this possibility depends on the intensity through which the migration between the image and the real, the visible and the invisible, being and non-being is experienced. The force of the image is the one that makes it possible to tear the veil of the spectacle when it makes visible the interruption between the image and the imaged, and shows the image as a dramatic migration between them.

*

Rather than *duplication, substitution or representation* of the world,⁵ the image should be understood as *migration* between the visible and invisible, the touchable and un-touchable, being and non-being. In order to describe what could be called the migrant

nature and poetics of the image, a reflection on the images of migration and the experience of the image in the situation of migration and exile becomes necessary.

We live in times of migration and exile, not only of people but of all forms of lives. The more capitalism advances, the more every form of existence, such as cultures and traditions, is forced to migration and exile. The fundamental law is the one of “general equivalence” through which everything and everyone must lose any fixed meaning and signification for the sake of becoming flexible and “open” to receive whatsoever determination and signification.⁶ If, for some, this corresponds to liberal ideals of freedom and liberation, for others (and many), this equals existence without existence, the conversion of all forms of life into resources for uses, misuses and abuses, without limits. Everything then loses its meaning, and value appears as replaceable and equivalent to anything. Thereby everything becomes at the same time “nothing” and “anything”; nothing because it appears indeterminate and “anything” for it can as “nothing” receive whatever meaning and value. Thereby everything loses its value and every value is reduced to a price, to monetary value. The spectacle we assist today is the spectacle of continuous designification and resignification. Things and forms of existence undergo a continuous process of loss of historically valid significations, on the one hand, and, on the other, of production of resignifications, depending on interests and market strategies. This exposes the apparent contradiction of a world submitted to the global law of “general equivalence” in which everything is converted to whatsoever for the sake of being easily used but also misused and abused by who-soever, whenever and wherever – a global world that pursues the undifferentiated and one-dimensional⁷ – and a world witnessing the rise of strong new waves of ethnocentrism, localism and nationalism. This contradiction is apparent insofar as these two opposed movements belong to one and same movement, the one of continuous transformation – which is the great motor of capitalism. Continuous transformation is however a contradiction in terms as a change that continuously changes is by definition not a change, and what explains that in the age of continuous transformation, *status quo*, conformism and regression reign. It could therefore be said that what the times need is not changes but above all a change of the very meaning of change. To this continuous interchange between strategies of designification and resignification contributes the spectacle of images that is staged over all in the world and as the world, today. In order to designify things, realities, and forms of existence, these have to be first identified, imaged *as* this and that. To the strategy of designification, a strong work of hyper-signification is required. The more global the face of the world, the more the need to locate it. Nationalities, folklores, local identities are branded, labelled, and hyper-typified in order to attend the goals of tourism or other market’s strategies. If minorities can thereby finally find a place to appear and speak,

the politics of identity demanded by the very system polarize society. Images are the main means for the construction of identities in a world submitted to the imperative of disidentification of all for the sake of enabling the omni-identification with the logic of money, announced for the most part as the need to survive within this logic. This becomes very clear in the way the images of the refugees, of people in exile and immigrants are produced, reproduced and exhibited. An independent collective of filmmakers in Syria, called Abounaddara, has been actively working against the image of the Syrian people exhibited both by the Assad regime and by international press, denouncing the indignity of these images and claiming the right for the dignity of the image.⁸ Their question touches the nerve of the problem about the construction of identity in the global world, a world globally grounded on techno-mediatized capitalism, and thereby imprisoned by and inside the spectacle of a system of images that images in every image the very system. This question about the right for the dignity of the image is the one about the poetics of the image, about what images can do to pierce the alienating wall of images today and thereby to refuse *qua* image the dangers of typification that lie in every image.

In the middle of a saturation of the images of migration and their typification, the migrant nature and poetics of the image appears. In order to see it, one has to be aware of the experience of the image in the situation of migration and exile. The common image of migration and exile is the one of interrupted existence, of the trauma of separation and rupture of life in life, from which a presumed distinct before and after is defined. The common image of migration and exile is the one of a “dual system”, the same through which the image of image has been itself defined during centuries of reflection. It is in terms of a dual system that more recently the French art historian Didi-Huberman also defined the nature of the image.⁹ Thus what sticks in the image is the way it refers to itself solely when referring to something else. Even the most possible conceptual image of the image would still be imprisoned in this law of the image, by which the image as image appears withdrawing in what is imaged. That is what allows the image to be, as much as the situation of migration and exile, a system of similarities and non-similarities, of likeness and non-likeness, of selfhood and otherness. What remains mysterious in the image is how one register – the imagetic – turns into the other – the real – and vice-versa, how appearance and existence interchange positions in this dual system. What these thoughts of the dual system of the image leaves however out of sight is the between realm that emerges. Edward Saïd proposed the musical metaphor of the “contrapunct” to indicate that in the situation of migration and exile the image appears rather as plural than as dual. Thus there are not only two dimensions or worlds at play but a plural variety, which includes between realms. Even if Saïd’s “contrapuntal awareness” presents a more nuanced image of images in

exile and migration it still supposes the clear distinction between fields of experience, the clarity in differentiation between the before and after the cut of separation from which migration and exile can be defined.¹⁰ What still remains unthought is how, in the experience of migration and exile, all these dimensions, fields, realms, and worlds lose their presumed contour, appearing as after-images, capable to make visible the in-between existence that defines this situation.

It is important to consider that migration and exile is rather a condition of between-existence than of post-existence. Indeed, the most decisive experience is the continuous situation of existing between a no longer and a not yet, no longer there and never yet here, thus in migration and exile one remains both without arrival wherever one arrives and without return in whatsoever return. This between-existence that migration and exile are shall not be seized as interval between two realms or worlds, but as the “con-fusion”, so to speak, of contemporaneous but nonetheless opposed horizons and movements. The suffering of migration and exile is never linear, the one of having left something and having arrived in something else. It is rather the concomitance of being continuously with-out, without a with and with a without, of living with images of what has been, together, superposed and exposed to what could have been and to what can never be. Migration and exile are the plural life of many lives, the one there, the one here, the one between both, at the same time and at the same place, as if one always had two or more pair of glasses at once, seeing both backwards and forwards in everything that one sees. In the situation of migration and exile, the now acquires such a density and spectrum that it can no longer separate from what has once been, what can and could be and what can never be. In migration and exile the absent is continuously becoming present and the present always somehow absent, one is not only here and there at once but above all in a vague between that cannot be measured, for it is from which measures and the lack of measures become possible or impossible.

Few writers wrote so clearly about what happens with sensibility, perception memory, images and consciousness in the situation of migration and exile than Vladimir Nabokov. In his work, one can find an inspiring sketch for a phenomenology of the image and of memory in this situation, which proposes lines to develop a view on the migrant nature and poetics of the image. Nabokov considered that in this situation everything that can be described as “being”, whether what has been or what could be, emerges from this between which is nothing but the pluri-movement of many contradictory movements. Thus what has been and what can be can no longer leave behind the left-behind that once occurred. What used to appear as being this or that, here or there, re-appear after the exilic cut as a no longer this and yet or not yet that, as a far from there and from here, as a near from the far away and far from

the near-by, emerging in obscure and diffuse contours. We could say, based on his thoughts, that images in exile and migration lose their figural shape and appears as abstract traits of a sketch. Nabokov insisted that the proper of images in the situation of migration and exile is that they are rather “after-images”,¹¹ that like comets or eclipses appear precisely while disappearing, that become visible after or even before having being made visible. He coined a term for these after-images in exile and migration, the word “photism”, derived from the Greek *phos*, light, meaning a kind of light-ism. In *Speak, memory*, where we find a thematic discussion of the “photisms” that emerge in the situation of migration and exile, Nabokov insists that:

They come and go, without the drowsy observer's participation, but are essentially different from dream pictures for he is still master of his senses. They are often grotesque. I am pestered by roguish profiles, by some coarse-featured and florid dwarf with a swelling nostril or ear. At times, however, my photisms taken on a rather soothing *flou* quality, and then I see – projected, as it were, upon the inside of the eyelid – gray figures walking between beehives, or small black parrots gradually vanishing among mountain snows, or a mauve remoteness melting beyond moving masts.¹²

In the situation of migration and exile, the real appears as real while it disappears, showing itself rather as photism, as lightism than as image, since every horizon loses the clear contours and shapes for it is now seen under the fog of separation, the one that keeps all things gathered in the vibrating tension of their ungathering.

This here out-sketched description of images in the situation of migration and exile as after-images or photisms aims to show in which sense images are themselves migrants. As much as migration and exile, images are not only the dual or plural system of the concomitance and convergence of opposed realms, dimensions and worlds but the rendering visible the invisible between of one turning into the other, of another turning into one. Seized as photism and after-image, images in the situation of migration and exile are themselves migrant insofar as they continue to be visible in a “palpebral” mode after having taken leave of us. They continue to appear when disappeared, being simultaneously here and not here, there and not there. What becomes central in this migrant and exilic experience of the image is its imminent character, since at stake is how the real becomes image when it is about to be lost, when it is about to take leave of us and we about to take a leave of it. Walter Benjamin's sensibility to conceive the image in migration and exile from this imminence of a departure allowed him to define the image as: “Anything about which one knows that one soon will not have it around becomes an image.”¹³ Image is what appears under the light of separation and departure even before this happened. It is “image” only inso-

far as a “trace of withdrawal is already silently at work within it”, as Gerhard Richter adequately described it.¹⁴

The experience of the image in the situation of migration and exile reveals the image as migration not only between realms and worlds but between the visible and invisible, the touchable and untouchable, between being and non-being. This migration is however never sequential but rather simultaneous and pluri-directional insofar as different times and places are always exposed to each other, superposed by each other, running together, so to speak, even if in different speeds and intensities. What Nabokov’s notions of “photism” and Benjamin’s thoughts on after-image render visible is how the image, even the most figural and figurative, is rather a “vague object”, recalling an expression by Paul Valéry.¹⁵ Images are “vague objects” in the sense that they are traces of the real turning into image and the image turning into reality, traces of the *shaping* of experience and not of accomplished shapes, forms or figures. In the situation of migration and exile, images witness the instant in which the invisible realm of in-between relations turns into figures and hence the dangerous moment in which the migrant nature of the image is about to be typified and thereby forgotten and kept out of sight. What the image shows in the situation of migration and exile is indeed the ungraspable actuality, the disquiet of existing in migration and exile, the trembling of this between-existence, that re-dimensions all being, either past, present or future. What gathers existence in migration and exile with the nature of the image is precisely the entirely unanchored present, which can no longer rely in an inherited image of past or in a shared image of the future, for it is nothing but “a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness”, recalling again some words by Nabokov.¹⁶ The image is migrant because it is itself a between-existence, an unanchored present. Its danger is however the one of any situation of migration and exile in which, the stronger the fear for this lack of anchors and the drift of existence floating at the mercy of currents, the stronger the tendency to construct strong figures and types to alleviate the harm of no longer believing to know how to be and exist. The danger of migration and exile, which is a profound experience of departure, is the one of hyper-figuration and typification in which the migrant nature and poetics of the image is kept out of sight as if under a mask. In times of hyper-figuration like ours taking place in the global disfiguration of very existence and form of life, it becomes urgent to image the becoming image and render visible the between-existence that the image is. The urgency is to learn to unlearn to force existence to strong figurations and to discover the possibility of a-figural images. Thereby it may be possible to render the image back to its migrant soul and thereby the present to its presence. Images would be then tales of attention to the unanchored present.

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NOTES

- 1 Paul Celan, *Der Meridian: Rede anlässlich der Verleihung des Georg-Büchner-Preises, Darmstadt, am 22. Oktober 1960* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1961), 19. Translation from idem, “The Meridian” – Final version, drafts, materials, eds. Bernhard Böschenstein & Heino Schmull, trans. Pierre Joris (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 10.
- 2 “Du lebst und thust mir nichts”; Aby Warburg, ‘Grundlegenden Bruchstücke einer monistischen Kunstpsychologie’, *Warburg Institute Archives*, III.43.1.
- 3 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Noli me tangere: On the raising of the body* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).
- 4 For a good discussion about the turn in the comprehension of the nature of the image when its material support is taken into account, see Emmanuel Alloa, ‘Anthropologiser le visuel?’, in *Penser l’image II: Anthropologies du visuel*, ed. Emmanuel Alloa (Paris: Les Presses du Réel, 2015), 5–41.
- 5 Gottfried Böhm, *Was ist ein Bild?* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2006).
- 6 Marx, Karl & Engels, Friedrich, ‘Das Kapital’, in *Werke* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1962), p. 65.
- 7 See Herbert Marcuse, *One-dimensional man: Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).
- 8 See e.g. Abounaddara, ‘Dignity has never been photographed’, Documenta 14, <http://www.documenta14.de/en/notes-and-works/15348/dignity-has-never-been-photographed>, accessed 21 March 2018.
- 9 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in spite of all: Four photographs from Auschwitz* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).
- 10 Edward W. Said, *Reflections on exile and other literary and cultural essays* (London: Granta, 2000), 186.
- 11 Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, memory: An autobiography revisited*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin, 1967), 28.
- 12 Nabokov, *Speak, memory*, 28–29.
- 13 Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A lyric poet in the era of high capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1997), 87.

14 Gerhard Richter, *Afterness: Figures of following in modern thought and aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 143.

15 “Le hasard, dans mes mains, vint placer l’objet du monde le plus ambigu”; Paul Valéry, ‘Eupalinos ou l’architecte’, in *Œuvres*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 115. Regarding Valéry’s “vague object”, see also Hans Blumenberg, *Ästhetische und Metaphorologische Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003).

16 Nabokov, *Speak, memory*, 17.

ANDREJ SLÁVIK

Imaginary history

A mathematical parable

In a recent autobiographical sketch, Carlo Ginzburg declared: “Labels do not interest me, but the impulse that generated microhistory does.”¹

Although this anthology already turns the spotlight on two such labels, the Italian historian’s own microhistory and the “potential history” developed by the Israeli curator, filmmaker and theorist of photography Ariella Azoulay, I trust that you will forgive me for introducing another label – in fact, even two or three of them – which, in what follows, I will proceed to introduce in their due order. Along the way, I will also offer some comments on what I regard as the common impulse behind both Ginzburg’s and Azoulay’s work.

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The first label that I would like to propose is that of *irrational* history – and I could just as well reveal straightaway that I regard microhistory as an example, perhaps even the most striking one, of irrational history. Of course, if Ginzburg himself was to be confronted with such a description, chances are that he would protest vigorously: after all, in his famous essay on ‘Clues’ (1978–1979) – often read as a sort of manifesto for the approach that subsequently became known as microhistory – he took care to distance himself from what he denounced as “the fruitless opposition between ‘rationalism’ and ‘irrationalism’”.²

When I say “irrational”, however, I have something altogether rational in mind – but I cannot explain what without deviating, at first sight rather drastically, from my subject.

When children count on their fingers, they tacitly rely on what mathematicians call *natural* numbers. By adding one to the other – one, two, three ... – they are able, at least in theory, to generate an infinite series: the *set* of natural numbers. Now, if such numbers can be added to (or even multiplied by) one another, they can also be subtracted from one another – minus one, two, three ... – generating another infinite series: the set of *negative* numbers, a sort of mirror image of the natural numbers. Indeed, to mark the point of passage across this imagined line of symmetry, we habitually add another number, this time of an altogether singular sort – the number zero, neither positive nor negative – thus bringing the natural and negative numbers together in the set of *integers*.

It goes without saying that we can already do an awful lot of counting with integers: since there is an infinity of both natural and negative numbers, apparently, there is also an infinity of integers. And yet, there is also an awful lot of counting that we *cannot* do with integers – because, although there are indeed infinitely many of them, there are just as many gaps between them. Fortunately, the solution to this problem is already at hand. If we can add, then we can also subtract: hence, as we have already seen, the negative numbers. And if, in addition to adding, we can also multiply, then, in addition to subtracting, we can also divide, thereby filling out the gaps between the integers with the help of ratios.³ For instance, the ratio of one and two ($\frac{1}{2}$) marks a point midway between one and two (that is, a half), and so on. The set of all such ratios – in other words, the set of all possible pairs of integers – is called *rational*.

At this point in my discussion, even the most patient of readers will no doubt ask themselves the decisive question: what on earth does all of this have to do with historiography, let alone with (audio)visual historiography? Well, as far-fetched as it must seem, I would contend that elementary number theory provides a quite fruitful conceptual model for the dialectical development of history-writing in a wide sense. To mark the passage of time, we single out significant occurrences: natural history. To interrogate or question such occurrences, we ask what came before: negative history. To regain a sense of orientation, we establish turning points, whether absolute (e.g. the birth of Jesus Christ in traditional religious historiography) or relative (e.g. *Stunde Null* in contemporary German historiography): integral history. To account for gaps in the historical record, we compare events with one another: rational history.

End of story? Not at all – because, on closer inspection, rational history is also full of gaps: infinitely small this time, but still infinitely many. The rational numbers, that is to say, do not constitute a real continuum, since we can prove that there are numbers which cannot possibly be expressed as a ratio of integers: no matter what number we divide by – or, indeed, how many times we carry out the division – a remainder will always result. The classical example is provided by the square root of two ($\sqrt{2}$) or,

a little more tangibly, the diagonal of a square with a side of unit length. Quite reasonably, the set of all such numbers is called *irrational*.

*

Now, if we agree to define the term “irrational” in this specific sense, I would argue that we find it articulated with almost astounding precision in the preface to Ginzburg’s most renowned work, *The cheese and the worms* (1976), where the Italian historian describes his protagonist, the 16th-century miller Menocchio, in the following words:

Menocchio falls within a fine, tortuous, but clearly distinguishable, line of development that can be followed directly to the present. In a sense he is one of our forerunners. But Menocchio is also a dispersed fragment, reaching us by chance, of an obscure shadowy world that can be reconnected to our own history only by an arbitrary act. That culture has been destroyed. To respect its residue of unintelligibility that resists any attempt at analysis does not mean succumbing to a foolish fascination for the exotic and incomprehensible. It is simply taking note of a historical mutilation of which, in a certain sense, we ourselves are the victims.⁴

Some occurrences, that is to say, no matter what other occurrences we compare them to, would seem to leave a kind of irrational remainder: in Ginzburg’s words, a “residue of unintelligibility that resists any attempt at analysis”. Pinpointing such singular events – and once we start looking for them, they tend to surface almost everywhere – requires not only the very sharpest of conceptual tools but also, I would argue, a sort of literary sensibility that is subtly present throughout Ginzburg’s scholarship, including his contribution to the present volume.⁵

Hence, we can think of microhistory as an approach that, in both senses of the word, *tends* to the irrational – but that nevertheless (and, one might add, almost by implication) remains committed to a broadly rationalist perspective: to recall the passage just quoted, respecting the unintelligibility of the past is not the same thing as “succumbing to a foolish fascination for the exotic and incomprehensible”. With time, in fact, Ginzburg has increasingly distanced himself from what he considers overly “irrational” interpretations of his work and has thereby come to emphasize – possibly even over-emphasize – its “rational” aspects.

This turn of events, however, should not be regarded as a step back but rather as another step forward.⁶ Just like the positive and negative numbers can be brought together in the set of integers, with the number zero as a sort of capstone, the ra-

tional and irrational numbers are reunited in the set of *real* numbers. By analogy, if *The cheese and the worms* can be considered a defining moment in the development of irrational history, then Ginzburg's mature position should rather be qualified as an instance of what might be called real history. This would at least explain why, in more recent writings, he continually underscores the complementarity of exceptions and rules, cases and generalizations, questions and answers, microhistory and global history.⁷ Far from collapsing the distinction, he rather exploits the tension between such apparent opposites, thereby combining them to even greater epistemic effect.

End of story? Not quite – but the next step does seem to take us in quite an unexpected direction.

*

In the course of the preceding argument, we have already encountered the square root of two as an example of an irrational number. We now come across another, even stranger one: the square root of minus one ($\sqrt{-1}$), also known as the *imaginary* number.

This time around, I will not bother you with the mathematical details: suffice it to say that the imaginary number cannot possibly be a real number, since no real number, whether positive or negative, can possibly yield a negative square. Utter nonsense, in other words – yet quite useful for working out certain equations that would otherwise remain unsolvable. In effect, by applying the ordinary arithmetic operations (addition, multiplication, and so on) to the square root of minus one, we are able to leave the linear expanse of real numbers behind and venture into an entirely new dimension. Although it took a while even for mathematicians to get used to the idea, nowadays imaginary numbers can be found in every high school curriculum.⁸

And what about imaginary history? As you will already have suspected, this is the second label that I would like to introduce – in the first place as a more captivating and, indeed, imaginative shorthand for the rather dull and cumbersome expression (audio)visual historiography. If irrational history attends to the remainder or “residue”, to what is either left out of or left over from conventional accounts of the past, then imaginary history opens up what is arguably an entirely new dimension for historical scholarship. What if we could write history not only *from* images (that is, drawing on visual evidence) but also *with* images – and then not only as illustrations for some preconceived idea about past events, but instead as an integral part of the process of inquiry? In the words of British cultural historian Ivan Gaskell, what if “the visual material of the past” – or, I would add, any such material – “can only be adequately interpreted by the creation of new visual material [...] which is rigorously

conceptually disciplined”? As Gaskell proceeds to note: “Under this premise the cultural theorist and the artist become one and the same.”⁹

But why, exactly, would this qualify as an entirely new dimension rather than just an extension along previously established lines? Although this is a matter of discussion, I would say that writing history with images – especially photographic images – is essentially different because, compared to written sources, their “residue of unintelligibility” can hardly be considered residual at all. Due to its distinctive mode of production, photography invariably gives rise to a surplus of sense – so much, in fact, that the result often verges on the nonsensical. As the American film theorist Mary Ann Doane has put it:

Beyond the inevitable selectivity of framing and angle, the camera always seems to evade issues of subjectivity, agency, and intentionality in the process of an unthought and mechanical recording. In reception, this lack can readily be transformed into the questions What does it mean? and What is it for?¹⁰

Clearly, if we still wish to “respect the residue” of such sources, we cannot just disregard the questions that they raise – but neither will it do simply to explain them away, so to speak, whether by declaring them insignificant or, indeed, by answering them in an overly literal manner. Rather, we would have to elicit somehow the “unthought” of the image, combining it either with other images or else with words in a way that brought its incomprehensibility to the fore – still without “succumbing” to it but, *pace* Ginzburg, perhaps just barely. Hence, if irrational history ultimately proves to be compatible with a certain kind of rationalism, imaginary history would have to occupy an even more ambivalent, because liminal, position.

*

Does the approach that Ariella Azoulay calls potential history occupy such a liminal position? On that score, readers are invited to make up their own mind by skipping straight to Azoulay’s contribution to this volume and, if necessary, comparing it with that of Ginzburg.¹¹ In any case, by virtue of its similarity to as well as its difference from microhistory, potential history provides the perfect point of orientation for my own discussion.

To begin with the most apparent difference, the one that first meets the eye: although Ginzburg’s microhistorical inquiries draw on a range of visual materials – from carvings and sculptures to illuminations and prints¹² – Azoulay’s perspective distinguishes itself by the significance it ascribes to photographic images, both as his-

torical sources and as historiographical means of expression. On more than one occasion, in fact, she even reproaches the historical profession for its relative neglect of the medium:

Historians are usually indifferent to photographs and to the unique type of information they contain, due to their ontological nature as documents that do not express the position of their “author,” but rather contain an excess of heterogeneous information.¹³

A reproach, one might add, that Ginzburg can only partly escape.¹⁴ If there is nevertheless a certain similarity – a family resemblance, perhaps – between microhistory and potential history, it is because both seem to approach their chosen materials from the same underlying point of view. “The ontological nature of the photograph,” Azoulay explains,

enables one to enact a civil reading, a viewing that one can call “nongovernmental viewing,” a viewing that will turn the traces of constituent violence that became the law [...] into traces of disaster and that will show the expanded field of the disaster. It will point out that the disaster has also affected those that the regime has maimed by virtue of the loss of ability to see disaster and recognize it as such.¹⁵

Although Azoulay is primarily concerned, here as elsewhere, with the situation in present-day Israel/Palestine, her reasoning has an almost uncanny resonance – at least to my ears – with the passage from *The cheese and the worms* that I quoted above. Indeed, what is Ginzburg’s “dispersed fragment, reaching us by chance” if not a “trace of constituent violence that became the law”? And could Azoulay’s “disaster”, with its “expanded field”, not be described precisely as “a historical mutilation of which, in a certain sense, we ourselves are the victims”? All differences aside, is microhistory not another instance of “nongovernmental viewing”, enacted with the help of Inquisition protocols rather than photographs? Clearly, although photography remains unparalleled in this regard, it is not unique in containing an “excess of information”.

In a different context, I hope to pursue this line of argument further, in the first place with reference to the essay where Azoulay introduces her notion of potential history.¹⁶ Here, I will settle for two additional points. Firstly, when Ginzburg wrote of “a historical mutilation of which, in a certain sense, we ourselves are the victims”, what he actually had in mind was not just the persecution of an obscure 16th-century miller but also – if only unconsciously – the Holocaust, that event beyond events which, directly or indirectly, continues to haunt the imagination of Jews and Palestinians alike, whether in Israel or the diaspora.¹⁷

Secondly, in addition to this tacit background, there is a more specific connection: both Ginzburg and Azoulay draw inspiration from the works of Walter Benjamin, in particular from his notion of redemption – although, in Ginzburg's case, this early influence would subsequently be offset, at least to some extent, by his belated encounter with the rather more sober perspective of Siegfried Kracauer.¹⁸ In *The cheese and the worms*, however, it still seems to have retained more than a little of its messianic force.¹⁹ To crown his discussion of the "fragment" Menocchio, Ginzburg quotes from Benjamin's *Theses on the philosophy of history* – "only to redeemed humanity does the past belong in its entirety" – and then appends a thesis of his own: "Redeemed and thus liberated."²⁰

Liberated – or restored, in Azoulay's words, to "full unimpaired citizenship".²¹

*

As my discussion draws to a close, allow me to briefly retrace my main lines of reasoning. First, with allusion to the terminology of mathematical number theory, I introduced the notion of *irrational* history and suggested that microhistory – at least in the style of Carlo Ginzburg – constitutes an example or subset of irrational history. Next, I proposed *imaginary* history as a more distinct term for what we have also been calling (audio)visual historiography, developed some of its implications and raised the possibility that Ariella Azoulay's potential history might belong in this category, operating in an even more ambivalent epistemic register. Still, it seems to me (but I could be wrong) that both microhistory and potential history remain, so to speak, on the same side of the line – "fine, tortuous, but clearly distinguishable" – between the rational and the irrational, comprehension and the incomprehensible, restraint and excess.

To conclude, I will also sound a note of restraint. Whatever becomes – if, indeed, anything at all becomes – of the prospect of an (audio)visual historiography, as evoked to varying extent by the contributions to this anthology, it needs to be conceived not as a self-sufficient approach but rather within a wider spectrum of historiographical practices. To resort one last time to my slightly fanciful parallel with mathematics: just like the rationals and the irrationals together form the set of real numbers, the real and imaginary dimensions come together in the *complex plane*. Hence, if imaginary history is to prove meaningful in the long run, it can only be as a contribution to what might be called complex history: a kind of history-writing that combines the full scope of available techniques and modes of communication (from the visual to the discursive) with a living awareness of how past, present and future are mutually constituted – without, however, giving in to the temptation of either

eschatology or absolute relativism. In short, a kind of history that would, as it were, approach philosophical reflection asymptotically without actually intersecting with it, that is, without ever taking the leap of faith into speculative philosophy; or, in the words of Siegfried Kracauer, history as a discipline dealing, not with ultimate matters, but nevertheless with “the last things before the last”.²²

In the end, then, should we regard imaginary history simply as one possible vector among innumerable others within the wider field of complex history – just like, in practice, the imaginary part of a complex equation is always eliminated at the end of a calculation? To recall my initial hesitation, how many labels – two or three – have I actually introduced in the course of the preceding argument? Well, perhaps we can take the term imaginary history in either a loose or a strict sense, where the former would simply be a shorthand for (audio)visual historiography in general – whereas the latter would refer to a more specific, perhaps even irreducible line of inquiry, one where the “real part” of the historical argument tends towards zero.

In the latter case, the concept can be summed up as follows. First, on the plane of content, imaginary history would primarily, if not exclusively, draw on visual sources. Second, on the plane of expression, it would primarily, if not exclusively, make use of visual – or, indeed, audiovisual – media.²³ Third, and perhaps most crucially, with regard to the process of inquiry in its own right, imaginary history, while relying to an equal extent on both empirical receptivity and theoretical spontaneity, would give pride of place to the faculty of the imagination, constituting a rigorous (but, *pace* Ivan Gaskell, not primarily conceptual) investigation into the social imaginaries of the remote as well as the more recent past.

Another experiment, that is to say, in practical epistemology,²⁴ now aiming to answer an altogether particular question: how far can (audio)visual historiography be taken without ceasing to be historiography in any meaningful sense? A question that I would very much like to explore further – with the proviso that, in all probability, it cannot be answered in principle, only in practice – that is, by force of example.

*

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NOTES

- 1 Carlo Ginzburg, 'Some queries addressed to myself', in *Carlo Ginzburg: 2010 Balzan Prize for European History* (Milan: Fondazione Internazionale Balzan, 2011), 13.
- 2 Carlo Ginzburg, 'Clues: Roots of an evidential paradigm', in *Clues, myths, and the historical method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 96. While the distinction between (ir)rational as an objective property and (ir)rationalism as a subjective persuasion is obviously of some significance here, I have chosen to disregard it in the context of my argument. For a reading that questions the prevalent perception of Ginzburg's essay as a manifesto, see Andrej Slávik, 'Microhistory goes public: From Ginzburg's *paradigma indiziario* to Weizman's forensic turn', in *Microhistories*, eds. Magnus Bärtås & Andrej Slávik (Stockholm: Konstfack, 2016), esp. 249, 253.
- 3 Although, technically, it would be more correct to speak of fractions or quotients, I opt for the term "ratio" to retain the etymological liaison with "rational".
- 4 Carlo Ginzburg, *The cheese and the worms: The cosmos of a sixteenth-century miller* (London: Routledge, 1980), first published 1976 as *Il formaggio e i vermi* (Torino: Einaudi 1976), xxvi. Ginzburg in this volume
- 5 For contrast, see Florike Egmond & Peter Mason, *The mammoth and the mouse: Microhistory and morphology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 201 (but cf. 203, where Ginzburg's alleged turn to élite culture is described as merely a "provisional closure"). For the Italian historian's own point of view, see Carlo Ginzburg, *No island is an island: Four glances at English literature in a world perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), xiv.
- 6 See e.g. Carlo Ginzburg, 'Our words, and theirs: A reflection on the historian's craft, today', *Cromohs* 18 (2013): 109; idem, 'Microhistory and world history', in *The Cambridge world history*, vol. 6, *The construction of a global world, 1400-1800 CE*, part 2, *Patterns of change*, eds. Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam & Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); idem (with Magnus Bärtås, Andrej Slávik & Michelle Teran), "[...] Dynamism in a single image." Twelve snapshots from a conversation with Carlo Ginzburg', in *Microhistories*, eds. Magnus Bärtås & Andrej Slávik (Stockholm: Konstfack, 2016), 80–81.
- 7 At this stage in my argument, I do not distinguish between (pure) imaginary and complex numbers, in effect retaining the historical terminology of Descartes.
- 8 Ivan Gaskell, 'Visual history', in *New perspectives on historical writing*, ed. Peter Burke, 2nd ed. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 206.
- 9 Mary Ann Doane, *The emergence of cinematic time: Modernity, contingency, the archive* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 63.
- 10 Azoulay in this volume.
- 11 For a more comprehensive inventory, see Andrej Slávik, 'Microhistory and cinematic experience: Two or three things I know about Carlo Ginzburg', in *Microhistories*, eds. Magnus Bärtås & Andrej Slávik (Stockholm: Konstfack, 2016), 50.
- 12 Ariella Azoulay, 'Regime-made disaster: On the possibility of non-governmental viewing', in *Sensible politics: The visual culture of nongovernmental activism*, eds. Meg McLagan & Yates McKee (New York: Zone, 2012), 39. Cf. idem, 'Potential history: Thinking through violence', *Critical Inquiry* 39:3 (2013): 555–556.
- 13 Slávik, 'Microhistory and cinematic experience', 50–51.
- 14 Azoulay, 'Regime-made disaster', 40.

16 Azoulay, 'Potential history'.

17 See e.g. Ginzburg, 'Some queries addressed to myself', 10; idem, 'Our words, and theirs', 104. Cf. Bashir Bashir & Amos Goldberg, 'Deliberating the Holocaust and the Nakba: Disruptive empathy and binationalism in Israel/Palestine', *Journal of Genocide Research* 16:1 (2014), 77–99.

18 For Ginzburg, see Tony Molho, 'Carlo Ginzburg: Reflections on the intellectual cosmos of a 20th-century historian', *History of European Ideas* 30 (2004), 144–148. For Azoulay, see e.g. Ariella Azoulay, 'The darkroom of history', *Angelaki* 10:3 (2006). As regards the corresponding notion in Kracauer's works, see e.g. Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The last things before the last*, ed. Paul Oskar Kristeller (Princeton: M. Wiener, 1995), 310 ("a common life of mankind on earth").

19 Regarding the intellectual background to Benjamin's vision, see e.g. Nickolas Lambrianou, 'Neo-Kantianism and Messianism: Origin and interruption in Hermann Cohen and Walter Benjamin', in *Walter Benjamin. Critical evaluations in cultural theory*, vol. 1, *Philosophy*, ed. Peter Osborne (London: Routledge, 2005).

20 Ginzburg, *The cheese and the worms*, xxvi.

21 Azoulay, 'Potential history', 574.

22 The subtitle of Kracauer's *History*.

23 I use the terms "content" and "expression" in the sense of Louis Hjelmslev: see e.g. 'La stratification du langage', in *Essais linguistiques* (Copenhagen: Nordisk sprog- og kulturforlag, 1959).

24 Cf. Andrej Slávik, 'Preface: Towards a community of style', in *Microhistories*, eds. Magnus Bärtås & Andrej Slávik (Stockholm: Konstfack, 2016), 11.



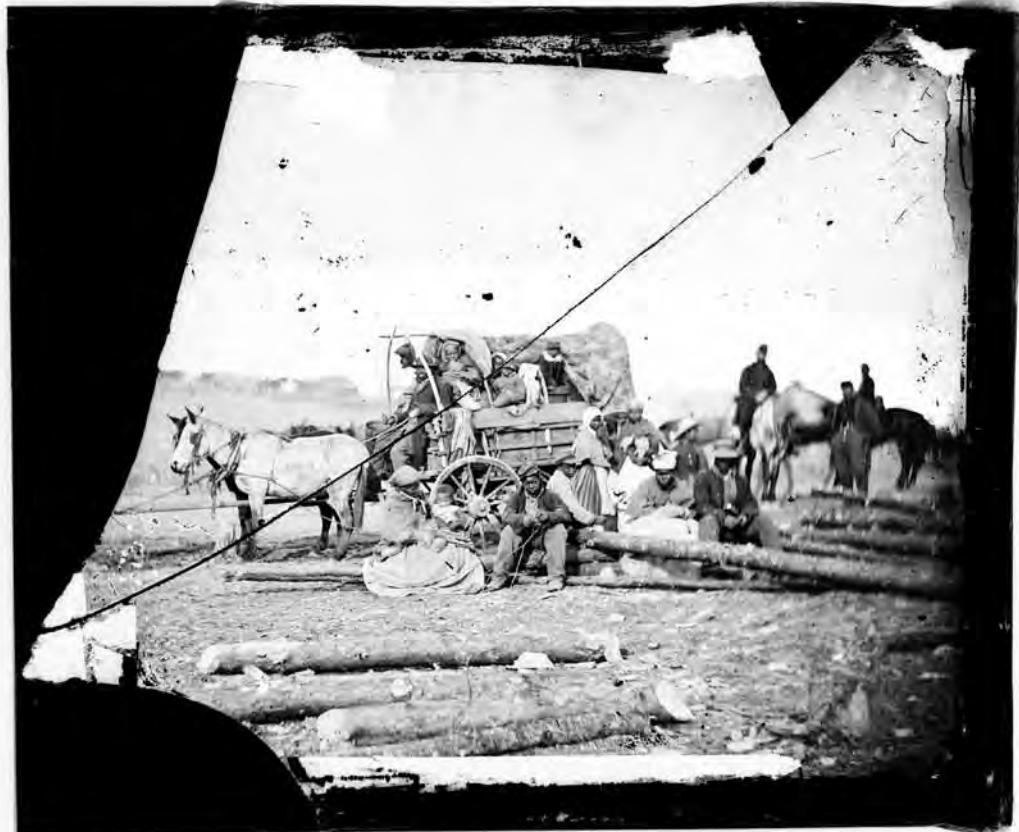
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HISTORY IN IMAGES

Towards an (AUDIO)VISUAL historiography



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History in Images

TOWARDS AN (AUDIO)VISUAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

EDITORS:

Peter Aronsson, Andrej Slávik & Birgitta Svensson



Konferenser 99

KUNGL. VITTERHETS HISTORIE OCH
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ABSTRACT

The outcome of an international symposium taking place on 27–28 April 2017 at the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in Stockholm, this anthology can be read from either end. At one end, a number of essays addressing the question of how pictorial, especially photographic, representations can and have been understood either as historical artefacts or as sources of knowledge about the past. In a nutshell, images in history. Turn the book over again and continue reading. At the other end, an equal number of contributions – texts as well as images – that approach the same question from the reverse angle: how pictorial, especially photographic, representations can themselves be used to convey a new and different understanding of the past. In another nutshell, history in images. Taken together, the two parts of the volume are intended, each from its own perspective, to prepare the ground for a new historical (sub)discipline, viz. (audio)visual historiography.

Keywords: (Audio)visual, film, history, images, methodology, photography

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ANDREJ SLÁVIK

Introduction: History in images

The outcome of an international symposium taking place on 27–28 April 2017 at the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in Stockholm, this anthology can be read from either end. Turn the book over, and you will find a number of essays addressing the question of how pictorial, especially photographic, representations can and have been understood either as historical artefacts or as sources of knowledge about the past. In a nutshell, *images in history*. Continue reading, and you will discover an equal number of contributions – texts as well as images – that approach the same question from the reverse angle: how pictorial, especially photographic, representations can themselves be used to convey a new and different understanding of the past. In another nutshell, *history in images*.

In contrast to the reverse side of the anthology, this part is organized thematically, progressing from the general to the particular, from the abstract to the concrete.

In the opening contribution, Ariella Azoulay throws down the gauntlet to the historical profession at large. In what is surely one of her most drastic theoretical gestures to date, the Israeli curator, filmmaker and theorist of photography stages nothing short of a full-scale attack on prevalent conceptions of the archive as a societal institution. Far from the neutral space that it is often made out to be, Azoulay regards the archive as a fundamental component of an “imperial regime” wreaking havoc on the cultural worlds that came in the way of its “relentless pursuit of the new”. In the same way, documents are seen less as simple carriers of information than as “burning shards, active embers, lethal blades” – in short, as traces of an “unbounded archival violence” that is closely intertwined, in principle and sometimes also in practice, with the physical violence of the ever-expanding regime. In an argument that can be said to parallel – but that also goes more than one step beyond – Ginzburg’s classic essay on ‘The inquisitor as anthropologist’, Azoulay challenges her readers to disentangle

themselves from inherited scientific practices and forms of expertise, to unlearn their most cherished lessons, to resist the siren song of the documents yet to be discovered, calling instead for nothing short of – an archive strike.²

The following three contributions direct our attention to contemporary filmmakers who, just like Azoulay, all grapple with the past and our relation to it. First, Sylvie Rollet turns the spotlight on Sergei Loznitsa, a Ukrainian documentarist whose works she relates to Ginzburg's microhistorical approach. Focussing on *Blockade* (2006) and *The Event* (2015), two compilation films that both deal with dramatic episodes in the history of Leningrad, and drawing on theorists such as Agamben, Foucault, and Deleuze, Rollet's analysis demonstrates how "cinema can contribute to writing history differently".

Then, Jaimie Baron leads us into more experimental territory in a discussion of *Halimuhfack* (2016) and *Reckless Eyeballing* (2004), two shorts by American filmmaker Christopher Harris. Although neither film will be recognized as "historical" in a straightforward sense, Baron argues that both embody "an intense form of historical experience" with the potential to destabilize our received notions of the past. By appropriating existing images and using them to "interrupt" dominating social imaginaries, Harris's work illustrates how aesthetic choices always have epistemic and ethical implications.

Third, Malin Wahlberg invites us to consider an even more ephemeral aspect of cinematic storytelling – that of sound – in *Natureza morta* (2005) and *48* (2010), two films by Portuguese filmmaker Susana de Sousa Dias. With Ricoeur's philosophy of history as her main point of departure, Wahlberg attends closely not only to voices, sounds, and sound effects, but also to "telling moments of silence". Like in the previous examples, it is precisely the aesthetic intricacy of de Sousa Dias's works that allows the viewer to approach a difficult past in a new and more thoughtful manner.

In the thematic progression of this section of the anthology, the next contribution marks a turning point insofar as it gives the word to the artist himself – in this case, to British filmmaker Peter Watkins as he presents himself in the soundtrack for *The Role of a Lifetime* (2003), an essay film by his Lithuanian colleague Deimantas Narkevičius. In his long, winding monologue, Watkins reflects on his own work and its personal resonances, on the genre of the documentary and its political implications, and on history as "a constantly revolving, linking process".

Taking the same overarching progression to its logical and, at the same time, aesthetic³ conclusion, the last four contributions provide concrete examples – if only in the form of film stills – of what an (audio)visual historiography could, perhaps, come to look like. While each project addresses a different theme – the legacy of the Cold War in Deimantas Narkevičius's *The Dud Effect*, the place of religion in secular soci-

ties in Magnus Bärtås's *The Miracle of Tensta (Theoria)*, the economic underside of Western modernity in Lina Selander and Oscar Mangione's *The Offspring Resembles the Parent*, or the figure of the refugee in 20th-century European history in Andrej Slávik's *The Literal Zone: Exhibits A–J* – and approaches it with a different sensibility, together they hopefully provide a glimpse of the “community of style” to which this anthology wishes to contribute.⁴ To gain a wider perspective on that venture, turn the book over and continue reading.

Finally, for the decisive question: how are we to understand the notion of (audio)visual historiography proposed in this volume? Most straightforwardly, as the historical counterpart to visual ethnography, an approach to anthropology that goes back at least to the 1950s and that has been firmly established in an academic setting since the mid-1980s (e.g. through the Society for Visual Anthropology, founded in 1984 as a section of the American Anthropological Association).⁵ To be more specific, if there were such a thing as (audio)visual historiography, it would situate itself at the intersection between three extant fields of research: *visual methodologies*, a trans-disciplinary field with its centre of gravity in the social sciences, taking its inspiration from visual ethnography; *visual history*, defined as the historical study of visual sources, often with reference to visual culture studies; and finally *public history*, to the extent that it has employed (audio)visual means of communication.⁶ It is from such a vantage point that the intertwined artistic traditions of compilation and found footage film could then be adequately assessed for their potential contribution to the historian's practice.⁷

And what would motivate such an audacious undertaking? In the first place, the sheer fact of its possibility. With a growing share of existing (audio)visual archives accessible in digital form, with increasingly advanced techniques for searching, classifying and retrieving such materials currently in development, and finally with both consumer- and professional-level video editing software already available at little or even no cost, it is reasonable to assume that historians, as well as scholars from neighbouring fields and other professionals working on historical issues, will sooner or later begin – and, indeed, have quietly begun – to explore the possibility of writing history with moving images in a more systematic fashion. Such explorations, however, will surely prove a lot more fruitful, in both the short and the long term, if a coherent theoretical framework is already in place to provide orientation and direction to the inquiry. It is such a framework that this anthology hopes, if not to provide, then at least to prepare the ground for.

In a wider perspective, as the preceding discussion has already made clear, the possibility of (audio)visual historiography takes shape against the nebulous background of what has been called “the digital revolution”. Although currently the subject of much speculation, there can be little doubt that the proliferation of digital technologies over the last half century has already brought – and, crucially, is yet to bring – irreversible changes to fundamental patterns of social interaction, political participation, technological innovation, economic production, and cultural expression. The same trend is equally prevalent in an academic setting, as evidenced by the recent profusion of “digital turns” across a variety of disciplines, including that of history.⁸ As a result, throughout the past decade, historians have increasingly devoted themselves to the new possibilities offered by digital sources (e.g. big data), methods (e.g. topic modelling) and channels of publication (e.g. open access).

In effect, digitization has not only opened up new theoretical and methodological vistas; more fundamentally, it has also affected the practical preconditions – the very horizon – of academic scholarship, a fact that is duly emphasized in a recent report on the future of societal interaction in the humanities and social sciences co-commissioned by the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters.⁹ However, while the authors do acknowledge that the exponential spread of digital technologies results in “fundamental modifications to patterns of communication and media use”, their subsequent argument conveys the impression that we are simply dealing with “changing practices of writing and reading”.¹⁰ Thereby, they fail to mention what, from a wider perspective, comes across as the really significant shift: the marginalization of the written word, directly paralleled by the increasing centrality of visual media, in the wider public sphere. Digitization, from this point of view, merely extends a historical tendency that can be traced all the way back to the invention of photography in the mid-19th century – that is, to the very beginning of what Walter Benjamin famously dubbed “the age of mechanical reproduction” – and that was cemented by the commercial breakthrough of television a century later.

It is this long-term medialization of the public sphere that, in conjunction with other processes, has given rise to our current predicament: on the one hand a scholarly writing of history which, in spite of recurrent initiatives to the opposite end, finds itself increasingly restricted to a narrowly academic circulation; on the other hand a pedagogical and popular dissemination of history where visual forms of expression play a decisive role, often to the detriment of sharper analysis and deeper understanding. Against such a background, the larger aim of (audio)visual historiography would be to *“short-circuit this divide with digital means by making visual media an integrated component of the professional historian’s own research process.”* “The transformation of the wider media landscape” – so the report just cited – “has repercussions on the very

idea of what knowledge is and ought to be.”¹¹ If this is indeed the case, then the pre-eminence of the visual register in this wider landscape should also make visual media an important mode of communication for contemporary historical scholarship.

So much for the motivation; now for the obstacles, which are indeed considerable. Having spent the better part of the last century shielding themselves, on the one hand from repeated incursions from “harder” sciences, on the other from the abiding risk of historical relativism, most historians are bound to object to what they will no doubt perceive as a challenge to their hard-earned epistemic authority. Similarly but conversely, many film scholars (and quite a few filmmakers) will remain sceptical of what they can only regard as a naive faith in the veracity of images in general and the photographic image in particular – a holdover, it would seem, from a bygone, pre-theoretical age. Anthropologists, on their part, will probably find the emphasis on filmmaking a little outmoded as compared to other visual research methods – to the extent, that is to say, that they see any value at all in such methods. And so, caught between a rock and a hard place, the would-be (audio)visual historian will have no other choice but to venture into the gnoseological fault zone between art and science, a no-less treacherous terrain that, in spite of common roots and innumerable exchanges, remains largely uncharted.¹²

And if, like Alice in Lewis Carroll’s celebrated novel, pursuing the White Rabbit down its hole and “never once considering how in the world she was to get out again”, we can only imagine what lies ahead – well, then all the better.

Göteborg, November 2019

NOTES

- 1 Carlo Ginzburg, ‘The inquisitor as anthropologist’, in *Clues, myths, and the historical method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). Some of the considerable distance between Ginzburg and Azoulay is bridged in Jessie Sherwood, ‘The inquisitor as archivist, or surprise, fear, and ruthless efficiency in the archives’, *The American Archivist* 75 (Spring/Summer 2012).
- 2 The argument is further developed in Azoulay’s recent work, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London: Verso, 2019).
- 3 In the etymological sense: see e.g. Steffen W. Gross, ‘The neglected programme of aesthetics’, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42:4 (2002), and cf. idem, *Cognitio sensitiva: Ein Versuch über die Ästhetik als Lehre von der Erkenntnis des Menschen* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011).
- 4 Cf. Andrej Slávik, ‘Preface: Towards a community of style’, in *Microhistories*, eds. Magnus Bärtås & Andrej Slávik (Stockholm: Konstfack, 2016).

5 See, e.g., Marcus Banks & Jay Ruby (eds.), *Made to be seen: Perspectives on the history of visual anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Faye Ginsburg, 'Shooting back: From ethnographic film to the anthropology of media', in *A companion to film theory*, eds. Toby Miller & Robert Stam (London: Blackwell, 1999); Anna Grimshaw & Amanda Ravetz (eds.), *Visualizing anthropology* (Bristol: Intellect, 2005). Regarding previous interdisciplinary exchanges between anthropology and history, see, e.g., Brian Keith Axel, *From the margins: Historical anthropology and its futures* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002); Christopher Morton & Elizabeth Edwards (eds.), *Photography, anthropology and history: Expanding the frame* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); Andrew Willford & Eric Tagliacozzo (eds.), *Clio/Anthropos: Exploring the boundaries between history and anthropology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

6 See, e.g., Gillian Rose, *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials*, 4th ed. (London: Sage, 2016); Gerhard Paul, *Visual history: Ein Studienbuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006); Faye Sayer, *Public history: A practical guide* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), ch. 6.

7 On compilation film, see Jay Leyda, *Films beget films: Compilation films from propaganda to drama* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964); Patrik Sjöberg, *The world in pieces: A study of compilation film* (Stockholm: Aura, 2001). On found footage film, see Jamie Baron, *The archive effect: Found footage and the audiovisual experience of history* (London: Routledge, 2014); *Found footage: Cinema exposed*, eds. Marente Bloemheuvel, Giovanna Fossati & Jaap Guldemond (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012); William C. Wees, *Recycled images: The art and politics of found footage films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993). The genre of essay film, although no less important, will not be discussed here.

8 See, e.g., Daniel J. Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital history: A guide to gathering, preserving, and presenting the past on the web* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Toni Weller (ed.), *History in the digital age* (London: Routledge, 2013).

9 Johan Östling, Katarina Bernhardsson, Jenny Björkman & Jesper Olsson, *Kunskapens nya rörelser: Framtidens humanistiska och sambhällsvetenskapliga samverkan* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhetsakademien, 2016).

10 Östling *et al.*, *Kunskapens nya rörelser*, 11 (my translation).

11 Östling *et al.*, *Kunskapens nya rörelser*, 18.

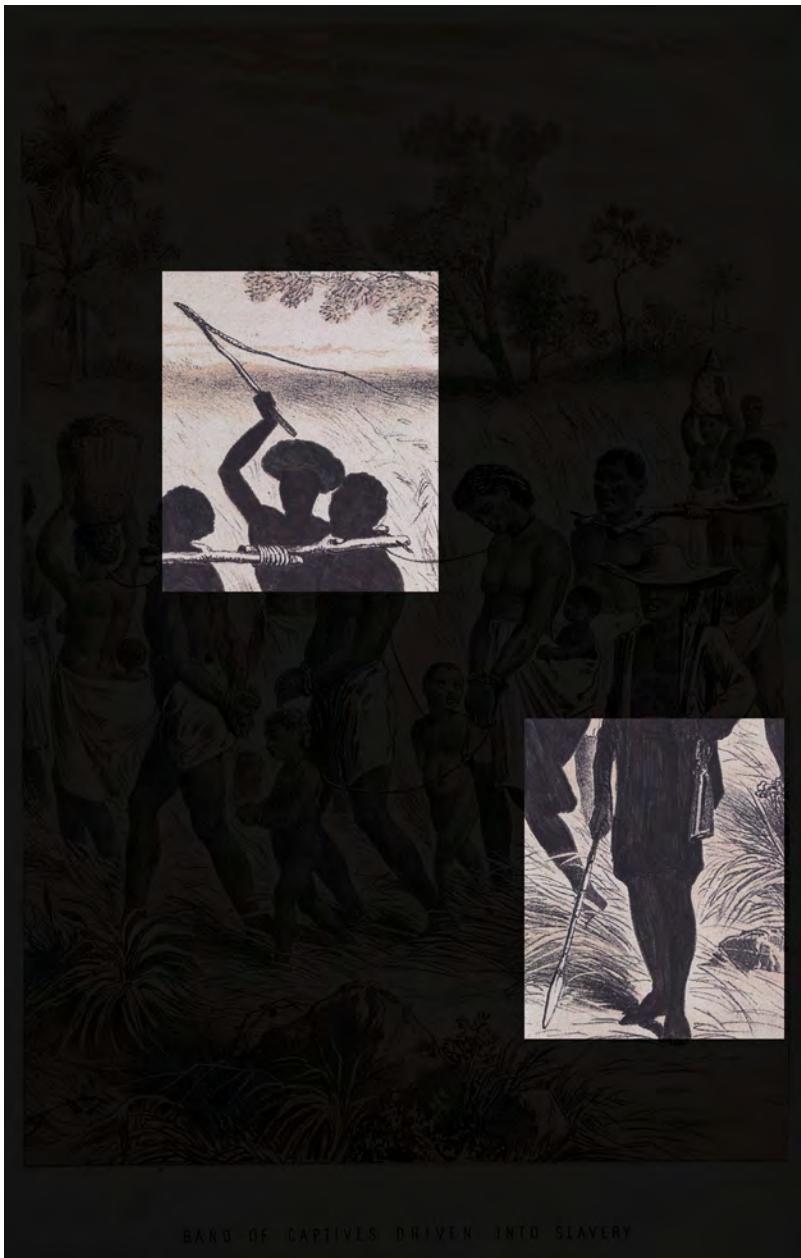
12 For a recent cartographic attempt, see Catherine Russell, *Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and archival film practices* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018). To achieve a longer historical perspective, a useful starting point is Steffen W. Gross, 'The neglected programme'.

ARIELLA AZOULAY

Archive strike

The histories and theories of the archive, diverse as they may be, presuppose a seemingly distinct object, a self-same institution that persists with little change from antiquity to the present. This self-same object consists of a tripartite conglomerate of *a walled space*, *bygone time*, and *documents*. When documents are assumed to be the archive's *raison d'être*, the archive is invented as a crystallized universal form cleansed of different elements, factors and modes of operation, whose origins can be found in archaeological sites, such as the chamber in Ebla, Syria, where numerous clay tablets were stored. This tripartite conglomerate of *documents*, *bygone time*, and *a walled space* dissociates the archive from other imperial apparatuses, delimits its physical existence, and turns it into a depository of past documents. In other words, it dissociates the archive from the imperial regime of which it is part and limits its existence to one of being a depository of documents. I will try to make less mysterious the legend that makes us believe that behind the walls of archives lie truly unusual objects. For regardless of what is written in the papers that archives store, or of the violence that they were involved in inflicting, they gained a sacrosanct status due to their belonging to a remote past, a detached tense to which they testify and which we are invited to consult through them, those papers-turned-documents.

Let me start with a few images (*Figs. 1–3*). Vintage images in which Africans are seen being seized by – or running away from – white people bearing instruments identified with enslavement are perceived as relevant to a discussion of the archive because they are *documents* produced in previous centuries. Safely indexed under categories such as “slavery” or “slave”, they seem to belong to the archive, and we trust the archive to take care of them. Images of slaves: this is how they are meant to be looked at, identified, tagged, studied, discussed, displayed, printed, and reprinted. When looking at such visual documents, viewers, and archive users in particular, are



BAND OF CAPTIVES DRIVEN INTO SLAVERY



Fig. 1 (left). "Band of captives driven into slavery." Lithograph, ca 1880. Wellcome Collection (redacted); Fig. 2. "Execution of slaves by the Bakuti, near Equator Station." Wood engraving by Edward Bannister (1833–1901). Wellcome Collection (redacted).

tempted to simply perceive themselves as looking at slaves. Stunningly enough, it does not occur to them to question the archival violence invested in detaching these people from their worlds, and, once worldless, rendering them "slaves", and in making of themselves – since the presupposition is that they are just spectators, external to the violence that determines people's status and implicates them in recognizing it as a matter of fact. When the archive is conceived through its walled document-centred space, as long as the cherished documents are protected and no attempt to conceal their content or alter their form is recorded, no archival violence is assumed to have taken place. For the archive's scholars and users, who act as literate in its operation system and secrets, "the archive" equals the institution, and the institution is reducible to the documents it stores.

However, for these images to become documents *in* the archive as an institution, the archive has to be dissociated from what I propose to call an unbounded archival violence exercised in the entire social space, which has produced slavery in the first place, using direct violence to seize people and hold them in this position of slaves,



Fig. 3. "A Female Negro Slave, with a Weight chained to her Ankle." John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition ...* (London: J. Johnson & J. Edwards, 1796). Engraved after a drawing by the author. Wellcome Collection (redacted).

as can be seen in these images. Its dissociation from the unbounded archival violence is only half of the story of how the archive could be conceived as a *sui-generis* institution, an object of a history of its own. The other half of the story is its dissociation from similar imperial walled institutions that operate like monoculture plantations such as slave houses, garrisons or museums.¹ These institutions, shaped in the form of fortresses to defend the imperial order's new taxonomy and interests, operate synergistically with the archive in order to destroy existing and diverse worlds of which people and things were a part, and obviously, to destroy the place they had in it. With imperial archival violence, things and people's mode of being and being-together as well as their being part of certain material and social fabrics were questioned to the point of becoming eligible for different forms of liquidation. The destruction of entire social, cultural and political fabrics was instrumental in making everything fit into new worldless archival taxonomies that were foreign to the worlds where things



Fig. 4. "View of the castle of Elmina on the north-west side, seen from the river." *Atlas Blaeu van der Hem*, vol. 36:18, fol. 59-60 (ca 1670). Drawing by Johannes Vingboons. Austrian National Library / Wikimedia Commons; Fig. 5. "Guinea and the surrounding lands." Drawing by Nicolas Sanson d'Abbeville, ca 1705. Dutch National Library / Wikimedia Commons.

and people used to live. This destruction provided them with new statuses and meanings, on the basis of which prices were determined, including that which should not have a price, and new rights were allocated to make sure that rights that were part of worlds doomed to be destroyed, are suppressed.

Under the new system of rights, which I propose to call world-free rights, the shared world ceased to be an object of care and attention. Rather than places such as Ebla in Syria, I propose to study the emergence of imperial archive from places such as the Elmina Castle (*Fig. 4*), built as early as 1482 by the Portuguese (and seized by the Dutch in 1637) on the coast of Ghana. For this trade village to be erected, an entire neighbourhood had to be demolished, including the villagers' houses, as was a rock that was believed to be the house of the god of the nearby River Benya. Behind the walls of the Elmina Castle, intensive archival work was pursued. Ten out of approximately 50 officers who lived there to handle the work of abducting people were writers. They, William St Clair writes, "copied documents while learning the business".² Putting it bluntly, these archivists of a sort were producing papers *qua* "documents" that would become the archive's *raison d'être*. However, looking at a single fortress may be quite misleading as it can create an image of a certain idiosyncrasy. The simultaneous manufacturing of people *qua* political categories (and things *qua* goods), and of the relevant testifying documents, shaped the *lingua franca* of an international sphere (*Fig. 5*). In this sphere, actors from different cultures detached themselves from the world of which they were part and became part of a worldless global taxonomy that enabled them to co-operate with peers who had equally bracketed off the world and succumbed to an unstoppable movement that turned existing worlds, including those to which they belonged, into obstacles to be removed.

The more these new meanings were forced and spread, the more they could be recognized and replicated by others as acceptable. Paradoxically their worldlessness became materialized to the point that detaching people and things from their world became a routine and common enterprise. The documents that were produced behind such walls were inseparable from the violent actions of other imperial actors who transfigured reality in correspondence with laconic records such as numbers of slaves or servants, which these writers cared to copy several times – with the promise from the company "of the possibility of a full career from writer to governor-in-chief".³ The presence of multiple copies of these documents of violent transactions such as the sale and purchase of people was useful in endowing them with reliability and the power to confirm the legal status of property forced on people who were abducted. It is only due to this double dissociation that the institution of the archive could emerge as a crystallized form and place whose history can be written by following only the work of extracting and preserving documents, making them accessible



Fig. 6. The road from al-Ramle and al-Lid, July 1948. Palmach Photographic Collection (Yitzhak Sadeh album no. 1, provided by Yoram Sadeh); Fig. 7. Deporting the women of al-Tantura, June 18, 1948. Photograph by Beno Rothenberg. Israel State Archive.



Fig. 8. Fugitive African Americans fording the Rappahannock, August 1862. Photograph by Timothy H. O'Sullivan. Library of Congress; Fig. 9. "Arrival of Negro family in the lines", January 1, 1863. Photograph by David B. Woodbury. Library of Congress.

to historians who come to study them, and making us trust in their role as faithful depositaries of our past.

The coincidence of the emergence of multiple European imperial powers and of changes in the production of paper that augmented its availability as a medium used in the pursuit of these imperial powers' commercial, legal and political transactions, and in general, of their enterprise of abusive enrichment, shaped the concept of the archive as the deposit of human actions. For a shared conception of the archive to emerge, out of the cultural diversity, rivalry and often hostility among these imperial European powers, what they shared in common had to prevail over the rest. This was found in their desire and readiness to liquidate the worlds in which they or others lived, so as to pave the way for the pursuit of the new – new worlds, new territories, new profit, new sources, new achievements, new rules, new technologies, new materials, new formations. This relentless pursuit of the new was inseparable from the universalization of destruction and the transformation of principles of individual profit and accumulation for the sake of accumulation into universal norms of ruling.



Fig. 10. "The first reading of the Emancipation Proclamation before the cabinet", ca 1866. Engraved by Alexander H. Ritchie after a painting by Francis B. Carpenter. Library of Congress (redacted).

By the President of the United States of America:

A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

"That the Executive will, on the first day



Fig. 11 (left). *Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863*. National Archives at Washington, DC; Fig. 12. "Slave Auction, Charleston, South Carolina, 1853." *The Illustrated London News*, November 1856. British Museum (redacted).

Out of these principles one of imperialism's fundamental rights emerged – the right to destroy existing worlds and to mould new worlds for others, as manifestations of utopian visions or what Françoise Vergès describes as promethean ideals.⁴ The speed and intensity through which the "no longer" or "vanished" was produced, shaped the understanding of the archive as the deposit of the past, and the past as man-made.

Under this conception, papers in which human actions were written down were construed as the crystallized form of these actions, as if documents can be a script or a blueprint in which these actions are inscribed. "Documents" were thus invented as a correlation between pieces of written paper and actions. This creates the misconception that what is written down in documents actually testifies to these actions, similarly to the way a plan or a template testifies to the craft of a carpenter or a mason. Let me briefly present two examples. First, the 1948 expulsion of Arab Palestinians from Palestine (Figs. 6–7): historians are still looking for the order to evict them. Second, the flight at the beginning of the American Civil War of 250,000 African Ameri-

cans from plantations where they were enslaved (*Figs. 8–9*) – and the association of the abolition of slavery in the United States with a piece of paper, *The Emancipation Proclamation* (*Figs. 10–11*). Imperial actors use extensive violence so as to ensure that their actions yield their desired outcome – thus acting as if the world of human affairs is a raw material upon which they can impose their visions. This process of imposition can never be totally fulfilled since it is in the very nature of human actions and affairs that they cannot be fully mastered, ruled, and completed, let alone under violent rule, and their incompleteness, unexpectedness or open-endedness often manifests at different degrees of unruliness, dysfunction, withdrawal and absenteeism.

Hence, given the scale of imperial plunder, the systematic marginalization – and often times the lack – of demands to undo and reverse this order and render imperial powers accountable for centuries of plunder and abuse, is stunning. Rather than taking for granted what can be assumed as a lack, I propose to interpret it as another major consequence of the imperial regime of the archive in which we as scholars, archivally savvy, are also implicated.

The archive, I argue, is first and for most a technological device that plays a pivotal role in matching the imperial plunder from the shared world – abducted peoples, their enslavement and exploitation, seized land and looted arts and crafts – to the written records testifying to newly forced statuses and titles of ownership applied to people, goods and lands. This device is made to prevent the objection to the unbounded archival violence from coinciding in the same space and time with imperial actions through which its wealth and power are accumulated, and hence to prevent it from being accumulated in a way that would engender imperial accumulation. Papers, produced inseparably from actions (*Fig. 12*), are thus extracted and proclaimed as belonging to the realm of “the past”, of which the archive was invented as its guardian. In the archive these people cannot exist but as slaves, or former slaves, i.e., freedmen. This temporal and spatial separation is predicated on the fast forward speed of imperial movement, which secures the non-accountability of its actions and actors.

This rapid pace is what makes of the archive a technological device whose main feature is what I call the “archival threshold” or “archival shutter”. Often even the characterization “rapid” is a temporal exaggeration – the only palpable trace in time of this type of violence consists of a written line. Here is how William Wells Brown opens his memoir of his life as a fugitive slave: “The man who stole me as soon as I was born, recorded the birth of all the infants which he claimed to be born his property, in a book which he kept for that purpose”.⁵ This archival shutter consists of a three-pronged attack: erasure-plunder-appropriation which obliterates in a fraction of a second much of people’s modes of life, culture, environment, belonging, kinship, political formations and more. This violence of the archival threshold should not be

conflated with the threshold of the physical place of the institution of the archive. The physical and material destruction of non-imperial forms and formations takes much longer than this fraction of a second, and it cannot be completed, though it is disastrous enough to enable the imperial worldless taxonomies and forms to prevail and take their place. It is the omnipresence of the imperial worldless taxonomies that enables them to survive in the multiple worlds from which people were dispossessed. Yet people do not cease to re-build and recover even though this reparative activity is often attended by further, repeated destruction. Hence, I'm not using the term worldless that Hannah Arendt developed in *The Human Condition* to qualify what is done to people, but rather to qualify imperial rule through worldless or worldfree taxonomies that, no wonder, structurally fail to provide people with the worldly protection which was stolen from them.

The orchestrated imperial enterprise between different European imperial powers of dissociating this archival violence from the walled institution in which the papers that were instrumental in their disastrous transactions were made “documents”, is successful to the degree that it seems obvious that we are expected to relate to the documents enshrined therein in the same way as those who, directly or indirectly, benefit from these documents and from their untouchable status. Never mind the fact that people, such as those who are forced to embody political categories including “slave” or “refugee” are not only expected to act in the same way as those imposing and profiting from the imperial categories, but often are simply denied the opportunity to relate the archive at all as they are barred from these walled institutions. The sacredness of the documents extracted as belonging to the “past” is reiterated through a series of standardized and accepted procedures for rescuing, preserving and protecting documents, procedures that augment the independence of the documents from the circumstances of their production, and render them worldless. The transfer of documents to the walled archive confirms this independence, and invites scholars to use the imperial taxonomy that was forced on people, and to study these documents as testifying to a dead past in which a slave is a slave is a slave, until one day those who enslave emancipate without renouncing the power to determine the conditions of the so-called emancipation. This makes scholars complicit with the archive’s command to dissociate the walled archive from archival violence or to look for violence *in* the content of archived documents.

Under the imperial regime, telling the story of “the archive”, as with recounting the story of other apparatuses of violence, involves the risk of becoming an agent of imperial violence. The documents, through their materiality and aesthetic, and what became their “archivability”, i.e. their capacity for reduction to some key imperial categories indicating *time*, *space* and *body politic*, contribute to the fabrication of the



A NORTHERN FREEMAN ENSLAVED BY NORTHERN HANDS.

Nov. 20, 1836, (Sunday,) Peter John Lee, a free colored man of Westchester Co., N. Y., was kidnapped by Tobias Boudinot, E. K. Waddy, John Lyon, and Daniel D. Nash, of N. Y., city, and hurried away from his wife and children into slavery. One went up to shake hands with him, while the others were ready to use the gag and chain. See Emancipator, March 16, and May 4, 1837. This is not a rare case. Many northern freemen have been enslaved, in some cases under color of law. Oct. 26, 1836, a man named Frank, who was born in Pa., and lived free in Ohio, was hurried into slavery by an Ohio Justice of the Peace. When offered for sale in Louisiana, he so clearly stated the facts that a slaveholding court declared him *FREE*—thus giving a withering rebuke to northern servility.

“Throughout the island the estates were never in a more advanced state than they now are. I have frequently adopted the job system—the negroes accomplished twice as much as when they worked for daily wages, *because they made more money*. On some days they would make three times the ordinary wages.”—Dr. Daniell.

“On my estate, cultivation is more forward than *ever* it has been at the same season. The laborers have *done well*.”—Mr. Favey, of Lavicount’s estate.

“Emancipation has almost wholly put an end to the practice of *skulking*, or pretending to be sick.”—James Howell, Esq.

“I find my people much more disposed to work than they formerly were. The habit of feigning sickness to get rid of going to the field, is completely broken up. My people say, ‘they have not time to be sick now.’ My cultivation has *never* been so far advanced at the same season. I have been encouraged by the *increasing industry* of my people to bring several additional acres under cultivation.”—Mr. Hatley.

“I get my work done better than formerly, and with incomparably more cheerfulness. My estate was never in a finer state of cultivation, though I employ *fewer* laborers than during slavery.”—D. Cranston, Esq.

EMANCIPATED SLAVES ARE EASILY CONTROLLED BY LAW.

TESTIMONY. “I have found that the negroes are readily controlled by law.”—David Cranston, Esq.

“They are as pliant to the hand of legislation, as any people.”—Wesleyan Miss’y.

“Aggression on private property, such as breaking into houses, cutting canes, &c., are *decidedly fewer* than formerly.”—Dr. Daniell.

Messrs. Thome and Kimball add: “Similar sentiments were expressed by the Governor, Hon. N. Nugent, R. B. Eldridge, Esq., Dr. Ferguson, James Scotland, Jr., Esq., and numerous other planters, managers, &c.”

In connection with the above, we present extracts of a letter from the SUPERINTENDENT OF THE POLICE, addressed to us, dated St. John’s, Feb. 9, 1837.

“The laborers have conducted themselves generally in a highly satisfactory manner to all the authorities. They are peaceable, orderly, and civil. *“A due fear of, and a prompt obedience to the authority of the magistrates, is a prominent feature of the lower orders.* To judge of the past and present state of society throughout the island, I presume that the *lives and properties of all classes are as secure in this, as in any other portion of his Majesty’s dominions.”* R. S. WICKHAM, Superintendent of police.

Fig. 13. “A Northern freeman enslaved by Northern hands.” American Anti-Slavery Almanac, 1939 (redacted).

archive as a monolithic entity, a coherent institution, whose history could be written. *The Declaration of Independence* of the state of Israel is an example of a paper on which imperial agents wrote that an entire place – Palestine – in which different groups used to live, belongs to them by right. Without imperial violence that transformed the local inhabitants into “refugees” and the rest into those who recognize them under their new title, this paper could not gain the status of an archival document. Documents sanction imperial violence as *a fait accompli*. Past the borders of the new geographical unit and some people are forced to be “refugees”, past the day of its declaration and they are forced to be infiltrators. At the same time, those who exercised archival violence and signed the document, as well as their descendants, are made citizens, lured to forever comply with archival violence. The importance attached to documents acquired as detached artefacts, and their status as the centre of gravity of the archive and the political realm, regardless of the different conditions in which the documents were produced and the different situations in which they played different roles, is performed and entrenched through each visit we as scholars pay to the archive.

The ontological homogeneity of “the document” is created through its differentiation, on the one hand, from other objects and artefacts such as works of art or commodities, and on the other hand, from human affairs in which its meaning, function, role and power may vary. The ontological uniqueness of the “document” that is thus produced is predicated upon its detachment from the circumstances in which it was created or operated and its transition to the realm of the archive. In this realm, imperial crimes dwell safely, as we are the guarantors that circumstances of sheer violence, like selling people or stealing their wealth, are made secondary to archival sanctity and the requirement to handle diverse documents with the same set of neutral procedures that instantiate acknowledgment and respect for what it is – a past relic that should be cherished, preserved and protected.

When our object of inquiry is not limited to the in-walled space of the archive nor solely to what is *in* the documents, archival violence becomes part of our inquiry and appears as consisting first and foremost of differentiating people and forcing them to embody distinct political categories such as “slave” or “refugee”, “infiltrator” or “undocumented” (Fig. 13). Let us look at this image, not as an archival document that can teach us about slavery, but as an image that can teach us how archival violence, performed outside of centralized walled-in spaces works, and the role it plays in the institutionalization of slavery. This, let me make it clear right away, is *not* an image of “slaves” but an image in which we see how certain people that we are expected to

recognize as slaves are forced to embody this category of “slave” as their identity. The violence exercised against them has a clear goal – not to let them escape from this category. What these actors guard is their identification with and containment under this category, in such a way that they would no longer be recognizable as anything else but slaves.⁶



Fig. 14. “The author and his mother arrested and carried back into slavery.” Illustration in William W. Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown, an American Slave: Written by Himself* (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1847). Emory University Digital Library (redacted).

This is in a nutshell how what I propose to call archival violence works. It is not only the enslavement of individuals, it is the destruction of the worlds in which they held meaningful places as everything other than slaves, and their substitution with a world in which not only is this violence free of criminal culpability, but is in fact the very substance of the worldliness of certain groups. Former worlds are replaced by a world – the world in which the right to destroy and subjugate others is inscribed and can be recognized. It is only with the transformation of this violence into a worldliness of a sort, that what and who these people – against whom it is exercised – used to be no longer has meaning in the world they inhabit. The inscription of the right to enslave in a world is essential to deprive those who are enslaved from the power to contradict and refute the records in which they are designated as slaves and that authorizes others to preserve them under this status of slaves, as well as to deprive them and their

descendants from making their claims for reparations sound legitimate enough to retroactively question the imperial accumulation of wealth and power in different spheres of life. From the moment they were kidnapped, they were forced to lose different forms of attachment to the place to which they belonged, and in which the simple fact of their existence was not questioned. Thus, those who were made guardians of the past – archivists of all sort – had to invent the past as the realm in which other worlds and others' worlds became instantly over, vanished, obsolete, closed to the challenge of modernity.

Let us look at these guardians in action (*Fig. 14*). Who are they? Why are they not arrested? How is it that they are not recognized simply as thugs or criminals, but rather are regarded as vigilant citizens, guardians of a sort? Why even years after, are they still not incriminated, made accountable for their crimes? These questions cannot be answered without recognizing in the violence they exercised the imprint of the archive as guardian of the past, the particular past that the imperial archive is made to guard. This past extends up until the fraction of a second when these people were made slaves. According to the archive, William Wells Brown, for example, has literally no other past than being born a slave. Nothing in the archive can attest to anything else that can refute this. The archive may allow exploring earlier time, the time of his ancestors as long as they are known, but this exploration of the past will provide just more proof of his attachment to bondage. These records are compelling and speak the same language as the category “slave” whose classificatory blades cut his ties to other worlds, and made it a solid fact recognizable throughout the social space.

These guardians or archivists of a sort are not appointed from above – such as Citizen Camus, the archivist appointed by Napoleon in a ceremonial moment that was made memorable in the history of the archive.⁷ They do not stand in the entrance of a building, guarding its gates or protecting its threshold, since what is enshrined in individual buildings loses its meaning without the unbounded archival violence. They do not act alone: many like them are spread all over, not nominated but self-appointed within a growing realm of a new order that emerged in the late 15th century. They, and others like them, are equipped with accessories that vary from instruments of torture and violence to uniforms and clothing adornments, threatening to transform the encounter of certain people with them into one of no return. The threat is not limited to a place – such as the famous door of no return, but to what I propose to call the imperial archival threshold or shutter, one that, once passed, makes it almost impossible to recover that which one is denied in order to prove that it should be recoverable, reversed and remedied.

This is the violence of the archive – the imposition of a wholesale new taxonomy that disregards and disempowers existing taxonomies unless they can be used to pro-



GROUP OF SLAVES ON THE PARADE, FORT AUGUSTA



Fig. 15. "Group of slaves on the parade, Fort Augusta." Wood engraving. Wellcome Collection (redacted); Fig. 16. "Modes of punishing slaves." Wood engraving. Wellcome Collection (redacted).

tect the same imperial interests. The more the new taxonomy colonizes, the better imperial interests are served, hence, actors should not necessarily have to be nominated and become official delegates in order to act within the realm of the law, mediated through the archive. The archive is the device that turns abomination into facts, and spares the law much of the dirty work, which would otherwise make the law sound like an outright abomination. Hence the “official” archivist should be kept apart from the “unofficial” one just mentioned, who assigns subjects with their political roles, enabling him to provide the law with the dignity necessary for its operation.

Archival violence operates through common markers that mirror each other in people’s accounts of the world they share: dates, political categories, spatial demarcations, etc. The multiple reflections in this global hall of mirrors affirm and confirm the normativity of these categories and markers, that is, the degree to which they seamlessly bind to their assigned objects, and no less important, to confirm that forcing, using and guarding them does not imprint the person who is engaged in this violence with any criminality.⁸ Let us look for example at this woodcut (*Fig. 15*). Again, we tend – we should better revise our language and say it straightforwardly, we are trained – to recognize the “slaves”, and skip the criminals. If we see them at all we tend (are trained) to call them “overseers”, using a term that is attached to the era of plantations and is not in use anymore, thus sparing them and their descendants any accountability, as if the abolition of slavery meant amnesty for its crimes.

Without the constant presence of so many armed forces, inhabiting different positions, in small or larger crews and teams, recognized as soldiers, policemen or coastal patrols made of armed galleys, what is claimed to be one’s right over and against another would not be compelling and would be resisted and revoked.⁹ The imperial enterprise is not just about how to loot, appropriate and profit; it is also about how to make what was plundered be recognized as rightfully owned so that its accumulation will not emerge as lawless and hence necessitate reversal. The relative horror that the pieces of wood or metal on the necks of these people (*Fig. 16*) raises today should not mislead us. No one was made accountable for their invention, production, diffusion, or use, and no less important, no means and funds were invested in decolonizing the knowledge and practices that shaped them and made their use, together with other coercive devices, part of a system of rule.

Thus, in our imagination, memory, and schemes of thoughts, we continue to associate slavery with the bodies of the people who were enslaved and to recognize these images of slavery as what happened to Africans, part of their fate, but do not associate white people with those who benefitted from these crimes, those who inhabited the



Fig. 17. "The Plantation Police, or home guard, examining negro passes on the Lever road, below New Orleans, LA." Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, July 11, 1863. Wood engraving after a drawing by Frederic B. Schell. University of Central Florida Libraries (redacted).

position of perpetrators. Nor do we perceive their professions and culture which we inherited, as that which we must carefully undo and remove from the expert knowledge we interiorized as to what politics is. We do not see those archivists as accountable perpetrators that should be incriminated and their wealth, practices, and bodies of knowledge redistributed and reorganized. Studying slavery cannot be only about those who were made slaves. It should also be about those of us inhabiting different positions of expertise and acting in different fields of knowledge and practice that were shaped by slavery and whose major fields of action and spheres of knowledge were shaped by it. The study of slavery cannot be pursued without an engagement with processes of unlearning institutionalized knowledge, practices, rules and laws, along with disengagement from the roles that we are lured to continue to play in the theatre of archival violence.

Let's look at one of the major threads of the origin of our archival literacy (*Fig. 17*). These same guardians, whom we saw earlier exercising direct violence, are seen here applying their archival literacy skills. One inhabits the position of guardian while demonstrating one's literacy in reading these kind of documents through which the imperial organization of the world makes sense. This is a kind of literacy that citizens acquire once they are governed with others but differentially from others, as they constantly have to prove their literacy in differential rule in different domains of life from habitat to nutrition, from health care to education, from freedom of movement to emotional economy and so on. These archival guardians rarely have to act alone, without the recognition of others signalling that what they are doing is the right thing. Often they act in groups and are part of identifiable groups such as "slave patrols".

The dissociation of the archivist as a gatekeeper from the archivist as a producer of archival records or as an enforcer of slave patrol, or border police agents, is predicated on the separation of the past, enshrined in walled-in spaces, from unbounded archival violence. Bits of paper (*Figs. 18–20*) are used to preserve and reproduce the gains of archival violence – the "slave" or the "refugee" as a *fait accompli* – and to ensure that others in this space are literate enough in reading these documents to know when the archival order is disturbed and the carrier of such documents is found not in the "right place". Imperial archival literacy is not simply reading texts written on papers, it is knowing to read them as compelling documents – regardless of the degree of abuse and destruction they yield in the shared world – and being able to complete the correlation between what is written in them and the experienced reality, e.g., to recognize and comply with the imperial threshold beyond which a person is made a "slave", or with a certain border beyond which a man or a woman becomes a "refugee".

Stored in the archive, these abominations – "slave" or "refugee" – are not being experienced as burning shards, active embers, lethal blades, that should not have required much verbosity to make clear that the regime that generates them should be dismantled. They are rather given to expert-scholars as documents of dead actions, detached from the realm of human affairs where the people who are engaged with enabling their deadly violence could be held accountable for their deeds. In the form of documents that belong to the realm of the past, imperial violence is often disclosed only to a few individual privileged scholars – recruited and volunteering – who are invited, under certain restrictions, to enter through the archives' gates into its realm and respect it as if it was truly that of the past. Thus, when this unbounded archival violence stormed the world and changed it from end to end, history emerged and flourished as the safe field or discipline in which violent actions are considered dead

SAV 9
My Bz. Monk has my per-
mission to sleep in a house in
Boni Alley, held by his Mother
This ticket is good for two
months from this date

Sarah. H. Saray
Sept th 19, 1843

Found in Book of Common Prayer
presented by David Holbeck
A.D. 1934

~~Grace has my permission to sleep in~~
~~States Alley one night this winter~~
~~Sett for three months~~ ~~Sett Alley~~
~~David Holbeck~~

Grace has my permission to
sleep in ~~States~~ Alley for three months
from ~~date~~ Oct 3 1849
Sarah. H. Saray
Gowating St
Found in Book of Common Prayer
Presented by David Holbeck
A.D. 1934

and free of accountability, and their victims become, at best, an object of discovery and narration.

Consulting archival documents for the study of “slaves”, “refugees” or “infiltrators”, scholars perform and reproduce the categories of the imperial regime and at the same time they relegate the fact that before being forced to embody such categories their subjects lived otherwise, to a deep “past”, deeper than that documented in the archive itself. By recognizing their subjects according to these categories, which were provided to scholars by those same powers which had forced these people to become “slaves”, “refugees”, or “infiltrators”, scholars are driven to mistake archival violence for *a fait accompli*. Thus, the objection of “slaves”, “refugees”, or “infiltrators” to what their categories claim they are, is belittled or ignored since their status is not impacted by their objection, and scholars are required to account for what did happen, not for what could have happened. Accepting the failure of these objections to change people’s fate as a given, scholars are invited to recognize and comply with the reality shaped by imperial powers as if it was irreversible and irremediable. This occurs unintentionally, by simply being propelled forward, as if one wants to catch up with one’s time, not to live in the past, as if one has no other choice but to move forward and speak the common *lingua franca* predicated on imperial taxonomy. Not only is what preceded slavery (or the act of seeking asylum, etc.) thus denied and lost, but also lost is that fraction of a second when a person is kidnapped, caught or caught again, and everything that forced him or her to embody at that moment a new political category.

In exchange for academically serious and reliable work on and with these papers, scholars are invited to enjoy the glory of those inhabiting the position of travellers in bygone times that unearth forgotten documents, before anyone else, if possible, and append to them our name and scholarship. Here is an example of how this exchange is performed, taken from a familiar genre of history writing, the introduction to a historical account, in which the author narrates how he found the documents that have become a key element in his narrative or analysis. It is here that we encounter the mutual granting of authority to the archive by an author and to the author by the archive. To take part in this exchange, the author must demonstrate his literacy and show that he is capable of reading carefully the yet “unsorted” and “unpublished” documents, that were accumulated first in one walled imperial institution, and – as the case below narrates – were later smoothly transferred to another imperial institution, but were always kept in the trustful hands of imperial actors, until they reached

Left: Fig. 18. Slave pass, signed by Sarah Savage, 1843. The College of Charleston Libraries; Fig. 19. Slave pass, signed by Sarah Savage, n.d. The College of Charleston Libraries; Fig. 20. Slave pass, signed by Isaac Riddell, 1849. The College of Charleston Libraries.

the author. With your permission I'll leave out the author's name, as it is not about him, but about imperial violence and the way it shapes our temporal and spatial conception, our speaking position and our language:

[...] my main source has been a vast archive of unpublished, and still mostly unexplored, manuscript records preserved among the British National Archives. When the British Government took over direct responsibility for Cape Coast Castle in 1821, following the Act of Parliament of 1820, they arranged for all the papers that had accumulated in the Castle since it was captured by an English fleet in 1664 [...] to be bundled up and sent to London. In the same year the British Government took over the papers of the African House, the London headquarters from which the Castle had hitherto been managed, so acquiring another huge accumulation of papers, including many letters sent from the Castle. In the nineteenth century, the British Government deposited all these papers, scarcely sorted, in the Public Record Office, and they are now held at Kew near London.

Let me summarize. The invitation to enter the imperial archive is a trap. Here are its major traits. (1) To be seduced by the access to papers from which others are distanced, and bracket this as incidental to what we can find *in* the documents. (2) To be induced into the belief that we are not acting from an imperial position, that we can keep a critical distance *vis-à-vis* the imperial enterprise, and thus be socialized to the idea that history is made by individuals: reformers, discoverers, justice activists, who can act alone, in the absence of those who were hit by imperial violence, against imperial powers. (3) To be incentivized to seek and reconstruct missing pieces that imperial actors themselves wrote down – or could have written down – in documents that somehow were made absent from the depository we consult. Thus we are trapped into operating in the circularity of the archive, whose documents, produced and preserved along the imperial temporality, spatiality and body politic, are there so that we fall into the trap of believing that these are the missing pieces of incomplete puzzles of imperial regimes that we are driven to put together and ventriloquize as authors.

Images of archival captivity are, by their nature, evasive, as long as we do not insist on their existence and force them to appear. Hence, looking at images of slavery, we should insist that they always also consist of such a moment of captivity in which one's life outside slavery is denied, destroyed, plundered and of one's recurrent attempts to recover it. The challenge is to see the materialization of the archival three-pronged attack not only in the man-hunter's seizing arms but also in the vocabulary, institutions, practices, wealth, imagination, and law of the imperial order, that were replicated in the acts of so many Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British people, of

Germans, Danes, Swedes, Americans or Brazilians. Stunning pieces of paper not yet studied, ready to become “our” discovery, await us there, a kind of reward for the exhausting and demanding journey we will conduct in imperial archives. The archive induces us to forget that the historical accuracy, for which we are looking in order to account for imperial crimes from records written by imperial actors, increases the chances that such accounts would share with these imperial documents the epistemology and ontology which the latter propagate.

Critical as we believe ourselves to be, the writing of imperial abominations from within the imperial archive cannot escape this danger. The challenge of potential history is to prolong the life of this fraction of a second in which the archival shutter operates so that it survives the unstoppable imperial movement in which it is doomed to disappear.¹⁰ The challenge is to do this in a way that lets the call for accountability and reparations, that was necessarily there, guide and shape our research. For that to happen we may have to consider the option of a strike. An archive strike. After all, imperial crimes were perpetrated in floodlit arenas, in the bodies of people who are more reliable sources for their study than any archival source made available only decades after the fact.

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NOTES

- 1 On the proximity of the museums and the plantation, see the initiative of Renzo Martens, the Institute for Human Activities (IHA), and the Cercle d’Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise (CATPC) to “repatriate the White Cube”: ‘Lusanga International Research Centre for Art and Economic Inequality – The repatriation of the White Cube’, e-flux Architecture, 17 March 2017, accessed 15 February 2018, <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/111715/the-repatriation-of-the-white-cube>.
- 2 William St Clair, *The grand slave emporium: Cape Coast Castle and the British slave trade* (London: Profile, 2006), 83.

3 St Clair, *The grand slave emporium*, 84.

4 See e.g. Françoise Vergès, 'The sound like a rumour', in K. Attia, *Transformations* (Leipzig: Spector, 2014). Also available on <http://kaderattia.de/the-sound-like-a-rumour>, accessed 23 March 2018.

5 William Wells Brown, *The narrative of William W. Brown, a fugitive slave* (Mineola, New York: Dover, 2003), 11.

6 The denigration was so intense, that even though African slaves worked in many different professions, a special effort was constantly required to keep this information from evaporating. See for example Vlach's attempt to gather all the crafts in which slaves excelled. Worth noting, that even though his text is based on research of many previous scholars who wrote in different period, when it was published, it was perceived as a surprising discovery. See John Michael Vlach, 'Arrival and survival: The maintenance of an Afro-American tradition in folk art and craft', in *Perspectives on American folk art*, eds. Ian M. G. Quimby & Scott T. Swank (New York: Norton, 1980).

7 Most notably by Louis-Charles-Auguste Couder's 1856 painting *Installation du Conseil d'État au palais du Petit-Luxembourg, 25 décembre 1799*, now at the Musée Histoire de France in Versailles.

8 The maintenance of such halls of mirrors required more and more acts to remove from the ground presence of options that contradict the norms. Such is for example the 1806 legislation prohibition of the migration of free men from Haiti to Louisiana, to avoid what was feared: "that they would incite local slaves to rebellion". See John Michael Vlach, *By the work of their hands: Studies in Afro-American folklife* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 194.

9 Here is how the Commander Diogo de Azambuja arrived to Elmina in January 1482: "He sailed with an expedition of 10 caravels, 500 soldiers and servants, and 100 masons, carpenters, and craftsmen. The ships carried precut stone for the castle's foundations, arches and windows." Christopher R DeCorse, *An archaeology of Elmina: Africans and Europeans on the Gold Coast, 1400–1900* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 21.

10 Cf. Ariella Azoulay, 'Potential history: Thinking through violence', *Critical Inquiry* 39:3 (2013).

SYLVIE ROLLET

The historical unconscious made visible

*Traces or symptoms of the “missing People”
(around three films by Sergei Loznitsa)*

Through the analysis of two compilation films by the Ukrainian documentary filmmaker Sergei Loznitsa,¹ I would like to show how the filmic writing of history can capture – because cinema allows to see it again – that which generally escapes the historians’ gaze, or at least is very difficult to insert into the narrative of historical events.² This “residue”, as Carlo Ginzburg would say, indeed disrupts the spatial and temporal scale of the usual historical observation.³ However, the camera has the ability to record a number of gestures, facial expressions, tiny looks; the scale of the shooting lies therefore not only below groups, masses or nations, but even below individuals. The cinematographic apparatus has, moreover, the possibility of seizing the fleeting instant which seems to leave no trace. The temporality that belongs to the cinema is thus that of evanescence. This “rhythm” of appearance and disappearance (which could be called *anadyomene*, “rising from the sea”) doubly escapes chronological order: seeming to have no consequence on the scale of historical times the evanescent apparition is radically achronic (out of time) and anachronic (it upsets the causal order on which is based the chronology). These two properties of shooting – capturing the tiny and the untimely – are, moreover, sensitive to the viewer only when the film mobilizes what Agamben calls the two “transcendental conditions of montage”: the repetition (i.e. the indefinite reproducibility of the images) and the stop (the cut on which editing is based).⁴

These two gestures of “revival” and “interruption” are at the core of Sergei Loznitsa’s two compilation films, *Blockade* (*Blokada*, 2006) and *The Event* (*Sobytie*, 2015), which thus mobilize the singular properties of the filmic writing of history. In doing so, they face frontally the contemporary reflections of both historians and philosophies of history. The microscopic scale constitutes, indeed, the central axis of the works of Carlo Ginzburg⁵ (and, more generally, of the *microstoria*) and an essential concern in the study of “ways of doing” by Michel de Certeau.⁶ Regarding the un-

timeliness of the event, it is central for all contemporary French philosophers (from Deleuze to Derrida).⁷ Anachronism, finally, constitutes for Benjamin the very mark of what he calls a “materialist” history opposed to historicism.⁸

AN IDENTICAL STRUCTURE

The two films not only mark a break with the filmmaker’s previous documentary approach (these are his first two “compilation films”), but also have many similarities. First of all, they are only composed of archive plans shot by news cameramen. The period portrayed in the images of *Blockade* is that of the Siege of Leningrad by the German armies (from 8 September 1941 to 27 January 1944): 900 days during which more than one million people died of starvation and cold, the city being able to resist the blockade until its liberation by the Soviet army. *The Event* consists of the shooting in Leningrad by the operators of the Lenfilm studios documentary unit during the five days (from 19 to 24 August 1991) of the state of emergency proclaimed in Moscow by a group of conservatives hostile to Perestroika. The coup ended with the victory of Boris Yeltsin and the arrest of the putschists, marking the end of the regime and of the Soviet Union itself in December 1991.⁹

If, in the two cases, the same city, Leningrad, is under siege, the situations are in no way comparable historically. And there is a gap between the way the besieged inhabitants of Leningrad had to resist the cold and hunger, and a vigilant and mobilized population on high alert facing a putsch whose effects remain invisible. If both films have a family resemblance, it is first because they adopt an identical structure: the succession of shots follows the chronology of the events, making the viewer experience the “suspense”.¹⁰ The singular tone of this suspended time permeates all the images. In *Blockade* we experience almost “in real time” the indefinite respite granted to the inhabitants of the besieged and gradually starving Leningrad, as in *The Event* we experience the worried expectation of the population, preparing to face the invasion of the tanks and putschist troops.

The spectators feel as if they are living the anxious expectation of the inhabitants essentially because of the nature of the shots. The images collected in *Blockade* are in fact due to the initiative of the operators who, from December 1941, no longer received any shooting guidelines and no longer met with each other because the developing laboratory had stopped working. Having no privilege, they were confronted with cold and starvation, like all the people they were shooting.¹¹ In the same way, the images of *The Event* are shot by Lenfilm cameramen who know no more than their fellow citizens. Without any outside knowledge, the operators thus adopt the man in the street’s point of view. Striding along the avenues or making their way through

the crowd, with a handheld camera, their attention is focused on the silent faces, shot in close-up, without hierarchy, young or old, that gather the same tension, the same concentration without losing their individuality (*Figs. 1–3, right*).

The temporal texture of the “respite” granted – for how long? – to the population also results from the editing and, first and foremost, the sound editing done by the filmmaker. In fact, in both films, Loznitsa added sound to the original silent shots, recording the “ambient sounds” in the studio. Hubbub of voices, various noises, echoes of steps and circulation thus fall under the fictional reconstitution. In *The Event*, the images are also associated with sound archives patiently collected by the filmmaker.¹² This extraordinary work of sound editing confers a material extension and thickness to the suspended time lived by a whole city.¹³

The “event”, in the historical sense, takes place, in fact, off-camera: at the gates of the besieged city where the fight-



Figs. 1–3. The Event (Sergei Loznitsa, 2015).



Figs. 4–7. *Blockade* (Sergei Loznitsa, 2005).

ing takes place, in the first case; somewhere else, in Moscow, in the distant capital, of which no image arrives, in the second. The presence of this invisible threat – and all the more threatening because it is invisible – inhabits the two films in the form of long fades to black, which interrupt the succession of shots.¹⁴ By the return, at regular intervals, of these long black segments interposed between the blocks of images, is recalled the oppressive presence-absence of the menace in off-screen space.

Finally, the two films adopt a similar narrative structure, although the duration of historical events is incommensurable (900 days of siege, in one case; five days of restless waiting, in the other): the suspended time is treated as a parenthesis out of history, the effect of “a-chronism” coming from the closed narrative. Thus, *The Event*, which opens with the declaration of the putschists on state radio, ends with the sealing of the Communist Party archives gathered in the Smolny Institute. Between these two moments, nothing happened in Leningrad. Even more subtly, in *Blockade*, Sergei Loznitsa’s editing creates a “visual rhyme” between the staring soldiers’ gazes at the beginning of the siege and those of the crowd cheering the fireworks that celebrate the victory and the end of the blockade (Figs. 4–5). This “rhyme” effect is further accentuated by the parallel introduced between passers-by, rare and almost indifferent, in front of the German soldier prisoners, at the beginning of the film, and the huge crowd of spectators who attend the “spectacle” of the Nazi criminals of war being hanged, at the end of the film (Figs. 6–7).

There is a major difference, however, between the two films: most of the shots of the Siege of Leningrad are well known, having been used many times during the Soviet era.¹⁵ On the other hand, the materials collected in *The Event* were unedited before the filmmaker used them. It was during his research for *Blockade*, in the archives of the *Lendofilm* studio, that the filmmaker discovered the 1991 shots. So it raises two issues: first, what drew the filmmaker’s attention in the images of the Siege of Leningrad, culminating in the realization of *Blockade*? Then, why did he wait nine years before editing the unknown archives of *The Event*?

BLOCKADE: THE EFFECTS OF THE EDITING GESTURE

The answer to the first question is provided by the elimination work Loznitsa has undertaken in *Blockade*. All the shots which, in the Soviet films, contributed to the image of a people not only united against the enemy, but bound by socialist ideals, were suppressed. Thus disappeared the battle scenes at the gates of the city, as did the sequences of workers in the factories who, despite the rigours of shortages, continued to supply the front with ammunition throughout the blockade. Keeping only the images describing the gradual introduction of the state of siege, in the autumn of 1941, and the months of the winter of 1941–1942 when the necessary supplies could no longer be obtained from the outside, the film also does not present scenes documenting the work carried out to perpetuate the “Road of life”,¹⁶ such as the restoration of the water supply or the return to service of trams in the spring of 1942.¹⁷ Loznitsa’s first gesture of montage is thus to make a temporal contraction – the film covers only the first months of the blockade, in particular the period of extreme famine in which



the greatest number of inhabitants perished¹⁸ – and a spatial tightening, which has the effect of rejecting off-camera the violence of the war (the German armies at the gates of Leningrad), but also the administration of the city by the Soviet authorities.

So, what is the “residue” unnoticed so far that the shots retained by the filmmaker finally show? I will respond briefly: shots of the besieged city are the only images that have been recorded of a Nazi concentration camp in operation. These images of the concentrationist universe that so many filmmakers and historians have looked for, these missing images were found by Loznitsa in Leningrad. He recognized there all the components of the camps, these “laboratories in the experiment of total domination” on the “human species”.¹⁹ Subjected to the extreme cold, to hunger, to exhaustion, the inhabitants are in permanent quest of the means to satisfy their most basic physiological needs. So their “humanity” is reduced to the gestures of survival: to draw water by drilling holes in the ice, to make a long queue for a few grams of ersatz bread (Fig. 8).²⁰ Above all, in besieged Leningrad as well as in the camps, the separation between the dead and the living, at the foundation of all human societies, is no longer valid. Walking alongside the corpses, too exhausted to bury them, indifferent, helpless, the living pass by, without glancing at them, beside those who have collapsed and lie on the snow (Fig. 9).

The reduction of human lives to organic survival, resulting in the mass production of anonymous corpses, has withdrawn any meaning from death itself: it has ceased to be the term of a *human* life. Irresistibly evoking the shots by the Allied troops at the opening of the Bergen Belsen camp, the images of piles of corpses dumped in mass graves and stirred by the gravediggers like garbage piles, confirm the victory of the process of dehumanization (Figs. 10–11).

These scenes of “desolation”, to use Hannah Arendt’s formula, are followed by an epilogue, at first sight surprising. Loznitsa begins with some of shots of *Fighting Leningrad*, the first film about the besieged city. The editing of this film, directed by Roman Karmen and Efim Utchitel, proposed a “happy ending”: after the hardships suffered by the population, the firework display celebrating the victory of the Soviet army. But the images of this joyful crowd, to which the Soviet power offers the spectacle of its victory, are immediately followed by shots taken from Efim Utchitel’s *The People’s Sentence* (Приговор народа/Prigavor Naroda, 1946), showing the public hanging of Nazi officers convicted of war crimes (Figs. 12–13).²¹

Left: Figs. 8–13. Blockade (Sergei Loznitsa, 2005).

Is the crowd cheering for the spectacle of the death sentence really “freed”? Or, on the contrary, is this compact mass, devoted to the role of spectator of the spectacles of power, the other side of desolation, produced by the experience of the concentration camp dehumanization? The film does not settle, the question remains unresolved.²² It seems to me, however, that the meaning of the epilogue chosen by Sergei Loznitsa – where the “attraction” is filmed in shot-reverse shot on the crowd and the hangmen – can be illuminated by the editing choices at the end of *The Event*, when the parenthesis of the Leningrad population uprising ends in 1991.

CAPTURING THE GESTURES: THE APPARITION OF THE “PEOPLE” IN *THE EVENT*

While the 1991 crisis is unwinding in Moscow, the mayor of Leningrad, Anatoli Sobchak²³ speaks to the assembled population on the esplanade of the Winter Palace (Fig. 14). Until then, as we have seen, the people were framed at “ground level” by the operators, making their way among the assembled inhabitants. Suddenly, the camera adopts an overhanging point of view, which crushes the perspective and the vanishing point: the dynamic interaction of the individuals is converted into a human tide saturating the frame. The free movement of autonomous bodies has been transformed into a uniform, unanimous and compact mass (Fig. 15).

Especially, when Sobchak asserts that the municipal authorities are “determined to support the government and Boris Yeltsin, who took command of the KGB forces in Russia”, the reaction of the crowd is not long in coming: out of the compact mass emerge by the hundreds raised fists and fingers spread in shape of V-for-Victory (Fig. 16). A stylistic device that had been completely absent until then – the shot/reverse shot technique – appears soon after, when the tricolour flag of Russia is raised on the official building instead of the red flag of the Soviet Union. From this moment on, the crowd framed in high-angle shot is deliberately turned into a uniform mass of spectators, whose only political action is acclamation.

These gestures of acclamation seem to definitively close the “parenthesis” of the popular mobilization and seal the return to “order”,²⁴ that is to say the failure of the uprising. This interpretation would no doubt be correct if we consider an uprising as a historical event among others, the importance of which is only measured by its effect on the events that follow it.

But cinema has a historicizing power of its own: capturing tiny “remains” from which another story can become visible. Before the acclamation gestures begin, the operators recorded other gestures, furtive but repeated, while men and women converged on the place: signs of connivance addressed by the protesters at the camera



Figs. 14–18. The Event (Sergei Loznitsa, 2015).

(*Figs. 17–18*). These signs of mutual recognition, too numerous to be the trace of private meetings with the operator, put us on the path of what converts a population in a “People”: everyone’s will (i.e. anyone’s will) of making themselves visible by breaking into the frame. The whole political stake of this gesture is to “answer present”, that is to say, literally to appear publicly.²⁵

Loznitsa’s editing thus seems to mobilize the power of the cinema itself: to make visible a tiny event capable, on its own, of redefining the political category of “People” by breaking out the usual representations. What the film shows is that there can be no *representation* of the “People” (which could be the meaning of Deleuze’s famous formula: the People are always “missing”),²⁶ but only a *presentation*.²⁷ It is this furtive “apparition” that captures the film exposing the trace of an exchange of glances, the scene of an interlocution, where the initiative to show oneself, to present oneself belongs to each and every one. Agamben’s formula – “cinema leads images back to the homeland of gesture”²⁸ – finds here its real significance.

The “event” that *Sobytie*²⁹ captures, above or below the facts recorded by history – a failed coup that precipitated the end of the USSR – would then be that irruptive, untimely presence within “historical” time, which manifests the emergence of a new sovereignty exercised by all (i.e. by anyone). If cinema can contribute to writing history differently, it is because by keeping the fugitive trace of these irruptive moments, it allows us to direct our attention, according to the word of Foucault, “a bit beneath history, at what cleaves it and stirs it.”³⁰

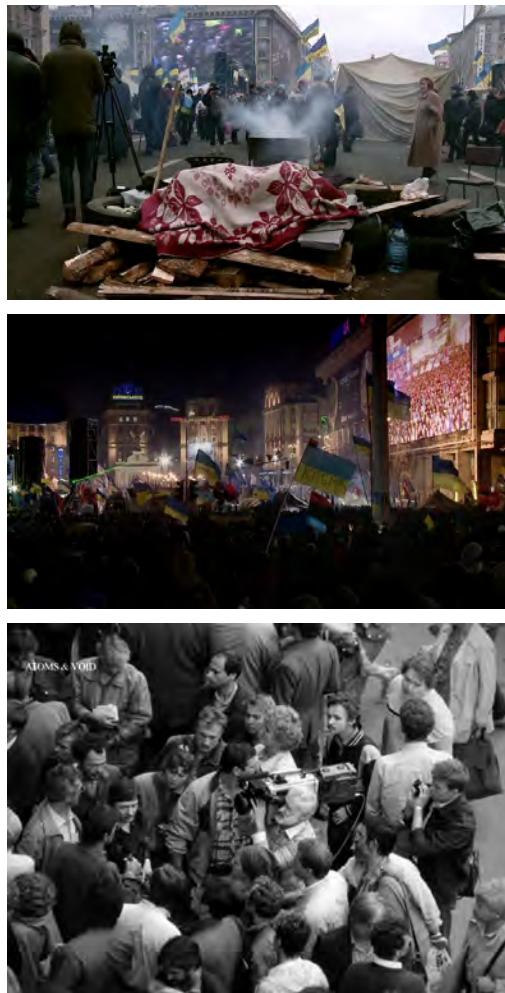
AN “UNTIMELY” HISTORY

The cinematographic medium thus appears as the only one able to capture the literally “anachronistic” temporality of the uprising. What characterizes, indeed, an uprising is, as Gilles Deleuze would say,³¹ that it “does not take place”, which means that it cannot find a place, fit itself, into the historical chain of causes and effects. At the same time “outside history” and in history”, it differs from the revolution, as analysed by Michel Foucault, because it doesn’t promote any programme or bring about any social change.³² It shows first and foremost a power of rejection which takes the form of a “blocking” of time, an interruption, and a “suspense”. Pure present, if it recalls a past or anticipates a future, it is those of a discontinuous history, irreducible to the alternative of success or failure.³³

My hypothesis is that this discontinuous history links *The Event* and a film shot a year earlier by Loznitsa: *Maidan* (2014). The editing of *The Event* (although he had discovered these archives a long time earlier) would have been made possible only by the filmmaker’s decisive experience in Kiev during the winter of 2013–2014: the day-

to-day shooting of a “film-diary” about the occupation of the Independence Square (“Maidan”) by the inhabitants, outraged by the decision of President Viktor Yanukovych to give up, under pressure from Putin, Ukraine’s association with the European Union (*Figs. 19–20*). Because the opponents are filming themselves and at the same time displaying the film on large screens, creating the image of their gathering and becoming the spectators of their own uprising, they reverse the previous position they were subjected to: to be spectators of the scene of power. In 2014 Loznitsa can finally see, in the images of 1991 in Leningrad (*Fig. 21*), an “image of the past” that would “disappear irretrievably” if “not recognized by the present as one of its own”, according to Benjamin’s formula.³⁴

Such, in my opinion, would be the way in which one could understand the Benjaminian thesis: “It is through the camera that we first discover the optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis”.³⁵ But, adds Walter Benjamin, it is not only an analogy. Indeed, “moreover, these two types of unconscious are intimately linked”.



Figs. 19–20. Maidan (Sergei Loznitsa, 2014); Fig. 21. The Event (Sergei Loznitsa, 2015).

In other words, the cinema would have the capacity to make perceptible the way in which the complex temporality of the psyche is also that of the historical times. However, it is necessary to specify the process of unveiling that condenses the Benjaminian formula. Indeed, if the camera can automatically capture, without intention, everything that appears in front of the lens, it does not see what it records: the gaze is ours and can only be done after the fact. This moment of seizure, in which our own responsibility for what we are able to see, is eminently historical. It is, writes Benjamin, what makes “the historical index of the images”. This does not only “says that they belong to a particular time; it says, above all, that they attain to legibility only at a particular time.”³⁶

It seems to be remarkable that Benjamin prefers the term “index” as if he intended to underline the gesture itself of engraving their historicity in the images. But this gesture is precisely that of the filmmaker, the first spectator of the shots, engaged at the editing table in an indissociably physical and cognitive process of reading: interrupting the scrolling of the film, returning several times the same shots, he or she isolates, stops them, to see them better. The editor’s gesture that allows him or her to see is also the one that allows him or her to show. Editing is not only a technical gesture, but a political gesture. By allowing us to re-mark the images, it offers us, in fact, the possibility of welcoming the presence of the past event, at the moment when it presents itself.

Then cinema indeed “belongs essentially to the realm of ethics and politics (and not simply to that of aesthetics)”, as Agamben says in ‘Notes on gesture’³⁷

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NOTES

¹ In addition to three fiction films, *My Joy* (2010), *In the Fog* (2012) and *A Gentle Creature* (2017), from 1996 onwards Loznitsa has authored 19 documentary films, “dedicated to the daily lives of “little people” – workers (*The Factory*, 2004) or peasants (*Artel*, 2006) – and to the excluded (*The Letter*, 2013) or to relegated places (*The Settlement*, 2001).

² A previous version of this essay was published in French as ‘Saisir “l’inconscient” de l’histoire: Autour de trois films de Sergei Loznitsa’, *Revue Proteus* 12 (2017), <http://www.revue-proteus.com/Proteus12.pdf>, accessed 2017/07/30 .

³ Carlo Ginzburg, *The cheese and the worms: The cosmos of a sixteenth-century miller* (London: Routledge, 1980), xxvi. Cf. Andrej Slávik’s contribution to this volume.

⁴ Giorgio Agamben, ‘Difference and repetition: On Guy Debord’s films’ (1995), in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and documents*, ed. Tom McDonough (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002), 317.

⁵ See, in particular, Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, myths, and the historical method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

⁶ Michel de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

⁷ See, for example: Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, ‘May ’68 did not take place’, in *Two regimes of madness: Texts and interviews 1975–1995*, ed. David Lapoujade (New York: Semiotext(e), 2007); Michel Foucault, ‘Useless to revolt?’, in *Essential works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, vol. 3, *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 2000); Jacques Derrida, ‘A certain impossible possibility of saying the event’, *Critical Inquiry* 33:2 (2007).

⁸ Walter Benjamin, ‘Theses on the philosophy of history’, in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

⁹ While Mikhail Gorbachev was on holiday in Crimea, a group calling itself the “State Committee for the State of Emergency” took power, suspending the regular operation of the institutions, in order to put an end to the liberal and democratic reforms of Perestroika. The eight-member committee included the vice-president of the Soviet Union, Gennady Yanayev, KGB leader Vladimir Kryuchkov, Interior Minister Boris Pugo, and Defence Minister Dmitry Yazov. A planned attack against the White House, the seat of the Russian Parliament, by encircling it with tanks failed after the troops had unanimously refused to obey. This failed coup d’état had major consequences: in September 1991, the independence of the three Baltic republics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) was recognized by the Soviet Union; the Communist Party (CPSU), which had ruled the country since 1917, was dissolved and banned; in December 1991, Gorbachev announced his resignation as president of the USSR and the Soviet Union itself ceased to exist.

¹⁰ I use “suspense” here as an equivalent to the philosophical term of *epokhē*.

¹¹ One of them, Anselm Bogorov, reports that “in the morning [...], I take a cup of hot water with a small piece of bread and I prepare for the ‘walk’ (ie to fetch water in the icy hole of the canals and shoot what happens outside). I take the sledge, the bucket, I hide the camera ‘Eyemo’ inside my coat ... I do not know what will happen with the film ... I have not seen my friends for a long time, I’m not sure they’re still alive. But every morning while leaving to fetch water, I take my camera.” Cit. Maria Golik, ‘Le traitement du blocus de Leningrad (1941–1944) dans les documentaires russe-sovétiques et contemporains: L’image-témoin’ (Master’s thesis, Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, 2015), accessed 2017/07/10 at <https://www.academia>.

edu/21457596/Blocus_de_Leningrad_dans_le_cinéma_documentaire_russo-soviétique (my translation).

12 Although the putschists suspended all radio and television programmes – the only television channel retransmitting only the press releases of the “State Committee for the State of Emergency” – the team of Boris Yeltsin managed, in less than 24 hours, to restart the radio transmitters. In addition, as telephone calls were not cut off in the Russian Soviet Union, Russian-language Western radio stations directed to the USSR immediately opened their offices to the Muscovites and journalists present. Also, the call launched by Yeltsin to resist the coup d'état (from the first hours it circulated in the form of a flyer) was also broadcast on the morning of 21 August on all frequencies.

13 The extraordinary work of “sound sculpture” made, in all his work, by Loznitsa and his sound engineers, is commented on in Daniel Deshays’ ‘La poétique sonore de Sergueï Loznitsa’, *Images documentaires* 88/89 (July 2017).

14 In *The Event*, the haunting return of darkness is accompanied by a musical leitmotif: the melancholy theme of Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake*. During the state of emergency, the ballet was broadcast continuously by television stations controlled by the putschists.

15 In particular the first one, released in 1942, *Leningrad v Borbe* (Ленинград в борьбе/Fighting Leningrad) by Roman Karmen & Efim Utchitel, but also *Podvig Leningrada* (Подвиг Ленинграда/The Leningrad Prowess) by Efim Utchitel (1959) or *900 niezavimikh dniei* (900 независимых дней/900 Independence Days) by Valerii Solotsev (1964), cited in the credits of Blockade.

16 In early September 1941, the encirclement of the city by the German troops no longer allowed the evacuation of the most fragile inhabitants by land. It continued by air and water via Lake Ladoga, and then by truck, when the surface of the lake had frozen. The construction work of the “Road of life”, completed in late January 1942, allowed a more efficient organization of the evacuation.

17 In the summer of 1942, a pipeline called the “Artery of life” and an electricity cable were laid on the bottom of Lake Ladoga which supplied the city with fuel and electricity.

18 There were approximately 700,000 deaths between September 1941 and July 1942, one in three inhabitants. The number of deaths peaked in February 1942 at over 10,000 a day.

19 Hannah Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1973), 436.

20 In early September 1941, the city had food for one month. A rationing system was set up on 12 September: 500 grams of bread for workers, 395 grams for employees, 310 grams for children and other civilians. On 11 November, rations fell to 300 grams for workers and 150 grams for children and other civilians. On 5 December, they fell respectively to 200 and 125 grams. From October, ersatz bread (using soy, cellulose, cotton pulp) began to be manufactured.

21 The execution of the Nazi criminals followed one of the many trials conducted by the “State Extraordinary Investigation Commission for the investigation of the crimes of invading Nazi Germans and their accomplices” (created in November 1942). The Leningrad press reported: “Leningrad, January 5th (TASS). Today at 11 am in Leningrad on the square in front of the ‘Giant’ cinema, the German-fascists and criminals Remlinger, Strufing, Bem, Engel, Zonofeld, Jianino, Skotki, Gerer are condemned by the Military Court to the death penalty by hanging, for mass shootings, cruelty to the citizens, setting fire to villages and reduction of Soviet citizens to slavery. Many workers were present in the square, heard the sentence and saw the execution with the agreement of all.” (*Leningradskaya Pravda*, 1946/01/08)

22 Loznista's comments, reported by the journalist Anna Malpas, mentioned the same question: "Only 60 years ago, we gathered on the street and watched other people being hanged. On the one hand, you can understand people, since they lived through something that – I don't know – reconciled them to such a fact. On the other hand, though, the scene is impossible to understand for people today". See Anna Malpas, 'Everyday battles', *The Moscow Times*, 17 March 2006, cited in the *Blockade* press kit from Icarus Films, accessed 29 March 2018, http://misc.icarusfilms.com/press/pdfs/bloc_pk.pdf.

23 First elected mayor of St. Petersburg, Anatoly Sobchak (who, as a law professor, would later write part of the Russian constitution) was both the teacher and the mentor of Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev.

24 This "order" is promoted by the jurist Carl Schmitt: "The genuinely assembled people are first a people, and only the genuinely assembled people can do that which pertains distinctly to the activity of this people. They can acclaim [...]" Carl Schmitt, *Constitutional theory* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2008), 272.

25 "[...] the political aspect [...] always consists in re-qualifying these spaces, in getting them to be seen as the places of a community; it involves these categories making themselves seen or heard as speaking subjects [...]" Jacques Rancière, 'Ten theses on politics', in *Dissensus: On politics and aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2010), 38.

26 "[...] if there were a modern political cinema, it would be on this basis: the people no longer exist, or not yet ... the people are missing." Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema*, vol. 2, *The time-image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson & Robert Galeta (London: Continuum, 2005), 208.

27 My remarks overlap the theses of Pierre-Damien Huyghe, "Un peuple manqué", *Vertigo* 37 (2010), 47: "Peuple", c'est le nom vague et indéterminé de ce qui manque à toute appellation et à toute représentation politique, c'est une puissance d'action sans image."

28 "Every image, in fact, is animated by an antinomic polarity: on the one hand, images are the reification and obliteration of a gesture (it is the *imago* as death mask or as symbol); on the other hand, they preserve the *dynamis* intact. [...] It is as if a silent invocation calling for the liberation of the image into gesture arose from the entire history of art. [...] Cinema leads images back to the homeland of gesture." Giorgio Agamben, 'Notes on gesture' (1992), in *Means without end: Notes on politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti & Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 54–55.

29 The Russian title of the film means both an "event", in the historical sense, and "news", in the media sense of the term.

30 Michel Foucault, 'Useless to revolt?', 453.

31 Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, 'May '68 did not take place'.

32 Michel Foucault, 'Useless to revolt?', 450: "Then came the age of 'revolution'. For two hundred years this idea overshadowed history, organized our perception of time, and polarized people's hopes. It constituted a gigantic effort to domesticate revolts within a rational and controllable history [...]"

33 This temporality peculiar to the revolutions whose "lost treasure", always reborn, is at the very heart of Hannah Arendt's reflections in her preface to *Between past and future: Six exercises in political thought* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1963).

34 Benjamin, 'Theses on the philosophy of history', 255.

35 Walter Benjamin, 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction' (2nd version, 1936), in *The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility, and other writings on media*,

eds. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty & Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2008), 37.

36 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2002), 462.

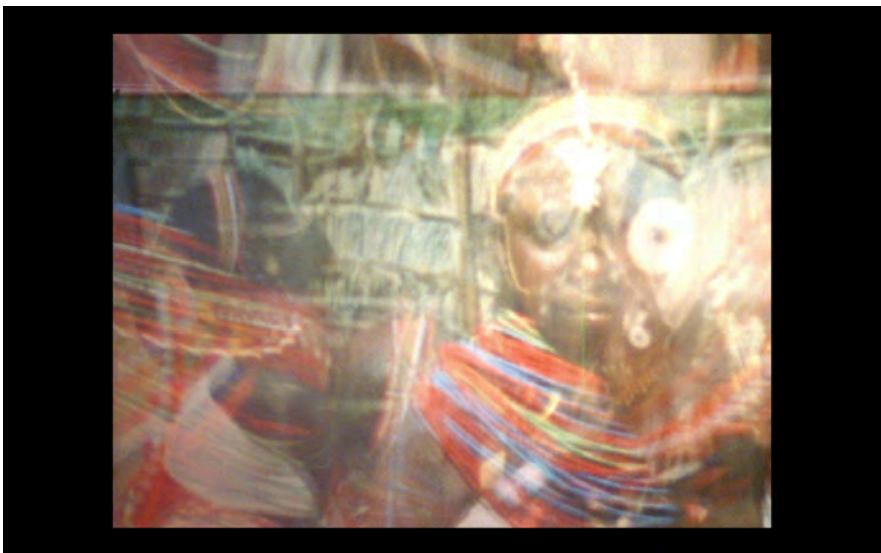
37 Agamben, 'Notes on gesture', 55.

JAIMIE BARON

Christopher Harris's experimental audiovisual historiography

Christopher Harris's short film *Halimuhfack* (2016) begins with the image of a Black woman wearing a black dress and red hat that suggest the fashions of the early 20th century (Fig. 1). She is sitting in front of a screen on which we see ethnographic footage of Maasai people performing a dance in traditional clothing. As the seated woman begins to speak, we hear the voice of a woman – who, we may learn from the programme notes, is in fact the celebrated African-American author and folklorist Zora Neale Hurston – answering a man's questions about her work learning, performing, and recording African-American folk songs in the US South.¹ However, the lips of the visible speaker and Hurston's voice slip increasingly out of synch so that it quickly becomes clear that it is not Hurston we are seeing onscreen. After the short conversation with the interviewer, Hurston sings the song 'Halimuhfack', but once the song is complete, the soundtrack begins to skip and repeat, distorting her words. The ethnographic images behind the lip-synch performer, which were already on a loop, begin to stutter. Soundtrack and image both break down until they become visually and sonically nonsensical (Fig. 2). Indeed, the film deploys an aesthetics of interruption that not only refuses to cohere into narrative but also moves increasingly toward incoherence. Nevertheless, an intense form of historical experience inheres in the experience of watching the film: an aesthetics of interruption producing what might be called an historiography of interruption.

Of course, interruption is often viewed as "rude" and as an impediment to dialogue or narrative. However, when dialogue is impossible or narrative becomes ideologically calcified or communicative power is inequitable, interruption may become necessary to the production of an ethical discourse – including an ethical historical discourse. Amit Pinchevski, drawing on Emmanuel Levinas, sees "interruption as bearing a special ethical significance: as a point of exposure and vulnerability upon which the relation with the Other may undergo a profound transformation".² In my



Figs. 1 & 2. Halimuhfack (Christopher Harris, 2016). Reprinted with permission of the artist.

view, certain works of audiovisual history that appropriate existing sounds and/or images enact an interruption that may serve as such a “point of exposure and vulnerability.” By interrupting the flow of one set of images and/or sounds with other sets of images and/or sounds, audiovisual appropriation may open a space in which otherness can be encountered without established preconception. Pinchevski also notes that “there is communication only when there is a moment, however, fleeting or minimal, of non-understanding, of disorientation, or even of stupidity with respect to what is said.”³ Audiovisual appropriation often generates this moment of disorientation. It is so fleeting that we often do not even consciously acknowledge this brief experience of non-understanding or stupidity. Yet, I want to argue that, in works of audiovisual appropriation – or “found footage” works – which often ask us to synthesize disparate sounds and images that have no instantly apparent connection, there is always a moment of incomprehension before we make sense of the “misuse”.⁴

Some works of audiovisual appropriation transform this moment of incomprehension into an opportunity for disrupting habitual ways of thinking about the past – and about the “other”. Pinchevski writes:

The Other’s interruption makes evident what is oppressed and denied by “innate” communal structures: the immanency of a relation transcending similarity and like-mindedness. Rather than having or working to have something in common, this community is realized in the approach and exposure to the foreign: the outcast, the mental patient, the immigrant, the Indian, the stranger, the enemy.⁵

In my view, Harris’s short experimental films literally and metaphorically interrupt dominant discourses, producing an encounter with iterations of the “foreign” in ways that, I argue, reveal the rule of “like-mindedness” when it comes to thinking about the practice of producing history. By interrupting established forms of historiographic discourse literally and metaphorically, sonically and visually, spatially and temporally, his films call upon us to rethink the notions of audiovisual traces as “documents” that ostensibly form the basis of future historical knowledge. Moreover, by placing bodies that refuse to be reduced to a singular identity into times and spaces – or temporal and spatial structures – wherein they do not easily “fit”, Harris’s films interrupt any comfortable epistemological relation between viewer and viewed.

In *Halimuhfack*, there are at least three distinct temporalities in effect from the very beginning of the film. First, there is the temporality of the footage of the Maasai people performing a dance or ritual. Without annotation, this colour footage reads as having likely been taken in the mid-20th century by white Western ethnographers intent on capturing the Maasai before they became “Westernized”, part of the project

of “salvage ethnography”. The bodies of these filmmakers are noticeably absent in the footage but their gaze is emphasized through the repetition of an image of one girl looking back at the camera. The fact that these images are of the Maasai is particularly significant because, as Neal Sobania has explored in depth, the “othering” of the Maasai through visual representation has a long history. He notes, “Everyone ‘knows’ the Maasai and Zulu – women in beads with breasts uncovered, in or around their ‘primitive huts’, warriors with spears and shields dancing or charging across the open plains”.⁶ Thus, these images likely also generate a sense of familiarity for the viewer as stereotype. A second temporality is represented by the audio recording of Hurston speaking about her ethnographic documentation of African-American songs during the 1930s. As Daphne A. Brooks notes, this was part of Hurston’s larger quest to “celebrate, cultivate, and make more audible to the masses the depth and complexities of Afro diasporic sonic cultures”.⁷ In the recording we hear Hurston describe her insider/outsider participant-observer status as she incorporated African-American songs into her own embodied inscription of this tradition. As Brooks further observes, Hurston used “embodied and sounded performance as a tool of ethnographic inscription, as an instrument that might put black voices on the (scholarly) record [...] Her performance doubly inscribes the subjectivity of the black collection whose voices she preserves, as well as her own present, active independent reception”.⁸ Indeed, although actual Hurston’s body is not visible in Harris’s film, it is audible, demonstrating that her ethnography not simply a documentation of the ethnographic “other” but an embodied performance of that other’s artistic practice. Finally, there is the temporality of the body of the performer, poet and author Valada Flewellyn, who lip-synchs to Hurston’s words. The synch slips in and out without any effort to convince the viewer that this is, in fact, Hurston’s body. Indeed, Flewellyn’s intentionally imperfect embodiment of Hurston is aligned with the present moment of the making of Harris’s film, closer to – though not coincident with – our own moment of viewing. Flewellyn’s visible body further accentuates the absence of Hurston’s actual body – and of the bodies whose songs Hurston echoes.

Corresponding to this multiplicity of temporalities, a spatial layering is also at work, represented not only by the gap between Flewellyn’s lip movements and Hurston’s actual recorded voice but also by the gap between the impersonator and the rear projection that appears behind her. The gap between lips and voice gestures towards a form of intentionally flawed ventriloquism that indicates the inability of past and present to match up and make a coherent sense. Moreover, the rear projection creates a literally incoherent space. Writing about narrative cinema, Laura Mulvey writes that, “Rear-projection’s clumsy visibility seems to smuggle something of modernism into the mass medium or modernity, creating an unusual paradox, almost a clash of

cultures, within a single space".⁹ Although Mulvey indicates that she means "clash of cultures" metaphorically, *Halimuhfack* seems to literalize this clash of cultures, pointing to the gaps between Western culture and African cultures as well as between African and African-American identity and even between the highly educated Hurston and her working-class subjects. Mulvey also notes that in classical Hollywood film, "There is a further incompatibility, a further paradox, inherent to the rear-projection process. The location footage can seem especially 'realistic', almost like documentary film footage, when it intrudes into otherwise wholly-staged narrative dramas".¹⁰ Similarly, in *Halimuhfack*, the footage of the Maasai tribe – contrasted with the obviously staged performance in the foreground – begins to align with the "real". Yet, this offer of the "real" is plagued by interruptions. As the footage is looped and plays over and over again, it loses something of its voyeuristic, ethnographic appeal in its very repetition. Moreover, as the speed of the looping increases, the footage itself grows increasingly grainy and hard to read. On top of that, the sound of Hurston's voice starts to loop so that the lyric "Who do? Who do? Who do working?" is transformed simply into "Hoodoo, hoodoo, hoodoo, hoodoo," which Harris describes in his programme notes as an "incantation". Thus, both sound and image track seem to lose their denotative function, transforming into non-sense or literal incoherence. Through these temporal and spatial layerings and stutterings, the film refuses to satiate our desire for "real" historical and ethnographic knowledge, which depends on spatial and temporal coherence. Everything we are seeing and hearing is visibly and audibly incomplete, unsynchronized, and actively incoherent.

Jeffrey Skoller has identified a particular tendency within avant-garde films that engage with history, which he categorizes as "shard" films and links to Walter Benjamin's ideas of historical materialism and allegory. Benjamin was interested in the ways in which the detritus of a past moment can have significance not for reconstructing the actual past but as a means of constructing an understanding of the past through the lens of the present and vice versa. Skoller writes:

For modern artists, the use of discarded, mechanically-recorded images and sounds has allegorical possibility because they remain unchanged while the original context for their existence passes out of visibility. The temporal untranslatability of the object becomes the embodiment of present meaning and is generative of new possibilities for significance.¹¹

Similarly, in *Halimuhfack*, the "discarded" fragments of the Hurston interview and of the Maasai people are revealed in their "untranslatability". Rather than attempting to reconstruct their original context, the film emphasizes the fact that this context has

passed out of visibility so much so that we cannot understand these traces as coherent messages from and about the historical past. Writing about a different found footage film, Ernie Gehr's *Eureka*, Skoller notes that, "the foregrounding of the present moment of the viewer's gaze through the slowing down of the image denaturalizes it and pulls the viewer out of the image of the past and into an acute sense of the present"¹². This denaturalization and emphasis on the present moment of viewing is clearly present in *Halimuhfack* as well. Any immersion in the past is violently sundered through both the "inauthenticity" of the performer and the aesthetics of interruption.

Yet, in *Halimuhfack* – and in Harris's work more broadly – this denaturalization through interruption is fundamentally political. In our present moment (or the moment of Harris's film's production), Black people are still implicated in scopic and sonic regimes that combine exoticization with denigration, that seek to fix Black bodies and voices in the service of a white gaze or ear. *Halimuhfack*, however, undermines our sense that we can know or understand African or African-American history through audiovisual ethnographic fragments. In particular, by placing the body of the lip synch performer – who functions as a "temporal other" – into the space of the frame, the possibility of knowledge about the past "untainted" by the present is exploded. The gap between her lip movements and the voice we hear, more than anything else in the film, points to that which we cannot access, cannot possess. Indeed, I argue it is in the gesture of placing the contemporary Black body within the historicized space of the appropriated document (with its implicit white gaze and ear) and acknowledging its interruption that the political – and ethical – stakes of interruption most keenly emerge. The discourses of ethnography attempt to produce coherence out of the life and experience of the "other" – usually people of colour – for a white reader or viewer. While there is no reason to reject all ethnographic discourse outright, it must be constantly interrupted to reveal the ways in which representation exerts power over both its subjects and its audience. By offering ethnographic representation of Black people but interrupting it temporally, spatially, visually, and sonically, *Halimuhfack* offers us traces of Black history but reminds us that it is filtered through a particular (usually white) gaze/ear and, moreover, that we have no particular right to this knowledge.

Yet Harris's work is not only concerned with ethnographic representation in relation to Black history. The aesthetics of interruption are also at work in Harris's earlier film, *Reckless Eyeballing* (2004), which, rather than incorporating ethnographic recordings, primarily appropriates fiction footage (Fig. 3). The main sources of footage are D.W. Griffith's 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation* and the 1974 Blaxploitation film *Foxy Brown*. Of course, *The Birth of a Nation* is generally regarded as both a masterpiece of early cinematic innovation and a virulently racist misrepresentation of the

American Civil War and Reconstruction. Meanwhile, *Foxy Brown*, made by white director Jack Hill, has been celebrated for its depiction of a strong, African-American heroine but also critiqued as an objectified and simplistic version of empowered African-American femininity. Through an exchange of gazes constructed by Harris's appropriation and editing, Foxy Brown (Pam Grier) appears to look at and be looked at by a variety of men, both Black and white. The most striking example of this occurs when Gus – the villainous would-be rapist of a white woman from *The Birth of a Nation*, who was played by white actor Walter Long in blackface – and Foxy appear to look at one another. We also repeatedly see an image of Black activist Angela Davis and text that says "ANGELA DAVIS IS WANTED", referring to the fact that she was pursued by the FBI in 1970 on charges of conspiracy and murder. The film emphasizes details of the "WANTED" poster, which includes a list of Davis's physical traits such as "race" and "complexion". Images of text referring to Black and white "bodies" also appear periodically onscreen; in fact, the terms refer to measuring colour temperature in motion picture photography, but they take on racial connotations in the context of Harris's film. On the soundtrack, the first thing we hear is a voice saying, "Don't let her look you in the eye, whatever you do, for that's how she turns men to stone".¹³ This reference to Medusa is then followed by a single (interrupted) line repeated through much of the film ("She will never look –") along with snippets of music and other brief bits of dialogue.¹⁴ The title of the film refers to a term that, under slavery, meant a Black slave making eye contact with anyone in a position of authority. Later, under Jim Crow, it referred to any Black man looking at a white woman. (It is also the title of a play by renowned African-American playwright Ishmael Reed.)

Clearly, the act of looking or being looked at is foregrounded in *Reckless Eyeballing* on multiple levels; however, the trajectories of the original gazes are interrupted and rerouted. As in *Halimuhfack*, we are presented in *Reckless Eyeballing* with Black (or blackface) bodies produced within a white scopic regime, a fact made palpable through Harris's interruption of the texts from which his footage derives. At the same time, his act of excising and re-suturing the footage produces an alternative scopic regime that also serves as a history and interrogation of raced and gendered looking. Yet, *Reckless Eyeballing* refuses simple race and gender binaries. For instance, in Harris's film, the term "reckless eyeballing" takes on a new meaning since one of the people we see is a white man (in blackface) "looking" at a Black woman. However, the Black woman is also clearly "looking" back at the disguised white man, her gaze tinged not with desire but hostility. In addition, the frequent use of overexposed images and negative images in which blacks and whites are reversed also complicate our sense of a black/white binary.



Fig. 3. *Reckless Eyeballing* (Christopher Harris, 2004). Reprinted with permission of the artist.

What interests me most is the exchange of gazes between Gus/Long and Foxy/Grier. These looks intersect across clearly disparate temporalities: 1865, 1915, and 1974. Instead of one “temporal other” as in *Halimuhfack*, wherein the presence of the lip sync actress undoes coherence, we have the image of two people who could not be more temporally or politically “other” in relation to one another but who seem – through editing – to be looking at one another. The editing creates a coherence that we know to be false. Yet, it poses a set of questions: what does it mean for Gus to look at Foxy across 59 years (or, diegetically, 109 years) and for Foxy to look back at him, and what implications do these looks have for thinking about history, particularly the history of representation of Black people? Foxy’s gaze is clearly an empowered one. She gazes, blinking slowly, with a subtle sneer, clearly dismissing the object of her

gaze. When this object is edited to appear to be “Gus – the renegade – a product of the vicious doctrines spread by the carpetbaggers”, her gaze reads as an annihilation of this figure, once menacing but now absurd. This annihilation is literalized later in the film when Foxy appears, through Harris’s editing, to point a gun at Gus as well. Moreover, I would argue that, through the appropriation, the fictional elements fall away to emphasize the actual indexical bodies within the fictions. The object of both the woman’s gaze and her firearm ceases to be the character Gus and becomes Long, the white man who performed a particular, racist version of Blackness. Foxy becomes Grier herself – visually aligned with Davis, who was in reality accused of conspiring to murder a white judge – asserting her power. Thus, in this film, the aesthetics of interruption (of the original texts) are combined with a reintegration into a different hierarchy of gazes and power, transforming the meaning of *The Birth of a Nation* and its most notorious and problematic character. This film does not simply historicize Black representation but also refigures it, allowing the present a form of revenge on the past. If, as Skoller argues, films can perform a Benjaminian allegoresis in which traces of the past are used to illuminate the present, Harris’s films do so in the service of revealing the (continuing) incoherence of the white vision of Blackness. The sounds and images that Harris appropriates are not traces of the real so much as traces of white visual and sonic supremacy, the discursive needs of which have structured so much cinematic representation. This structuring power is hardly gone; it must be continually interrupted.

The aesthetics of interruption as exemplified in *Halimuhfack* and *Reckless Eyeballing* have both political and ethical ramifications. If we are to come to grips with the archive of racial (and often racist) representation, we cannot simply narrate these representations as an illustration of the past, safely contained. Instead, by creating a clash of divergent temporalities and spatialities, we may “reactivate” these sounds and images to better understand our current assumptions about the “other”, whom we cannot seem to stop producing. An historiography of interruption may thus be a potential antidote to the simplistic, seamless versions of history that have such currency among ethno-nationalists and their ilk. While Harris’s work circulates almost exclusively within experimental media circles, his editing strategies may provide a model for more mainstream historical texts, both audiovisual and written, that generally tend to present history as unified, uninterrupted, and – all too often – exclusionary. Incorporating the aesthetics of interruption more broadly may, then, move us towards a more ethical historiography.

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NOTES

- ¹ According to the Library of Congress website on which this recording can be streamed, this interview took place in Federal Music Project Office in Jacksonville, Florida, on 18 June 1939. The man interviewing Hurston is identified as Herbert Halpert. See ‘Halimuhfack’, Library of Congress, accessed 21 March 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/flwpao000014>.
- ² Amit Pinchevski, ‘The ethics of interruption: Toward a Levinasian philosophy of communication’, *Social Semiotics* 15:2 (2005), 212.
- ³ Pinchevski, ‘The ethics of interruption’, 227.
- ⁴ This may be true of all editing, of course, but I am suggesting that it is often more pronounced in the case of audiovisual appropriation.
- ⁵ Pinchevski, ‘The ethics of interruption’, 231.
- ⁶ Neal Sobania, ‘But where are the cattle? Popular images of Maasai and Zulu across the twentieth century’, *Visual Anthropology* 15:3/4 (July 2002), 313.
- ⁷ Daphne A. Brooks, ‘“Sister, can you line it out?”: Zora Neale Hurston and the sound of angular Black womanhood’, *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 55:4 (2010), 619.
- ⁸ Brooks, ‘“Sister, can you line it out?”’, 623.
- ⁹ Laura Mulvey, ‘Rear-projection and the paradoxes of Hollywood realism’, in *Theorizing world cinema*, eds. Lúcia Nagib, Rajinder Dudrah & Chris Perriam (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 208.
- ¹⁰ Mulvey, ‘Rear-projection’, 212.
- ¹¹ Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, specters, shards: Making history in avant-garde film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 5.
- ¹² Skoller, *Shadows, specters, shards*, 13.
- ¹³ This, along with the music included in the film, is appropriated from a 1963 B-movie called *Son of Hercules vs. Medusa* directed by Alberto De Martino.
- ¹⁴ The “she will never look” loop is from a self-help book on tape about how to keep your sexual relationship with your partner strong. The complete line is “she will never look at another man, she will never need another man.” Email correspondence with filmmaker, 23 October 2017.

MALIN WAHLBERG

Memory, history, and forgetting

*Knowledge production and commemoration
in the films by Susana de Sousa Dias*

History is a science of *traces*, and it is the trace that “orients the hunt, the quest, the search, the inquiry”.¹ In documentary cinema, the photographic imprint and the poetics of cinematic enactment add to the contingency of the trace. The interrelation between *trace, memory, and imagination*, so crucial to the “telling” of the past, crystallizes differently in documentary enactments.² Aside from the narrative drive of any project engaged in representing past events, imagination is needed for any poetic enactment as it is for the reception of historical narratives. We engage intellectually with the facts and vestiges of historical events that are reassessed and presented to us, but we imagine and respond emotionally to the existential implications of historical experience. Paul Ricoeur never addressed the implications of visual archives, narration in moving images, or the complex relationship between visual media and cultural memory. Still, his notion of imagination speaks to the “ethico-political project” of experimental approaches to time and historical experience in documentary cinema and visual art. Ideally, this is where historical scholarship and art meet “to put memories before our eyes”.³ In cinema, where the image of the past is also re-enacted as a documentary ready-made, how is one to analyse the intersection between trace, memory, and imagination that the philosophy of history has always found to be at the heart of narration?

FROM STILL-LIFE TO ENACTED FRAGMENTS OF LIVED TIME

In *Natureza morta: Visages d'une dictature* (“Still Life: The Many Faces of Dictatorship”, Susana de Sousa Dias, Portugal, 2005) duration has been added to still images, and archival films have been reframed in slow motion. A minimalist score enhances the poetic impact of the compiled archival footage and underscores the horrors of a traumatic past. In this film, the dictator António de Oliveira Salazar is presented

less as a historical figure than as an icon of Fascism and terror. Towering behind a set of spidery microphones, Salazar's assured expression is mocked by the manipulated speed of the film, but a possible comic effect seems immediately counterbalanced by the soundtrack: the grinding noise of a 16 mm projector interferes with an electronic score to mimic the masses' excitement. Sequences from different films have been organized and reframed thematically to forge an image of the past that resonates symbolically with the present. In de Sousa Dias's montage, glimpses shot at different parades combine into a ghastly motif of Fascist mass celebration; a pantomime, enhanced by the added score. The co-ordinated greetings to Salazar underscore the ever-present spectre and actual leader (*Fig. 1*).



*Fig. 1. Fascist parade. *Natureza morta* (Susana de Sousa Dias, 2005). All images courtesy of the artist.*

Susana de Sousa Dias's films *Natureza morta* (2005) and *48* (2010) relate to Fascism and colonialism (the Portuguese context of Salazar's dictatorship 1926–1974).⁴ The poetics of these films ties into a longstanding tradition of compilation aesthetics in the history of documentary cinema, where archival images, films, and media material are subjected to poetic reframing and orchestration.⁵ Reassessing a complex time-period that is painfully present and therefore rarely addressed in public life, these two films are based on related archival material, although they differ in style and mode of address. Both are based on archival images, film footage, and photographs that have an immediate connection to systematized violence and power, in particular the snapshots of political prisoners collected and preserved by the secret police, the PIDE/DGS. During the production of the first film, de Sousa Dias felt as if the record of



Fig. 2. Manuel Pedro. Natureza morta (Susana de Sousa Dias, 2005). The materiality of the archive photograph meets with the scale, sound, and duration of a photograph in cinematic enactment.

the secret police archives and the proud, far from defeated faces of the photographed prisoners concealed unique life stories that called for another mode of representation. She first met the former prisoner Conceição Matos in 2003, when seeking permission to film her PIDE snapshots. The conversation they had inspired further research.⁴⁸ became a montage in which the cinematic animation of photographs now included recorded voices from these encounters with former prisoners.⁶ Hence, de Sousa Dias developed her technique of reframing, adding duration to the photographs to create a vertical montage “in temporal depth”.⁷ Cinematic duration structures the interrelation between the viewer and the screen event, such that the “undecidability between movement and stasis” also seems to characterize the constructed time-space assigned to each unique voice in the film.⁸

In the following, my aim will be to think in dialogue with these two films and related philosophical and theoretical references to address the problem of “audiovisual historiography”. The aim of this essay is twofold: 1) to desacralize the phenomenology of *the trace*, and to reassess its meanings in documentary art and film experience, and 2) to underscore the role of listening and the “sounding” of recorded voices and silence in moving images (*Fig. 2*).

“NARRATIVE IMAGINATION” IN DOCUMENTARY ART

In *Memory, history, forgetting*, Ricoeur pursues a phenomenology of narrative time in dialogue with a critical philosophy of history. “Forgetting” relates to the practical realm of archival politics and commemoration culture, but also to the ethical aspects of “forgetting and the effacing of traces” versus “the persistence of traces”.⁹ These concerns reverberate in the methodological concerns and ethical dilemmas of documentary cinema, and are also conceptualized by artistic projects that engage with filmed testimonies, missing pictures, and media archives. Some films have been more successful than others in complementing aesthetic knowledge about historical events and their representation, and about the production and reproduction of cultural memory in moving images. The term “documentary art” alludes to this alternative knowledge production and the “formal domain” of experimental cinema and visual art, where we may learn to see and perceive in new ways. Jeffrey Skoller builds on Walter Benjamin in his recognition of the deeply political nature of films that may “release energies” to spark “new forms of awareness”.¹⁰ Referencing Ken Jacobs’s influential compilation aesthetics in *Tom, Tom, the Piper’s Son* (1969) as a case in point, he associates these energies with the possibility of a “cine-narrative based on the abstract and purely temporal elements of the cinematic experience.”¹¹

Applied to the poetic enactment and cinematic “animation” of archival images in documentary art, “narrative imagination” also operates beyond text and verbal narration. On a more general note, this relates to Bill Nichols’ suggestion that “the imaginary” is brought to the fore by the modes of address and expressive capacities of “the documentary voice”:

The documentary voice speaks through the body of the film: through editing – through subtle and strange juxtapositions, through music, lighting, composition, and mise-en-scène, through dialogue overheard and commentary delivered, through silence as well as speech, and through sounds and images as well as words. This dispersed and polymorphous voice possesses an intrinsically desubjectivized form. The workings of a fantasmatic arise through it.¹²

Overall, Nichols's emphasis on the ideally "dispersed and polymorphous voice" of documentary is consistent with a present reflection on an audiovisual historiography that is attentive to problems of media commemoration, and to the production and reproduction of cultural memory in moving images. In the example of de Sousa Dias's films, the "documentary voice" opens up to the voice of anonymous subjects, and the cinematic orchestration at work also enhances the materiality of the archival findings. In *48*, fragments of recorded life stories reanimate the compiled photographs to invoke a memory work beyond narrative closure. In particular, her films seem also to find new ways to tackle the problem of the filmed testimony. The compilation aesthetics of *48* adds to this salient theme of documentary cinema, where the enactment of first-person narratives and a process of commemoration suggest "a deeply cinematic form of historiography".¹³

Before a closer consideration of *Natureza morta* and *48*, the phenomenology of *the trace* and its poetic enactment in cinema requires some clarification and theoretical contextualization.

THE TRACE – FROM VESTIGE TO A TELLING SIGN OF THE PAST

According to Martin Heidegger, time is something intrinsically shared, and if separated from the dialectic of future, past, and present, it would be nothing but a misleading abstraction.¹⁴ Instead, transition characterizes every moment into a constant split of now, not-yet-now, and no-longer now. Time is an *a priori* horizon, where *Dasein* (being in the world) is embraced and so is the everyday conception of Time.¹⁵ Our existence as human beings is marked by our knowledge of approaching death. We come, we die, but the results of our actions and works remain. The trace becomes an intentional object whose mode of being is equivalent to its function as inscription of the past within the present. To *Dasein*, the trace of the past event even tends to replace it.

Emmanuel Lévinas questions Heidegger's notion of the trace as an immanent bearer of the past. Instead, he emphasizes the unmemorable status of the trace in arguing that its relation to the past and the present is not irreversible: the trace of somebody passed by does not automatically signify his or her past.¹⁶ Ricoeur draws on the ethics of Lévinas to highlight the power of narration to show us actual traces of our shared past. Telling, alternatively, implies that the praxis of representing the trace constitutes the prerequisite action against forgetting. Traces left by past events call for interpretation and contextualization, "it is a duty to tell".¹⁷

What then happens in film experience where *the trace* seems to double, both in the sense of analogue sound-images and footage presented as a record of events docu-

mented by a camera? The trace is also invoked in the ways the film camera may zoom into material vestiges, objects, as well as the embodied traces of time in human faces, voices and gestures. Cinema is a temporal art and shares with recorded music the double status of inscription/document and measured movement, at once a forged rhythm and an unfolding sequence. To quote from Bernard Stiegler's critical reassessment of Husserl's *Zeitobjekt*: "My time is always the time of others. Cinema reveals this cinemato-graphically".¹⁸ Time-based objects of analogue recording automatically upset Husserl's suggested relation between *primary retention* (the now and the just-past now) and *secondary memory* (referring to the *remembrance* of the melody just heard), which motivates Stiegler's notion of "tertiary memory" to which the actual products of any recording belong. Filmic inscription provides artificial memories to our imagination and perception. Souvenirs of past events are given to us, but they are fabricated as recorded tertiary memory and often unmemorable on a personal and subjective level. These virtual memories become reinforced as visual inscriptions of the past by the realistic force of photographic images. Cinema, Stiegler contends, is a "technology of memory".¹⁹

In documentary cinema, material traces tend to be presented as proof of things having happened, but the indexical quality of photographs, film images, and recorded sound already enhance the uncanny impact of the trace as a "disarrangement expressing itself".²⁰ Even in the most reflexive film narrative, where the claims to truth and objectivity associated with documentary are questioned and mocked, aspects of camera inscription and framing devices tend to invoke the vestige as both passage and mark, a compelling presence of absence. In film, inevitably, the trace doubles into "a trace of a trace", an affective sign-effect depending on a chosen set of aesthetic strategies and the realization of a rhythmic whole, a cinematic time-space. If imagination also operates beyond text and language in our example of cinematic imagination, or imagination through cinematic animation, how may audiovisual historiography align with what Ricoeur and his readers refer to as "the synthetic activity of 'retracing'", the methods and documents with which to "schematize the traces as a *reinscription of lived time*"?²¹

TRACES OF TRACES IN *NATUREZA MORTA*

Just as a painted still life transforms the depicted object while ascribing new meanings to it, the compiled images in *Natureza morta* have been reframed and loaded with an expressive function beyond mere representation. The opening sequence of the film consists of black and white 16 mm footage shown in slow motion with a score that mimics natural sounds, presumably that of a cricket or some other insect. This effect

blends with the background noise of a projector. A tiny monkey walks on its hind legs towards the welcoming, open arms of a man. Thus, a symbolic sound-image of anticipated terror, once a trace of the past and a moment pregnant with a future that already happened. The temporal status of the photographic image, referred to by Roland Barthes as *un pur ça a été* and by Susan Sontag's "neat slice of time",²² here shifts into the contingency of the *punctum*: "He is dead and he is going to die ..." (Fig. 3).²³

The introducing sequence ends with a black frame, accompanied by the sudden beat and reverberating echo as of a closing door. The title of the film appears in white letters. A dry, electronic sound combines with a brief textual account of the history of Portuguese fascism (1926–1974) that escalated under Salazar's dictatorship (1932–1970), overlapping with the terror and transnational trauma of the colonial war (1961–1974). The captions in white letters are followed by a black frame and, as the disharmonic sound slightly intensifies, the first snapshot from the PIDE police archive gradually appears: a photograph of a young woman in her mid-twenties, her fierce look into the camera pierces the screen while at the same time representing the materiality of the photograph. De Sousa Dias deliberately chose to reframe the photograph with a splice leaving out one third of the woman's face, something that at once demystifies the trace and enhances the grim quality of the police archive, the image object, and the violent history to which it refers. Four photographs demarcated by black frames follow in a similar display. Now, the splices and material feel of the archival object are still apparent but less pronounced. Each photograph slowly appears to linger on in full view for at least a minute. To the sudden sound effect of a heavy door slammed shut, the final image in this series of photographs fades into a new black frame. The following film sequence represents a grenade exploding in the bushes. The event is rendered in extreme slow motion, such that the actuality of the filmed event transforms into abstraction and a symbolic image of historical time.

In *Natureza morta*, "narrative imagination" is realized beyond any means of verbal narration, but is effected in the workings of compilation, montage, and sound. The interval between images and film fragments materializes in the use of black frames as if the archival fragments have been enacted together with the blank of their evasive historical context. As a result, the trace is at once activated as an archival vestige and as an uncompromising indication of the blank, the void, and *the missing picture*.²⁴

The reference to the colonial past is especially striking in the three, related sequences of *Natureza morta* in which racism and exoticism crystallize into the motif of colonizer and colonized. The previous sequences interrelate thematically by showing Portuguese soldiers or excited crowds greeting Salazar. The masses perform the co-ordinated gesture of raised arms, a lingering scene that de Sousa Dias enhances through repetition and slow motion, first to the sound of a ticking clock and then



Fig. 3. Monkey. *Natureza morta* (Susana de Sousa Dias, 2005); Fig. 4. African women. *Natureza morta* (Susana de Sousa Dias, 2005); Fig. 5 (right). Portuguese women. *Natureza morta* (Susana de Sousa Dias, 2005); Fig. 6. Colonial soldiers. *Natureza morta* (Susana de Sousa Dias, 2005).



to the grinding projector noise combined with the muted sound of innumerable insect wings. The following sequences show native African groups from the Portuguese colonies. A frontal shot of parading women, the camera transfixed in a typical ethnographic view to centre on young, female bodies (*Fig. 4*). As the women proceed in slow motion, the inaudible laughter and excited cheering of the white audience become a ghastly pantomime accompanied by António de Sousa Dias's low but creaky soundtrack. Closer views of the Portuguese crowd watching the parade illuminate the excitement aroused by this exotic spectacle, the asymmetrical relation between the audience and the African groups (*Fig. 5*). In the next sequence, Black soldiers in white navy uniforms appear, smiling and waving the Portuguese flag (*Fig. 6*). A repeated view shows a cheering white crowd, happily laughing and reacting to the extraordinary spectacle off frame. Another film fragment, shot at some distance, frames native warriors dancing in high jumps to inaudible drumbeats, their pride and fierce expression reduced to comic effect by the white onlookers who, laughing wildly, try to mimic their gestures. By the end of this colonial episode, the minimalist score is suddenly pierced by one distinct drumbeat, some poignant grinding noise, a distinct "pling", and, finally, the leitmotif sound effect of a door being shut.

In relating the phenomenology of the trace to *Natureza morta* we have to acknowledge its literal sense as an imprint made by a violent attack or accidentally traced by somebody, as well as the intrinsic trace-status of the compiled film sequences. Both dimensions coincide in our relation to the constructed nature of history, and in the idea of cinema as a technology of memory. When Barthes comments on the *punctum* effect at work in the photograph of Lewis Payne sentenced to death, the effect is obviously as dependent on Barthes' own imagination and contextual knowledge as on the photo-trace *per se*. He hints at the unique life story beyond the image, dramatizing the spectacular event of death beyond the frame: "He is dead and he is going to die".²⁵ The paradoxical signification of the future of the past is also suggested in de Sousa Dias's compilation: the trace of the trace indicates an attentive gaze, an attentive act of listening to the implied voices and nuances of the depicted motif. Imagination through cinematic animation seems to be a crucial process for the enacted sound-image to perform as a telling presence of absence. *Camera lucida* was indeed dedicated to Jean-Paul Sartre's *L'imaginaire*, and, as Barthes emphasized, for the *punctum* to actually affect the viewer, "there must be something with which to animate this piece of paper". That is, the trace as sign-effect depends on context, on extra-textual knowledge. Sound effects, duration and slow motion accomplish the twisted cinematic version of the *punctum* in *Natureza morta*: *This has been, this will happen again*.

SONIC TRACES AND TELLING MOMENTS OF SILENCE IN *48*

48 opens with a black frame and a preface almost identical to that of *Natureza morta*, providing a brief background to the 48 years in question and with an additional note on the especially cruel colonial section of the PIDE/DGS. In Angola, Guinea Bissau, and Mozambique the torture of political prisoners took on an entirely different magnitude compared to the already intolerable images invoked by the Portuguese testimonies. In addition to the cruelty of mass incarcerations and the many prisoners who were killed or died of illness or starvation, the photographic record of African prisoners was deliberately destroyed by the PIDE by the end of the colonial war.

The opening sound of *48* is a woman sniffling in a lingering black frame. A photograph of a young woman framed in profile (Fig. 7) slowly materializes out of the dark to the sound of someone breathing and sighing delicately, the rustling of clothing and a more pronounced sigh. The elderly lady's Portuguese voice rings out to comment hesitantly on this archival record of her younger self:

I remember ... That's at PIDE headquarters when I was arrested in '49. It was all those years ... And there were all the difficulties the police imposed in defence of our dignity. I was only tortured by beating ... after the first visit from my sister. This was the only time that they hit me. Actually, the torture was morale [sic], the arguments they used, the gestures ... And so on.²⁶



Figs. 7 & 8. Georgette Ferreira in profile and facing the camera. 48 (Susana de Sousa Dias, 2005).

This image of Georgette Ferreira lingers on throughout most of her recorded testimony.²⁷ The individual voice has been edited to include every moment of hesitation, every sonic nuance of her embodied memory work. The following image shows another PIDE photograph of the same woman, but this time a frontal shot (Fig. 8). A fierce look into the camera, her curly hair in place and dressed in a neat cardigan with a small ribbon, the political prisoner uses her only means of resistance: she looks back with anger and contempt at the police, and her older self concludes, "I thought about remaking my life ... But no ... It did not work out".

Consistent with a salient theme of image and trauma in documentary cinema, the poetic enactment of testimony in 48 depends on the conveyed presence of speaking bodies and on sounding moments of silence. It is a struggle to remember, but perhaps a relief to address an attentive listener. The constraints of looking back, of being confronted with a vector for memory work – in this case the PIDE snapshots – gains credibility through conveyed gestures of emotional struggle. The time-space assigned

to each testimonial fragment depends on these extra-discursive articulations when speech is halted, when the filmed body is at the centre of the cinematic record, or when hesitation and pauses convey their own sonic traces. Cinematic silence is a rather overlooked feature in scholarly work on filmed testimony, although its dependence on edited sound relates to brilliant analyses in classical film theory and sound theory. Béla Balázs noted: “Silence too, is an acoustic effect, but only where sounds can be heard. The presentation of silence is one of the most specific dramatic effects of the sound film.”²⁸ Michel Chion would later assert that “silence is never a neutral emptiness” and that it is always “the product of a contrast”²⁹

FILMED TESTIMONY, SILENCE AND SPEAKING BODIES

Roland Barthes refers to speech as the theatrical and unpredictable other of the written word, freed from the former’s “tactical” feature. The written word introduces “a new image-repertoire, that of ‘thought’”³⁰ In our encounter with documentary film and media, the experience of first-person testimony, framed confessions, and memory work present us with an “aesthetics of ambiguity” where the logics of Barthes’ binary is shaken or even ruled out.³¹

It goes without saying that the expressive possibilities of montage and narration in cinema often claim an “image-repertoire” similar to that of the written word. Still, the moment a camera starts filming, speech doubles into both a performative act and a recorded event. The speaking subject becomes the subject of a cinematic gesture, and the performance in the presence of a camera is something different than a face-to-face encounter.

Here, the inevitable ethical problems relating to the filmed testimony could be set in dialogue with the ethics of Lévinas’ trace, and the related responsibility that Ricoeur ascribes to narration. Different from the *tupos*, the imprint, the trace has to be separated from the material “constructed on the basis of being-affected by an event, becoming its witness after-the-fact through narration”³² Ricoeur’s critique of relativism and exemplification of “abuses of memory” and “falsification” does not contradict his recognition of the enacted testimony, a celebration of imagination and the power of poetics to bring forth insights in historical experience:

We must not forget that everything starts, not from the archives, but from testimony, and that, whatever may be our lack of confidence in principle in such testimony, we have nothing better than testimony, in the final analysis, to assure ourselves that something did happen in the past, which someone attests having witnessed in person, and

that the principal, and at times our only, recourse, when we lack other types of documentation, remains the confrontation among testimonies.”³³

In *48*, the editing of voice asserts the drama of personal recollection while replacing the scene/seen with the actual subject of the interview, the photograph of the interviewee as a political prisoner. Instead of centring on the actual account and contextualization of individual statements, de Sousa Dias chose to depart from the nuances of stasis and change in each of the recorded voices: “from very early on in the process of developing the film, I abandoned the texts with the transcripts of the interviews, to instead focus on the live testimonies, on hearing the discourse and the words”.³⁴ In this respect, *48* stands as the cinematic other of, for example, Svetlana Alexievich’s book *Voices from Chernobyl* (1997), which is at once a poetic enactment of transcribed interviews and a historical document of the 1986 nuclear catastrophe, based on more than 100 interviews. The author’s aim was to collect testimonies, to edit and rewrite these into a *polyphonic* record of this environmental disaster and ongoing tragedy that was famously silenced and downplayed by the Soviet authorities. In the process, her project would have the effect of also encouraging memory work in a present charged by continuous suffering and loss. Alexievich’s political and poetic project aligns with that of de Sousa Dias. Still, what in filmed testimony is crucial for a compelling scene of recollection is here reduced to the three dots interlinking many of the sentences that the author kept from the original transcripts: the telling moment of silence when body language replaces words, and when discourse is halted by emotion or the inability to remember.

The “complex set of relations between the visible and the invisible, the said and the unsaid” is immanent in the testimonial act, but has always been key to the ethical and affective concerns of framed testimonies in documentary.³⁵ The example of *48* adds to the predominant discourse on filmed testimony by highlighting the embodied time-space of recollection. As a possible audiovisual vector for memory work, the film presents fragments of life stories where the past is invoked as in conflict with the present, rather than a history to be narrated and remembered at a safe distance. In some of the scenes, the spatiality of the unseen kitchen or living room where the conversation with de Sousa Dias was recorded materialize with a creaking chair or distant sounds entering from the outside, a car passing, footsteps. Each individual voice is given its own time-space where sonic nuances crystallize. Just as duration was added to the filmed photographs, attention is here paid to the vocal signs parallel to the discourse: groans, intonation, and the different ways of breathing. De Sousa Dias refers to Giorgio Agamben when asserting that, “listening to a person in the act of

speaking, understanding their voice as gesture, emerges as a political dimension that escapes the technical-instrumental use of language and, simultaneously, cinematic conventions".³⁶ This becomes pivotal for the passage of the film where de Sousa Dias had to enact the missing picture of torture overlapping with colonial violence; a passage that thematically corresponds with her symbolic enactment of the colonial past as cultural oblivion in Portugal and beyond.

MISSING PICTURES, SONIC MEMORIES, AND REVERBERATIONS OF LIVED TIME

A final example from *48* will further illuminate the ethico-political strategies of documentary art where the classical triad of trace, memory, and imagination is indeed at work but, also conceptualized to provide aesthetic knowledge about material traces, archival politics, and the relational aspects of selected and dramatized testimony. Although marginalized in this film, the related colonial history is represented by two stark voices. These sequences become literally and symbolically loaded by the impact of the missing picture: the colonial subjects were even deprived of their PIDE record. Instead, the two testimonies have been edited together with a computer-generated black background and thematically related 16 mm footage shot by a Portuguese soldier during the war somewhere in Guinea Bissau.

The black frame and the distant sound of heavy traffic anticipate the testimony by Amós Mahanjane. With a deep breath, his gentle voice rings out to the missing image: "I was young, very young when I first went to prison". He recalls the round shape and healthy expression of himself, and the joyful discovery of his first facial hairs, "It's growing, my beard is growing!" He pauses briefly and then goes on to confirm how the PIDE was "a total terror", more frightening than the Portuguese army since they hired native people to infiltrate and act as informants, and to arrest political prisoners. Amós describes how they were first identified and had their picture taken by the police, "... but everything disappears". Demonstrating the horrific morning sound of the guard's keys, his testimony transforms into a sonic trace, an imaginary re-enactment that resonates in the denied vision of the black frame: "Cachaca, chaca, chaca ... Well, that launched total panic. He made the noise on purpose and all the while singing: 'Eihaa, eihaa' ... [Amós Mahanjane inhales loudly] *Incredible. A terror*".³⁷

There is a narrative arc to this testimony, such that the auditory interval of each statement is marked, although there is an almost seamless conjunction between the computer-generated black frame and the following film sequence of an actual nocturnal landscape. Amós's voice conveys the hardship of facing traumatic memories as he tells of intolerable scenes at the Machava prison. His voice shivers and weakens



Figs. 9 & 10. Missing image for Amós Mabanjane and Matias Mboa. 48 (Susana de Sousa Dias, 2005).

with fatigue at the description of torture and sexual harassment. At this point, the pauses that halt his speech become longer: moments of an audible and pained silence. Sonic memory dominates as Amós recalls the grim details of an especially cruel whim: a nail was hammered into the fellow prisoner's head: "Toc, toc, toc". After an extensive pause and a shivering breath, he further describes the everyday terror of electric shocks and the efficiency of the prison guards in keeping the inmates in constant hunger. By the end of his testimony, the missing picture is once more invoked with the closing words: "When I left, I had a full beard, but a broken, deformed face ...".

Halfway through the first speech, the image appears slightly reframed to show the dark content of the 16 mm footage and "the white border of the projection window. The nocturnal landscape is inscribed over this white border, sporadically scanned by a surveillance light projector [...]".³⁸

The second African-Portuguese testimony, by Matias Mboa, is anticipated by a slight lightening of the image to show more of the filmed landscape: the post of a fence, a tree branch, the shape of bushes and grass appear out of the mere darkness (*Figs. 9–10*) to the jungle sound of cicadas. The added natural sound enhances the materiality of the original footage, its torn, partly destroyed fabric. The man sounds very tired, as if the utterance of each word requires great efforts. He recalls that PIDE took photographs, but he does not “remember anybody having found a photo of those difficult times”. There is a longer pause, then he says quietly: “They died of everything. Sickness ... In a place where there are thousands of people ...”.³⁹ Again, sonic traces are poignant in the mnemonic images conveyed by the verbal account: “Screams ... Dilacerating ... People wailing because of the torture. Screams from people tumbling ... You would hear it all. This man bidding his farewell ... These are the sounds that mark you.” Aspects of phrasing and repetition, the tone and timbre of voice, direct our engagement with the unbearable content of the recorded testimony. Attentive listening is called for by the aesthetics at hand, which in turn depends on a method of carefully sounding these echoes of actual events, historical trauma, and missing pictures. Although we hear only fragments of a conversation, these are recollections propelled by mutual trust and the presence of a listener.

PENSIVE IMAGES AND THE IMPERATIVE OF TELLING ALTERNATIVELY

According to de Sousa Dias, her montage in temporal depth strives at the realization of “pensive images”.⁴⁰ She borrows the expression from Jacques Rancière, who describes a produced effect on the viewer in the encounter with an artwork, an effect that is never reducible to a given object, meaning a signification beyond discursive intentionality.⁴¹ Typically, Rancière builds on Barthes’ account of the proposed movement from *studium* to *punctum*, as discussed with reference to ‘Lewis Payne’, the 1865 photograph depicting a young prisoner awaiting his death sentence. He returns the gaze of the camera without any apparent emotion about his guilt or imminent death. Rancière brackets the immediacy of the *punctum*, to account for “the photograph’s pensiveness” in terms of an “aesthetic indeterminacy”. The image addresses us simultaneously as a social image of a “condemned man and the image of a young man characterized by a rather nonchalant curiosity”.⁴²

The highlighted *contradiction* (beyond the obvious phenomenology of the trace) and the tension behind “pensiveness”, ascribed to several modes of representation operating at once, speaks to the compelling screen event of 48. The “pensive image” applies to the montage in temporal depth and, perhaps most notably, to the enactment

of cultural oblivion. In the scenes standing in for the missing images of torture and colonial violence, the voices, silences, and erased PIDE record may be said to result in a “figure of aesthetic indeterminacy”. Still, it is thanks to this complex sound-image that two anonymous testimonies so forcefully animate the trace and give voice to a memory work of the present. Cultural oblivion is both commented on and dissolves as the trauma of prison life and torture in the colonies is conveyed through a vivid and painful fragment of lived time.⁴³

In contrast to Barthes’ and Rancière’s photograph, duration is the poignant temporal mode of the “pensive image” in documentary art. In this context, the “pensive image” is brought to the fore by cinematic animation, and it provides a charted time-space for attentive listening and contemplation. Voice and words add to and infuse this pensive image by deliberately drawing attention to life stories beyond the film. Similarly, the compiled and orchestrated footage in *Natureza morta* has been slowed down and reshaped into symbolic images of events that haunt the present, as much as they recall a bracketed past in Portuguese history.

My reflection on audiovisual historiography was made in dialogue with *Natureza morta* and *48*, with a reassessment of Ricoeur’s notion of “narrative imagination”, to address the material and aesthetic strategies applied in a cinematic project to bridge between the present and the past. I argue for the possibility of a re-inscription of lived time in moving images, a process that can be traced beyond discursive intentionality. The alternative knowledge provided by audiovisual historiography depends on the formal complexity, here illuminated by de Sousa Dias’s two films; the resistance to any simple conception of a story, and a mode of address that requires our attentive listening. The pensive image materializes in a mediated time-space, where silence can be heard and where imagination pairs with a critical moment of contemplation and recognition. In *Natureza morta* and *48*, the transcultural wound of colonial violence and dictatorship also materialize in a poignant figure of cultural oblivion. There is no authoritative voice, no historical discourse in this film. But there is an imperative to engage in a process of recollection and critical reassessment.

Audiovisual historiography may engage spectators in collaborative efforts of memory work. In the work of de Sousa Dias, the enactment of the trace emerges with a critical power to build a disturbing screen where we, as viewers, become aware of the ambivalent status of the film image as archival record, of how the meaning of audiovisual content changes over time. *Natureza morta* and *48* illuminate the ethico-political function of cinematic imagination, to “put memories before our eyes”, but these are fabricated sound-images and in the poetics of montage the compilation result in a reverberation of a conflicted past.

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NOTES

- 1 Paul Ricœur, *Time and narrative*, vol. 3, trans. Kathleen Blamey & David Pellauer (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 1988), 120.
- 2 Paul Ricœur, *Memory, history, forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey & David Pellauer (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), ch. 1.
- 3 Paul Ricœur, 'Imagination, testimony and trust: A dialogue with Paul Ricœur', in *Questioning ethics: Contemporary debates in philosophy*, eds. Richard Kearney & Mark Dooley (London: Routledge, 1999), 15.
- 4 For a reflection on de Sousa Dias' third film relating to the same historical context and archives, see Wahlberg, 'Archive, Memory, Forgetting' in *Docalogue*, April 2019, <https://docalogue.com/april-luz-obscura/>
- 5 Despite the downplayed role of text and verbal discourse in her films, Susana de Sousa Dias's compilation aesthetics resonates with the re-framings and poetics of unique film archives in historical examples of compilation films, such as Esfir Shub's *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*; the orchestration of compiled sequences in films by Chris Marker; or with the work on the interstice and interval associated with Harun Farocki's essay films and installations.
- 6 Susana de Sousa Dias, '(In)visible evidence. The representability of torture', in *A companion to contemporary documentary film*, eds. Alexandra Juhasz & Alisa Lebow (Malden: Wiley, 2015), 482–483.
- 7 De Sousa Dias, '(In)visible evidence', 497–498.
- 8 De Sousa Dias, '(In)visible evidence', 498.
- 9 For an extended comment on Ricœur's book in relation to time-images and narrative imagination in cinema, see Malin Wahlberg, *Documentary time: Film and phenomenology* (London & Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 37–38.
- 10 Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, specters, shards: Making history in avant-garde film* (London & Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 6.
- 11 Skoller, *Shadows, specters, shards*, 8.
- 12 Bill Nichols, 'Documentary reenactment and the fantasmatic subject', *Critical Inquiry* 35 (Autumn 2008), 78.
- 13 Skoller, *Shadows, specters, shards*, 6.
- 14 For an introduction to Heidegger's account of ecstatic-horizontal temporality and the paradoxical instant, see Philip Turetzky, *Time* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), 38; Shaun Gallagher, *The Inordinance of Time* (Evanston, III: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 17.

15 Philip Turetzky, *Time* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), 182.

16 Emmanuel Lévinas, *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1972), 69.

17 Paul Ricœur, 'Memory and forgetting', in *Questioning ethics: Contemporary debates in philosophy*, eds. Richard Kearney & Mark Dooley (London: Routledge, 1999), 9.

18 Bernard Stiegler, 'The time of cinema: On the "new world" and "cultural exception"', *Tekhnema: Journal of Philosophy and Technology* 4 (1998), 90.

19 Stiegler, 'The time of cinema', 90.

20 Lévinas, *Humanisme de l'autre homme*, 69.

21 Richard Kearney, 'Narrative imagination: Between ethics and poetics', in *Paul Ricœur: The hermeneutics of action*, ed. Richard Kearney (London: Sage, 1996), 176.

22 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 17.

23 Roland Barthes, *Camera lucida: Reflections on photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982), 95.

24 See Rithy Pahn's conception of memory and forgetting in his first-person narrative on history and trauma in *The missing picture* (2013), and his interview with Joshua Oppenheimer: 'Perpetrators' testimony and the restoration of humanity: *S21*', in *Killer images: Documentary film, memory, and the performance of violence*, eds. Joram ten Brink & Joshua Oppenheimer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

25 Barthes, op. cit., 94–95.

26 48 (Susana de Sousa Dias, 2010).

27 Her name is never mentioned or indicated in the film, nor are the other subjects' identities. Susana de Sousa Dias confirms per email that the first photograph and voice belongs to Georgette Ferreira.

28 Béla Balázs, 'Theory of the film: Sound', in *Film sound: Theory and practice*, eds. Elisabeth Weis & John Belton (New York & Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1985), 116.

29 Michel Chion, *Audio-vision: Sound on screen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 40.

30 Roland Barthes, 'The grain of the voice', in *Image, music, text* (London: Fontana, 1977), 179.

31 Dai Vaughan, 'The aesthetics of ambiguity', in *For documentary. Twelve essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

32 Ricœur, *Memory, history, forgetting*, 66.

33 Ricœur, *Memory, history, forgetting*, 147.

34 de Sousa Dias, '(In)visible evidence', 495.

35 Jacques Rancière, *The emancipated spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliot (New York: Verso, 2009), 93. Cf. Michael Renov, *The subject of documentary* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

36 de Sousa Dias, '(In)visible evidence', 501.

37 Amós Mahanjane in 48.

38 de Sousa Dias, '(In)visible evidence', 502.

39 Matias Mboa in 48.

40 de Sousa Dias, '(In)visible evidence', 497–498.

41 Jacques Rancière, 'The pensive image', in *The emancipated spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliot (New York: Verso, 2009), 115.

42 Rancière, 'The pensive image', 115.

43 Rancière, 'The pensive image', 115–116.



“[...] a constantly revolving,
linking process [...]”

Peter Watkins’ monologue from Deimantas Narkevičius’
The Role of a Lifetime (2003)

The Role of a Lifetime is a video installation, roughly 16 minutes in length, screened at the symposium on which this anthology builds at the initiative of the artist, the Lithuanian sculptor and film-maker Deimantas Narkevičius. Based on amateur footage from Brighton, England in the 1960s intercut with panning shots of landscape drawings by fellow Lithuanian artist Mindaugas Lukošaitis, the image track is accompanied by recorded interviews with the British filmmaker Peter Watkins (born 1935), best known for historical docudramas such as *Culloden* (1964) and *La Commune* (2000). To what extent the original recordings have been modified by Narkevičius is difficult to judge – and, one might suspect, intentionally so – only from watching the film: on a close listening, Watkins’ soliloquy becomes more and more fragmented with time, to the point where some words might seem (but only quite subtly) to have been edited out and some phrases to have been included more than once. By following the wording in the soundtrack as closely as possible and adding some cues about its sonic characteristics, we invite the readers to make up their own minds.

The following transcript is published with the kind permission of Peter Watkins.

*

PETER WATKINS is a filmmaker based in Fellein, France. His numerous works include *The Journey* (1983–1987), *The Freethinker* (1992–1994), and *La Commune* (1999) as well as a number of media critical articles published on his personal website (<http://pwatkins.mnsi.net>), most recently “Dark Side of the Moon – Part 1”.

*Left: Still from The Role of a Lifetime (Deimantas Narkevičius, 2003).
Drawing by Mindaugas Lukošaitis.*

[an indoor ambience]

The first film I made, which you haven't seen – where my work has its birthplace, in a sense – is an amateur film called *Forgotten Faces*, which I made in 1960, which is a reconstruction, in quotes, of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising, which I made as if it was being filmed in Budapest, but I filmed just near Canterbury Cathedral in England.

So the film is a complete cheat. And there are many people who've looked at the film and assumed that it was made in Hungary in 1956. And the basis for that film was the photographs taken in *Paris Match* – and also many other photographs, but mainly a very strong series of photographs in *Paris Match*. Not film, photographs, which I studied endlessly before I made *Forgotten Faces*. I looked at these photographs, I looked at where the camera was, how the people looked into the lens, how sometimes there was a part of a body. In other words, I was looking at something to see how I would recreate reality and give it a special feel that would enable the onlooker to believe that it was reality. Even though there would be other elements which would make clear, I hoped, that it wasn't.

In other words, at that very beginning time, I was starting to play with – and I don't mean that in a superficial way –, to interrogate the form of what we call reality. Showing that, in fact, it's highly individual and subjective, what we call reality. And it does not have an authoritarian, strict, true, objective form. There are links to do with my personal life, with my family life. I know from myself that links between my work and myself are very, very strong. I'm not the best person to say it is this link and that link, but I know that they are there, just as one's past shapes one's character and one's beliefs in many ways. You cannot ... I don't believe, I personally don't believe you can separate that from the creative process. If a film-maker or an artist says, "My past has nothing to do with my art", I have to look at the person and say, "I think you are lying", or "I don't think you're thinking about the real genesis of your work".

So it's very, very, very complicated. And of course, it's the same for me, I'm a child of World War II – many people are a child of World War II, they haven't all gone on to make films like I've done, so there's been something else as well ... But I've always been very concerned about the subject of war, it's occupied me a lot. I don't know where that comes from: I was in England during the war, but many other people were. Of course, I believe that – I believe that absolutely, entirely – the fact that my work has been marginalized as my life has gone on. This has affected me very much, this has affected the subjects I make, this has affected my political viewpoint, this has affected many things. I don't believe – or I'm not interested in – the idea of a neutral artist, even if there is such a thing, I don't think it interests me very much, frankly.

So it's to try and indicate that this thing called documentary is a ... creation, is a fake. I'm doing that not just for pleasure. Some artists, I think, like to play with form. I'm not interested in that, 'cause it's cost me too high a price to do this in my life. I'm interested in that not only for creative reasons, but for political and social reasons. And that, I think, is where my work has gone wrong, and that's cost me a very big price, and that's why my work has been marginalized so excessively in my profession. Because you're not supposed to do that, you're not supposed to ask questions of that kind, because it makes my profession uncomfortable.

[change to an outdoor ambience]

I'm Peter Watkins and, with some of my family and friends, we are here in Gruto Park which is in Lithuania. It's actually a very evocative and rather strange sort of theme park that we're in. A local entrepreneur here went around the backyards of Vilnius some few years ago, collecting together all the statues of Lenin, Marx and the other merry band that he could find, and brought them out to this swampland in the south of Lithuania and constructed a theme park to the Soviet period. To a number of Lithuanians it is a disaster to, as they see it, put these statues of these murderers in a sylvan setting with birds twittering and trees. But, I think, probably, to others – I'm sure there are others who see this as a possibility to really reflect on man's unbelievable folly and inhumanity and, I suppose, the endless repetition, sadly, of history.

[change to an indoor ambience]

You don't set out to make a programme of how your life's work is going to be, and what it's being based on, and ... Things evolve and change, but at the same time you may well start with certain intuitive ideas or feelings, or wishes, or ideologies, of various things which you don't necessarily identify in yourself. And maybe as you get older, you gradually start to identify why you are doing what you are doing: you don't necessarily think it out as a programme when you're age 20 or 25. Some people never think it out, they just don't. I have to some degree because, as the years have gone on – and I think this, maybe, is what separates my work from a lot, I certainly won't say all, but I will say most ... audiovisual stuff. – Because, in some ways, I'm very conscious of what I'm doing as a filmmaker. It's a strange mixture of being extremely intuitive and spontaneous, but also thinking about what I'm doing. It's like a combination of various elements, which are normally not consciously fused together in film. At least

certainly not in something that's called documentary. So, I'm not sure you can call my work documentary, to start with. I'm not even sure what you can call documentary. I think it is a very misleading expression.

I'm not interested only in my process. The unpredictable process of the people who participate, the audience – and the unpredictable processes of the people who were in the film: there's three elements: my process, the people who are the subjects, or the actors, or whatever you want to call them, in the film – or the recreators –, and the audience. In the audiovisual field the audience is always ... simply, they are mostly as a passive, receiving element – which they are not, of course, but they are seen as this. I'm very interested in challenging the people to think of what I'm doing. What I'm doing is creating an environment for them ... by getting them to think about the subject, by getting them to read about it, by talking to them about it, by having them work together in a way that's not like ordinary filmmaking with having ... It's just a process of, it's collective in a sense. And always offering people the opportunity of – even if I give them something to say – of saying, now change that, put that into your own words. That's already a step away from the traditional, but it's to do with creating an environment whereby people feel involved, they feel it is important, they feel it has connection with them – they feel, even if it's about history, that it has connection with them.

So, I mean, all these things have connection. So you don't direct in a simple way, you create something else. And that process, as my films have evolved, I hope, has become a bit less directed and a bit more space for the people to become involved in the research, in thinking about what they're going to say, thinking about how they may react. And that's very difficult, you know: to what degree do you let something become totally spontaneous, maybe chaotic, or to what degree do you control ... And that's a question I always asked myself about my own role, to what degree I control them.

And obviously, I'm there all the time, somehow or another. But what I'm experimenting with my work is trying to see how much I can also step back from that and have other people come in and express themselves. I do not regard my work as the most radical kind of work that can be done because of my controlling factor, which is always there somewhere. I see myself as somewhere, but in the voyage between a totally free video artist and the authoritarian television. That middle area is a very important area, because it's an area that, if more people in television went into it, they could liberate themselves and the audience. And I think to a lot of people in the mass media, the totally free video artist may be something they could never think of, who knows, it's too free or too radical. It's that middle ground, I've been very much experimenting with that. And I don't think, to be honest with you, I can ever look at

any of my films and say, really, I've completely given over all my control to everyone else. I can't do that. Partly, because I've always been editing. I suppose, because I like editing – this is the trap – like a painter likes painting. Well, I'm not sure I should say problems, but let's say these are the challenges.

We put images and sounds together, but we never discuss with the audience, with people, what it means to do this. What effect is this having on society, what is it having on history, what is it having on our personal feelings, what is it having on the way we speak to each other? What effect is it having on the way we think about time, space, structure, process? Constantly it's working in a very manipulative, authoritarian, fixed, regulated, programmatic, hierarchical way with all those things. And we, as human beings, we try not to do that and we try and be complicated in our memories, our feelings, but not the pictures and sounds we see.

[slight change of ambience]

As for history, for me history is then, now, tomorrow, it's a constantly revolving, linking process, and I've always been worried about the way we don't honour or reflect history.

[another slight change of ambience]

I think it's becoming ... I am sorry to say this, I'm very pessimistic. I used not to be, maybe even up to five years ago, but I think about this a lot: I wonder why it is that, as a species, we have allowed this to happen. We seem, as a species, to be very much influenced by moving pictures and sound. We give them incredible ... we give them credence, believability, we're impressed, we don't like criticizing them.

There are a number of people who are critical – either intuitively critical, naturally critical, who remember things from the past, for whatever reasons. But I think there's also a hopelessness now. Many people are feeling there's nothing they can do as individuals. There's a great passivity. I have people who listen to what I'm saying and say, well ... – Very sympathetic people, people who love film, but they don't like to hear that there may be something in the audiovisual process, including in some of their films, that is a part, possibly, of – problem, in some ways. Because it's part of a hierarchical structure – processes, part of it. That worries me, it's always worried me. And I can't talk about this much. It's too, yeah, it's, we say in English, touching the holy grail too much. Unfortunately. It's a lack of critical thinking, yeah, that's really, basically – it's that. Real, critical, *self*-critical thinking as well. – It's that.

DEIMANTAS NARKEVIČIUS

Stills from *The Dud Effect* (2008)

Abandoned Soviet launch bases for nuclear rockets form the subject of Deimantas Narkevičius's film *The Dud Effect*. One of these bases existed in the filmmaker's native Lithuania: although it was closed down back in 1977, the underground catacomb structure is still impressive in its scale and scope. Working on the project, Narkevičius was able to find a few people who served at such bases and who could provide him with much technical and specific information on the way it functioned. Combining his own shots from what remains of the complex in Lithuania with found footage from the 1970s and unique black-and-white photographs of an R-14 type rocket ready to attack, the basic idea of the film was to create a scenario around the launch of such a rocket from the site in Lithuania. Fortunately, such an event never happened during the Cold War period, but within the new political tone of confrontation between West and East (including Russia), the horror – which we thought was gone – of possible nuclear strategical weapon confrontation is rising from the past. Another source of inspiration for the theme is Peter Watkins' 1965 film *The War Game*, which Narkevičius regards as an outstanding work.

2008 | 16 mm film transferred to HD video | B&W and colour | sound (Russian with English subtitles) | 15:40.

*

DEIMANTAS NARKEVIČIUS is an artist and filmmaker based in Vilnius, Lithuania. Among his recent films are *Books on Shelves and Without Letters* (2013), *20 July 2015* (2016), and *Stains and Scratches* (2017).

















MAGNUS BÄRTÅS

Stills from *The Miracle of Tensta (Theoria)* (2014)

In August of 2012, a young girl in Tensta, a northern suburb of Stockholm, borrowed her mother's smartphone and took a photograph of a peculiar cloud in the sky. She showed it to her mother, who interpreted the cloud formation as an apparition of the Virgin Mary. The image began circulating on social media, and a few days later thousands of people gathered in the local Syrian Orthodox church, the Church of St Mary. Journalist Clas Svahn was present in the church when the audience witnessed a second apparent miracle: the apparition of images in the church windows, and gave a respectful report in Swedish daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*. He also mentioned an important part of the context: the fact that St Mary's Church had a visitor that day – the Bishop of war-torn Homs (in Syria) – and had a religious relic in the cross he carried through the church hall: several threads said to have come from the girdle of the Virgin Mary.

Svahn's text was the only report in larger mainstream media in Sweden. The story disappeared very quickly, and it seemed that this kind of ecstatic religiosity was impossible to internalize in a public reporting or debate. Nor did reporting about fantastic visions seem to adhere to the overall dominating narratives of Tensta, at least not to the common view of the predominantly Muslim suburb.

Although the story of the miracle disappeared very quickly from the mainstream media, it lived on in social media, and the script of the film *The miracle of Tensta (Theoria)*, was entirely composed of discussions from these internet threads. Borrowing methodology from historiographic narration, Magnus Bärtås compiled the material and extracted seven “composite-personalities” from it, representing seven attitudes to the (becoming) historical event. It is these characters that provide the starting point for *The Miracle of Tensta (Theoria)*, first shown at Tensta Konsthall, a contemporary arts centre in the same suburb where the original event took place.

The unwillingness and inability to internalize the story of the apparent miracle in Tensta in the Swedish context says something about how questions of micro- and macrohistory are bound to perspectives and contexts. In the history-writing of the Syrian Orthodox church, the event now belongs to a category of important moments in history. In the history of Sweden, the event is effectively non-existent. This gap, or tension, between the life of narratives points to questions of co-existence in diverse societies; to live in a society where a *theoria*¹ is deprived of its potential symbolic or metaphoric meaning, and which *theoria* is also unable to provide any basis for action, negotiation, listening to and telling stories.

2014 | HD video | colour | sound (Swedish with English subtitles) | 16:36
Photograph from St Mary's church by Clas Svahn, 2012.

*

MAGNUS BÄRTÅS is an artist, writer and head of research at Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm. Together with Fredrik Ekman he has published five books of essays, the latest in 2017 (Bebådaren, Albert Bonniers förlag). His films and installations are screened and exhibited and in museums, galleries and film festivals in Sweden and abroad.

¹ Initially *theoria*, the Greek word for theory, was understood according to its concrete implication; it was the report given by people upon returning to the villages after having witnessed certain events (for instance the Olympics). What the messenger related was not of great consequence, but rather the participation in the social situation through which *theoria* was conveyed. In this situation, the witness's level of presence was of primary importance, the fact that the witness actually shared the reality he depicted. A philosophic theorist used to contemplate the stars – it was the activity of astronomical *theoria*, beholding and apprehending “visible gods” in the heavens. But the experience was given a meaning in local civic context. *Theoria* was a situation in which contemplative wisdom was transformed into practical and (under certain conditions) political activities: the theorist's theoretical wisdom provided the basis for action.



A peculiar cloud in the sky.

The bishop from war-torn Homs in Syria had visited Santa Maria Church. He had stuffed a few threads from the Virgin Mary's cloth sash into the cross he carried around in the church.

A cloud in the sky is just a cloud for an atheist, while the believer sees it in another context and can see the cloud as a divine apparition.

That the others see what they see can only be grasped by taking on their worldview.



Some see with their eyes,
others hear with their ears
and some see with their hearts.
Clairvoyance,
clairaudience
and clairsentience.



In what way does this
look like the Virgin
Mary? I think it looks
more like a pear.

When I saw it my legs started
to shake and I think it was
visible for no more than
twenty seconds.

Be happy, Swedes:
now you have your own
"our Lady of..."
Our Lady of Zeitoun
Our Lady of Fátima
Our Lady of Tensta



I arrived at quarter to five, the rites were to start at six o'clock. There were already at least 1,500 people there and around six there were more than 2,000 people on site. Apart from the Syriac Orthodox people there were also plenty of visitors from the Serbian Orthodox Church, some members of the Coptic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church and some Muslim women.

A vision, no matter how apparent, can never become a physical object that can be measured or weighed. It is an experience that people have had and that one can accept or explain away depending on one's own perspective.

For believers it is certain that Mary sometimes shows herself in order to strengthen the faith of Christians, but how it actually happens is beyond our comprehension and cannot be proven scientifically.

Believe instead. Accept the truth.

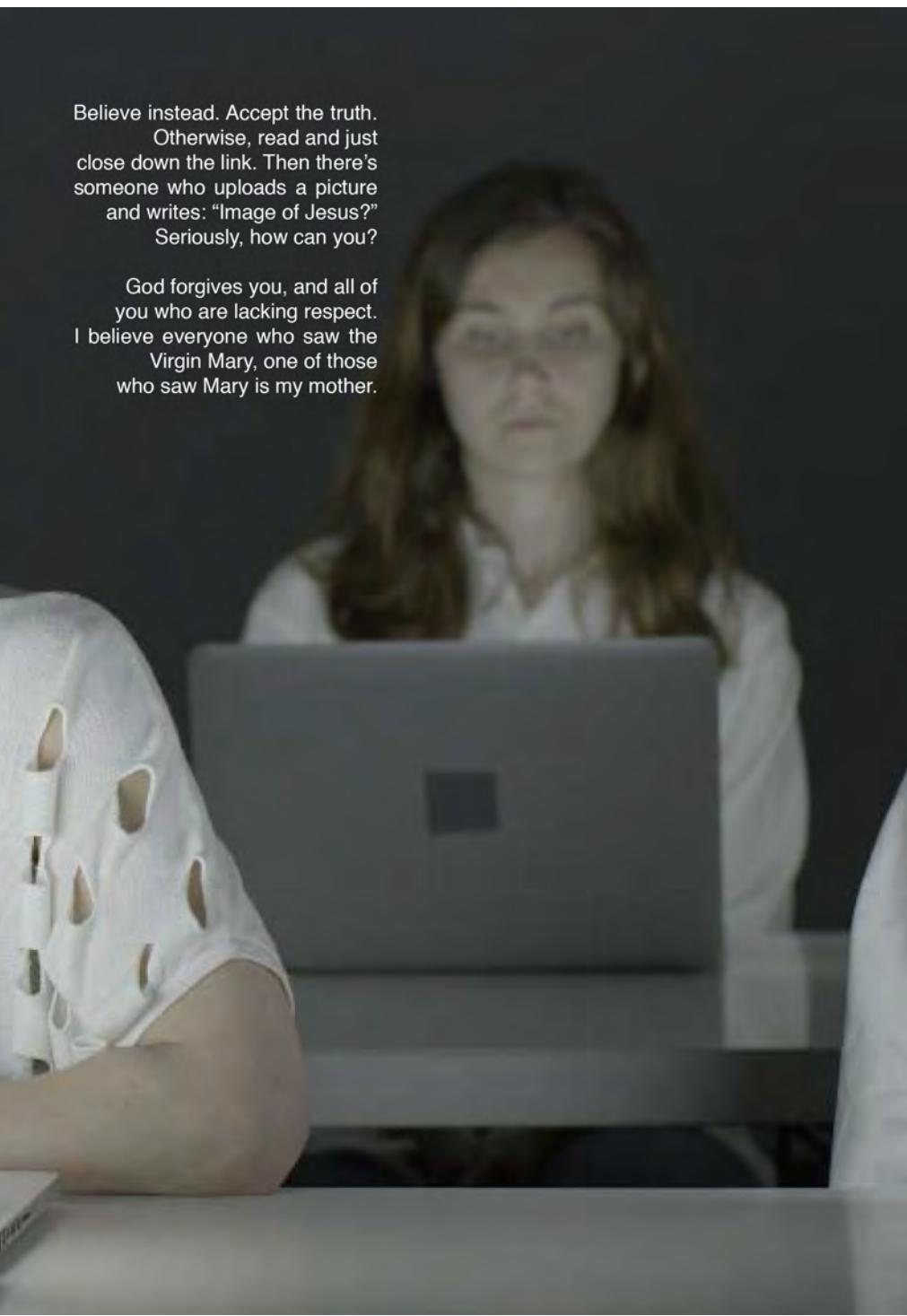
Otherwise, read and just close down the link. Then there's someone who uploads a picture and writes: "Image of Jesus?"

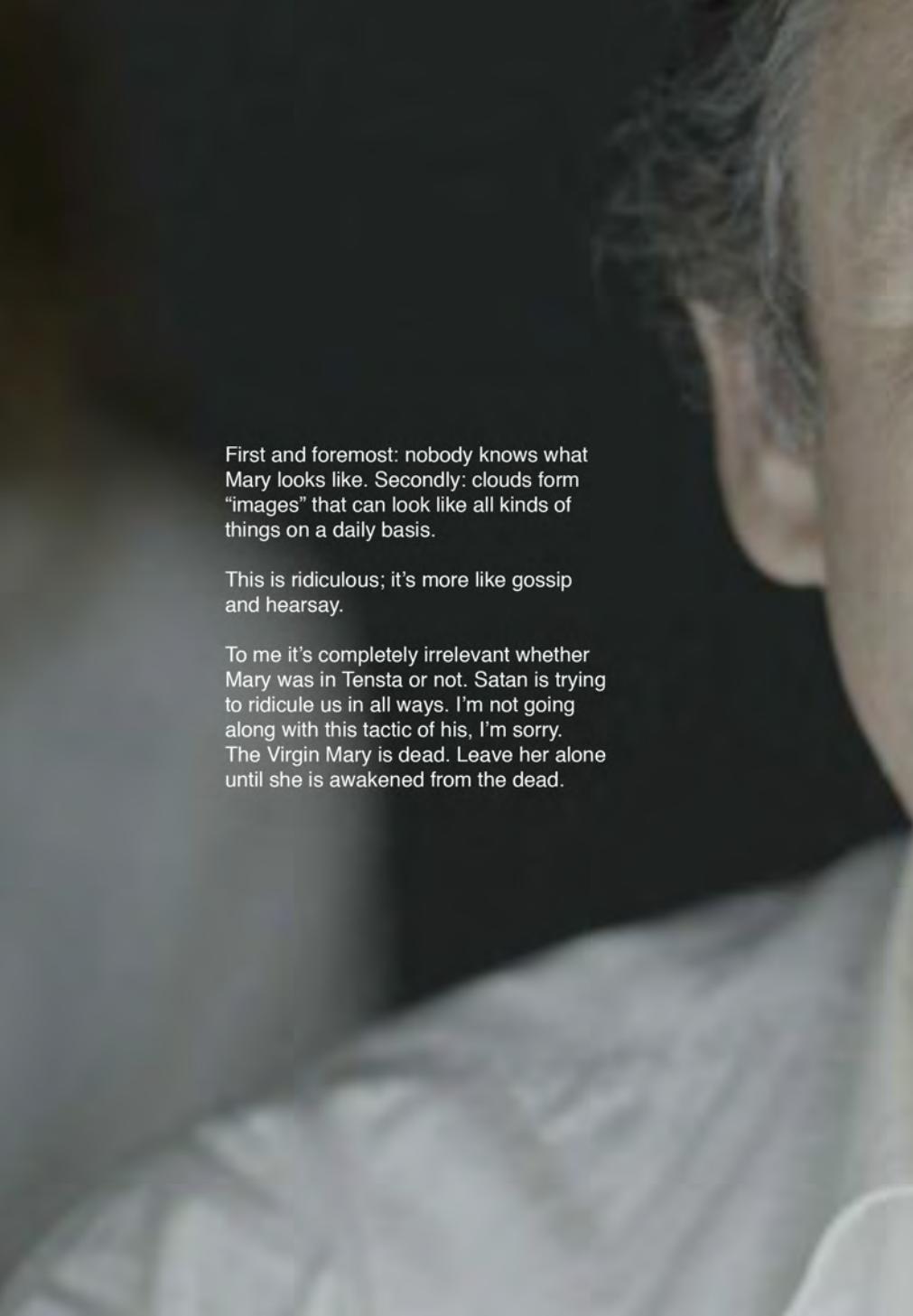
Seriously, how can you?

God forgives you, and all of you who are lacking respect.

I believe everyone who saw the

Virgin Mary, one of those who saw Mary is my mother.



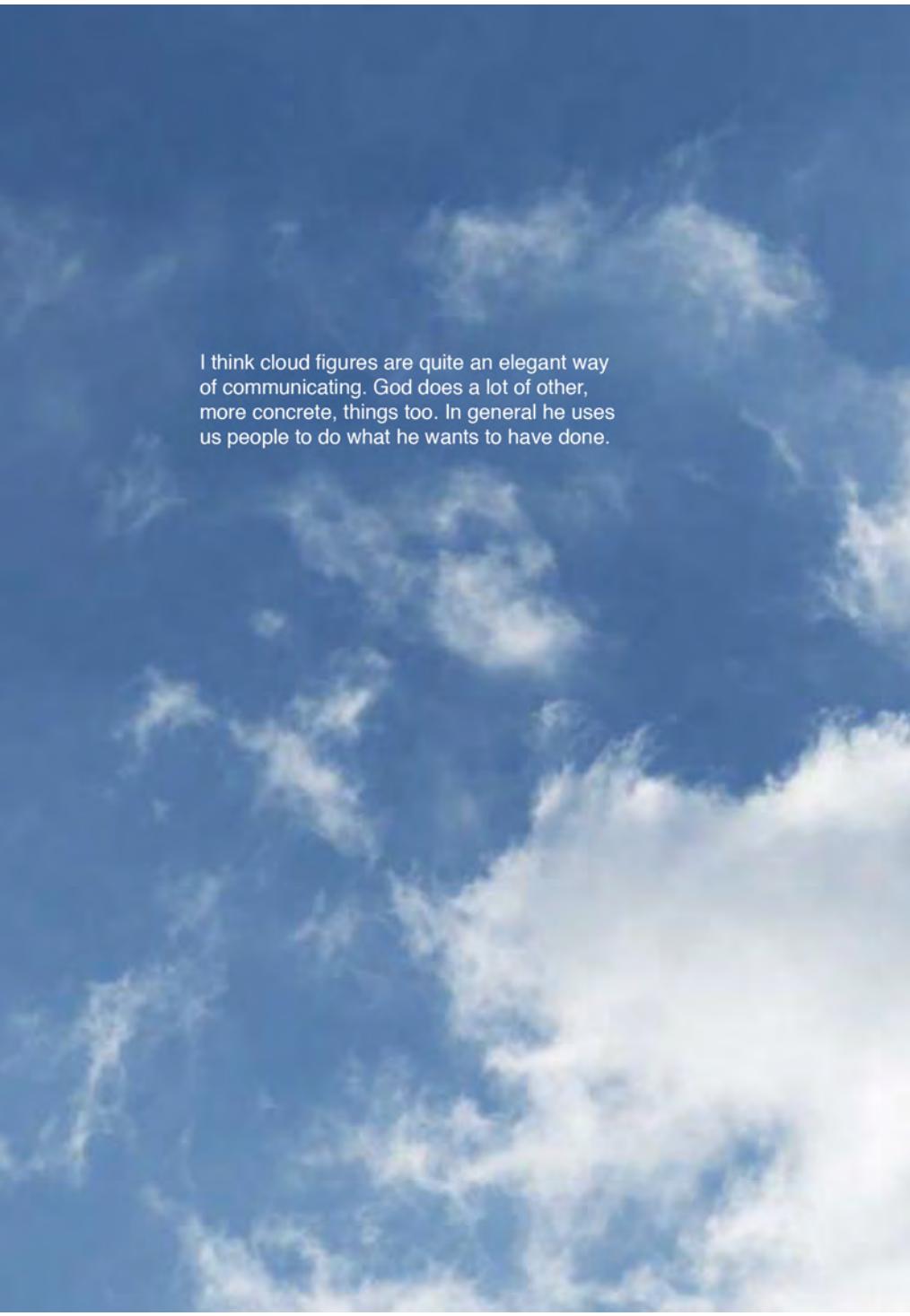


First and foremost: nobody knows what Mary looks like. Secondly: clouds form "images" that can look like all kinds of things on a daily basis.

This is ridiculous; it's more like gossip and hearsay.

To me it's completely irrelevant whether Mary was in Tensta or not. Satan is trying to ridicule us in all ways. I'm not going along with this tactic of his, I'm sorry. The Virgin Mary is dead. Leave her alone until she is awakened from the dead.





I think cloud figures are quite an elegant way of communicating. God does a lot of other, more concrete, things too. In general he uses us people to do what he wants to have done.





People who believe that
the cloud depicts the
Virgin Mary: do you have
glasses? If not, get some.

You mean to say the video lies?
More than a thousand people have seen this
video. Hundreds have seen the Virgin Mary,
with their own eyes and captured it. So, all
these people are lying. All these Christians are
lying? Here we see who really needs glasses!







LINA SELANDER & OSCAR MANGIONE

Stills from *The Offspring Resembles the Parent* (2015)

Lina Selander created her video work *The Offspring Resembles the Parent* for the 2015 Venice Biennale; like *Silphium* (2014), it was made in collaboration with Oscar Mangione. The title draws on Aristotle's *Politics*, in which the philosopher argues that money increasing at interest is the most unnatural mode of achieving wealth, since, unlike livestock and crops, money cannot breed as it "exists not by nature but by law". Both works depart from the observation that memory is inextricably connected with economy – in the sense of capital that we manage or hand down – as evinced by the etymological connection between *monere* (to remind) and money. The starting point of the film is the emergency currencies printed in the 1920s, banknotes used during times of crisis and inflation or for enclaves without a set structure or definite borders, such as ghettos, concentration camps, or colonies. The meticulously designed notes are often visually dramatic, with propagandist messages in word and image. Engaging the cinematic qualities of the delicately coloured colonial notes, Selander and Mangione conjure up a bygone era which disastrously helped lay the foundations for our own welfare society. "Colonialism as a vehicle for modernism", in the words of Hamid Dabashi. The work develops into a visual contemplation on fictive economies, dormant power, blind subordination, and the hyperinflation of values – human as well as monetary.

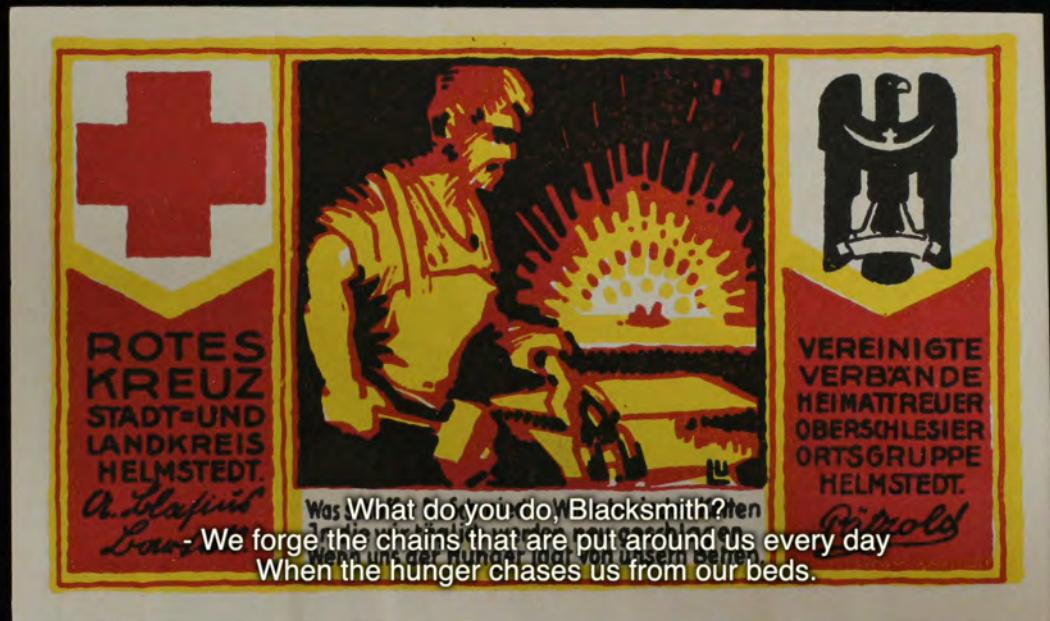
(By Lena Essling)

2015 | HD video | colour | sound (English) | 13:44.

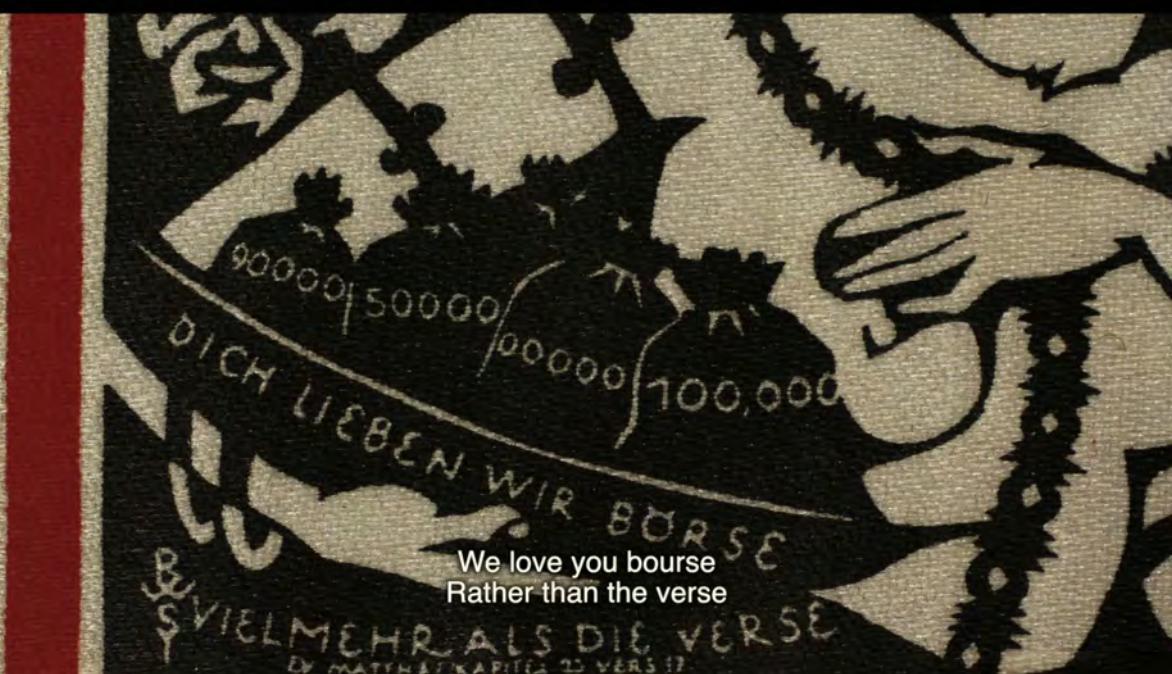
*

LINA SELANDER is an artist based in Stockholm, where she currently holds a position as guest professor at the Royal Institute of Art. Working together with OSCAR MANGIONE, her films and installations have been widely screened, exhibited and publicized. In 2016, she represented Sweden at the 56th Venice Biennale. Recent works include *Diagram of Transfer No. 1 & 2* (2018–2019), *Soli Deo Gloria* (2017), and *The Ceremony* (2016).





24. 12. 21



We love you bourse
Rather than the verse

BY MATHIAS KAPITZ 22 VERS 17



by the local Lincoln Guard of Honour to prevent

on a

in journey

ca, where

Y

reaching

place at

nois.

COMMUNIST LEADERS AND THE GHOST OF TUTANKHAMUN

He has not died, but merely sleeps:

Our tired leader is resting

Under his granite tombstone

(Adrian Vechernii 1924 Il'ichu, 9)









ANDREJ SLÁVIK

Stills from *The Literal Zone: Exhibits A–J* (2018)

The short essay film *The Literal Zone: Exhibits A–J* is Andrej Slávik’s first foray into the terrain of (audio)visual historiography. Consisting of ten brief episodes (or “exhibits”), each focusing on a highly circumscribed event, the piece revolves around the figure of the refugee as it has been constituted throughout modern history, juxtaposing the recent – in fact, ongoing – so-called refugee crisis with what migration scholars have recently begun to describe as a “forty-years’ crisis” in the beginning and middle of the 20th century (ca 1919–1959). While the key notion in the title is apparently literal in the sense of verbatim, word-for-word, without metaphor, the term is also intended as an allusion to its near-exact homonym littoral – one pronounced /'lit(ə)rəl/, the other /'lɪtərəl/ – meaning “of or pertaining to the shore” (*OED*). In this way, the incongruous expression “literal zone” – ostensibly a misspelling (which, as such, actually returns a few hits on Google) of “littoral zone” – enacts a play of sense and nonsense where, in the tension between lexical distinction and phonetic ambiguity, the literal and the metaphorical almost come to seem interchangeable. Hence, the title can be regarded as an instance of the kind of stylistic resources – allusion, ambiguity, and the like – that Slávik borrows from the arts, without in any way claiming the status of art for his own work.

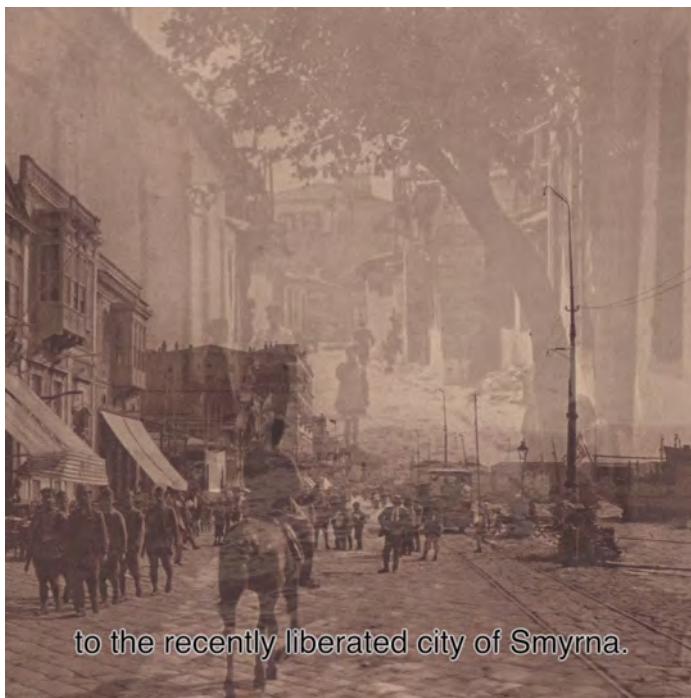
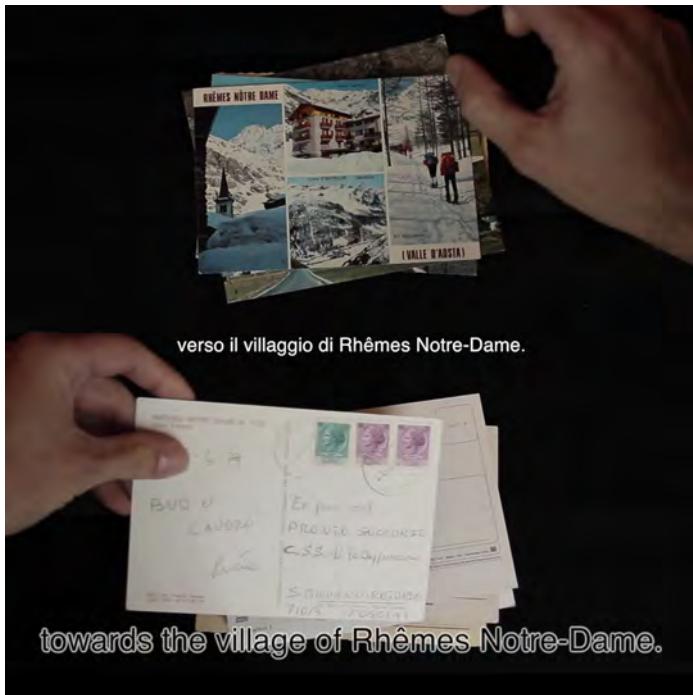
2018 | HD video | B&W and colour | sound (various languages with English subtitles) | 5:28.

ANDREJ SLÁVIK is a historian based in Göteborg. The short essay film *The Literal Zone: Exhibits A–J*, is his most recent work.

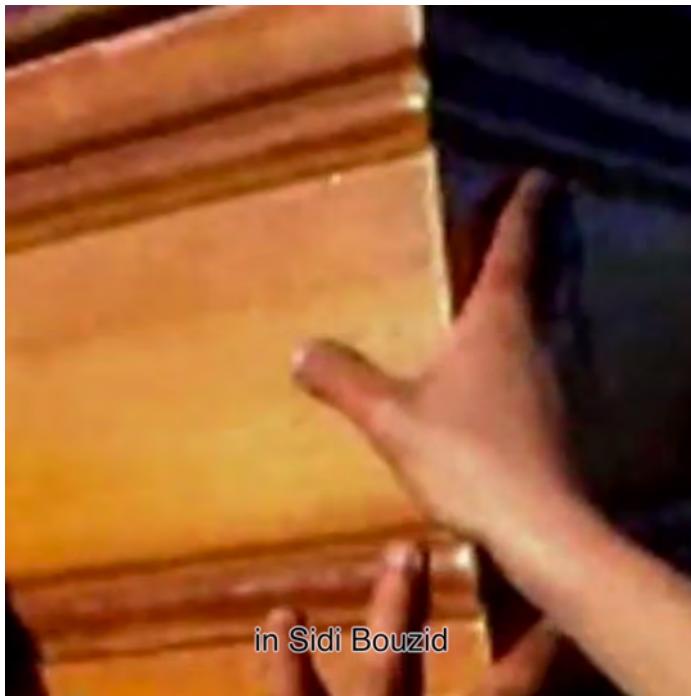


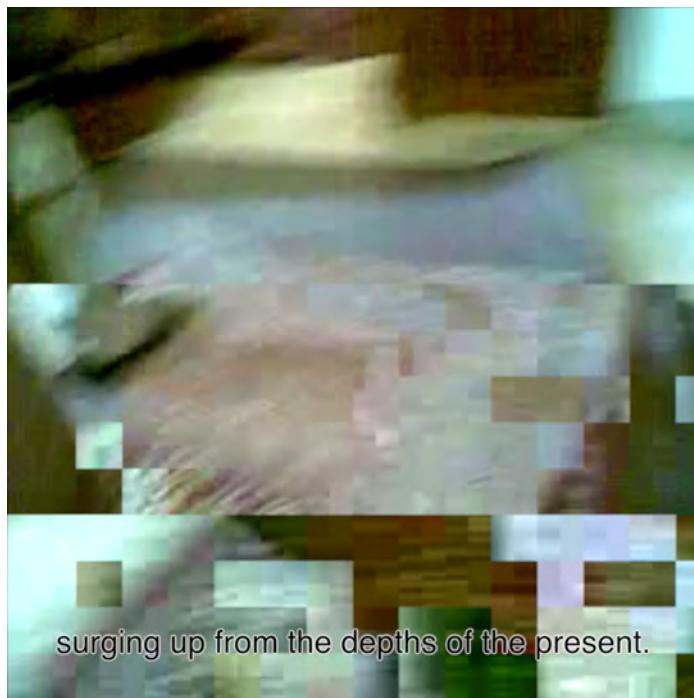
Prima di tutto un ricordo, un'immagine:

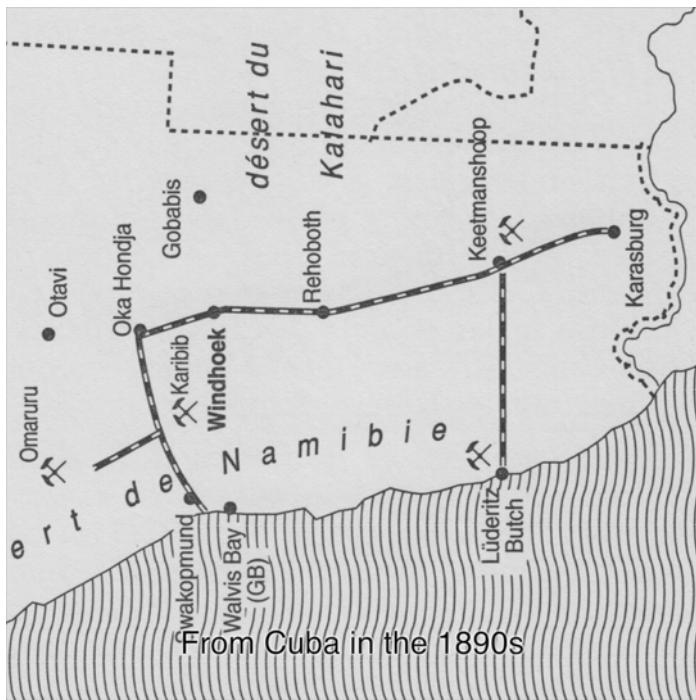
First of all, a memory, an image:

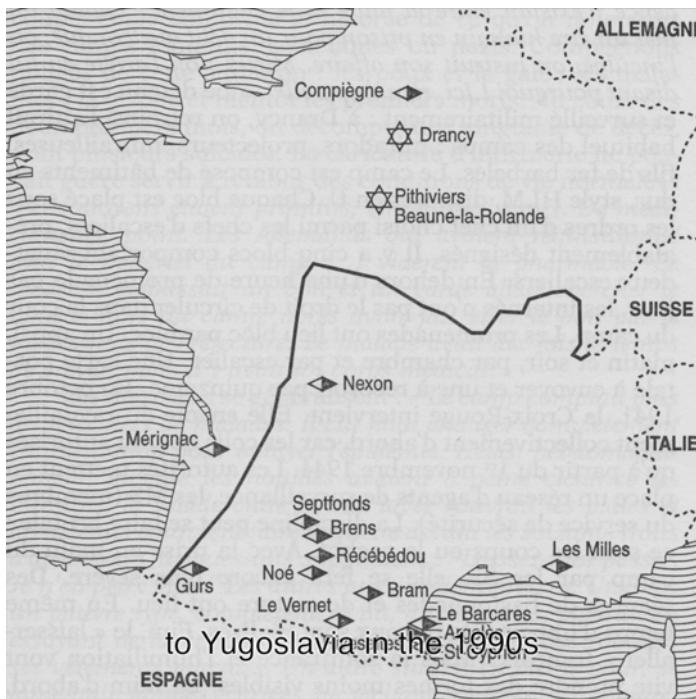














Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien serie *Konferenser*

- 1 Människan i tekniksamhället. Föredrag och diskussioner vid Vitterhetsakademiens konferens 25–27 januari 1977. 1977
- 2 Människan i tekniksamhället. Bibliografi. 1977
- 3 Swedish-Polish Literary Contacts. 1979
- 4 Människan, kulturlandskapet och framtiden. Föredrag och diskussioner vid Vitterhetsakademiens konferens 12–14 februari 1979. 1980
- 5 Människan, kulturlandskapet och framtiden. Bibliografi. Ed. Arnold Renting. 1980
- 6 Safe Guarding of Medieval Altarpieces and Wood Carvings in Churches and Museums. A Conference in Stockholm, May 28–30 1980. 1981
- 7 Tolkning och tolkningsteorier. Föredrag och diskussioner vid Vitterhetsakademiens symposium 17–19 november 1981. 1982
- 8 Research on Tropes. Proceedings of a Symposium Organized by the Royal Academy of Letters History and Antiquities and the Corpus Troporum, Stockholm, June 1–3 1981. Ed. Gunilla Iversen. 1983
- 9 Om stilforskning. Föredrag och diskussionsinlägg vid Vitterhetsakademiens symposium 16–18 november 1982. 1983
- 10 J. V. Snellman och hans gärning. Ett finskt-svenskt symposium hållt på Hässelby slott 1981 till 100-årsminnet av Snellmans död. 1984
- 11 Behövs ”småspråken”? Föredrag vid Vitterhetsakademiens konferens den 22 november 1983. 1984
- 12 Altaistic Studies. Papers Presented at the 25th Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference at Uppsala June 7–11, 1982. Eds Gunnar Jarring and Staffan Rosén. 1985
- 13 Att vara svensk. Föredrag vid Vitterhetsakademiens symposium 12–13 april 1984. 1985
- 14 Samhällsplanering och kulturminnesvård. Föredrag och diskussionsinlägg vid Vitterhetsakademiens symposium 28 mars 1985. 1986
- 15 Runor och runinskrifter. Föredrag vid Riksantikvarieämbetets och Vitterhetsakademiens symposium 8–11 september 1985. 1987
- 16 The Slavic Literatures and Modernism. A Nobel Symposium August 5–8 1985. Ed. Nils Åke Nilsson. 1987
- 17 Nubian Culture: Past and Present. Main Papers Presented at the Sixth International Conference for Nubian Studies in Uppsala, 11–16 August, 1986. Ed. Tomas Hägg. 1987
- 18 ”1786”. Vitterhetsakademiens jubileumssymposium 1986. 1988
- 19 Polish-Swedish Literary Contacts. A Symposium in Warsaw September 22–26 1986. Eds Maria Janion and Nils Åke Nilsson. 1988
- 20 Sverige och Petersburg. Vitterhetsakademiens symposium 27–28 april 1987. Red. Sten Carlsson och Nils Åke Nilsson. 1989
- 21 Tradition and Modern Society. A Symposium at the Royal Academy of Letters History and Antiquities, Stockholm, November 26–29, 1987. Ed. Sven Gustavsson. 1989
- 22 Die Bronzezeit im Ostseegebiet. Ein Rapport der Kgl. Schwedischen Akademie der Literatur Geschichte und Altertumsforschung über das Julita-Symposium 1986. Ed. Björn Ambro-
siani. 1989

23 Bilden som källa till vetenskaplig information. Föredrag vid Vitterhetsakademiens symposium 13–14 april 1989. Red. Allan Ellenius. 1990

24 Att tala utan ord. Människans icke-verbala uttrycksformer. Föredrag vid symposium i Vitterhetsakademien 25–26 oktober 1989. Red. Göran Hermerén. 1991

25 Boris Pasternak och hans tid. Föredrag vid symposium i Vitterhetsakademien 28–30 maj 1990. Red. Peter Alberg Jensen, Per-Arne Bodin och Nils Åke Nilsson. 1991

26 Czeslaw Milosz. A Stockholm Conference. September 9–11, 1991. Ed. Nils Åke Nilsson. 1992

27 Contemplating Evolution and Doing Politics. Historical Scholars and Students in Sweden and in Hungary Facing Historical Change 1840–1920. A Symposium in Sigtuna, June 1989. Ed. Ragnar Björk. 1993

28 Heliga Birgitta – budskapet och förebilden. Föredrag vid jubileumssymposiet i Vadstena 3–7 oktober 1991. Red. Alf Härdelin och Mereth Lindgren. 1993

29 Prehistoric Graves as a Source of Information. Symposium at Kastlösa, Öland, May 21–23, 1992. Ed. Berta Stjernquist. 1994

30 Rannsakningar efter antikviteter – ett symposium om 1600-talets Sverige. Red. Evert Baudou och Jon Moen. 1995

31 Religion in Everyday Life. Papers given at a symposium in Stockholm, 13–15 September 1993. Ed. Nils-Arvid Bringéus. 1994

32 Oscar Montelius 150 years. Proceedings of a Colloquium held in the Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, Stockholm, 13 May 1993. Ed. Paul Åström. 1995

33 August Strindberg och hans översättare. Föredrag vid symposium i Vitterhetsakademien 8 september 1994. Red. Björn Meidal och Nils Åke Nilsson. 1995

34 The Aim of Laboratory Analyses of Ceramics in Archaeology, April 7–9 1995 in Lund, Sweden. Eds Anders Lindahl and Ole Stilborg. 1995

35 Qumranlitteraturen. Fynden och forskningsresultaten. Föreläsningar vid ett symposium i Stockholm den 14 november 1994. Red. Tryggve Kronholm och Birger Olsson. 1996

36 Words. Proceedings of an International Symposium, Lund, 25–26 August 1995. Ed. Jan Svartvik. 1996

37 History-Making. The Intellectual and Social Formation of a Discipline. Proceedings of an International Conference, Uppsala, September 1994. Eds Rolf Törstendahl and Irmline Veit-Brause. 1996

38 Kultursamanhengar i Midt-Norden. Tverrfagleg symposium for doktorgradsstudenter og forskarar. Førelesinger ved eit symposium i Levanger 1996. Red. Steinar Supphellen. 1997

39 State and Minorities. A Symposium on National Processes in Russia and Scandinavia, Ekaterinburg. March 1996. Eds Veniamin Alekseyev and Sven Lundkvist. 1997

40 The World-View of Prehistoric Man. Papers presented at a symposium in Lund, 5–7 May 1997. Eds Lars Larsson and Berta Stjernquist. 1998

41 Forskarbiografen. Föredrag vid ett symposium i Stockholm 12–13 maj 1997. Red. Evert Baudou. 1998

42 Personnamn och social identitet. Handlingar från ett Natur och Kultur-symposium i Sigtuna 19–22 september 1996. Red. Thorsten Andersson, Eva Brylla och Anita Jacobson-Widding. 1998

43 Philipp Melanchthon und seine Rezeption in Skandinavien. Vorträge eines internationalen Symposiums an der Königlichen Akademie der Literatur, Geschichte und Altertümer anlässlich seines 500. Jahrestages in Stockholm den 9.–10. Oktober 1997. Herausgegeben von Birgit Stolt. 1998

44 Selma Lagerlöf Seen from Abroad – Selma Lagerlöf i utlandsperspektiv. Ett symposium i Vitterhetsakademien den 11 och 12 september 1997. Red. Louise Vinge. 1998

45 Bibeltolkning och bibelbruk i Västerlandets kulturella historia. Föreläsningar vid ett symposium i Stockholm 27 oktober 1997. Red. Tryggve Kronholm och Anders Piltz. 1999

46 The Value of Life. Papers presented at a workshop at the Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, April 17–18, 1997. Eds Göran Hermerén and Nils-Eric Sahlin. 1999

47 Regionala samband och cesurer. Mitt-Norden-symposium II. Föreläsningar vid ett symposium i Stockholm 1997. Red. Staffan Helmfrid. 1999

48 Intuitive Formation of Meaning. Symposium held in Stockholm, April 20–21 1998. Ed. Sven Sandström. 2000

49 An Assessment of Twentieth-Century Historiography. Professionalism, Methodologies, Writings. Ed. Rolf Torstendahl. 2000

50 Stiernhielm 400 år. Föredrag vid internationellt symposium i Tartu 1998. Red. Stig Örjan Ohlsson och Bernt Olsson. 2000

51 Roman Gold and the Development of the Early Germanic Kingdoms. Symposium in Stockholm 14–16 Nov. 1997. Ed. Bente Magnus. 2001

52 Kyrkovetenskap som forskningsdisciplin. Ämneskonferens i Vitterhetsakademien, 12–13 november 1998. Red. Sven-Åke Selander. 2001

53 Popular Prints and Imagery. Proceedings of an International Conference in Lund 5–7 October 2000. Eds Nils-Arvid Bringéus and Sten Åke Nilsson. 2001

54 The Chronology of Base-Ring Ware and Bichrome Wheel-Made Ware. Proceedings of a Colloquium held in the Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, Stockholm, May 18–19 2000. Ed. Paul Åström. 2001

55 Meaning and Interpretation. Conference held in Stockholm, September 24–26 1998. Ed. Dag Prawitz. 2001

56 Swedish-Polish Modernism. Literature – Language – Culture. Conference held in Cracow, Poland, April 20–21 2001. Eds Małgorzata Anna Packalén and Sven Gustavsson. 2003

57 Nationalutgåva av de äldre geometriska kartorna. Konferens i Stockholm 27–28 november 2003. Red. Birgitta Roeck Hansen. 2005

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